

Reading Selection 2

Read the following selection, and answer the corresponding questions for “Reading Selection 2” on your unit test.

I whirled round, and there, on one of those dry gravel beds, was the biggest snake I had ever seen. He was sunning himself, after the cold night, and he must have been asleep when Antonia screamed. When I turned, he was lying in long loose waves, like a letter “W.” He twitched and began to coil slowly. **He was not merely a big snake, I thought—he was a circus monstrosity.** His abominable muscularity, his loathsome, fluid motion, somehow made me sick. He was as thick as my leg and looked as if millstones couldn’t crush the disgusting **vitality** out of him. He lifted his hideous little head, and rattled. I didn’t run because I didn’t think of it—if my back had been against a stone wall I couldn’t have felt more cornered. I saw his coils tighten—now he would spring, spring his length, I remembered. I ran and drove at his head with my spade, struck him fairly across the neck, and in a minute he was all about my feet in wavy loops.

from *My Antonia*
by Willa Cather

Reading Selection 3

Read the following selection, and answer the corresponding questions for “Reading Selection 3” on your unit test.

The Hare was once **boasting** of his speed before the other animals. “I have never yet been beaten,” said he, “when I put forth my full speed. I challenge anyone here to race with me.”

The Tortoise said quietly, “I accept your challenge.”

“That is a good joke,” said the Hare. “I could dance ‘round you all the way.”

“Keep your boasting till you’ve been beaten,” answered the Tortoise. “Shall we race?”

So a course was fixed and a start was made. The Hare darted almost out of sight at once, but soon stopped, and to show his **contempt** for the Tortoise, lay down to have a nap. The Tortoise plodded on and plodded on, and when the Hare awoke from his nap, he saw the Tortoise just near the winning post and could not run up in time to save the race. Then said the Tortoise, **“Plodding wins the race.”**

“The Tortoise and the Hare” by Aesop

Reading Selection 4

Read the following selection, and answer the corresponding questions for “Reading Selection 4” on your unit test.

It was spring, and in the night, the men of the clans could be heard singing to the spirits of powerful animals. Anpao and his two friends decided they would explore the lands beyond the village. The brothers, Anpao’s friends, had never ventured out of the valley of their people, for the elders often cautioned them about the dangers of the world beyond the meadow. But Anpao loved to explore, and his **infatuation** with adventure was highly contagious. Before long, his two friends wanted to accompany him.

So early one morning, the three young men started in the direction of the farthest slope of the little valley. **By the time the sun was high,** they were tired and hungry. The brothers complained of the heat and cursed the thin soles of their moccasins. **They were not the kind of people who are made for adventure.**

(3) Anpao attempted to encourage them, but his high spirits had little effect. The elder brother was especially sullen as they hiked through **the rocky, scorched landscape in which nothing grew, and there was neither fruit to eat nor water to drink.** The three young men searched everywhere for food, but they found nothing, not even tender roots or green berries. Finally, the sullen elder brother sat down on a rock and refused to go any farther. “I want to turn back,” he said angrily.

“No,” protested the younger brother. “We have come this far, and what will be the good of it if we turn back before we have seen what lies beyond the valley?”

(5) “It takes nothing to go back,” Anpao told them. “That is why people never get anywhere. Do not be so easily disappointed, my friend. We will find food soon. And we will also find a good place to make our camp for the night.”

The elder brother grumbled but finally agreed to continue their journey. And so, after resting in the shade of a boulder, they started out again.

“Ah!” shouted the elder brother suddenly. “Just as you said, Anpao, I have found food! Come and see what I have found for us!”

The three crowded around a nest built of pebbles among the great rocks. In the nest were four extremely large greenish eggs. “I am very glad,” the elder brother said and laughed. “I have found a blessing. Here is food for us to eat in this place where there is no food!”

(9) “No,” Anpao whispered. “Please, my friends, do not eat these eggs. I think there is great power in them. We must come away and continue walking.”

(10) “You are a fool, Anpao!” the elder brother shouted. “You always tell us what to do. If we are tired, you tell us we must continue to walk. If we are hungry, you tell us we must be patient. And when we finally find food, then you tell us we must not eat it. You are a fool, and I don’t know why I call you my friend!”

“Listen to me,” Anpao urged, but the brothers ignored him and gathered dried grass to make a fire. Soon the eggs were roasting. The brothers sang heartily, their voices echoing among the great gray rocks, as they sniffed the cooking food.

“You must listen to what I am telling you,” Anpao pleaded. “I have come to know about such things, and you are doing evil. Already the eggs have died in the fire. Now we must run away quickly. You cannot steal these eggs without a prayer or an offering. A living thing is a vast mystery, and something that is coming into life, like these great eggs, is even more mysterious. I know that something bad will happen if we eat those eggs.”