

Informative Reading Work Sample Assessment

Middle School – For Classroom Use

Instructions

Read the following article carefully and **make notes in the margin** as you read.

Your notes may include:

- Comments that show that you **understand** the article. (A summary or statement of the main idea of important sections may serve this purpose)
- Questions you have that show what you are **wondering** as you read.
- Notes that differentiate between **fact** and **opinion**.
- Observations about how the **writer's strategies** (organization, word choice, perspective, support) and choices affect the article.

Margin notes are optional, but they may add to your score for this assessment.

Student _____

Teacher _____ Class Period _____

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Kevin Krajick, National Geographic Magazine, 2003

Sometimes I imagine early America as a sort of lost paradise: a place of boundless forest and riverscape, where farms carved from the wild had room for both wolf and lamb, and men lived in peace with nature—and each other. Things may never have been that good. Yet I've found an echo of my peaceable kingdom in a small piece of Portland, Oregon. It starts on a steep ridge crowned with the country's biggest, wildest urban forest; cascades down hillsides of storybook houses and gardens; then hits the Willamette River waterfront, where men and women still sweat the big stuff, wrestling masses of steel, lumber, and grain. It's all within a ten-minute walk, just off center city.

This rich urban ecosystem happened partly by accident. When William Clark (of Lewis and Clark) canoed by in 1806, old-growth trees were plentiful, but within a few years of Portland's start in 1845 so many were gone the place was nicknamed Stumptown. On the heights, up Balch Creek Canyon, some old growth escaped—and when developers subdivided nearby denuded slopes in the early 1900s, hoping to build houses, landslides ruined their plans. Oregon's mild, rainy climate did the rest, returning hills to woods. Soon Portland cultivated a new nickname—City of Roses. Today Forest Park, with more than 5,000 acres of trees, 112 species of birds, and 62 species of mammals, dominates zip code 97210.

Outdoor recreation is to Portland as horses are to cowboys; thousands hike, bike, and jog in the park. That includes 80-year-old Jim Morris, whom I met one morning on a five-mile hike with other seniors, loping along like 30-year-olds. "The availability of nature is what makes Portlanders so healthy," said Morris, a Bronx native. "It makes the city *livable*."

Notes on my thoughts, reactions, and questions as I read:

With my guide Sam Wilson, a skinny 15-year-old, I mountain-biked a winding dirt road through woods that occasionally opened to foggy vistas of riverside oil depots, docks, and rail yards far below. Distant ship horns and the bangs of coupling freight trains floated up, providing pleasing counterpoints to birdsongs. Sam and friends have an obstacle course of planks and logs they call Neverland deep in the woods. Pulling up shirt and pants, he showed scars, scrapes, and his second set of stitches in two weeks, running under his chin like the goatee he is too young to grow.

Within a metro area grown to almost two million people, the park shows scars too. One afternoon after a cool rain I hiked up Balch Creek Canyon with park manager Fred Nilsen. Wet fir and dirt smell wafted up; autumn maple leaves cascaded down. Nilsen pointed out the country's tallest urban tree: a 241-foot Douglas fir. But he says few new conifers are sprouting, possibly from too much trampling. We reached a stone ruin, a 1930s rest room now roofless and mossy, known as the Witches' House. In a dark alcove something stirred—three homeless teens, Yoshi, Chickie, and Gremlin. "Got a cigarette?" asked Gremlin. The homeless haunt 97210; compassionate Portland provides food and showers at community centers. Nilsen is too nice to throw the kids out. "Besides," he said, "I got weeds to pull." He meant the park's main threat: invasive exotic ornamentals, especially English ivy, a glossy creeper that strangles native plants and trees. The No Ivy League, a citywide group, is dedicated to the proposition that ivy is, as Sandy Diedrich, the director, puts it, "the cockroach of the plant world, a primeval, cunning foe straight from the heart of darkness." Every Saturday teams claw back mats of it. They've liberated more than 25,000 trees—just a start.

Some ivy comes from Willamette Heights, a residential isle of 250 houses cradled on three sides by park, reached on the fourth via the Thurman Street Bridge across Balch Creek. Along winding lanes and ravine edges, early gentry affixed houses to fit the topography: little Victorians and bungalows enclosed by profuse gardens. Willamette is now a place of long memory, where homes are known by the names of previous owners, and where if anyone moves, it's often to a house nearby. Writer Ursula K. Le Guin has lived for 43 years in the same modest house where she raised three children. In her tribute to the neighborhood, *Blue Moon Over Thurman Street*, she wrote: "A street that ends in a forest—there is a magic there."

In the heights, generations of children have grown up exploring the woods, and a rototiller is thought a fine Mother's Day present. Chet Orloff's backyard Pinot Noir vineyard is tucked away so nicely, he could work it in the nude. When his father died, the family used his ashes to help plant cedars in the park. A while back Phyllis Stevenson opened her back door to see Mac, her cat, being carried off by a coyote—common here and accepted as part of the big picture. The most telling landmark: a small granite fountain at Thurman and 31st, built in 1917, paid for in part by kids who pitied the workhorses that hauled groceries up. It has a bubbling spigot for people, a trough for the horses, and near the bottom, a drinking spot for dogs and raccoons.

At the hills' feet on the "flats" are the stores, mostly small, all pedestrian friendly. Early developers made blocks with diminutive 200-foot sides in order to sell more corner lots, and thus unwittingly created an intimate, village-like atmosphere.

Motorists make eye contact and *smile*. Restaurants and cafés line the streets. Frequent drizzle makes Portland quintessential double-latte country; Caffè Fresco will even scramble your eggs with espresso-machine steam. Such places employ a species called *baristas*—enthusiastic, body-pierced youth who need jobs when not out hiking or snowboarding.

Beyond this lies the riverfront industrial district. One afternoon down there I glimpsed a ragged, long-haired figure with a mountain bike, digging copper piping from a trash bin. He was Dave Reinhardt, and he lived under a bridge by the river. At a friendly scrap dealer he got \$13.69 for his day's load. "Portland is great," said Dave. "The world is screwed up."

On my last morning I escaped back to Forest Park. A few hundred yards above Aspen Avenue, English ivy gave way to native Oregon grape, sword fern, towering Douglas fir, mossy-trunked vine maple. It was quiet. Rain pattered briefly. Sunbeams appeared. A spider web brushed my head. Songbirds flitted branch to branch. Then: a great, distant ship's horn, like a one-note aria. Through the trees somewhere below, children laughed. Maybe it *was* once this good.

Demonstrate Understanding

1. If you were trying to summarize this article for someone who had not read it, what would you say?

Demonstrate Understanding

2. A magazine article is supposed to report information factually, but the author can sway readers' opinions by the way they write. What does Kevin Krajick think about Forest Park? How do you know? Give specific examples from the article.

Develop an Interpretation

3. The author references and describes many people who use, live or have been a part of Forest Park past or present. Describe the person you found the most interesting, explain why, and give specific examples from the article.

Develop an Interpretation

4. What makes Forest Park unique? Use examples from the article to support your answer.

Analyze Text

5. The author includes quotes from several different people. Choose two quotes and explain how they help you understand the article.

Quote from article	How this helped me

Analyze Text

6. Using the chart below, give two examples of figurative language (simile, metaphor, or personification) from the article and explain how each example helps make the writing more effective.

Check the type of figurative language	Sentence from article	How it makes the writing effective
<input type="checkbox"/> Simile <input type="checkbox"/> Metaphor <input type="checkbox"/> Personification		
<input type="checkbox"/> Simile <input type="checkbox"/> Metaphor <input type="checkbox"/> Personification		