

Homework Packet 8-21-12 (Due 8-25-12)

Name _____

- Write a biography, using the outline you have created from the information on the “Meet Me” poster. Your biography should follow the Bing-Bang-Bongo essay format.
- Read “Catalina’s Pigeon Express” answering all of the attached questions.
- **WATCH A TELEVISION SHOW OR MOVIE, OF YOUR CHOICE AND COMPLETE THE ATTACHED PLOT DIAGRAM & CONFLICT CHART.**

Name _____

Topic

Subtopics

Bing _____

1

2

3

Bang _____

1

2

3

Bongo _____

1

2

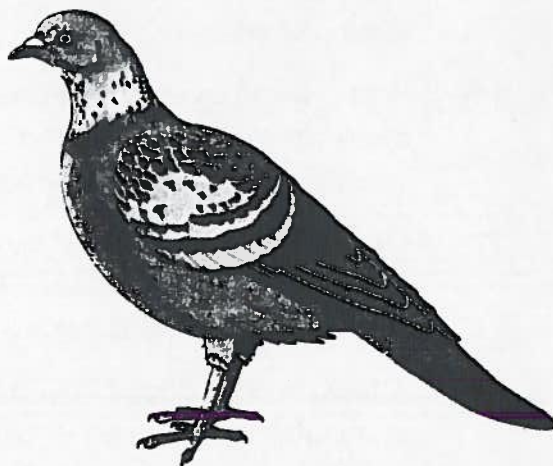
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Directions: Read the following passage. Then answer the questions that follow.

Catalina's Pigeon Express

by Richard Bauman

- 1 Even before the invention of the airplane, a unique kind of airmail service was in full swing between Santa Catalina Island and Los Angeles on the California mainland.
- 2 In 1894, Catalina was an island mecca for the social elite. Wealthy people from all over California called the island home between June and September every year. They could be found sunning themselves on Catalina's beaches, sipping cocktails on pleasure boats anchored in Avalon Harbor, playing golf, or partaking of other resort activities.
- 3 While island access was reasonably easy via the steamship *Hermosa*, rapid communication between island and mainland was another matter. The radio hadn't yet been invented, and neither telegraph nor telephone cable spanned the channel. If there was desperate need to contact Los Angeles from Catalina, or vice versa, it took a boat several hours to travel the twenty-five-mile San Pedro Channel.
- 4 Some vacationers relished Catalina's isolation. On the other hand, those trying to keep tabs on the stock market, their business, or world affairs weren't thrilled with such seclusion.
- 5 Then along came Otto Zahn, with his radical idea of starting an airmail service—the Pigeon Express.
- 6 Zahn owned seventy-five homing pigeons that he could train to fly messages back and forth between Avalon and Los Angeles. As bizarre as the idea sounds, it was a viable concept.
- 7 Knowing that the Western Union Telegraph Company had no intentions of connecting its services to Catalina in the foreseeable future, Otto met with Hancock Banning, then owner of Catalina Island. Banning agreed to build Otto an office and pigeon loft on the wharf at Avalon. In return, Otto would train his pigeons to fly from Los Angeles to Catalina and back again, carrying messages both ways.



- 8 When Otto arrived on Catalina on 12 July 1894 with dozens of trained pigeons in cages, he was greeted by hundreds of vacationers eager to send messages home.
- 9 The Pigeon Express fascinated nearly everyone. Otto was inundated with questions as he handed out fliers about his airmail service. "There will be two scheduled flights a day," he said. "I will use no less than two pigeons per flight, and as many as four, depending on how many messages there are."
- 10 How much did it cost to send a message on the Pigeon Express? There were two prices. Messages sent on morning flights cost a dollar each. Missives flying in the afternoon traveled for just fifty cents. Afternoon flights cost less because they were subsidized by the Los Angeles Times, which had hired Otto's pigeons to fly dispatches of social news from Avalon to Los Angeles during the vacation season.
- 11 Dispatches had to be penned on special, ultralight onionskin forms that were three and three-fourths inches by two and one-half inches. There was no limit on the number of words, but each form constituted a single message. The onionskin forms were folded lengthwise into half-inch-wide strips, then wrapped around a pigeon's legs and tied in place. One bird could carry twenty to thirty messages.
- 12 Zahn had planned to use just two birds on the inaugural flight, but nearly everybody in Avalon wanted to send a message to the mainland. He added two more birds to meet customer demand.
- 13 Zahn's favorite pigeon, Orlando, was leader of the first flight. Even though it was a gray, overcast morning, all of Avalon stood shivering at dockside, eager to witness the maiden flight of the Pigeon Express.
- 14 When Otto released his pigeons, they circled Avalon once, flying several hundred feet above the town. Then they abruptly turned toward Los Angeles and disappeared into the gray, overcast morning.
- 15 In Los Angeles, Oswald Zahn, one of Otto's brothers, kept a nervous vigil, peering into the mist, hoping for a glimpse of Orlando and the other birds. It was nearly 10:30 a.m., and Oswald reckoned the pigeons should be swooping into the loft within a minute or two.
- 16 Had Oswald been a nail-biter, he would have chewed off his fingertips waiting. The clock struck 11:00 a.m., and the loft was still bare. If Otto had launched the birds as scheduled at 9:30, they should have landed by now.
- 17 Oswald reassured himself by reminding Lorenzo, his younger brother, that Orlando was smart and resourceful. "He probably flew above the overcast," Oswald explained again and again, "so he could find his way back home."
- 18 A few minutes after 11:00, a bell rang in the loft. Orlando had arrived! A couple of minutes later, the other birds flew in, ringing the bell and registering their arrival.

times. Heavy clouds and fog had slowed them down, obscuring the landmarks they relied on for navigation.

- 19 Oswald and Lorenzo quickly unwrapped and sorted the messages. Two had out-of-town destinations and were telegraphed to their recipients. The other message slips were put into envelopes, which Lorenzo delivered by bicycle.
- 20 As guests on Catalina settled into a routine of sending messages, Otto followed an unwavering system. He collected his "airmail" from a special box in front of Catalina's premier hotel. He wrapped messages around the legs of his pigeons and sent them heading for Los Angeles exactly on schedule.
- 21 Most of his messages were nothing but social banter, but occasionally the pigeons were used for emergency flights. It took a boat at least three hours to make the trip to the mainland, while a pigeon could cover the distance in less than an hour.
- 22 Pigeons were used to summon doctors in emergency situations. One time a bird even called the police to Catalina. A wanted man was spotted operating Avalon's target-shooting concession. Deputy sheriffs hurried to the island and easily arrested the ne'er-do-well.
- 23 The Pigeon Express operated between Catalina and Los Angeles until 1898. While the birds were faster at crossing the channel than steamships and private boats, they couldn't outrace radio waves. Guglielmo Marconi's invention of the wireless radio ultimately grounded the Pigeon Express. But during its heyday, when Otto Zahn's airmail service made several hundred flights across the channel, his pigeons never failed to reach their destination.

Lesson 1**Use Context Clues**

1. Read the paragraph below.

Some vacationers relished Catalina's isolation. On the other hand, those trying to keep tabs on the stock market, their business, or world affairs weren't thrilled with such seclusion.

Which word in this paragraph is a synonym for *seclusion*?
Use **both** words in a sentence.

2. Read this sentence from the article.

As bizarre as the idea sounds, it was a viable concept.

Which word provides a contrast that helps you understand the meaning of *viable*? What is a synonym for *viable*?

**Ohio
Achievement
Practice**

Use the passage to answer questions 1 – 6.

1. "In 1894, Catalina was an island mecca for the social **elite**. Wealthy people from all over California called the island home."

Which word in this passage best helps you figure out the meaning of **elite**?

- A. island
B. mecca
C. wealthy
D. home
2. "Messages sent on morning flights cost a dollar each. **Missives** flying in the afternoon traveled for just fifty cents."

What does **missive** mean in the second sentence above?

- A. a kind of letter
B. a type of bird
C. an amount of money
D. a time of day
3. "In Los Angeles, Oswald Zahn, one of Otto's brothers, kept a nervous **vigil**, peering into the mist, hoping for a glimpse of Oriando and the other birds."

Which phrase best describes what someone does during a **vigil**?

- A. gets upset
B. eats breakfast
C. falls asleep
D. keeps watch

4. "Heavy clouds and fog had slowed them down, **obscuring** the landmarks they relied on for navigation."

What does **obscuring** mean in the sentence above?

- A. making easier to see
B. hiding from view
C. reducing in size
D. raining upon

5. "As guests on Catalina settled into a routine of sending messages, Otto followed an **unwavering** system. He collected his 'airmail' from a special box in front of Catalina's premier hotel. He wrapped messages around the legs of his pigeons and sent them heading for Los Angeles exactly on schedule."

Which phrase in this passage provides the best context clue for **unwavering**?

- A. settled into a routine
B. sending messages
C. premier hotel
D. exactly on schedule

6. What are some reasons the Pigeon Express became a popular means of communication? What factors led to the eventual ending of the service. Use examples from the text and your own ideas to support your response.

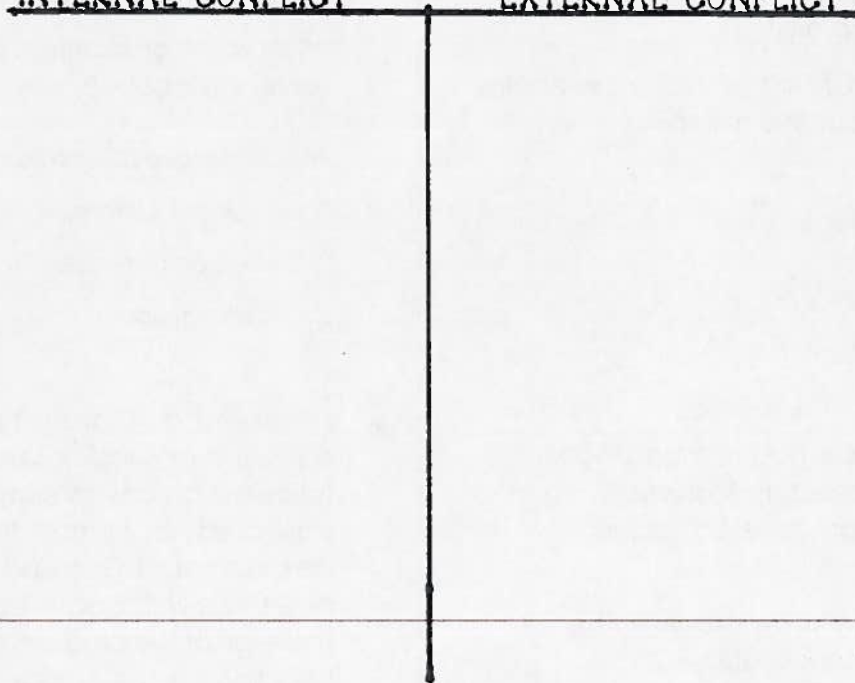


Write your response on a separate sheet of paper.

CONFLICT CHART

Main character's name _____

INTERNAL CONFLICT EXTERNAL CONFLICT



Plot diagram