

ZB **Zaner-Bloser**
NEXT GENERATION ASSESSMENT PRACTICE
English Language Arts / Literacy

Student Edition

Grade 6
Narrative

Name _____

Date _____

PART I: Close Reading

Your Task

You will examine three sources about life in America in the first half of the twentieth century, which include accounts of Matthew Henson's experiences trying to reach the North Pole and with racial discrimination. Then you will answer three questions about what you have learned. In Part 2, you will write a historical episode about Matthew Henson's attempts to reach the North Pole and his reception by the American people when he returned.

Steps to Follow

In order to plan and write your historical episode, you will do all of the following:

1. Examine three sources.
2. Make notes about the information from the sources.
3. Answer three questions about the sources.

Directions for Beginning

You will have 35 minutes to complete Part I. You will now examine three sources. Take notes because you may want to refer to them while writing your historical episode. You can re-examine any of the sources as often as you like. Answer the questions in the spaces provided.

From
Matthew Henson,
Introduction, Chapters 7 & 8

Introduction

In November 2000, the National Geographic Society met in Washington, D.C., to bestow its Hubbard Medal. Past winners of the medal included the first astronauts to walk on the moon and the first person to fly around the world. Since he had died in 1955, Matthew Henson, the 2000 Hubbard Medal winner, wasn't on hand to receive the award. The Hubbard Medal was only the latest in a series of honors and recognitions that Henson received . . . after he died. In 1996, the United States Navy commissioned the 5,000-ton *Matthew Henson*, a research ship. Ten years earlier, in 1986, the United States Post Office put out a postage stamp honoring Henson. Lots of people have been honored after their deaths with medals, stamps, and ships named after them. Yet rarely have those people been as unknown during their lifetimes as Henson was.

Failure After Failure

During each of their attempts for the Pole, Peary's team got a little farther. Yet each time they turned back. Their 1902

expedition was especially bitter. Just before they were to leave, the native people of the region known as the Inuit quit. Peary pleaded with the Inuit to reconsider. They would not listen to him. Finally Henson spoke to them and convinced them to go on the expedition. Henson's influence with the Inuit kept Peary's polar dreams alive.

Once they got moving, the expedition was beset by problems. The ocean ice often buckled, creating jagged mountains. Other times, large chunks of ice broke off, creating leads, or gaps in the ice, separated by open ocean. The team had to wait for the leads to close up before they could resume traveling. As they waited, their food supplies dwindled to almost nothing. They had to turn back.

Peary had failed yet again. However, he had learned a powerful lesson: To defeat the ocean ice and reach the North Pole, he would need a special kind of ship that could slice through the ice. Then he would be able to start for the Pole from closer than ever before.

Peary and Henson returned to the United States in the fall of 1902. Henson had spent most of the past ten years in

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the Arctic, where he was used to being treated with respect by Peary and the Inuit. Now, back home, he experienced vicious racism. He longed to get away from America's intolerant society.

Fortunately, Peary still needed Henson's skills. Throughout 1905, they planned another trip to the North Pole, which had yet to be reached. Peary acquired a new ship, the *USS Roosevelt*. It could cut through the ice better than anything they had sailed on before.

It was now July 1905. Henson and Peary were ready to embark on yet another Arctic expedition. They sailed north on the *Roosevelt* to Greenland and stopped at Etah. There, they picked up Inuit helpers and dogs for their sledges, and prepared their expedition.

On March 1, 1906, Henson and Peary started once again for the North Pole. Despite having their best ship ever, they were still thwarted by terrible weather and ice. Then disaster struck: The *Roosevelt's* rudder and propeller were damaged by ice.

Luckily the ship was not damaged beyond repair. Yet Peary saw that, for the time being, it could not support a journey to the Pole.

Even with this setback, Peary and Henson still achieved a major milestone during their 1906 expedition. They had

succeeded in traveling farther north than any other group of explorers. Peary and Henson had reached 87 degrees, 6 minutes north before having to turn around. They had gotten to within a mere three degrees of the North Pole itself, which is located at 90 degrees north (90° N).

The Pole at Last

Peary and Henson arrived back in New York on Christmas Eve, 1906. Peary announced that as soon as the *Roosevelt* was fixed, he and Henson would embark on their final polar expedition. Henson was now 40 years old. Peary had just turned 50. They had enough strength left for one last attempt.

Peary spent all of 1907 and the first half of 1908 raising money. In contrast with previous expeditions, he assembled a large crew of 23. On July 6, 1908, they left New York Harbor. They were heading to Greenland and then on to the northern tip of Ellesmere Island. At Etah they took on 246 sledge dogs. Then they pushed on for Cape Sheridan, their embarkation point from Ellesmere Island.

The *Roosevelt* scraped and gouged through the ice on the way to Cape Sheridan. On some days, the ship wasn't able to move at all. The crew's big fear was that two ice floes would come together. If that happened, the ship could be trapped, capsized, or crushed.

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On September 5, 1908, they reached Cape Sheridan. There they would stay through the long, dark Arctic winter before beginning their push to the North Pole in the spring.

To ensure that their final expedition was a success, Peary and Henson developed the Peary System. The system had several key points. One was to bring along more sledge dogs than seemed reasonable. This was based on the expectation that over half of the dogs would die along the way. Another key point was to earn the Inuit's trust so they would want to help throughout the expedition.

On February 22, 1909, Peary's team left the *Roosevelt*. On foot and by sledge, the group of 24 explorers and 130 sledge dogs began their long, 413-mile journey to the North Pole.

In Peary's system, one part of the team was always moving ahead in order to make a camp and break trail for

everyone else. There they would leave stoves, fuel, and food before turning back to the *Roosevelt*.

As more team members returned to the *Roosevelt*, the size of the remaining group dwindled. By April 2, just six people were left to forge ahead: Peary, Henson, and four Inuit. They had five sledges and 40 dogs to help them cover the final 133 miles to the Pole.

At this point, the group was just five "marches" away from the Pole. Henson recalled these as being days of "toil, fatigue, and exhaustion." Everyone suffered in the cold temperatures, which stayed below -30° F.

The group reached the Pole on April 6. The team knew from their measurements that they'd reached 90 degrees N (90° N). The North Pole was theirs!

From *Matthew Henson* by Margaret Cleveland.
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Compare and contrast the kind of treatment Matthew Henson experienced at home and in the Arctic. How might this treatment have encouraged him to make another attempt at reaching the North Pole? Include four or more details from the text in your response.

From

Captain Mac: The Life of Donald Baxter MacMillan, Arctic Explorer

Chapter 16

Race did not matter to Mac. What mattered to him was honoring Henson. Mac knew no man was more valuable to Commander Peary. Henson's dogs had actually pulled Peary part of the way when Peary was too weak to drive his own sledge. Peary could not have reached the North Pole or gotten back to land without him. Mac knew that. The entire expedition party knew that. Peary publicly admitted Matt Henson was "probably a better dog-driver, than any other man living, except some of the best of the Eskimo hunters themselves." The night before they left the *Roosevelt*, Peary had told Mac he hoped Henson would go with him all the way to the Pole, because he could not get along without Henson. For eighteen years, Matthew Henson had explored with Peary. Numerous times he had risked death for his commander.

"I first met Matt Henson aboard the Commander's steamer *Roosevelt*," Mac wrote. "Out he stepped with hand extended in greeting and a ready smile . . . I did not then know that he was to teach me how to survive in the North."

True, Henson was an assistant on the North Pole

expedition, as were Mac and the other men. It was Peary's expedition; he was the commander. But Matthew Henson was the only other American who stood at the North Pole with Peary, and Mac was determined to credit him for his role in the conquest.

In the early decades of the 1900s, most Americans would not acknowledge achievements of African Americans. Matthew Henson was born just a year after the Civil War ended [August 8, 1866] and had known racial discrimination and hatred since childhood. When the North Pole expedition returned to the United States in 1909, laws in the South kept African Americans segregated from mainstream America. And all over the country, white people discriminated against blacks. Henson and MacMillan could drive dog teams together in the Arctic, but in the southern United States, they could not have ridden in the same railroad car or sat together on a bus. And Henson was not allowed to sip water from a "whites only" drinking fountain. African Americans were just beginning to organize to end legal segregation.

For years and years, MacMillan struggled to make sure

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that Matt Henson received the honor that was rightfully his. Geographic societies all over the world accepted Peary's claim. For reaching the North Pole, Peary was presented with a formal letter of thanks from the U.S. Congress. The National Geographic Society awarded Peary a special gold medal. What did Henson get? Nothing. Matthew Henson dropped into obscurity, working first as a parking-garage attendant, then as a low-paid worker in the U.S. Customs office in New York City.

MacMillan had admired Matt Henson from the first days of the North Pole expedition. During their year together in the frigid Arctic, they had become good friends. After that, the two men corresponded often. Occasionally they met for lunch at the Explorers Club in New York City—after 1937, that is, when Mac finally convinced the club to elect Henson as a member.

Most likely the two men chatted about the polar expedition. They each could remember climbing over enormous piles of jagged ice, facing ferocious winds and excruciating cold. And how could they ever forget the frightening polar ice, shifting and grinding beneath them? "A false step by any one," recalled Henson, "would mean the end."

Did Mac and Henson talk about their childhoods? Both had been orphaned as young boys. Both were experienced

seamen. And they each had known someone who believed in him and pushed him onward toward success. Henson was taught by a ship's captain when he went to sea as a cabin boy at twelve or thirteen. Mac's high school principal encouraged him to go to college. Mac would go on to become a famous Arctic explorer. Henson, so successful in the Far North, could find no appreciation at home.

Mac was not afraid to speak out. He praised Henson in his book about the polar expedition, and he wrote in a *National Geographic* article that Henson "was indispensable to Peary."

Mac wrote to Congress several times, requesting recognition and a pension for his friend. In one letter to his congressman, he wrote:

In consideration of the very valuable work of Matthew A. Henson, Assistant to Peary for eighteen years (1891-1909) I would suggest a special medal to be awarded by Congress. This negro went to the Pole with Peary because he was a better man than any man in Peary's party; in fact he was of more real value to Commander Peary on the Polar Sea than all white men combined. He selected all the dogs, he made all the sledges, he made all the camp equipment, he talked the language like a native . . . With the exception of four Eskimos he is the only living man to-day who has stood

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at the North Pole. Race, creed, or color should not stand in the way of recognition.

Congress paid no attention. Later, Mac wrote firmly to another congressman: "I know of no explorer who has done more and received so little as Henson, and for one reason only—he is black."

Henson wrote to Mac, "Few men would have the courage to say what you have said in my behalf."

For a long time, MacMillan felt his efforts were wasted. A few others tried to help, too, and eventually Henson received

a meager pension. At long last, in 1944—thirty-five years after the North Pole expedition—Congress honored each of Peary's assistants with a special congressional medal. They still would not vote to honor Henson independently, but at last Henson could hold a medal in his hand. To Mac, it seemed the very least this country could do for one of its heroes.

From Captain Mac: The Life of Donald Baxter MacMillan by Mary Morton Cowan. Copyright © 2010 by Mary Morton Cowan. Published by Boyds Mills Press, Inc. Used by permission.

Write a paragraph discussing how Mathew Henson's contributions to reaching the North Pole were recognized. Be sure to include two ways in which Matthew Henson was important to Peary's missions to reach the North Pole. Provide at least three examples of conditions that existed in American society that help show why Matthew Henson was not individually recognized for his achievement. What did Donald MacMillan say to try to help him? Include information about how Henson's contribution was finally recognized.

Click the image to watch the video.



What are six hardships African Americans experienced in the American South before 1960? Use descriptive details in your response. Explain what happened in the 1960s to eliminate the hardships you described.



PART 2: Writing to Multiple Sources

You will now have 70 minutes to review your notes and sources, plan, draft, and revise a historical episode. You may use your notes and refer to the sources. You may also refer to the answers you wrote to questions in Part I, but you cannot change those answers. Now read your assignment and the information about how your historical episode will be scored; then begin your work.

Your Assignment

Write a historical episode for a classmate to read. Describe the role Matthew Henson played in helping Robert Peary reach the North Pole, including details about Henson's return from the successful expedition. Describe Henson's relationship with the people with whom he explored. Tell about at least two of his contributions to the expedition. Use sensory details to describe at least five conditions African Americans experienced in the American South at the time of Henson's return. Finally, describe how Henson himself was treated after he returned from the successful expedition. Be sure to give at least two examples of how Henson and Peary were treated differently.

Historical Episode Scoring

Your historical episode will be scored on the following criteria:

- I. **Focus and organization**—How well did you engage the reader by describing a situation and introducing the narrator? How well did your ideas flow using effective transitions? How well did the events in the historical episode unfold naturally and logically? How well did you provide a conclusion that follows from the experiences or events?

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Historical Episode Scoring (continued)

2. **Elaboration of experiences/events**—How well did you use dialogue and description to develop experiences, events, and characters? How well did you use concrete words and phrases and sensory details to convey experiences and events precisely?
3. **Conventions**—How well did you follow the rules of usage, punctuation, capitalization, and spelling?

Now begin work on your historical episode. Manage your time carefully so that you can:

- plan your historical episode.
- write your historical episode.
- revise and edit for a final draft.

Spell check is available to you.

Type your response in the space provided on the following page. Write as much as you need to fulfill the requirements of the task. You are not limited by the size of the response area on the screen.

Type your response below.



Go to the next
page if you need
more space.



Continue your response below.

