

Skill: Identify/Classify Sequence 7th Grade Assessment

NONFICTION: Today's Telephone

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Today's telephone has a long history as a part of American technology. It is American because an American, Alexander Graham Bell, invented it. The story begins very long ago, when there were no telephones. The only way to get a message to someone else was to write it and send it. Long ago there were messengers who traveled on foot. They were people who would run from place to place, transporting messages to other people. They would run miles, and they had great endurance. Later, communications improved in that people would send letters that traveled by wagons. In time, the mail would travel by train.

After the invention of a new communications tool, people could send messages quickly. That tool was the telegraph, which used a line that went from one place to another. It took years to put all the telegraph lines across America. At one end of the line a person used a device to send a message by code. At the other end, the message would be received and translated by another person. With those telegraph lines people could send messages almost immediately, although it was not "person to person." The telegraph was a remarkable invention, but it did not let people talk to each other.

The telegraph meant the end of the pony express, which had been an American invention of another sort. The pony express involved riders who would carry a bag of mail from one place to another riding quickly on horses. It was like a relay race. Those riders were replaced by telegraph operators. They had to know the code to get the messages across the wires. On one end of the telegraph, an operator clicked the message. On the other end, a machine would make the same clicks. At first, a person had to listen and note what the clicks said. But then they figured out how to make the machine record them.

Still, there was no telephone. Then Alexander Graham Bell invented it. He tried many ways to get a machine that would work, and he was persistent because he failed many times. After many attempts, he perfected the machine. Once he had done that, the world all wanted telephones.

The next changes for the telephone were the same as the telegraph. People had to put in all those lines. If you see a picture of Chicago in 1900 you will see lots of wires downtown. The first telephone lines went from one person's phone to another. Those were called landlines. Then they added what were called switching stations, so one line could reach more than one place. Still, it would take years to get the phone system to work more efficiently.

Today there are cell phones, which do not need wires. They use signals that travel through the air, carried by systems that depend on the science of physics. Many people now do not have a landline any more, and just depend on their cell phone. The cell phone is changing communication and even impacting how people live. It can connect people through texts as well as voice. It can download music from the Internet. Some people even use their computers to talk to other people with video screens. Those are the latest innovations in communication. So the telephone is still changing.

Directions: Choose the best answer for each question

1. What was the first way people would get messages across a distance?

- a. telephones
- b. runner
- c. telegraph
- d. invention

2. What invention followed the telegraph?

- a. typewriter
- b. airplane
- c. television
- d. telephone

3. Which of these problems did the first telephones bring?

- a. too much talking
- b. too many wires
- c. landlines
- d. cell phones

4. What is changing telephones today?

- a. computers
- b. movies
- c. music
- d. landlines

5. *Write your own answer to this question.*

Make a sequence list. List the inventions on the way to today's cell phone.

TEACHER NOTES: Develop Students' Skills: Exercise Thinking

These questions have not been validated, so decisions about student's achievement should not be made based on their responses. They are intended to exercise skills. Recommended activities include: students work in pairs to choose the best response; give students the questions without the responses so they generate their own answers; students make up additional questions; students make up questions like these for another passage.

Answers: *You can remove this answer key and then give it to students and ask them to figure out the basis for the correct response.*

Item	1	2	3	4
Answer	b	d	b	a

Question 5 is open-ended. Here is a suggested response.

5. Student lists should include telegraph, telephone, and may include land-lines.

My uncle told me that long ago people used carrier pigeons to take messages to other people. He has some carrier pigeons, and he is proud of them. They live in a coop on the roof of his apartment building. They aren't everyday pigeons. They have been trained, and it's remarkable. I don't know how they do it, but they know where to take a message when he sends them out, and they never fail to return.

My uncle had carrier pigeons when he was a child, and he says that today he probably is one of just a few people who still have them. He grew up and went into the army, and he no longer had pigeons. Then he got a position working at a store, and he sent messages by computer. We imagined that he had forgotten about the carrier pigeons, since it was decades ago that he had them as a child.

He still has a computer--now he has it at home--but he always loved those carrier pigeons, and he wanted to have them again. So when he retired after working for four decades, he bought some pigeons and trained them himself.

Every day, my uncle writes a note to his sister and sends it by carrier pigeon. His sister lives on the south side, while my uncle resides on the west side. He tells his sister about his day in his notes. He says it's not urgent to tell her the news; he just likes using the carrier pigeons.

His sister thought this was silly. When the pigeon comes, she takes the note and reads it, but she does not send anything back. She says, "I don't want to touch those dirty birds. I don't know why you still want to keep them." Then the bird comes back to my uncle's coop without a return message.

One day there was a sudden rainstorm after the pigeon left my uncle's coop. It rained so hard and so long that everything was flooded. The pigeon did not come right back. My uncle was concerned about the pigeon, and he also worried about his sister. But then the pigeon came back, and it was very wet. It had a note in a plastic bag. The note said, "I am ok. I guess your pigeon is practical after all."

Later that summer, there was another problem. There was a power outage that lasted for two days. We did not have any telephone service. My uncle said, "See, pigeons can work all the time. They don't need electricity." He wrote that in a note, too. He tied that note to the pigeon. Then he sent that note to his sister.

About an hour later, the pigeon came back. It had another note on it. "You're right," it said. "I have learned that you can count on pigeons. But I still want my telephone back, and my air conditioner, too."

The phone lines were back the next day, but we were not worried about more power failures. We had insurance because we knew we could count on our pigeon express.

Directions: Choose the best answer for each question

6. What is the first thing that happens in the story?

- a. The uncle grows up.
- b. The uncle buys pigeons.
- c. The uncle sends notes.
- d. The aunt gets the message.

7. What happens after the big storm?

- a. The pigeon does not come back.
- b. There are no phones.
- c. There is a flood.
- d. There is a fire.

8. What happened when the power failed?

- a. They used candles.
- b. The phones did not work.
- c. The pigeon got lost.
- d. The storm came back.

9. What happened at the end of the story?

- a. The aunt got pigeons.
- b. The aunt learned about pigeons.
- c. The aunt moved.
- d. The aunt used the telephone.

10. *Write your own answer to this question.*

What happened while the pigeon was flying in the storm?

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Answers: *You can remove this answer key and then give it to students and ask them to figure out the basis for the correct response.*

Item	6	7	8	9
Answer	a	c	b	b

Question 10 is open-ended. Here is a suggested response.

10. It got wet. It brought back the message.