

## **Open-and-Closed Stories**

Something Was Up With Jake (Part 1) p. 2

Something Was Up With Jake (Part 2) p. 4

The Dolphin Show p. 6

JoJo Helps Out p. 9

Mrs. Robinson Needs a Babysitter p. 11

Visiting the Reptile House p.14

Facts About Snakes p. 16

A Writing Task p.18

The Debate Club Hosts Their First Debate (Part 1) p. 20

The Debate Club Hosts Their First Debate (Part 2) p. 22

The Best Commute p. 24

Facts About Ponds and Lakes p. 26

Filing Papers p. 28

Improv Games p. 31

## **Something Was Up With Jake (Part 1)**

**(Story words: board, weeks, teacher)**

Something had been nagging at Ms. Liz all day. Ms. Liz was the kind of teacher who knew when there was a problem or something up with one of her students. In this case, she kept thinking about Jake.

Jake used to come to math class with a smile. When Ms. Liz put a problem on the board, she could depend on Jake to have his hand up wanting to discuss it.

But in these last weeks, this was not happening. She did not think Jake was chatting. He was quiet in class. But, was Jake getting distracted by one of the boys sitting next to him?

The next day in class, Ms. Liz gave frequent looks to where Jake was sitting. Then she saw something. Jake

kept squinting at the board! Then, he was taking frequent looks at what the boy next to him was writing. He wasn't distracted; he could not see well.

Ms. Liz called Jake's mom to tell her what she had detected. Ms. Liz and Jake's mom suspected that there was something wrong with Jake's eyes and that Jake could need glasses.

## **Something Was Up With Jake (Part 2)**

**(Story words: school, baseball, cool)**

Jake's mom made a date to take Jake to see Dr. Nelson. Jake was not wild about having to get an eye exam, but when he met Dr. Nelson he felt more enthused.

Dr. Nelson was a relaxed man who liked kids and telling jokes. The jokes were kind of childish, but Jake liked the fact that Dr. Nelson took the time to tell them and to smile and chat before beginning the exam.

Dr. Nelson told Jake that he himself had gotten glasses when he was in fifth grade and that glasses had made school much more fun for him. Dr. Nelson told him there were thick plastic glasses that would be safe to use for baseball.

Now Jake was getting more enthused. He had been in a big batting slump. What if this was why!

Dr. Nelson gave Jake the exam and told him that in fact Jake did require glasses to help his eyes see their best. After the exam, Dr. Nelson let Jake look through the microscope that the craftsmen used to grind the lenses. Most of the lenses had to be shaped to fit the frames that the people chose.

When Jake came to math class in his new glasses, he gave Ms. Liz a small smile. Jake hoped his pals would not think that he looked dumb in his glasses. But many classmates complimented his metal frames. They said he looked cool and a bit wise too.

## The Dolphin Show

**(Story words: amazing, show, aquarium, front, feet)**

Jack had a fantastic trip with his dad to the aquarium.

They spent the day looking at all the amazing fish. But the most thrilling event of the day was the dolphin show.

Jack and his dad got tickets and then traveled down a long ramp. Jack saw the biggest tank he had ever seen. The benches up front were filled, so Jack and his dad had to find a spot in the back.

A woman and man spoke into microphones and told the people many facts about dolphins.

Dolphins live in pods. The dolphins in the pod have strong bonds. A dolphin will care for a sick or an old dolphin in its pod. Dolphins can dive down more than 1,000 feet into the water when in the wild.

Then it was time to see the dolphins swim, flip, and do tricks. Jack was amazed. The man or woman would make just a small “click” and the dolphins would spring out of the tank, often at the exact same time!

The man and the woman had buckets of small fish. They would toss the dolphins handfuls of fish when the dolphins jumped out of the water.

One time, all the dolphins jumped out of the water at the same moment and landed on their backs with a big splash. The people sitting in the front all got wet. Jack hoped that next time he came to the dolphin show he could sit as close as they were to the tank.

The dolphins were fantastic. They could fling a ring with their noses and pass it to a dolphin friend. Jack looked at all the people gazing at the dolphins. They were all smiling and looking at the dolphins with wide eyes. It could be,

Jack was thinking, that people cannot see a dolphin show without being amazed.



## JoJo Helps Out

**(Story word: chairs, play)**

The people on the block had a lot to do to prepare for the block picnic. In June, the moms and dads on the block picked a day for a fun outside event for all the kids.

They would set up a stand for drinks and cups. They would put out utensils and napkins. At the last moment, they would bring out the snacks and sandwiches, so that they would stay fresh.

They would put old blankets and quilts on the grass for the kids to sit on. They would move picnic benches and canvas chairs into the shade, so the old people could sit.

JoJo saw the moms and dads discussing their plans and bringing stuff from their houses. “What can I do to help?” she asked.

Mrs. Yang smiled. “Thanks, JoJo for asking. It would be such a big help if you could play with the kids and distract them while we get more things set up.”

For just a second, JoJo felt intimidated by this task.

“I can do that!” JoJo said. She ran into her house and grabbed a big plastic bin. She grabbed things she could use to make games. She took what looked fun—jump ropes, dolls, trucks. Then she saw a basket of plastic eggs on the shelf that had been used for an egg hunt in the spring. “A hunt will be the best,” she said to herself. She was confident now.

She saw some post-it notes and a pen on her mom’s desk. She grabbed them too. She could put fun notes in the eggs. She went outside and yelled, “Come with me! I have the most fun things for us to do before the picnic!”

## **Mrs. Robinson Needs a Babysitter**

**(Story words: babysitter, weekends, real)**

Mrs. Robinson has a job selling real estate. On the weekends, she often has to spend a few hours taking her clients to look at a house or condo that is up for sale.

She had called on many babysitters before. It was distressing that her son Mike had not liked any of them. When she spoke to Mike about having to go out with a client, he always looked glum.

This Sunday she called Beth, a student who lived down the block. Beth was glad to come over.

After Mrs. Robinson left, Beth said, "Mike, what do you have to get done today? And, then, what should we do with the time we have left over?"

Mike was shocked. His other babysitters had let him gaze at the tv while they looked at their phones. They had not asked if he had stuff he had to do.

Mike said, "Well, I have some math problems which I should finish."

Beth said, "Good, why not get those done?"

Mike did not like doing math. But, the problems were not difficult. He did not ask Beth for help, but it felt good to have her there.

When he was done, Beth said, "Now, what would be fun to do?"

Mike could not think of anything at the moment. Beth said, "Want to ride bikes?"

When Mrs. Robinson came home, she saw that Mike had had a good time. After Beth left, Mike asked, “Can we have Beth come again?”

Mrs. Robinson smiled and responded, “You bet!”

## Visiting the Reptile House

**(Story words: zoo, face, ears)**

When Jen and Zack go to the zoo, Zack always wants to go into the Reptile House. Zack is thrilled to spend a lot of time gazing at all the snakes. When Jen sees a snake, even behind glass, a chill runs down her spine. She sometimes says that she is tired and sits on a bench by the Reptile House while Zack and Mom go in.

This time, she went in with them. A woman was discussing a topic that was just made for someone like Jen. It was, “Why Do Humans Dislike Snakes?”

The woman said that humans like the look of mammals because we are mammals. When we humans look at mammals we are reminded of ourselves. She demonstrated this fact with photos of apes, dogs, lions, elephants, and skunks. The woman noted that all of these mammals have eyelids, noses, and ears. An elephant’s

ears and trunk are big compared to our ears and noses, but we relate to them anyway. She held up a photo of a lion cub and said, “Do you respond to this cub’s cute, infant face?” Jen gazed at the small cub and knew that she did.

The woman added, “But the face of a snake has no ears and no nose. Many people find this disgusting or chilling. Plus, the eyes of a snake are not like our eyes. Mammals have eyelids that can blink or close, but snakes have lidless eyes that are always open.”

The woman concluded: “I love snakes and reptiles, but many people look at them and just think, ‘Yuck!’”

Jen could relate to that! She liked knowing more about how people respond to faces of mammals and snakes. She even felt a bit more relaxed being in the Reptile House.

## Facts About Snakes

**(Story words: cold-blooded, warm, body, feet, squeeze, jaws)**

Snakes are reptiles. Most snakes live in tropical climates where sun is plentiful. Snakes are cold-blooded and use the sun to warm themselves.

Snakes do not have legs, but they do have lots of bones. Humans have a total of 206 bones, but snakes have more than 400 bones. A human spine has 33 bones, but the spine of the snake has more than 200 bones. While humans use their legs to travel, a snake can move fast by flexing its whole body.

When snakes get too big for their skin, they just shed it. They will rub up against a rock or a branch, and the old skin will come off like an old sock. The fresh skin will shine and look fantastic. Many snakes have skins that are striped. The stripes help snakes to hide and blend in.



Snakes come in all sizes. There are snakes that are only two inches long, and then there are snakes that are 38 feet long.

Snakes have two methods of hunting. Some snakes constrict an animal. The snake will wrap its body around the animal and squeeze. Some snakes bite with fangs. And some snakes have fangs that inject venom into the animal they bite.

A snake always consumes an animal whole. The jaws of a snake are constructed to open wide. A small snake will consume insects and eggs. A big snake can polish off frogs, chickens, rodents, and rabbits.

Most people think that snakes are pests and would want to get rid of them if they saw them by their home. But some people have snakes for pets.

## A Writing Task

**(Story words: birthday, grandma, paper)**

Nina woke up and felt inspired. This was a good thing because she had a big task before her. She needed to write a thank-you note to Gram.

Gram was the kind of grandma who always sent birthday gifts, and she liked getting a note about the gift. Gram took so much pride in her gifts that Nina would not want to let her down!

On her birthday, Nina had been thrilled to unwrap the gift and see the two graphic novels Gram had sent her. Gram must have consulted Nina's mom because they were the exact novels that Nina had been wanting to get.

The novels were about the Vixenden School and a gang of students, who were foxes, who always got into complicated problems. The novels were fantastical and

whimsical but not too childish. They were full of wit and fun.

Nina got some scrap paper and made a list of what she wanted to communicate. One thing she would tell Gram was how much she liked having a graphic novel to put in her backpack. It was splendid to have a novel to escape into for her long bus rides to and from school.

Before long, Nina had a complete list of what she wanted to write. Then she wrote her final note while things were fresh in her mind. Nina gazed at her finished note and smiled. She knew Gram was going to like it a lot.

## **The Debate Club Hosts Their First Debate (Part 1)**

**(Story words: first, Elementary, school, food)**

Ms. Lopez ran a debate club open to all students in the fifth grade at Clifton Elementary. They met at lunch time. Today, Ms. Lopez was thrilled to tell the students that a school in the district had just created a debate club too and wanted to debate with them!

The topic of the debate had been chosen. It was, “Should snacks and junk food be sold in schools?” Kids began discussing the subject. Some students expressed their hope that they would get the “pro” side.

Ms. Lopez told them that she would not find out if they were on the “pro” or “con” side until just days before the debate. Thus, the best thing to do was to prepare by finding all the facts about this subject.

Ms. Lopez said, “Do not fret. If we are on the ‘pro’ side, we will find lots of facts that will help us to defend the idea of

schools selling snacks. And, if we end up on the 'con' side, we will find lots of facts to make the case that schools should be prohibited from selling snacks. Debate topics are chosen because you can make a good case for the 'pro' or 'con' side.”

Ms. Lopez finished, “We will host the first debate at our school, and then we will be invited to go to their school for a second debate.”

The students had wide eyes. This felt like a big event.

## **The Debate Club Hosts Their First Debate (Part 2)**

### **(Story words: understanding, judges)**

Ms. Lopez shared some tips with the club. “Our time is limited. So you will want to make a good outline with the best facts at the top.”

“Then, when our opponents are making their case, you must listen and take notes. Even when you think you have grasped what our opponents have said, taking notes will help you focus. Writing things down will give you a more exact understanding of their side and will help you plan your best response to refute them.”

Ms. Lopez emphasized that the judges expect clubs to demonstrate politeness. “If someone on the other side messes up and makes a big mistake, you should be polite and kind when you respond. Mocking an opponent does not reflect well on anyone.”

There was lots of nodding. The kids knew that this was going to be a fun event.

Ms. Lopez concluded, “Because we are hosting the debate, I will get some drinks from the school, and the club can bring in some snacks to share.”

The kids were smiling and nodding again. But then Allison asked, “Can we bring in junk food? Even if the other school is on the ‘con’ side?”

Ms. Lopez said, “I like how you are thinking, Allison. But I do not think they will mind. And, besides, we will not be selling the snacks.”

## **The Best Commute**

**(Story words: work, drivers, car, weather)**

Some people dislike their commute to work. They get frustrated by the traffic and sometimes by drivers who do unsafe or rude things. Some people also resent how much time they spend commuting from home to work.

Scott loves his commute. Sometimes it is the best time of his day. Scott and his wife Ann share one car. Ann drives to work. Scott sometimes rides the metro, but most often he rides his bike to work.

He likes the fact that he and Ann save cash by having just one car and using less gas.

Scott also prizes being fit, and he knows that riding his bike helps with his fitness. When he does not have time to run or work out, he is still being active when riding his bike.



Scott likes being on a bike. It reminds him of fun times he had as a kid. He does some of his best thinking about problems he is working to solve when he is on his bike.

If it is too wet or cold to ride his bike, Scott will take the metro or ride the bus. But if it is just a bit wet, Scott has a plastic poncho that prevents him from getting too damp.

One day, Scott did not check the weather before setting out. He got drenched, and had to go back home. That was no fun, and it made him late for a big day. After this happened, Scott was careful to check the weather app on his phone before getting on his bike.

Some of his friends like driving to work. They like listening to music or podcasts and being in a car. But when friends say they dislike their commute, Scott advises them that they might like a bike commute just like he does.

## **Facts About Ponds and Lakes**

**(Story words: need, grow, bigger, marsh)**

People sometimes ask, “Why do we call a pond a pond and a lake a lake?” Both ponds and lakes are located in spots where the land is depressed, and both ponds and lakes are full of water. But ponds and lakes are not the same.

One thing that makes ponds unlike lakes is the plant life that lives in them. Plants can live on the bottom of a pond. This is because the bottom of the pond is still close to the sun, and thus the plants can get the sunshine they need to grow. Sometimes plants reside on the top of the pond; this plant life is called moss or pond scum.

Lakes have more depth than ponds. Down at the bottom of the lake, there is not much sunshine to help plants grow. Also, the water at the bottom of the lake can be quite cold.

When more and more plants begin to grow in a pond, the pond becomes less liquid and more solid. As time passes, the pond can even become a marsh or a grassland.

One thing that is the same about ponds and lakes is that fish and frogs like to reside in or by them.

## Filing Papers

**(Story words: papers, school, first, teachers)**

Luis came into the kitchen. There were stacks of papers and documents on the floor. His mom was holding some papers. Luis said, “What are you doing?”

Mom said, “I am filing papers.”

Luis said, “All of them? Why?”

“No, thank goodness,” said Mom. “Most of this stuff can be tossed or shredded. But some things will get saved in my files in case we want to consult them again. This big stack on the floor is my toss pile.”

Luis said, “How do you know what to file?”

“Well, I save our bank statements and other things. Would you like to see my files?” Mom opened the filing cabinet

under her desk. Bill could see a lot of files with labels. A thin file said “Leo,” the name of their cat. In that file were papers from the vet with the dates of Leo’s shots. A thick file said “dentist,” and he could see some bills from their trips to the dentist.

The thickest file said “Randolph” which was the name of Luis’s school. “Can I look at my old grades?” Luis asked.

“You bet,” said Mom and grabbed the file.

Luis opened the file and saw what Mr. Sanchez had written about him in the first grade. “Luis impresses me with his kindness to his classmates. Luis likes to joke and have fun but is mindful of how a joke will affect them.”

Then Luis began looking at more comments teachers had made which was kind of fun.

Mom said, “Filing papers is a dull job, but when stacks of papers begin to pile up, I like to spend an hour or so filing,

so the job does not become too big. Plus, when I can find things that I filed away a long time ago, I impress myself with my filing skills.”

## Improv Games

**(Story words: actor, minute, saying, say)**

Students in Mr. Davis's sixth grade English class liked the fact that on Fridays the class often had time for improv games. Mr. Davis knew a lot about acting from his past life as an actor.

Mr. Davis had a good method for creating skits. Before students began, he reminded the class of the five things a good skit should establish. The five things were:

1. Who are the people?
2. How do the people relate or get along?
3. What problem do they have?
4. How can that problem become more extreme?
5. How can the people resolve their problem to end the skit?

On his desk Mr. Davis kept a box for improv prompts. Students put in notes with fun proposals.

Rachel wrote: “Two students are taking a make-up quiz. One student is popping gum and tapping a pen on the desk.”

Lucas wrote: “Two people are checking into a hotel. Their bags look the same and get mixed up, which is a problem because a cat is hidden in one of the bags.”

Mr. Davis told his students that in improv games there was only one rule that could not be broken: “There is no saying ‘no’ in improv, and no stopping until time is up.”

In his improv games, two students take the floor for one full minute. If they get stuck and cannot think of what to say or do, Mr. Davis would begin yelling, “Move! Do something! Don’t stop!”