I wanted to show people how I felt about my new country. My family had moved here 5 years ago when I was just 7 years old. When we came I did not know any English. Everything was novel, and I was surprised every day. I had lived in a remote village far from the city. Now I was living in a city where there were so many people, every day was a discovery about living in an urban area in America.

We would take the elevated train downtown. There we viewed buildings that noted architects had designed. These architects were so famous that people all over the world knew their names, but I had never heard of them before. I looked up and was astonished at how immense the buildings were. I wondered how they had been constructed to reach what looked like a mile into the sky. Then I saw a construction site where I observed workmen putting up a steel framework, and I knew that the tall buildings had those strong frames.

I went to a school that was bigger than my whole village. More than 1,000 students go to the school. I remember my first day was full of trepidation. The principal was friendly, and the teacher was supportive, but I was mystified. I could not understand what the teacher and students were saying. Then another student came up to me during lunch. She said hello in Russian, and I was so glad to hear a familiar language from her that I felt much better.

The teacher arranged for her to sit next to me for the rest of the school year to help me comprehend what they were saying. I appreciated this special support, and she was my official translator. But I wanted to learn English; I wanted to be independent, so every day after school we would go to my home. She would help me learn English. To reciprocate, my mother would cook her family dinner. Once a week they would come to dinner and we would have long conversations. We would try hard to learn English, so instead of Russian everyone would converse in English.

Now I have learned English, and I have learned so much about the United States, and still I discover new insights all the time. I will put some symbols in my painting that show how I feel about this land. I want to communicate that it is a land of helpful people and a land of many heritages. It is a land of collaboration. People here work together to contribute to progress. I'm thinking of putting a flag in the background and then putting people holding hands in the foreground. I'll make a sketch first and then I will paint it.

Making a painting is a lot like writing an essay. First you think of the idea you want to express. Then you think of ways to communicate that idea. I think my painting will be a great way to tell people how I feel about my new homeland.
Infer Meaning of Word from Context – Fiction
Questions developed for Chicago Public Schools by CUE, 2009.

Choose the best answer for each question.

1. What does **remote** mean in the passage?
   a. small
   b. distant
   c. urban
   d. village

2. What does **noted** mean in the passage?
   a. architect
   b. famous
   c. urban
   d. surprising

3. What does **mystified** mean in the passage?
   a. learned
   b. smart
   c. ready
   d. confused

4. What does **reciprocate** mean in the passage?
   a. return
   b. remember
   c. respond
   d. recall

5. Write your own answer to this question. What does **express** mean in the passage? How do you know?

   ___________________________________________________________________
   ___________________________________________________________________
   ___________________________________________________________________
   ___________________________________________________________________

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.

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<td>Answer</td>
<td>b</td>
<td>b</td>
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<td>a</td>
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Question 5 is open-ended. Here is a suggested response.
Express means communicate. The meaning is clear because it is about how painting is like writing.