



# The Landry News

by Andrew Clements

## Teacher's Guide

Written By Kathy Sammis

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Andrew Clements

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## Synopsis

### Chapter 1

Fifth-grader Cara Landry moved to the town of Canton with her mother six months ago, following her parents' divorce. Cara is a brainy, quiet loner, barely noticed by her classmates at Denton Elementary School. Cara's afternoon teacher—for reading, social studies, and language arts—is burned-out Mr. Larson, widely regarded as the school's worst teacher. Mr. Larson conducts a very open classroom, giving his students an assignment at the beginning of the class period and leaving them to work on their own while he sits at his desk reading the newspaper. The classroom is bulging with old newspapers, magazines, layered bulletin boards, books, and more, which the students root through to complete their assignments. Cara likes working on her own in the back corner of Mr. Larson's room. Then, on a Friday afternoon in early October, Cara tacks up her first edition of *The Landry News* on the classroom's back bulletin board.

### Chapter 2

When Mr. Larson looks up and sees the whole class clustered around the back bulletin board, reading a newspaper that one of his students has created, he is pleased. His open classroom has allowed such creativity! But Mr. Larson's approval of the well-written newspaper vanishes when he reads the paper's editorial, which starts, "There has been no teaching so far this year in Mr. Larson's classroom." Mr. Larson rips the sheet off the board, shouts, "THIS is INappropriate!" and tears it into bits.

### Chapter 3

On the way home from school that afternoon on the school bus, three of Cara's classmates talk to her for the first time—LeeAnn, Joey, and Ed. They are very impressed with the way Cara gathers news, and they ask why she wrote the editorial. Cara explains she saw an old plaque honoring the Teacher of the Year, and Mr. Larson won the award for three straight years about fifteen years ago.

### Chapter 4

Mr. Larson goes home very angry about the editorial, and with himself. Over the course of the weekend, he recognizes he has stopped being a good teacher. Cara's editorial is right, and his students need him to teach.

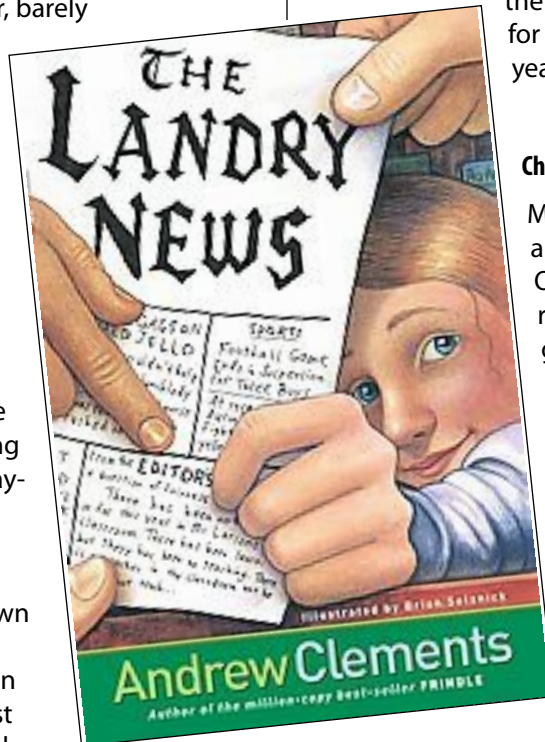
### Chapter 5

At home that evening, Cara and her mother have a serious discussion about Cara's journalism. Last year, at her previous school, feeling hateful because her father had just left, Cara had produced a series of newspapers filled with unkind,

although fact-based, stories. Cara's mother is concerned this new *Landry News* is also mean-spirited, as shown by the editorial. But Cara explains that this year, she is still sad about the divorce but no longer angry, so her new paper is truly just fact-based. The editorial, while justifiably expressing Cara's opinion, is fact-based, Cara says. Her mother responds with a quote from Psalms, "Mercy and truth are met together," saying it is all right for Cara to report the truth in her paper, but she must be sure there is some mercy in her stories, too.

### Chapter 6

Over the weekend, Cara composes a letter of apology to Mr. Larson. On Monday at school, she is almost sick with nervousness about giving it to him.



## Chapter 7

Preparing to face his afternoon class on Monday, Mr. Larson is also very nervous. He opens the class by doing something unprecedented—leading a class discussion about the students’ newspaper-reading habits. This leads to a one-on-one exchange between Cara and Mr. Larson about newspaper editorials. Cara says editorials are where newspapers can say difficult things and can apologize for mistakes, where readers can see the heart of the newspaper. Mr. Larson then gives the class its first real assignment—to comb through the classroom’s old editions of two Chicago newspapers, find and clip the editorials, and from them, identify the heart of each newspaper. Cara realizes Mr. Larson is no longer angry with her, and he has seen the truth of her editorial.

## Chapter 8

Joey suggests to Cara that she let him and Ed produce her next *Landry News* on the school computers so they can print multiple copies to hand out to interested students beyond Mr. Larson’s classroom. Cara agrees, deciding the benefits of wider circulation outweigh her keeping total control of her creation. Mr. Larson, secretly grinning, gives the pair permission to go to the library during the class period to work on “a project.”

## Chapter 9

At the end of the school day, Mrs. Steinart, director of the school’s resource center, corners Mr. Larson and gushes enthusiastically about the journalism project Cara and Joey are working on—producing a newspaper by this Friday.

## Chapter 10

The new *Landry News* appears on schedule, on Friday, full of interesting, well-written features and even a photo. The editorial thanks all the people who helped create the newspaper’s new look, including Mr. Larson. It also expresses the paper’s new motto: Truth and Mercy, a commitment to be a good-hearted newspaper, telling the truth in a non-hurtful way. Mr. Larson tells Cara the editorial is a fine piece of writing. Cara and her helpers distribute seventy-five copies of their paper in six minutes.

## Chapter 11

Denton Elementary’s go-by-the-book principal, Dr.

Barnes, has disapproved of Mr. Larson and his lax teaching for years. But while Mr. Larson has had repeated poor performance reviews, he has done nothing to justify legally firing him. Seeing Mr. Larson’s name mentioned in *The Landry News* gives Dr. Barnes an idea.

## Chapter 12

On Tuesday afternoon, Mr. Larson leads his students in a discussion of the editorials and other features in the old newspapers they have browsed through. One student suggests *The Landry News* could have more features, too, a decision that is up to Cara as editor in chief. Cara reflects briefly that she has enjoyed working with a small group on the paper, so involving more kids would be that much more satisfying. Everyone in the class gathers eagerly around Cara’s desk to plan the expanded newspaper, much to Mr. Larson’s satisfaction.

## Chapter 13

Dr. Barnes summons Mr. Larson to his office to say he plans to review each copy of *The Landry News* before it is distributed, citing the U.S. Supreme Court’s *Hazelwood* decision that a school principal has this authority. Mr. Larson counters that *The Landry News* is not a school newspaper but rather a classroom paper, produced by his students as part of his work as a teacher. He agrees to take full responsibility for the paper and whatever is printed in it, an agreement that quietly delights Dr. Barnes.

## Chapter 14

The next day, Mr. Larson leads a class discussion on the First Amendment and freedom of the press, about what a newspaper can and cannot print, and about who can control the content of a newspaper, especially one produced in a school.

## Chapter 15

By December, the popular *Landry News* has expanded to two sheets, each printed on both sides, with a wide variety of features written by many different students. Then Michael Morton asks Cara to print a well-written, anonymous story titled “Lost and Found” about the pain, confusion, and anger a grammar school boy experienced during his family’s recent divorce process. Cara is sure it is a true story—she recognizes the feelings the boy

expresses from her own divorce experience. She seeks guidance from Mr. Larson about whether she should publish the story, dealing as it does with a family's private troubles. Mr. Larson agrees with Cara that it is a helpful story for students to read, but he leaves the publishing decision up to her. It appears in the ninth edition of *The Landry News* (370 copies distributed).

## Chapter 16

Dr. Barnes pounces, calling Mr. Larson up before a school board disciplinary hearing for allowing inappropriate material to be printed in a newspaper.

## Chapter 17

Mr. Larson turns his problem into a teaching experience, involving his students step-by-step in the case as a living laboratory on the First Amendment and freedom of the press. This helps Cara feel less guilty about getting Mr. Larson into trouble.

## Chapter 18

Cara realizes she has to stop publishing *The Landry News* for now, so as not to get Mr. Larson into more trouble. But she and Joey then realize they can publish anything they want to—it's a free country—as long as they don't make the newspaper at school or pass it out there. So the ex-staff of the *News* produce their own, new paper, *The Guardian*, completely off-campus. In a meeting with Dr. Barnes, Cara carefully explains the ways in which *The Guardian* is distinct from *The Landry News* and so is not subject to censorship by the school.

## Chapter 19

Denton's other teachers have been extremely impressed at the quality of *The Landry News*, so they wholeheartedly support Mr. Larson, as does the Chicago teachers' union. The case becomes a media sensation, and Cara notices how superficial TV news reports are as compared with newspaper stories in dealing with a complicated case.

## Chapter 20

Mr. Larson's hearing is held in the high school auditorium, attended by hundreds of people and covered by the media. Dr. Barnes makes his case, that a story about divorce is not appropriate for a student newspaper. The

school board expresses its agreement with this and cites past complaints about Mr. Larson. The teacher himself points out that the school and board have no guidelines about what is or is not appropriate for this newspaper, as required by the *Hazelwood* decision. The audience is then stunned when the author of the story, Michael Morton, comes forward to read what he wrote. Applause and cheering for Mr. Larson and *The Landry News* convince the school board to dismiss the disciplinary action. As the crowd begins to leave, student staffers pass out a special edition of the *News*. A single headline announces: "LARSON IS VINDICATED!" The only other text is an editorial announcing this school year has a good heart, because "the heart of this year is Mr. Larson," and that for the staffers of the *News*, Mr. Larson is Teacher of the Year.

## Timeline

- ca. 15 years ago** Mr. Larson was named Teacher of the Year three years in a row.
- last school year** Cara got in trouble at her previous school over nasty newspaper stories.
- April this year** Cara and mother move to Carlton; Cara starts attending Denton Elementary School.
- this school year** Cara begins fifth grade with Mr. Larson as her afternoon teacher.
- October**
  - Friday** Cara posts the first edition of *The Landry News* on the bulletin board.
  - that weekend** Mr. Larson realizes he needs to start teaching again.
  - Monday** Mr. Larson starts to teach about newspapers; Joey starts creating a computer version of *The Landry News*
  - Friday** First computer-created and -printed edition of *The Landry News* is distributed (75 copies).
  - Tuesday** Cara agrees to expand *The Landry News*; Mr. Larson meets with Dr. Barnes, takes full responsibility for the *News*.
- December**
  - 1st Friday** Ninth edition of *The Landry News* is distributed (370 copies); contains Michael Morton's divorce story.
  - Monday** Dr. Barnes notifies Mr. Larson he will face disciplinary action; Joey and Cara decide to publish a new, off-campus paper, *The Guardian*.
  - Friday** Cara meets with Dr. Barnes, defending the freedom of *The Guardian*.

**next Tuesday** A disciplinary hearing is held in high school auditorium; action against Mr. Larson is dismissed.

## Author Sketch

Andrew Clements is a versatile children's book author, writing numerous picture books and middle-grade readers, while also adapting and translating European picture books for a variety of publishers. Clements was born in 1949 in Camden, New Jersey, and grew up there and in Illinois. Encouraged by his parents, teachers, and school librarians, Clements was an avid reader as a youngster. He earned a B.A. in English literature from Northwestern University in 1971 and an M.A. in elementary education from National Louis University in 1972, the same year he married. He taught fourth grade, eighth grade, and high school from 1972 to 1979. He switched his career path to publishing in 1980, having since then served as editor, sales and marketing manager, publishing director, and editorial director at a variety of publishing houses. Most recently he has been a full-time writer of children's books and a freelance consultant and editor. He also speaks frequently at schools, seminars, and conventions. Clements and his wife have four sons and live in Westborough, Massachusetts.



Clements published his first picture book, *Bird Adalbert*, in 1985. A number of popular picture books followed that remain widely read today, including *Big Al*, *Santa Secret Helper Temple Cat*, *Bright Christmas*, and the "Real Monsters" series. Clements's first middle-grade novel, *Frindle*, appeared in 1996; *Kirkus Reviews* has called the very popular award-winner "something of a classic."

## Critic's Corner

Critics admire Clements's ability to tell a story clearly, simply, and appealingly in his picture books and his sure touch with dialogue, plot, theme, and humor in his middle-grade novels. Of *The Landry News*, *Horn Book* wrote, "Clements writes with a light touch that allows the text to flow effortlessly for the reader, yet lays out thought-provoking issues such as intellectual freedom that are likely to engender further exploration. *School Library Journal* admired the novel's "believable characters" and "satisfying conclusion." *Booklist* concluded that the book's "depth of characterization, humor, realistic

dialogue, and drama will engage readers. . . . Sure to stimulate classroom discussion."

## Selected Other Works by Andrew Clements

### Books

*Bird Adalbert* (1985)  
*Big Al* (1987)  
*Santa 'S Secret Helper* (1990)  
*Temple Cat* (1991)  
*Billy and the Bad Teacher* (1992)  
*Bright Christmas: An Angel Remembers* (1996)  
*Frindle* (1996)  
*Double Trouble in Walla Walla* (1997)  
*The Landry News* (1999)  
*Workshop* (1999)  
*The Janitor 's Boy* (2000)  
*The School Story* (2001)  
*Air from Other Planets* (2001)  
*Big Al and Shrimpy* (2002)  
*The Jacket* (2002)  
*Things Not Seen* (2002)  
*A Week in the Woods* (2002)  
Real Monsters Series  
Jake Drake Series  
Lift-the-Flap Series  
Pets to the Rescue Series

### Audio book

*The Landry News* (2 cassettes, Listening Library)

## Bibliography

*Booklist*, June 15, 1999, p. 1828.  
*Bulletin of the Center for Children's Books*, June 1999, p. 346.  
*Christian Science Monitor* June 14, 1999, p. 21.  
*Contemporary Authors*, Vol. 171. Detroit: Gale, 1999.  
*Horn Book*, July 1, 1999, pp. 462-63.  
*Library Journal*, Dec. 1, 1999.  
Lodge, Sally, "Andrew Clements," *Publishers Weekly*, April 1, 2002, p. 25.  
*New York Times Book Review*, Oct. 17, 1999, p. 30.  
*Publishers Weekly*, June 7, 1999, p. 83.  
Rockman, Connie C., ed. *Eighth Book of Junior Authors and illustrators*. NY: H.W. Wilson Co., 2000.  
*School Library Journal*, July 1, 1999, p.95.  
*Something About the Author* Vol. 104. Detroit: Gale, 1999.  
"Clements, Andrew": <[www.edupaperback.org/author-bios/Clements\\_Andrew.html](http://www.edupaperback.org/author-bios/Clements_Andrew.html)>  
"Interview with Andrew Clements":

<[www.ksu.edu/english/lnelp/clements/](http://www.ksu.edu/english/lnelp/clements/)>

## General Objectives

1. To analyze the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution and the issue of freedom of the press
2. To examine the ways in which a newspaper can be negative, positive, and/or neutral
3. To discuss common reactions among children to their parents divorce
4. To consider the process of teacher burnout, and reasons why this may occur
5. To explore various methods of teaching and various ways of learning
6. To consider the mutual benefits of student-teacher relationships
7. To become aware of the phenomenon of the media blitz
8. To understand typical structure, rules, and policies of a school system

## Specific Objectives

1. To identify and understand Cara's previous problems with vindictive journalism
2. To analyze the motto Cara gives to her newspapers, "Truth With Mercy"
3. To trace the changes in both Mr. Larson and Cara that *The Landry News* sparks
4. To identify the ways in which *The Landry News* changes from its first edition, and the ways in which *The Guardian* is different from the News
5. To examine the differences between Mr. Larson and Dr. Barnes
6. To analyze the appropriateness of *The Guardian's* name
7. To explain Cara's concept of the "heart" of a newspaper
8. To identify the various points of view from which the novel is told

## Literary Terms and Applications

To enhance students' appreciation and understanding of the novel, present them with these terms.

**Climax:** the moment in a novel when the action reaches its greatest intensity and a crisis is resolved. In this novel, the climax occurs in the last chapter, when Mr. Larson defends himself at the disciplinary hearing and is vindicated.

**Conflict:** the opposition of two forces or characters in a literary work. In this novel, the student staff and teacher

sponsor of *The Landry News* are in conflict with Dr. Barnes, the principal, over the issue of freedom of the press, and Dr. Barnes is in particular conflict with Mr. Larson, seeking for a way to fire the teacher or force him to retire. Cara has previously been in conflict with the outside world due to her anger about her parents' divorce, and now she still fights down her habit of lashing out verbally.

**Editorial:** a newspaper or magazine article that gives the opinions of the editors or publishers. Cara writes an editorial for each issue of *The Landry News*, and she most enjoys the editorial sections of other newspapers.

**Journalism:** writing for publication in a newspaper or popular magazine, especially such writing characterized by a direct presentation of facts or description of events without interpretation or opinion. The novel's descriptions of the activities of Cara and her classmates in putting together *The Landry News*, and the classroom discussions Mr. Larson conducts, teach readers a lot about journalism.

**Point of view:** the perspective from which a story is told. This novel is told from three main points of view: Cara's, Mr. Larson's, and Dr. Barnes's, using third-person narration. The narration reveals the narrators' feelings and thoughts as well as their actions. We learn about other characters' feelings and reactions through their actions and dialogue and, in a few instances, from a brief glimpse into their point of view.

## The Importance of Setting

The main setting of this novel is Denton Elementary School in the fictional town of Carlton, Illinois, near Chicago. The school's focal point in the novel is Mr. Larson's room, "a giant educational glacier, with layer upon layer of accumulated materials." The room is stuffed with old newspapers, magazines, books, maps, clippings, historical documents, charts, and bulletin boards layered with articles, posters, and illustrations. Chaos often rules in room 145, where the children learn on their own, until Mr. Larson resumes his role as involved teacher. Most of *The Landry News* is planned and written in this room.

Also important is the school's resource center, where Joey, Ed, Cara, and other helpers use the printer, scanner, and computers to create the published version of the News. The principal's office is the scene of two conferences, one between Dr. Barnes and Mr. Larson and the other between Dr. Barnes and Cara. This office reflects Dr. Barnes's personality and priorities: it is orderly, and filled with signs of his accomplishments.

Outside of Denton Elementary, Cara first makes friends with classmates on the school bus, has heart-to-heart talks with her mother in their small apartment, and watches as Mr. Larson successfully defends himself at the disciplinary hearing at the packed auditorium.

## Cross-Curricular Sources

### Fiction

Avi, *Nothing But the Truth*  
Judy Blume, *It's Not the End of the World*  
Ellen Conford, *Dear Lovey Hart, I Am Desperate*  
Roald Dahl, *Matilda*  
Paula Danziger, *The Cat Ate My Gymsuit*  
Louise Fitzhugh, *Harriet the Spy* and *The Long Secret*  
Patricia Reilly Giff, *Fourth Grade Celebrity* and *Rat Teeth*  
Johanna Hurwitz, *Class Clown*  
Elizabeth Levy, *Keep Ms. Sugarman in the Fourth Grade*  
Colleen O'Shaughnessy McKenna, *Live from the Fifth Grade*  
Barbara Park, *Don't Make Me Smile*  
Louis Sachar, *Wayside School Is Falling Down* (and sequels)  
Paul Zindel, *Attack of the Killer Fishsticks*

### Nonfiction

Peggy Burns, *News*  
Meish Goldish, *Our Supreme Court*  
R. Conrad Stein, *The Bill of Rights and Powers of the Supreme Court*  
Martha Wickenden, *A Day in the Life of a Newspaper Reporter*

### CD-ROMs

*Island Reading Journey* (Sunburst)  
*JumpStart Adventures 4th Grade 2000* (Knowledge Adventure) *Kids Mensa* (Voyager/Learn Technologies Interactive/Grolier) **Internet**

"Crayon" (custom newspaper): <crayon.net/> "FACT: First Amendment Cyber-Tribune":

<w3.thb.com/FACT/>

"Kids Report" (on-line newspaper):

<www.kidsreport.com> "Newseum, the Interactive Museum of News":

<www.newseum.org/>

"The U.S. Constitution": <www.usconstitution.net/>

### Internet

"Andrew Clements":

<www.readin.org/authors/author\_pages/Clements/andrew\_clements.htm>

"Clements, Andrew": <www.edupaperback.org/author-bios/ClementsAndrew.html>

"Interview with Andrew Clements":

<www.ksu.edu/english/help/clements/>

"Meet Andrew Clements":

<www.eduplace.com/kids/fhmr/mtailclements.html>

### Video/DVD

*Advertising & Journalism: Inform or Influence* (Learning Matters)

*Conflict at School: Dealing with Adults* (Sunburst)

*Integrity Matters: Responsibility* (Television Production Group)

*NewsKids: Learning Hot Off the Press* (Optical Data)

## Themes and Motifs

A study of the central issues and situations in *The Landry News* should include these aspects.

### Themes

- . First Amendment and freedom of the press
- . "truth and mercy" in journalism
- . effects of divorce on children
- . teacher burnout
- . teaching methods and ways of learning
- . mutual benefits of student-teacher relationships

### Motifs

- . administrator-teacher differences
- . school system structure
- . plaid skirt, white blouse
- . vindictive journalism
- . media blitzes and biases

## Meaning Study

Below are words, phrases, or sentences that have a particular meaning in the novel. Explain each as it relates to the book. Use the page numbers given in parentheses to reread the term in context if you wish.

1. Mr. Larson said he believed in the open classroom. (Chapter 1, p. 3)  
*(In an open classroom, students do not sit quietly at their desks, lined up in neat rows, absorbing lessons*

presented to them by their teachers. Instead, they move around the worm, finding materials and information for themselves to complete activities, guided by their teachers. Some open classrooms are literally “open,” with walls between classes that are simply temporary partitions. Mr. Larson has taken the concept of the open classroom to an extreme, giving his students a task at the beginning of the class period, which the students complete entirely on their own while Mr. Larson sits at his desk reading the newspaper.)

2. The bulletin boards were like huge paper time warps—shaggy, colorful collages. (Chapter 1, p. 5) *(The bulletin boards are “time warps” because everything that has ever been posted on them remains, covered up by layer after layer of more recent postings. They resemble collages, artworks made by gluing different materials onto a picture surface.)*
3. Cara Landry, Editor in Chief (Chapter 2, p. 11) *(An editor is a person who helps direct the publication of a daily newspaper. The editor in chief is the head of an editorial staff. For this first edition of The Landry News, Cara calls herself “editor in chief,” even though she is the only member of the editorial staff. Later, when the News expands, Cara really is an “editor in chief” of a newspaper staff.)*
4. Every good journalist knows that circulation is important. (Chapter 8, p. 48) *(Cara is a journalist, writing for publication in a newspaper. She realizes her own newspaper, like other publications, needs good circulation numbers—the amount of copies of the paper distributed for each edition. Good circulation numbers mean lots of people are reading and, in the case of a commercial publication, paying for the paper; even more importantly for commercial publications, advertisers are willing to place ads—thereby paying for advertising space—because they know many people are reading the newspaper and will be seeing their ads.)*
5. “I have the requisition forms all ready for you to sign.” (Chapter 9, p. 53) *(A requisition form is a written request for something that is authorized but not available automatically. Mr. Larson has to sign a request form for the extra supplies needed to produce The Landry News.)*
6. ... a performance review. (Chapter 11, p. 65) *(In a performance review, a superior assesses how well an employee has done his or her job in the period since the previous review. At Denton Elementary, the principal evaluates each teacher at a meeting at the end of each school year. Mr. Larson’s file shows performance review assessments of poor or un-*

*ceptable for each of the seven years Dr. Barnes has been principal and evaluating Mr. Larson.)*

7. Ambition oozed from every photograph. (Chapter 13, p. 76) *(Mr. Larson sees the photographs showing Dr. Barnes with important people as an expression of the principal’s self-importance and evidence of his desire to advance his career through contacts with influential people.)*
8. Dr. Barnes was a good administrator. But Dr. Barnes was not a good teacher. (Chapter 13, p. 80) *(In a school, administrators manage and supervise the running of the school, while teachers instruct students directly. Mr. Larson is drawing a distinction between Dr. Barnes’s skills at running the school [good] and his effectiveness as a teacher [poor].)*
9. “This is a memorandum to the personnel file of Mr. Karl Larson.” (Chapter 13, p. 81) *(A personnel file contains records about an employee, including annual performance reviews [which we learned in Chapter 11 are poor and unacceptable for Mr. Larson] and memoranda to and about the employee. In this case, Dr. Barnes is creating a record of his meeting with Mr. Larson by placing a memo in Mr. Larson’s personnel file, documenting the fact that Mr. Larson is taking full responsibility for The Landry News.)*
10. The memo requested an emergency meeting concerning “a disciplinary proceeding against Mr. Karl Larson.” (Chapter 16, p. 99) *(A disciplinary hearing is held to decide if an employee should be corrected or punished for actions that may have violated the rules governing employees’ conduct or activity. Dr. Barnes requests an immediate disciplinary proceeding by the school board to determine that Mr. Larson violated school policy by allowing the divorce story to appear in The Landry News.)*

## Comprehension Study

Answer the following questions in your own words. There is not always a right answer. Your judgment is important, and you should be ready to defend your answers by referring to passages in the book.

### Questions 1-4 (Literal Level)

1. What problems did Cara have at her previous school, when she was in the fourth grade, and why? *(Last year, at the school in the town where she used to live, Cara produced her own newspaper and filled each issue with well-written articles that exposed the*

*weaknesses, foibles, and mistakes of her classmates and the school staff members. Many of the articles had a hateful tone, which was an expression of Cara's anger about her parents' recent breakup and divorce. Schoolmates, even those who had been friends, backed away from Cara, and she was called to many meetings with the school principal.)*

2. What kind of teacher was Mr. Larson about fifteen years ago? What kind of teacher has Mr. Larson been in recent years, before Cara's fifth-grade year? *(Mr. Larson used to be a dedicated, enthusiastic, effective teacher, as shown by his being named Teacher of the Year for three years in a row about fifteen years ago. But for the last ten years, Mr. Larson has been increasingly burned out. As a teacher, he has largely withdrawn from actual teaching. He simply gives his students an assignment at the beginning of the class period and leaves them to rummage through the educational materials jumbled around his room, while he sits at his desk, sips coffee, and reads the daily newspaper.)*
3. In what ways does *The Landry News* change from Cara's first Denton Elementary edition to the ninth edition that gets Mr. Larson in trouble? *(Cara's first edition of the News is a single page, created by hand, using neat block letters carefully drawn to look like newspaper type and arranged in headlines and columns like a real newspaper page. The second edition of the News is computer-designed and -printed, thanks to the computer skills of Joey and Ed; it is still one page, but the kids print and distribute seventy-five copies of it. Cara's enthusiastic classmates pitch in to add more features to the third edition of the News. By the fourth edition, these features have caused the paper to be printed on both sides of the page. From the fifth edition on, the News has two sheets, each printed on both sides, with a wide variety of features written by many different students.)*
4. In what ways is *The Guardian* different from *The Landry News*? *(The Landry News was written, assembled, and produced during school on school property, using school equipment and supplies. The Guardian is written, assembled, and produced outside of school, using private facilities and privately owned equipment and supplies. The Landry News was distributed to students by other students during school hours on school property. The Guardian is distributed by kids to their friends on private property outside of school hours. The Landry News was supervised and reviewed by Mr. Larson. The Guardian is*

*created and produced with no adult involvement at all.)*

## Questions 5-8 (Interpretive Level)

5. What effect does Cara's editorial about Mr. Larson have? *(At first, the editorial makes Mr. Larson very angry. But as he stewes and thinks about the editorial over the weekend, he finally admits to himself that what Cara wrote is true. He has stopped being a good teacher; in fact, he has stopped being a teacher at all. So the editorial inspires Mr. Larson to reform himself and start involving himself in the classroom again. As for Cara, she becomes something of a celebrity; the editorial catches the attention of her classmates, who now begin noticing and interacting with Cara for the first time.)*
6. How does Cara change in the course of the novel? *(As the school year begins, Cara is a quiet loner barely noticed by her classmates. She likes being left alone, creating a private corner for herself in the back of Mr. Larson's room. The sensation she causes among her classmates with her editorial about Mr. Larson changes things. Classmates on the bus talk to her about the editorial, and Cara begins to make friends. Joey draws her into group interaction with his idea of using the school computers to produce *The Landry News*. By the time the third edition of the News comes out, Cara is a popular editor active in a circle of new friends, feeling useful, needed, and inclusive, enjoying the satisfaction of being part of a group working together effectively while having fun, and gaining recognition from students and teachers.)*
7. Compare Mr. Larson and Dr. Barnes. *(Mr. Larson is an unconventional teacher comfortable with a seemingly chaotic classroom, tolerant of disorder and willing to give students a lot of leeway to learn on their own (although he has taken this approach too far before *The Landry News* turns him back into an effective teacher). He also has little use for school rules and administrative procedures; he pays little attention to memos from Dr. Barnes— his focus is on his students.*

*Dr. Barnes is a striking contrast to Mr. Larson. He is a do-it-by-the-book administrator with a spotless, orderly office. His devotion is not to learning but to his own professional advancement; he is self-important, filling his office with framed diplomas and photographs of himself with prominent people, preferring that people call him "Dr. " or "Principal" Barnes, and communicating with his secretary by telephone even though she is only a few feet away. Dr. Barnes*



*lives for rules; Mr. Larson lives for results.)*

8. What does “Truth With Mercy” mean? Why does Cara adopt it as the motto of her newspapers?  
*(In the past, Cara practiced vindictive journalism. She told the truth as she saw it, in a mean-spirited way. Cara’s mother advises Cara to add some mercy to her truth-telling, to be sure not to tell the truth in a hateful way. Cara, who is no longer angry at the world, agrees this is a good idea, and she adds the motto to each newspaper)*

**Questions 9-11 (Critical Level)**

9. Why is *The Guardian* an appropriate name for the new newspaper?  
*(Answers may vary somewhat. The Guardian, in taking the place of The Landry News, is guarding the principle of freedom of the press. Dr. Barnes may have succeeded in stopping the News for the time being. But The Guardian carries on, so a student-created newspaper is still being published.)*
10. According to Cara, what is the “heart” of a newspaper? (Cara says a newspaper expresses its heart in its editorial section. Editorials help to show whether a newspaper means well, if it tries to tell the truth in a way that helps people understand things better—the hallmark of a “good-hearted” newspaper. Editorials also help to reveal if a newspaper tries to tell the truth in a way that hurts others; in this case, a newspaper is mean-hearted.)
11. From whose different points of view is this novel told? Identify examples of each.  
*(Examples will vary. The three main points of view are those of Cara, Mr. Larson, and Dr Barnes, with the impersonal narrator filling in the parts between. The novel opens with the impersonal narrator’s voice, describing Cara and then Mr. Larson, his teaching methods, and his unconventional classroom. This first chapter ends with a glimpse at Dr. Barnes’ view of Mr. Larson, and Cara’s personal preference for being left alone. Chapters 2 and 4 are written largely from Mr. Larson’s point of view, Chapters 5 and 6 from Cara’s, Chapter 11 from Dr. Barnes’s, and so on.)*

**Questions 12-13 (Creative Level)**

12. Write an article for *The Landry News* or *The Guardian* about the process and outcome of Mr. Larson’s disciplinary hearing.
13. Write one of Cara’s fourth-grade newspaper articles, the editorial “Let’s Chat about Fat,” or the story “Food Workers Perform Disappearing Act” (see

page 28 of the novel). First, write the article in Cara’s angry, lashing-out mode. Then rewrite the article following the “truth with mercy” motto.

**Across the Curriculum**

**Art**

1. Lay out a page of *The Landry News*.
2. Design the banner for *The Guardian*.
3. Draw a cartoon to be featured in *The Landry News*.

**History and Social Studies**

1. Research and report on a recent Supreme Court case that interests you. If the decision was not unanimous, summarize elements of both the majority decision and the dissenting arguments.
2. Find Chicago and Indianapolis on a U.S. map. How many miles will Cara have to travel to visit her father in Indianapolis? Create an itinerary for Cara to travel via airplane, bus, and train; include times of departure and arrival, and total cost of the trip.
3. As a member of a small group, study one of the constitutional Amendments that make up the Bill of Rights. Explain your Amendment and give examples of the actions it covers.
4. Dr. Barnes accuses Mr. Larson of “insensitivity to community values.” Explain what “community values” means in terms of the law.

**Journalism and Computer Skills**

1. Design and lay out the first page of a school newspaper. Choose type style and size for each element; set up columns; include banner, headlines, masthead, lead story, and secondary stories.
2. Use a scanner to add a photograph or artwork to your front page.

**Language Arts**

1. Read and report on the book Cara is reading in Mr. Larson’s classroom, *Incident at Hawk’s Hill*. What do you think Cara would like about this book?
2. Reread Ms. Steinert’s dialogue in Chapter 9 of the novel. Then rewrite a dialogue passage spoken by one of the novel’s other characters using Ms. Steinert’s style of high enthusiasm and italicized words.
3. With classmates, collect a sampling of editorials from recent newspapers. Then go through the exercise Mr. Larson leads for his class, identifying negative, positive, and neutral words in the various editorials.

4. The story that appears in *The Guardian* about the situation involving *The Landry News* is described as “honest” and “impartial” and following the paper’s motto of “Truth with Mercy.” Write a newspaper article about a controversial local or school situation that also is honest, impartial, and expresses truth with mercy.
5. Discuss with classmates other school-story novels you have read. Create a list of elements and themes you find in these novels.

## Mathematics

1. Keep track of the number of pages in your daily newspaper over the course of a week, including Sunday. Compare the numbers of pages per day, in absolute numbers and in percentages. What might account for differences?
2. Use your math skills to design your school newspaper for the Journalism and Computer Skills activity above. Select paper size, and then figure column widths and margins.

## Science

1. With classmates, design and construct a geodesic dome. If the dome is large enough, add mini science lessons to its segments, like the lesson-filled dome in Mr. Larson’s classroom.

Explain the physiology by which fear causes a dry mouth, cold sweat, and churning stomach.

## Student Involvement Activities

1. In a small group of schoolmates with similar experiences, overseen by an adult facilitator, discuss divorce and what you see as its effects on other family members, particularly kids.
2. Bring to class a newspaper or magazine, describe its features, and, from these, identify the “heart” of this publication.
3. Experiment with making Jell-O. Can it really be overcooked?
4. Draw up a list of instructions about how to care for a pet you have or would like to have, such as a cockatiel.

5. Find out what the policy is in your school or school system about censorship and responsibility for the contents of school newspaper(s).
6. With classmates, act out favorite scenes of the novel, such as Mr. Larson’s disciplinary hearing.
7. Research and report on the structure of your school system, including the school board, and the process for disciplining and dismissing a teacher.
8. Draw up a list of the responsibilities of a school administrator and of a teacher. Compare. Are there overlapping areas?

## Alternate Assessment

1. Conduct a Denton Elementary School hearing in which teachers, staff, and students present arguments for and against suppressing publication of *The Landry News*.
2. Create a chart detailing the many elements of a newspaper, and the staffers needed to get a paper to press and distributed.

## Vocabulary Test

Match each **boldfaced** word with its meaning listed below. Write the letter of the meaning in the space next to the sentence number.

- |                |                    |                    |                         |
|----------------|--------------------|--------------------|-------------------------|
| a. fierce      | f. with no bias    | k. impulsive       | p. kindness, compassion |
| b. not fitting | g. fearful person  | l. lost in thought | q. with all agreeing    |
| c. trembling   | h. utter confusion | m. very strange    | r. uncertainly          |
| d. cleared     | i. with disbelief  | n. basic nature    | s. refuse to accept     |
| e. breaks      | j. express regret  | o. hand out        | t. miserably poor       |

- \_\_\_ 1. "Don't worry, Mom," Cara said in an **absentminded** way, absorbed in her task.
- \_\_\_ 2. It was possible to live in Carlton for half a year and not know that Mr. Larson was a **lousy** teacher.
- \_\_\_ 3. Mr. Larson had taught himself how to ignore the **chaos** that erupted in his classroom every day.
- \_\_\_ 4. Cara became a **ferocious** reporter—aloof, remote, detached.
- \_\_\_ 5. "When you are publishing all that truth, just be sure there's some **mercy**, too."
- \_\_\_ 6. If Cara didn't go to class, then Mr. Larson would know she was a **coward**.
- \_\_\_ 7. Cara spoke carefully, at first with a little **tremor** in her hand.
- \_\_\_ 8. Mr. Larson wasn't mad at Cara, and she had gotten to **apologize** to him, sort of.
- \_\_\_ 9. "It's kind of **weird**, because now he knows that we're all thinking about what kind of a teacher he is."
- \_\_\_ 10. "Well . . . thank you, Cara," said Mr. Larson, **haltingly**.
- \_\_\_ 11. There has to be something that **violates** school policies or the law.
- \_\_\_ 12. **Neutral** words or phrases were a lot harder to find than negative or positive ones.
- \_\_\_ 13. "What are you doing?" Dr. Barnes asked **incredulously**.
- \_\_\_ 14. Cara had to **reject** whatever she didn't think would be right for *The Landry News*.
- \_\_\_ 15. "This boy has certainly caught the **essence** of a hard experience here."
- \_\_\_ 16. The letter charged Mr. Larson with "**inappropriate** use of school resources."
- \_\_\_ 17. The first edition of *The Guardian* had been ready to **distribute** Friday morning.
- \_\_\_ 18. The vote of support at the teachers' meeting was **unanimous**.
- \_\_\_ 19. The special edition had a single headline—LARSON IS **VINDICATED!**
- \_\_\_ 20. There was a **spontaneous** burst of applause.

## Comprehension Test A

### Part I: Matching (20 points)

Read each character description. In the list below, find the character who matches the description. Write the letter of the character in the space next to the description number. Use each name only once.

- |  |                   |
|--|-------------------|
| ____ 1. The school principal's secretary.                      | a. Cara Landry    |
| ____ 2. Loner, computer whiz, and sensitive writer.            | b. LeeAnn Ennis   |
| ____ 3. Desktop publishing ace.                                | c. Joey DeLucca   |
| ____ 4. Brainy loner and dedicated journalist.                 | d. Dr. Barnes     |
| ____ 5. Orange-haired TV reporter and interviewer.             | e. Joanna Landry  |
| ____ 6. Freshly divorced mother.                               | f. Ms. Steinert   |
| ____ 7. Cara's classmate, school bus pal, and new girl friend. | g. Mrs. Cormier   |
| ____ 8. Burned-out, then re-inspired, teacher.                 | h. Michael Morton |
| ____ 9. School resource center director.                       | i. Jordy Matlin   |
| ____ 10. Go-by-the-rules school principal.                     | j. Mr. Larson     |

### Part II: Fill-In (20 points)

Write one or two words in each blank to make each statement true.

1. This year, Cara is in the \_\_\_\_\_ grade.
2. Mr. Larson drinks \_\_\_\_\_ while he reads his newspaper at his classroom desk.
3. The town where Cara lives is part of the urban area of the city of \_\_\_\_\_, Illinois.
4. Both Cara and Michael Morton have been troubled in the past year by their parents' \_\_\_\_\_.
5. The motto of both of Cara's newspapers is "\_\_\_\_\_ With \_\_\_\_\_."
6. Cara says you can find the \_\_\_\_\_ of a newspaper in its editorials.
7. The First Amendment is part of the \_\_\_\_\_.
8. Mr. Larson's disciplinary hearing is held in the month of \_\_\_\_\_.
9. Michael Morton writes a story for *The Landry News* titled "\_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_."
10. The newspaper Cara and her friends produce outside the school is named \_\_\_\_\_.

### Part III: Multiple Choice (30 points)

Underline the choice that correctly completes each of these sentences.

1. Cara and her mother now live in the town of (**Williston, Canton, Indianapolis, Lakeside**).
2. Mr. Larson's classroom is (**the resource center, Room 53, the Green Room, Room 145**).
3. Cara publishes a story about a young student choking on overcooked (**Jell-O, pizza, custard, mashed potatoes**).
4. Mr. Larson won his Teacher of the Year awards about (**three, seven, fifteen, twenty-five**) years ago.
5. The section of a newspaper that reports deaths is called the (**classified, obituaries, leisure, travel**) section.
6. Joey produces the second edition of *The Landry News* using a (**computer, videotape, digital camera, printing press**).
7. A newspaper's title, running across the top of the front page, is called a (**headline, column, plug, banner**).
8. A review of how well a teacher does his or her job is called a (**disciplinary, teacher, performance, discovery**) review.
9. The situation with *The Landry News* raises the issue of freedom of (**the press, religion, assembly, thought**).
10. *The Landry News* is a (**daily, classroom, commercial, underground**) newspaper.
11. The (**principal, teachers' union, student body, school board**) has the power to fire Mr. Larson from his teaching job.
12. *The Guardian* has both a printed and a(n) (**Internet, hand-written, Braille, Spanish-language**) edition.
13. Mr. Larson's hearing is held in the (**high school auditorium, elementary school cafeteria, town hall, local court-**

house).

14. The school board president is (**Mr. Thomson, Ms. Clements, Mrs. Deopolis, Mr. Andrews**).

15. Mr. Larson's wife is a (**lawyer, teacher, nurse, pilot**).

**Part IV: Essay (30 points)**

Choose any two to answer. Write a paragraph for each.

1. What things do Dr. Barnes and Mr. Larson disagree about?
2. In what ways does *The Landry News* change from its first edition to its ninth edition?
3. What First Amendment issues does this novel explore?

## Comprehension Test B

### Part I: Matching (20 points)

Read each quotation. In the list below, find the character who spoke, wrote, or seemed to be saying the words. Write the letter of the character in the space next to the quotation number. You will use one name twice.

- a. Cara Landry                      c. Joey DeLucca    e. Joanna Landry                      g. Mrs. Deopolis                      i. Jordy Matlin  
b. LeeAnn Ennis                      d. Dr. Barnes                      f. Ms. Steinert                      h. Michael Morton                      j. Mr. Larson

- \_\_\_\_ 1. "You can make your newspaper on a computer, and then you can print up as many copies as you want. Simple."  
\_\_\_\_ 2. "Now Cara, tell our viewers, was it your teacher or your principal who got you in trouble about this newspaper?"  
\_\_\_\_ 3. "Cara, honey, you *promised* you wouldn't start that again. Didn't you learn one little thing from the last time?"  
\_\_\_\_ 4. "I appreciate your talking to me about it, but that's a decision that the editor in chief should make."  
\_\_\_\_ 5. "I can't believe you wrote that, Cara! Oh . . . you know, I don't think we ever met, but I'm in Mr. Larson's class with you."  
\_\_\_\_ 6. "We members of the board feel that by allowing this story to be published, Mr. Larson made a very serious error in judgment."  
\_\_\_\_ 7. "I *like* being a reporter. It's something I'm *good* at."  
\_\_\_\_ 8. "It's *such* a good idea, and your students are *sooo excited* about it."  
\_\_\_\_ 9. "You're *supposed* to get your mail every morning, you know. Your mailbox is an important channel of faculty communication."  
\_\_\_\_ 10. "When I heard that my parents were getting divorced, the first thing I did was run to my room, grab my baseball bat, and pound all my Little League trophies into bits."

### Part II: Short Answer (20 points)

Write a one- or two- or three-word answer to each of the following questions.

1. Who is the author of this book? \_\_\_\_\_.  
2. What grade was Cara in last year? \_\_\_\_\_.  
3. What is the name of Cara's elementary school? \_\_\_\_\_.  
4. What is the name of Cara's classroom newspaper? \_\_\_\_\_.  
5. In which month does the first edition of Cara's classroom newspaper appear? \_\_\_\_\_.  
6. What is Mr. Larson's favorite section of the Chicago newspaper? \_\_\_\_\_.  
7. In which section of a newspaper do the paper's editors express their opinions? \_\_\_\_\_.  
8. What is Cara's job title on the newspaper? \_\_\_\_\_.  
9. What award did Mr. Larson win three times many years ago? \_\_\_\_\_ of the \_\_\_\_\_.  
10. Which Amendment to the U.S. Constitution guarantees freedom of the press? \_\_\_\_\_.

### Part III: Multiple Choice (30 points)

Underline the choice that correctly completes each of these sentences.

1. The first edition of *The Landry News* appears on the (**Internet, school bus, bulletin board, required reading list**).  
2. Cara's career choice is to be a(n) (**journalist, astronaut, teacher, librarian**).  
3. Cara's mother reads a verse about truth and mercy from the (**newspaper, cookbook, Qur'an, Bible**).  
4. Cara loves to read the *Chicago* (**Times, Tribune, Leader Patriot**).  
5. Mr. Larson gives Joey and Cara permission to work on "a project" in the (**gym, resource center, down-town library, science lab**).  
6. "Ninety point" refers to (**type style, the newspaper's score, paper size, type size**).  
7. Joey uses a (**scanner, overhead projector, transparency, darkroom**) to add a photograph to the newspaper.  
8. *The Landry News* reports that (**Jell-O, pizza, creamed corn, fried chicken**) is the students' least-favorite cafeteria

food.

9. Mr. Larson's performance review folder is full of (**fair, outstanding, poor, missing**) assessments.

10. Dr. Barnes has a(n) (**R.N., L.L.D., G.E.D., Ed.D.**) degree.

11. *Hazelwood* is a U.S. (**Congress, Supreme Court, District Court, President's**) decision.

12. Dr. Barnes says *The Landry News* is a (**school, classroom, vicious, illegal**) newspaper.

13. Mr. Larson is called before the school board for a (**hiring, promotion, grievance, disciplinary**) proceeding.

14. Cara's full interview with Jordy Matlin appears in/on (**the local newspapers, the Internet, TV, The Landry News**).

15. At Mr. Larson's hearing, (**Cara, Mr. Larson, Dr. Barnes, Michael Morton**) reads the "Lost and Found" story aloud.

### Part IV: Essay (30 points)

Choose any two to answer. Write a paragraph for each.

1. Why does Cara make "Truth With Mercy" the motto of both of her newspapers?

2. How does *The Landry News* change Cara from being a loner?

3. What are the differences among a school newspaper, a classroom newspaper, and an independent newspaper, as expressed in the novel?

## Answer Key

### VOCABULARY TEST

- |      |       |       |       |
|------|-------|-------|-------|
| 1. l | 6. g  | 11. e | 16. b |
| 2. t | 7. c  | 12. f | 17. o |
| 3. h | 8. j  | 13. l | 18. q |
| 4. a | 9. m  | 14. s | 19. d |
| 5. p | 10. r | 15. n | 20. k |

### COMPREHENSION TEST A

#### Part I: Matching (20 points)

- |      |       |
|------|-------|
| 1. g | 6. e  |
| 2. h | 7. b  |
| 3. c | 8. j  |
| 4. a | 9. f  |
| 5. l | 10. d |

#### Part II: Fill-In (20 points)

- |                 |                         |
|-----------------|-------------------------|
| 1. fifth        | 6. heart                |
| 2. coffee       | 7. (U.S.) Constitution  |
| 3. Chicago      | 8. December             |
| 4. divorce      | 9. Lost, Found          |
| 5. Truth, Mercy | 10. <i>The Guardian</i> |

#### Part III: Multiple Choice (30 points)

- |                |                            |
|----------------|----------------------------|
| 1. Carlton     | 9. the press               |
| 2. Room 145    | 10. classroom              |
| 3. Jell-O      | 11. school board           |
| 4. fifteen     | 12. Internet               |
| 5. obituaries  | 13. high school auditorium |
| 6. computer    | 14. Mrs. Deopolis          |
| 7. banner      | 15. teacher                |
| 8. performance |                            |

### Part IV: Essay (30 points)

Answers will vary.

### COMPREHENSION TEST B

#### Part I: Matching (20 points)

- |      |       |
|------|-------|
| 1. c | 6. g  |
| 2. l | 7. a  |
| 3. e | 8. f  |
| 4. j | 9. d  |
| 5. b | 10. h |

#### Part II: Short Answer (20 points)

- |                           |                    |
|---------------------------|--------------------|
| 1. Andrew Clements        | 6. sports          |
| 2. fourth                 | 7. editorials      |
| 3. Denton                 | 8. editor in chief |
| 4. <i>The Landry News</i> | 9. Teacher, Year   |
| 5. October                | 10. First          |

#### Part III: Multiple Choice (30 points)

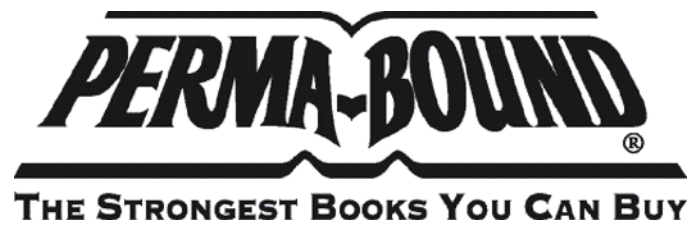
- |                    |                    |
|--------------------|--------------------|
| 1. bulletin board  | 9. poor            |
| 2. journalist      | 10. Ed.D.          |
| 3. Bible           | 11. Supreme Court  |
| 4. <i>Tribune</i>  | 12. school         |
| 5. resource center | 13. disciplinary   |
| 6. type size       | 14. TV             |
| 7. scanner         | 15. Michael Morton |
| 8. creamed corn    |                    |

#### Part IV: Essay (30 points)

Answers will vary.







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