

Directions: Read the passage below and answer the question(s) that follow.

Section 1

Kansas Territory / An Interesting Project

It was August of 1874. Eva Novak sat on the dirt floor of the house her father had toiled all summer to build. At first her mother had scolded her for sitting on the floor because her dress would get dirty, but after two long, scorching months on the Kansas plains, she did not mind it as much.

Vaclav Novak had spent the entire day plowing the field where he would plant wheat the following year, and was now consumed with the task of spreading white plaster on the walls of the one room in their tiny house. He had built the house from sod, one of the few building materials available in Kansas. While their tiny cottage in Bohemia might not have been much larger than this, it wasn't as dark on the inside or as difficult to keep clean.

"After I finish plastering the walls, I will paint them," Eva's father said. "Then I will put in a wooden floor."

"Will it look like our cottage back home?" Eva asked.

Eva's mother, who sat in a rocking chair in the corner of the room, was busy embroidering a set of curtains she had stitched from an old flour sack. Suddenly, she looked up at Eva. "This *is* our home now, Eva." Her voice was kind but firm. "This is where we will live from now on."

"But this house is made of dirt! We can't possibly live here forever!"

"I have explained this," her father replied. "We spent nearly every penny we had just getting here. We have 160 acres to farm, and in five years every acre of it will be ours, belonging to us and no one else. After our farm begins to be profitable and we own the land ourselves, I will build a timber-framed house with many rooms. But until then, we need a place to live and we need to prove that we are serious about homesteading, so that is why I have built this sod house."

Eva sighed. There were many things that she missed about Bohemia. Her family might have lived in a small village far from town, but she could walk a few yards from her cottage and be at her next-door neighbors'. Here, she was not even sure how to reach the house of the Novaks' closest neighbors, the Janaceks. After two months, she had yet to even meet them.

Irena Novak rose from her chair and bent down next to where Eva sat, wrapping her arm around her shoulders. "Eva, there are things you are going to love about Kansas. Remember how badly you wanted to go to school in Bohemia? Here, school is completely free. You will be able to start in only a few weeks."

The thought of going to school put a smile on Eva's face. "I think I'm going to go outside and read—before it gets too dark," she said. She had been practicing reading books in English in order to get ready for her first day at school in America. Picking up her copy of *Little Women*, Eva left the house and sat down outside, leaning on a small boulder near the front door. The brilliant orange sun, illuminating the golden stalks of wheat on the Janaceks' farm nearby, had begun to set over the Kansas plains, leaving an ink-colored violet sky behind.

An Interesting Project

"So, what did you find out?" Ethan asked his friend Jimmy.

"A lot," Jimmy replied. "My grandfather appears to be an expert on the subject, and he was able to give me a lot of help. He could spend hours talking about the history of our family!"

Jimmy Novak was a sixth-grade student in Topeka, Kansas. His teacher had recently assigned a very interesting project to the class. Each student was to research their family history and discover when their family first arrived in Kansas.

"It all started with my great-great-great-grandparents, Vaclav and Irena Novak, who came to America in 1874 from Bohemia. That's part of the Czech Republic today, in Eastern Europe."

"That is a little odd," Ethan noted. "You usually hear about immigrants moving to the big cities. Why would they decide to move all the way out here to the Plains?"

Directions: Answer the following question(s) relating to the passage titled "Kansas Territory / An Interesting Project".

"The American government was trying very hard to settle the new territories, so they were giving away free land. The Homestead Act was signed in 1862, and it gave 160 acres of free land to each person or family who settled the territory. The conditions were that they had to live on the land for at least five years and they had to improve it. That would usually involve farming the land or planting trees, since the land was very dry and uncultivated. The settlers would also have to build houses on their land, even if they were very small."

"But there are so few trees on the Plains. Even today, it's mostly flat. How could they build so many houses if they had so little timber?"

"They didn't use wood to build the houses. My ancestors used a material called sod. It was made from dirt and prairie grass packed together. It was cut into squares and stacked just like bricks."

"That is crazy! They would make houses out of dirt?"

"Most sod houses would last only a few years, but they could be plastered and painted just like regular houses. It was actually a good building material for the area—readily available, and houses built from it would stay cool in the summer and warm in the winter. But it's still quite amazing what they had to endure. I can't even imagine living in a sod house in the middle of nowhere today!"

1 Based on the information in both texts, what inferences can be made about the Novak family and their history in Kansas? Support your answer with details from the text.

2 Read the paragraph from "An Interesting Project."

"The American government was trying very hard to settle the new territories, so they were giving away free land. The Homestead Act was signed in 1862, and it gave 160 acres of free land to each person or family who settled the territory. The conditions were that they had to live on the land for at least five years and they had to improve it. That would usually involve farming the land or planting trees, since the land was very dry and uncultivated. The settlers would also have to build houses on their land, even if they were very small."

Based on this information, what can a reader conclude about the Novak family in "Kansas Territory"? Support your answer with details from the text.

Directions: Answer the following question(s).

- 3** Read the two sentences below about household chores.

Many parents ask their children to do one or more chores to help out around the house. These tasks may be big or small, and the child may or may not get a reward for doing them.

Add two to three additional sentences to the above text to create a short paragraph about household chores. Use examples and/or details to expand upon the information provided above.

Directions: Read the passage below and answer the question(s) that follow.

Overcoming Great Obstacles

Frida Kahlo was one of the most impressive female artists of all time. Although her life was short-lived, she was able to achieve more than anyone expected. Born in Mexico, Frida used her heritage as inspiration for her art. Frida was a surrealist. A surrealist is someone who expresses their feelings by using bizarre or unique imagery in their art. Her paintings were a true reflection of her personal life that expressed her emotions. Frida faced difficult challenges during her youth, yet she was able to overcome them and leave a strong impact as an artist. In fact, her life was more difficult than that of any other artist.

Frida's young life was extremely difficult. When Frida was six years old, she got polio. This left her confined to a bed for nine months. She battled with the disease for some time. Eventually she did recover from it; however, it left her with a limp that she coped with for the rest of her life.

As a young girl, she dreamed of going to medical school. Then, on one momentous day, Frida's life changed when she was severely wounded in a bus accident. She was bedridden for one year and had over thirty different surgeries. Frida was in constant pain.

Though this tragedy could have left Frida hopeless, it essentially changed her life in a great way. It was a blessing in disguise. While in the hospital, she learned how to paint with oils. At first she painted colorful self-portraits. Eventually she painted poses of her visitors and guests. This was only the beginning of her life as an artist.

Frida's challenges were not over. When Frida moved to America, she was looked at as different because of the colorful way she dressed. In addition, her artwork was not like any they had seen before and was not accepted right away. Through time, Frida was able to show the world her unique style of painting. Eventually she became well-known as a great artist.

Eventually many people admirably looked at Frida's artwork and thought, "Bravo!" She had much success during her lifetime. People were able to relate to Frida's creativity. Her paintings were like close friends who often shared how they were feeling. During her lifetime, she went through many difficult seasons and tackled many obstacles. However, Frida Kahlo didn't let it stop her from becoming an inspirational artist.

4 In 2–3 sentences, summarize how Frida began her career as a painter. Within your summary be sure to include details from the passage.

5 Which of the following statements gives the best summary of the passage?

- A. All artists face many challenges in life.
- B. There are many different types of artists in the world.
- C. Frida Kahlo was a person who was able to rise above her problems.
- D. People were uncertain of Frida Kahlo's art because it was different than anything they had seen.

Directions: Answer the following question(s).

- 6** Read the two sentences below about shyness.

People who suffer from shyness feel awkward around others. Shy people often feel the most nervous around people they do not know.

Add two to three additional sentences to the above text to create a short paragraph about shyness. Use examples and/or details to expand upon the information provided above.