

## **Soft “c” and “g” Stories**

Sailing on Skates p. 2

Darwin’s Idea p. 4

A Big Opportunity Requires Passing a Big Test (Part 1) p. 6

A Big Opportunity Requires Passing a Big Test (Part 2) p. 8

Visiting the Redwoods p. 10

The Community Center Faces a Challenge p.13

A Fledgling (Part 1) p. 16

A Fledgling (Part 2) p. 18

Children’s Day in Japan p. 20

Gram Teaches Beth to Knit p. 22

The Polio Vaccine p. 24

## **Sailing on Skates**

**(Story Words: catches, attach)**

When a pond or lake is frozen, you can go skating on it. But first, you must be sure that the ice is not thin anywhere. The ice can be very thick near the shore of a lake or pond but still be open water in the middle.

If a pond is completely frozen over with thick ice, you can skate all the way across it. You can even go “sailing.”

Here is how to sail on ice: first you make a big square or rectangle with thin strips of wood. Then, you attach a sheet or big cloth to the frame. When you get on the ice, you hold up the sheet to catch the wind in front of you. The frame is like a big kite that you are holding.

Once the wind catches your sail, you will start sailing. It will feel like flying. You will be going so fast you will not be

able to stop quickly. This is why you need to know that the pond is completely frozen over and safe to skate on.

Sometimes the ice on a pond or lake will be completely smooth like glass. But other times, the ice will have little ripples that are like little waves that have frozen in place. These ripples feel bumpy on your skates.

## Darwin's Idea

Max had to write a short speech for class about a person born in the past who had a big idea. Max loved animals and his Dad suggested that Charles Darwin's ideas might interest him.

Darwin was born in 1809, so that was good. Darwin explained how animals and organisms change over time. The genes that make animals the way they are mutate or change all the time, but in most cases these changes result in one or two odd looking animals and the trait remains rare. But in some cases, those odd changes help an animal to survive. Max went to his Dad and said, "I think I have what I need. It seems like Darwin was saying that genes change and that over time the best genes win."

Max's Dad said, "Yes, that's right, that was his idea, but you could explain in more detail about how that might happen. Let's say a gene mutates, and a frog now has brown and white spots. If those spots help her hide from

predators, she will survive and give birth. Some of those new frogs will have spots. The frogs with spots have the most chance to survive and mate. Over time spots will become more common.”

Max went back to the computer and did more reading and found some examples. Then he looked at his report again and saw how he could expand it and make it better. When he was done, he went to his dad and said, “Thanks for the feedback. My report now seems more complete.”

## **A Big Opportunity Requires Passing a Test (Part 1)**

**(Story word: commercial, route, especially)**

It had been many years since Carole had been in school. She was in her fifties, and the last thing she thought she would ever be doing again was taking exams. The idea of studying for a test was quite intimidating. But, a big opportunity awaited her if she passed the commercial driver's license test.

It was Carole's best friend Cynthia who had inspired her. Cynthia had a school bus route and loved it. Over the years, she had told Carole so many funny stories about the kids in their community. Once Cynthia had established the rules on the bus, she said interacting with the kids was a breeze.

On the way to school, Cynthia said, kids tended to be sleepy and quiet. But coming home, especially on Fridays, they were rowdy. So long as kids followed Cynthia's most important rules—staying seated, putting away dangerous

and sharp objects (especially pencils) in their backpacks, and refraining from antagonizing other kids—Cynthia tolerated loud chatting.

Each year, there would be new kids on the route that were fun to get to know. This year she told a lot of stories about Grace, an exuberant kindergartner with a big personality. Whenever Grace was not on the bus, she wanted to make sure that Cynthia had noticed her absence. She would say, “Miss Cynthia, did you miss me yesterday?” Then, she would tell Cynthia all about her trip to the dentist or wherever she had been.

Carole lived on a farm, as Cynthia did, and her life was already busy. Her husband Frank was semi-retired, but they had lots of animals to care for. They had three dogs, two cats, and four pet goats. They also raised chickens and sold their extra eggs at the farmers market.

## **A Big Opportunity Requires Passing a Test (Part 2)**

**(Story words: route, encouraged)**

A bus route would fit in perfectly with Carole's busy life. In rural places, school bus drivers often park their buses right on their own property so that they can start and finish their routes right from home. Talk about a nice commute! Once a week, the drivers take their vehicles into town to the firehouse where they can borrow the equipment to give their buses a deep clean. The benefits that came with the job were generous too.

Carole did not mind the idea of taking the classes required. In fact, the classes sounded quite interesting. But she did not like the idea of having to take exams.

Cynthia and Frank both encouraged Carole to try. First, Carole had a superb driving record. She always drove safely and had never been in an accident. Second, Carole



had already taken a CPR class when she had wanted to volunteer in a summer program for kids.

Carole agreed that passing the First Aid test did not sound challenging. Getting the practice hours of driving done also sounded easy because Cynthia had offered to sit in the passenger seat and be her coach during all the required practice runs. The hard part, Carole thought, might be the written exam. She would have to memorize a lot of facts about how air brakes work and how to inspect parts of a vehicle in order to know that it is safe to drive.

Frank said, “If you want to do the training, I think you should! And certainly there would be no shame in having to retake a test. You will never know if being a bus driver is the right thing for you unless you try.”

Carole thought it over. Her community really needed more bus drivers to get kids safely to school. “Who says an old dog cannot learn a few new tricks?” she told herself. She was prepared to study hard and give it her best shot.

## Visiting the Redwoods

**(Story words: California, Muir, National, special, moisture)**

Bryan lives in Sacramento, California, and every chance he gets he likes to drive a few hours to the coast and hike in the redwoods near San Francisco, at Muir Woods, or at Redwoods National Park. In a redwood grove, Bryan feels he is walking in a fairyland. Even though Bryan is six-feet tall, he feels like he is a tiny sprite when he looks up at the giant trees.

Redwood trees are special because they are both the tallest and the oldest of trees. Old growth redwood groves can be found on the coasts of California and Oregon. Redwoods like the damp soil in the winter when it rains. In the summer when it is dry, the redwoods rely on coastal fog for moisture. They are said to “sip” the fog, as their needles absorb moisture from the air.

The tallest coastal redwood is named Hyperion and stands at 379 feet somewhere in Redwoods National Park. The oldest coastal redwood is thought to be over two thousand years old.

Bryan was amazed and excited when he considered how the land and world had changed during the lifetimes of these giant trees. This prompted him to learn more about redwoods.

While redwoods are very tall, their root systems are shallow. Although their roots do not go deep into the ground, they can travel up to 100 yards away from the tree. Because redwoods live in groves, the roots of a single tree must intertwine with the roots of all the other trees nearby. Those intertwined roots give all the trees in the grove more stability.

When Bryan imagined what the roots looked like under the ground, it gave him a new way of seeing the redwoods above the ground. These giant trees were like a gigantic

family of trees—a gigantic family that has been together for hundreds and hundreds of years!

When driving home to Sacramento, Bryan felt more relaxed and peaceful than he did before. He knew that his latest pilgrimage to see the redwoods would not be his last.

## **The Community Center Faces a Challenge**

**(Story words: board, renovation, insulation, research)**

Anne looked at her balance sheet and sighed. She could not see how the community center could afford all the repairs that were needed.

The furnace was on its last legs. The roof had begun to leak last winter. If this were not enough, the cement walkway was crumbling. In fact, just three weeks ago, an elderly woman coming to play bridge with other seniors stumbled on the front stoop and fell. Thankfully, she had not been badly hurt.

Anne had been the director of the center for ten years and ran the center well on a tight budget. That evening she had a board meeting, and she presented these challenges to the board members. She was glad to share all these concerns and get them off her chest.

One board member, Fran, had a new way of looking at the problem. She said, “Anne, you have done a fantastic job with general maintenance of the center—but these costs are beyond general maintenance. We need to ask the county council for help to renovate the center so that it can continue to serve the community as it always has.”

Other board members agreed with Fran. Malcolm said, “A new roof, with new insulation, and a new furnace will be expensive, but we can show the county how much can be saved in energy costs once we have a renovated space. Before we try to convince the council members, though, we need to do our research.”

Another board member, Felicity, offered to help Malcolm with preparing a budget for renovation and a model of future cost savings.

At the end of the meeting, Anne said, “I have to say that before this meeting I felt quite overwhelmed and even hopeless when considering these challenges, but I can

now see that we can begin to tackle these problems, and I am excited to get started.”

## **A Fledgling (Part 1)**

Ricardo came downstairs to get a snack from the kitchen and saw Sniff barking and snarling in a strange way. Sniff was in front of the sliding glass door that opened onto their raised wood deck. Sniff was frantic to get out. Luckily, Ricardo hesitated before opening the door. Then he saw what Sniff was concentrated on, a large black bird hopping from one flower pot to another.

There was no doubt in Ricardo's mind that if Sniff were to be let out, he would attack the bird. In fact, Ricardo wondered if Sniff had already attacked this bird and injured it in some way. The bird was hopping strangely and seemed to be stuck on the deck. Could it be that Sniff had damaged one of its wings?

Ricardo's mom was already on her way home from work, so Ricardo decided to wait with Sniff in the house.



When Ricardo's mom got home, she called the county wildlife rescue center and was thrilled when someone answered her call. She put the phone on speaker so that both she and Ricardo could listen.

The man at the rescue center, Roger, did not think the bird was hurt. "He's hopping around on the deck in a quirky way? How big is this bird?"

Matt's mom replied, "Well, it looks big to me...maybe it's a crow?"

The man at the rescue center said, "I will come and check it out, but I think you just have a fledgling."

Ricardo said, "What is a fledgling?"

"A fledgling is a baby bird who can't fly yet. His mother kicked him out of the nest, and he is trying to fly, but his wings are not strong enough. If this a fledgling, he will be gone in a week."

## **A Fledgling (Part 2)**

**(Story word: watching, spread, figure)**

Ricardo and his mom were both grateful that Roger was willing to check the bird out. Roger agreed that it was possible that Sniff had injured the bird.

When Roger arrived, he stood at the sliding door and observed the bird. “Yep, I think it’s a fledgling.” He noticed that the fledgling would look up at the sky and open its beak. “See how he’s opening his beak, just like a big baby, looking for his mama?” He put on thick gloves and a large hat.

“It’s very likely that the mother bird is nearby watching him, so I am going to examine him quickly before Mama gets upset with me.”

Roger darted onto the deck, glanced up at the sky, picked up the baby bird, and felt his wings. The bird allowed

Roger to feel his wings and spread them out, but when Roger put him down, he still flopped around the deck in a clumsy way.

Roger raced back into the kitchen. Ricardo was amazed by how confident Roger had been when handling the bird's wings—he must have done it many times before. Roger said, “His wings are fine; he's just stuck here while he is trying to figure out how to fly.”

Roger advised Ricardo and his mom to stay out of the backyard until they saw that the fledgling had gone. He predicted that they would not have to wait very long.

Ricardo and his mom had to take turns walking Sniff on the leash for the next few days, but it was fun hosting a fledgling on the deck.

## **Children's Day in Japan**

### **(Story words: ancient)**

In social studies, Zeke's class was doing a unit on holidays celebrated in other countries. Zeke's group was focusing on Children's Day in Japan which is celebrated on May 5.

Children's Day began as an ancient holiday called Boys' Day. It was associated with the planting season for rice, a very important crop, and the holiday was part of Golden Week. In the old days, there was a separate holiday to celebrate girls.

Families would display windsocks for fathers and sons in the family. The windsocks were brightly decorated carp. Carp are determined swimmers who swim upstream. In a myth, a carp swam up to Dragon's Gate and was reincarnated as a dragon. Thus, the carp represents the hope for children having perseverance and success.

In 1948, the government of Japan reintroduced the holiday and named it Children's Day, a day to respect children's personalities and celebrate their happiness. They decided that it was unifying to celebrate all children and family members on the same day. Since then, people display windsocks for each member of the family, including mothers and daughters.

Children's Day is a fun chance for children to shine as stars in the family. Music, theater, or dance recitals may be planned for children to perform in. Also, there may be Olympic-style games for children to compete in. People eat festive treats, such as sticky rice buns filled with red bean jam.

Before studying Children's Day, Zeke had thought it was just a day when children got gifts or candy. It was fun to learn that there is a lot more to it than that.

## **Gram Teaches Beth to Knit**

**(Story word: learn, gorgeous, bargain, stitches)**

For a long time, Beth begged Gram to teach her to knit. She loved to sit at night by Gram's chair and listen to her needles clicking away. Gram made hand-knit gifts that were gorgeous. But when she asked Gram to teach her to knit, Gram always had an excuse. Beth concluded that Gram thought Beth was unable to learn to knit.

At lunch Beth said, "Gram, I know you think I'm not old enough to learn to knit, but I'm in sixth grade! Couldn't we at least try it one time?" This time, Gram could not resist Beth's request.

Gram said, "If you want to knit and will not get frustrated when mistakes happen, and in the beginning they will happen a lot, I can try to teach you. But you must understand that it will take some time." Beth wanted to get

started right away, but Gram said that they needed to make a trip to the knitting shop.

At the shop, Gram bought some huge plastic needles. They reminded Beth of the fat pencils she had used in kindergarten. Then Gram selected a big ball of yarn from the bargain box. She didn't even ask if Beth liked the color. Beth started to look at the beautiful projects displayed in the shop, even though she knew it would be a long time before she was ready to take them on.

Gram explained to the owner of the store, "My granddaughter wants to learn to knit, so we are getting just a few things to learn some stitches."

"That's wonderful," the owner said. She turned to Beth and added, "And how lucky you are to have a grandmother who can teach you to knit." Beth looked at Gram's face—Gram looked so happy and proud.

## **The Polio Vaccine**

**(Story words: learning, discovery)**

Janet had an interesting project to complete for her seventh-grade science class. Class members were allowed to choose the scientist that most interested them and create a slideshow about that person.

Janet was interested in learning more about vaccines, a subject she had heard discussed so often during the year. She came across the name “Jonas Salk” who was the leading scientist in the discovery of the polio vaccine.

There was a time when the poliovirus provoked fear in everyone. Before the vaccine was created in the 1950s, there were more than 15,000 cases of polio per year. The virus could infect a person’s spinal cord and result in lifelong paralysis. Parents were afraid to let their children play outside or go to swimming pools, especially in the summertime when it seemed like cases were peaking.



Jonas Salk was the leading inventor of a vaccine that used inactivated poliovirus. In 1955, he announced that his vaccine was safe and successful. People were injected with inactivated poliovirus, which prompted their bodies to create antibodies to fight the virus. Producing those antibodies protected them from getting really sick from live poliovirus out in the world.

Other vaccines, such as the smallpox vaccine and the flu vaccine, are based on a similar concept. A small bit of a virus is put in people's bodies so that their bodies will produce antibodies to fight it.

Jonas Salk never tried to patent the vaccine or profit from it. He felt that the vaccine was his gift to the children of the world, and he wanted children (and people) to be vaccinated as quickly as possible. By 1959, ninety countries were vaccinating people against the poliovirus, and parents in many places no longer feared that their children would get the polio disease.

Salk became a celebrity and was treated as a hero for the rest of his life. When Janet began to create her slideshow, she decided that Salk was lucky to be such a successful scientist. She even felt inspired to continue studying science so that she could someday invent something as necessary and wonderful as the polio vaccine.