

Third Grade
MSTEP Homework Packet # 4

Sent home on _____

Return by _____

Student's Name

Name _____ Date _____

Reading and
Analyzing Text

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Read the story “The Talking Yam: An African Folktale” before answering Numbers 1 through 6.



An African Folktale

retold by Marilyn Helmer
illustrated by Josée Masse

One day, a farmer decided to dig up some yams to sell at the marketplace. As he worked, he sang:

Sweet, sweet yam, so fine,

Sweet, sweet yam, all mine!

He had just pulled the first yam from the earth when it called out to him. “All yours? What are you talking about? Where were you when it was time to weed me and water me?”

The farmer was so scared that he jumped to his feet and raced off down the road. By the river, he passed a fisherman with a large fish in his net.

“Why are you running so hard on such a hot day?” asked the fisherman.

“My yam talked to me!” said the frightened farmer.

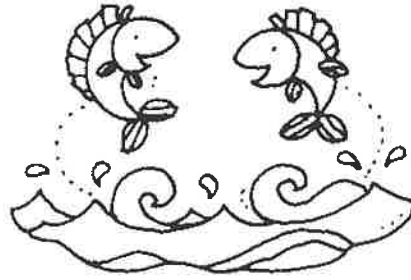
The fisherman rolled his eyes. “I’ve never heard of anything so ridiculous,” he said.

“I agree,” said the fish. “Everyone knows that yams can’t talk.”

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The fisherman was so surprised that he threw the fish back into the river. Then he scrambled to his feet and ran on down the road, right on the farmer's heels.



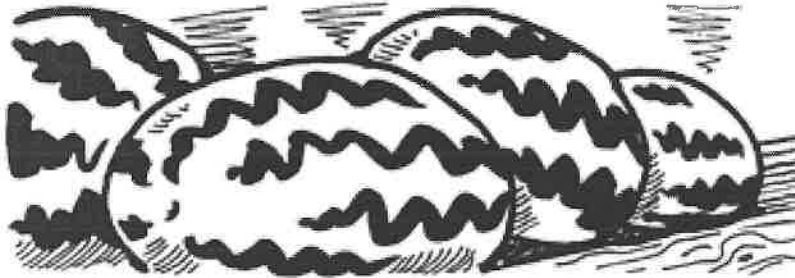
As the farmer and the fisherman rounded a bend, they came upon a girl carrying a large melon.

"Why are you running so fast on such a hot day?" asked the girl.

"My yam talked to me!" exclaimed the farmer.

"My fish spoke, too!" said the fisherman.

The girl laughed so hard she almost dropped her melon. "I've never heard of anything so ridiculous!" she said.



"I agree," said the melon. "Everyone knows that yams can't talk."

The girl was so terrified that she actually *did* drop the melon. Then she ran away with the farmer and the fisherman as fast as her legs could carry her.

Up hill and down, they ran until they came to the King's hut.

The farmer stopped to catch his breath. "We must tell the King what is going on," he said.

"Yes," said the fisherman, puffing and panting. "The King is a wise man."

"He will know exactly what to do," said the girl.

The three rushed into the King's hut.

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“My yam talked to me!” said the farmer.

The King gave the farmer a stern look. “Impossible,” he said. “You have been working too long in the hot sun.”

“My fish talked to me, too!” said the fisherman.

The King frowned. “Nonsense!” he exclaimed. “Your ears are playing tricks on you.”

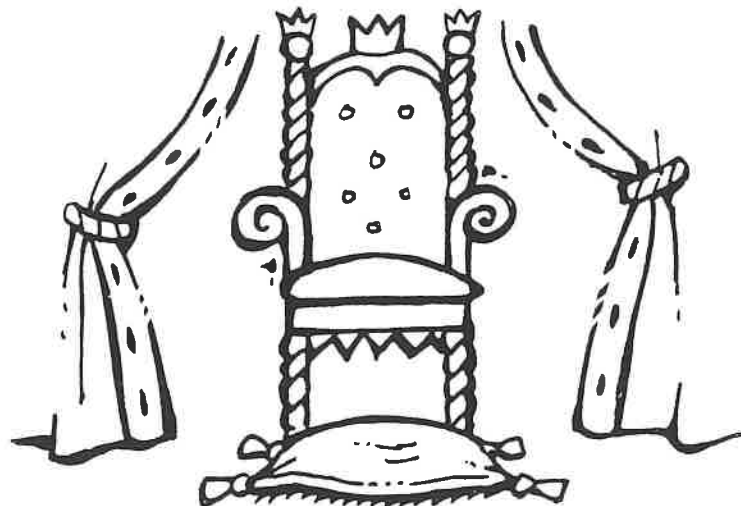
“And my melon talked to me!” the girl finally added.

The King became very angry. “Foolish tales like that could frighten the entire village,” he roared. “Leave my hut immediately before I punish all of you severely!”

The farmer, the fisherman, and the girl wasted no time in leaving the king’s hut. Foolish or not, they did not want to be punished.

The King sat back in his royal chair. He shook his head. “Thank goodness they are gone,” he muttered to himself. “A talking yam indeed. I’ve never heard of anything so ridiculous.”

“I agree,” said his chair. “Everyone knows that yams can’t talk!”



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**Now answer Numbers 1 through 6. Base your answers on the story
“The Talking Yam: An African Folktale.”**

- 1** Which word BEST describes the fisherman when the farmer tells him about the yam?

(A) amused
(B) happy
(C) sad
(D) scared

- 2** Read this sentence from the story.

**Then he scrambled to his feet and ran on down the road,
right on the farmer’s heels.**

What does the phrase *right on the farmer’s heels* mean in the sentence above?

(F) following the farmer very closely
(G) moving past the farmer at a fast speed
(H) attempting to trip the farmer, causing him to fall
(I) keeping a great distance between himself and the farmer

- 3** What do the farmer, the fisherman, and the girl do about the talking objects?

(A) They go to see the king.
(B) They dive into the river.
(C) They try to figure out why.
(D) They decide that it is not true.

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- 4 Read this sentence from the story.

The King gave the farmer a stern look.

What does the word *stern* mean in the sentence above?

- Ⓕ beam
 - Ⓖ pleased
 - Ⓗ serious
 - Ⓘ stare
- 5 How are the farmer, the fisherman, and the girl all ALIKE?
- Ⓐ They run when objects talk.
 - Ⓑ They are happy to see the king.
 - Ⓒ They do not believe that yams talk.
 - Ⓓ They think talking yams are funny.
- 6 What happens LAST in the story?
- Ⓕ The girl drops her melon.
 - Ⓖ The king's chair talks to him.
 - Ⓗ The farmer runs down the road.
 - Ⓘ The fisherman throws the fish in the water.

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Reading Complex Text

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Read the article “Dialing into the Future.” As you read, stop and answer each question. Use evidence from the article to support your answers.

Dialing into the Future

Let’s say a visitor from the past drops in on you today. She arrives straight from the year 1984. She lands on a busy street in the town where you live. It is a Saturday, and people are out enjoying their weekend. She strolls down the street, amazed. There are so many strange and unfamiliar things!

Here is something this time traveler has never seen before. Many people are holding little rectangles up to their ears. Even stranger, they’re talking into them.

“What on earth are they doing?” she asks. “Who or what are they talking to?”

You happen to be walking by so you try to explain. First, you tell her that they are not talking into little rectangles. They are talking on their cell phones, a kind of telephone.

1 Why does the author use the word *you* in the article?

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Now, a telephone is a device this time traveler knows well. In 1984 telephones had been around for 108 years. They were invented in 1876 by Alexander Graham Bell. Back then, they hardly looked the way they do now.

Much larger and heavier than the cell phones of today, telephones would either sit on a flat surface or attach to the wall. To make a call, you picked up the receiver, which was usually attached to a base by a stretchy, coiled cord. Phone numbers were dialed by putting your finger in the hole of a wheel and spinning it. Later, numbered buttons, like those on a cell phone, replaced the wheel.



Talking to people is only one of the things that you can do on a cell phone. On some cell phones, you can send and receive written messages, listen to music, and watch movies. You can also read books, play games, and use maps. The list gets longer every day.

As you explain all that you know, the time traveler's eyes seem about to pop. She is so surprised that you can't help but continue.

You tell her that the cell phone combines different kinds of technology that she already knows about. Much of it existed in 1984. Some of it comes from a hundred years before.

One of these technologies is the radio. A cell phone is really a kind of radio. Nikolai Tesla invented the radio in the 1880s, not long after the invention of the telephone.

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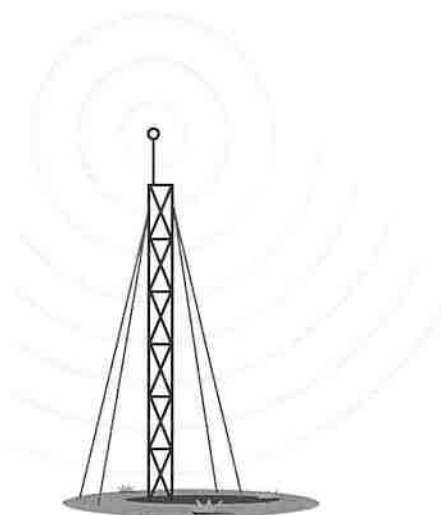
2 Based on the article, how are telephones DIFFERENT from cell phones?

Radios work by sending invisible waves through the air. These waves travel 186,000 miles every second, the same speed as light. They can carry sounds, images, and other information from one cell phone to another.

Radio waves are used in many devices that we use often. They are used in radios and televisions. They are also used in microwave ovens, garage-door openers, and walkie-talkies.

In order to make a call to someone else in the world, your cell phone needs to send a message to the nearest cell phone tower. This message is sent to the tower using radio waves. Then the tower, or another tower like it, sends the message to the other person's phone. This last step is also done with radio waves.

Cell phone towers are spread out around the country. They pick up the waves that are closest to them. The area in which each tower operates is called a cell.



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- 3** Explain how radio waves allow cell phones to make calls.

Cell phones are a lot more complicated than radios, you begin telling your time-traveling friend. The tiny computers inside cell phones, for example, once took up a whole room. But you decide that for now, this is enough for the time traveler to know.

That's when you realize that you have a question for her! How did she get to the future anyway? After all, even now there's still no such thing as time travel, except in books and movies!

- 4** Why does the narrator compare new technology to old technology? Provide an example that supports your answer.

