

## Comprehension

### Genre

A **Nonfiction Article** in a newspaper or magazine presents facts and information.

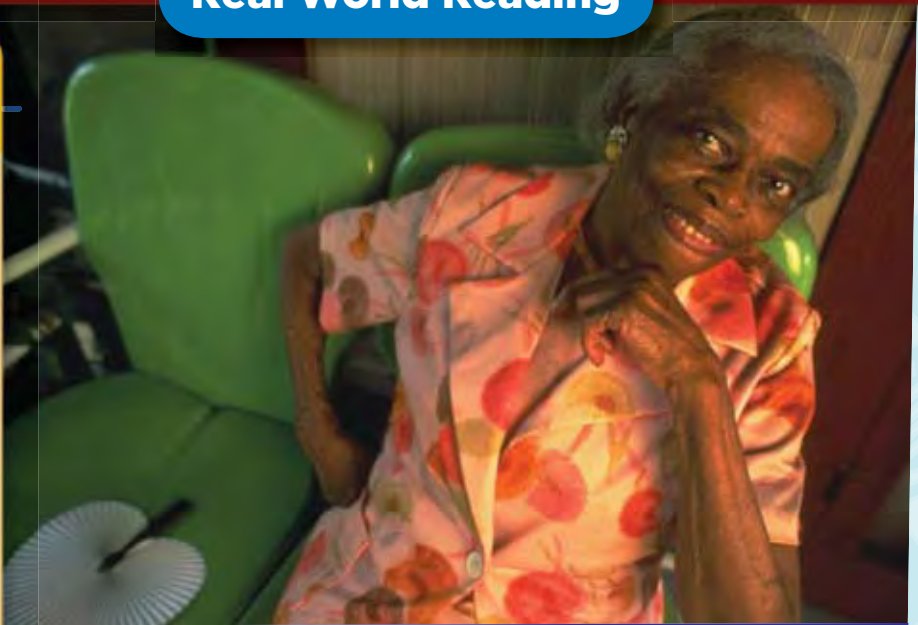


### Make Inferences and Analyze

#### Compare and Contrast

When you look for similarities, you compare things. When you look for differences, you contrast them.

**Oseola McCarty (third from the right) and her family in 1922**



# SAVING GRACE

*How could a woman who spent her life doing laundry for others give \$150,000 for university scholarships?*

For most of her life, Oseola McCarty of Hattiesburg, Mississippi, did laundry for other people. It seems reasonable to assume that the modest income of a washerwoman would **prohibit** her from becoming a philanthropist. What people in Hattiesburg could not have guessed was that McCarty would wind up donating a small fortune to the local university. Large donations usually come from wealthy alumni. However, the University of Southern Mississippi announced that Oseola McCarty, then 87 years old, was giving the university \$150,000 to finance scholarships for African American students. “I want them to have an education,” said McCarty, who never married and had no children of her own. “I had to work hard all my life. They can have the chance that I didn’t have.”

## HARD WORK

When McCarty was in the sixth grade, her aunt became unable to walk. McCarty left school to care for her. She also helped her mother and grandmother with their backyard laundry business. “Even when I was little,” says McCarty, “I was always getting into the wash.” By the time her aunt got back on her feet a year later, McCarty thought she was too far behind to return to school. “I was too big,” she says. “So I kept on working.”

McCarty’s business was similar to running a Laundromat. However, unlike the owner of a Laundromat, she did not use washing machines and dryers. McCarty did all of the washing by hand. She had tried a washer and dryer, but found them inadequate. Instead, she boiled the clothes in a big black pot and hung them on the line to dry. Her place of business was the backyard of the wood-frame house she grew up in.

“She had a bench in the backyard with three tubs on it,” says Helen Tyre, 89, who hired McCarty back in 1943. “She and her mother and grandmother carried the water from a hydrant.”

Tyre remembers a time when McCarty charged just 50 cents a bundle (a week’s worth of laundry for a family of four). Eventually her fee climbed to \$10 a bundle, still a very **moderate** price.

## SO OTHERS CAN LEARN

McCarty thought for years about the scholarship project. But it was only after arthritis forced her to stop taking in wash—at the



McCarty in 1997

age of 87—that she reached out to the university. Many people in McCarty’s shoes would have kept the money. “Frankly, I didn’t believe it at first,” said Bill Pace, executive director of the University of Southern Mississippi

Foundation. The foundation manages gifts to the university. “I was amazed that someone who made their money that way could save that much and then would give it away.”

The scholarship fund was established in 1995. The scholarships were not supposed to go into effect until after McCarty’s death. But Pace and other university officials didn’t want to **hamper** McCarty’s chance to see at least one of her beneficiaries graduate. So less than a year after the gift was made they awarded the first Oseola McCarty Scholarship of \$1,000 to Stephanie Bullock, 18.

Stephanie’s mother taught school in Hattiesburg and her father supervised a water-treatment plant. Stephanie has a twin brother, Stephen, and the Bullocks were worried about paying college tuition for two kids at the same time. The help from the McCarty scholarship fund would make college **accessible** to both twins.



President Bill Clinton awarded the Presidential Medal of Honor to McCarty in 1996.



McCarty and Stephanie Bullock, the first student to receive the Oseola McCarty Scholarship



McCarty in 1995,  
at age 87

## THE GIFT OF A LIFETIME

Word of McCarty's gift and her life story caused others to open their pocketbooks. Local businesspeople pledged to match McCarty's \$150,000 contribution, and in addition, checks arrived at the university from all over. McCarty, meanwhile, found all the fuss a bit **bewildering**. She continued to project an air of genuine puzzlement by the question she heard over and over: Why didn't you spend the money on yourself? "I am spending it on myself," she answered with a smile.

Oseola McCarty died in 1999 at the age of 91.

## Think and Compare

1. What did Oseola McCarty do for a living?
2. What benefit did Oseola McCarty receive from giving \$150,000 to the University of Southern Mississippi?
3. If you had a large sum of money to use to help others, what would you do with it?
4. Compare and contrast the ways of helping others that are described in "Saving Grace" and the three stories on pages 416-417.





## Test Strategy

### Author and Me

The answer is not directly stated. Think about what you already know and link it to the text.



Beatrice takes a study break at her school in Massachusetts.

# A GIFT OF HOPE

Beatrice Biira grew up in Kisinga, a small African village in Uganda. Beatrice had always dreamed of going to school. But her family could not afford to buy the uniforms, shoes, and books required for school. Most villagers could not, because they had nothing to sell for money.

In 1993, a charity called Heifer International gave Beatrice's family a goat named Mugisa. That name means "luck." And that is when the Biiiras' luck began to change.

The goat provided milk for the family to drink and offspring to sell. The money from selling the goat kids

was enough to enable Beatrice and her six siblings to go to school.

For 60 years, Heifer International has been helping families become self-sufficient. The organization provides them with livestock such as geese and goats. Each family must pass on the first female offspring to another family in need. Since it began in 1944, Heifer International has helped 5 million families in more than 125 countries.

Says Beatrice, "I want to get a good education so that I can give back to others the gift that was given to me."

**Directions: Answer the questions.**

**1. What does it mean to be “self-sufficient”?**

- A You prefer to live alone.
- B You can provide for your own needs.
- C You are selfish and uncaring.
- D You depend on the government to help you.

**2. What is the MAIN purpose of a charity?**

- A to organize fundraisers
- B to bring people luck
- C to sell toys and candy
- D to improve people’s lives

**3. Why was Mugisa a good name for Beatrice’s goat?**

- A The goat helped change the family’s luck.
- B The name means happiness.
- C It was the name of the local school.
- D The goat lived a lucky life.

**4. How were Beatrice and her family helped by Heifer International?**

**5. Beatrice wants to repay the gift that she received. What was her gift? How did she use this gift? Use details from the article to support your response.**

### Tip

Connect the clues and ideas from the passage to choose the best answer.

# Write to a Prompt

Early one morning, the Biira family awakes to find their goat is missing! The vanished Mugisa is expecting her first kid any day now. Without Mugisa, the family will lose their hope of getting money for school. Write a story telling what the family experiences and how the story ends.

## Mugisa's Gift

"Mugisa! Mugisa!" The voices sounded like alarm bells ringing through the fields of Kisinga. Where was the Biiras' goat? If Mugisa was lost, so was all hope for an education for the Biira children, including 12-year-old Beatrice. Mugisa's first offspring was due any day. The Biiras had a debt of honor to give the first female kid to their cousins, the Tumbas.

As the day wore on, hope began to fade. They had looked everywhere. No one had seen the goat.

That night the Biiras were eating their meal sadly when Beatrice's aunt arrived. She was leading Mugisa and carrying a baby goat in her arms! Beatrice's aunt had found Mugisa deep in the forest. Mugisa was giving birth, so she could not be returned to the village right away.

The joyful children gathered around to pet Mugisa and look at the tiny kid. Mugisa had been a gift. Now she had a gift of her own to give.



The ending of my story tells how the problem was solved.

## Writing Prompt

It is Beatrice's first day of school! She is very excited. But on the way, she meets a family in trouble. Should she help them or be on time for school? Write a story telling about Beatrice's problem, what she does, and what happens to her on her first day of school.

## Writer's Checklist

- Ask yourself, who will read my story?
- Think about your purpose for writing.
- Plan your writing before beginning.
- Use details to support your story.
- Be sure your story has a problem and a solution.
- Use your best spelling, grammar, and punctuation.

