Trouble at the Plate

[Ten-year-old Jordan and his baseball coach are sitting in the bleachers after a game that Jordan's team has just lost to their league rival.]

Jordan: I don't know what happened. I just can't hit a curveball.

Coach Williams: Even some professional baseball players have a hard time hitting a curveball.

Jordan: [sadly] But I keep striking out against that pitcher, and it makes me feel like the worst player on the Mustangs!

Coach Williams: You're a talented player, and you've made some outstanding plays. But the only way to get better at hitting curveballs is to hit curveballs, and that means you need to meet me here tomorrow at four o'clock.

Jordan: I'll be here because I'm *not* going to let that pitcher get the best of me.

[The following afternoon Jordan stands at the plate, his shoulders slumped, his face

a study in frustration. Coach Williams is perched on the mound.]

Coach Williams: Remember to use your eyes and pay attention to where the pitcher places his fingers. When you see his fingers on the side of the ball, you'll know that he's about to throw a curveball.

[Coach Williams throws the pitch, and Jordan misses it.]

Jordan: This is totally impossible! We've been out here for an hour, and I haven't hit a single curveball.

Coach Williams: I know you're frustrated, but it's important that you keep practicing and don't give up. Hitting a curveball is a skill, and like any other skill it takes time to develop.



Jordan: You're right, but I don't get why this is so difficult.

[Coach Williams throws another pitch, and Jordan hits the ball on the ground.]

Coach Williams: That wasn't the greatest hit, but at least you made contact. Keep practicing on your own. Go to the batting cages every day before our next game. Instead of hitting 50 balls, I want you to hit 100 balls.

Jordan: I've never done that before, but if that's what I need to do to hit a curveball, I'll hit baseballs all day.

[It's Saturday, and Jordan is nervous about batting in the ninth inning of the game.]

Jordan: Coach, I've already struck out twice today and this is a close game. Maybe you should have Deandre hit in my place. I don't want to cost the team a victory today. [sighs]

Coach Williams: Jordan, you've demonstrated a lot of determination and perseverance this week, and I'm confident you can do this. Just remember to watch the ball, keep your swing level, and hit the ball at the last possible moment.

Jordan: You're right, Coach.
I can't give up now, not when
I've practiced so hard.

[The pitcher releases a curveball, and Jordan hammers it to left field.

Sometimes professional baseball teams have players use a curveball machine during batting practice.

DID YOU KNOW?

The following batter hits a homerun, and the Mustangs are victorious.]

Coach Williams: Your dedication and perseverance finally paid off!

Jordan: I'm so glad I listened to you and didn't give up. The Mustangs won—and I finally conquered the curveball! And I'll guarantee you one thing: That pitcher will never intimidate me again.



The Dress Disaster

[Sixteen-year-old Tameka models a beautiful gown for her mother and her sister Jalisa in their living room. Tameka smiles and turns in circles so they can admire the dress.]

Mother: Oh, Tameka, it's simply exquisite. With that dress and that tiara, you look like you stepped out of a fairy tale.

Jalisa: You look totally amazing! If you don't win first prize in tonight's costume contest, I'll be shocked.

Tameka: It's the most beautiful dress I've ever seen, and don't you love how it sparkles and moves when I twirl around?

[The back door opens and Tameka's brother, Marcus, enters, followed by their dog Bella who is covered in mud.]

Tameka: Marcus, why did you let Bella inside? If you don't get her out of here, she's gonna ruin my dress!

Mother: Marcus, what were you thinking?

Get Bella out of here *now*!

Marcus: I'm trying, Mom, but Bella's too strong for me. Besides, I didn't know there was a beauty pageant going on in our living room.

[The excited dog repeatedly jumps on Tameka, ripping the front of her dress and leaving brown streaks of mud on it. Marcus struggles to restrain Bella before he finally grabs the dog, drags her across the floor, and pushes her outside.]



Tameka: This is an absolute disaster! What am I going to do now? How can I go to the costume contest looking like *this*?

Mother: Oh, honey, I'm so sorry this happened, but we'll think of something, I just know we will.

Jalisa: You still look like a princess, Tameka, but instead of a fairy tale you look like you came from a horror story.

Tameka: This is no time for joking, Jalisa. I need to find a solution to this problem now.

Mother: Jalisa, you just gave me an idea. I think I know how we can turn around this disastrous situation. Tameka, follow me to the bathroom.

Tameka: Mom, I don't know what you have in

DID YOU KNOW?

Creative solutions to

common problems often lead to popular inventions. In 1904, an ice cream seller ran out of dishes. He saw a man selling waffles. The waffle maker rolled his waffles and offered them to hold the ice cream. That's how some of the first ice cream cones were born. mind, but I hope you have a magic wand in there because I don't know of anything else that can fix this dress. Brandon will be here any minute to pick me up, and I can't let him see me looking like this.

[The two women disappear and when they return Tameka has been transformed.]

Mother: Ladies and gentlemen, may I present Tameka, the zombie princess.

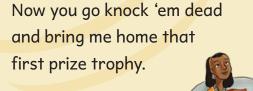
[Tameka appears, walking in a slow, stumbling way. Her tiara sits askew slightly messy hair and her makeup now makes her look like a zombie.]

Jalisa: I thought it would be impossible to fix this situation, but you actually did it. That's the perfect dress for a zombie princess.

Marcus: [laughing] Tameka, I actually think you look *better* as a zombie.

Tameka: Very funny, Marcus. But seriously, Mom, your creativity really saved the day. I can't thank you enough for what you did.

Mother: I'm glad I could help, honey.



Where's Whiskers?

[Ten-year-old Brandon is nervously pacing in front of his house when he sees his fifteen-year-old sister Madison approaching.]

Brandon: Madison, I'm so relieved to see you. I've got a problem, and I don't know what to do.

Madison: Calm down, Brandon. If we work together, I'm sure we'll be able to figure this out. Now tell me what happened.

Brandon: Well, you know that our neighbor Mrs. Takamatsu is on vacation for a few days, and I'm taking care of her cat,

Whiskers, while she's gone.

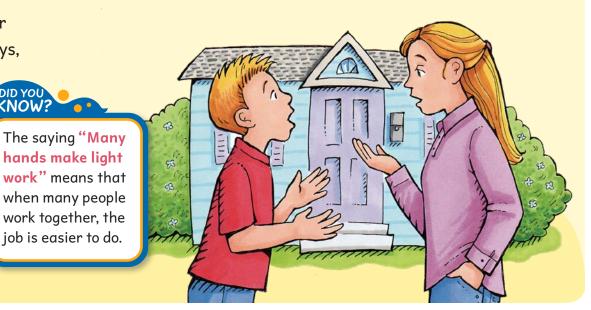
Madison: Yeah, I think Mom mentioned your pet-sitting job, but what is the problem?

Brandon: When I got home from school today, I went over to Mrs.

Takamatsu's house to feed Whiskers, just like I've done the last three days. But this time when I called for the cat, she never showed up. I've called and clapped and searched the whole front yard, but there's no sign of Whiskers. What am I going to do if I've lost Mrs. Takamatsu's cat?!

Madison: Maybe the cat was exploring the neighborhood and wasn't close enough to hear you call. Let's go next door and I'll help you look for Whiskers.

[Brandon and Madison spend several minutes looking under plants, calling the cat's name, and listening for the cat's meow, but there's no trace of the cat.]



Brandon: I can't find that cat anywhere! Maybe something happened to her while I was at school and she can't get back home.

Madison: Brandon, we can't give up or think the worst has happened just yet. Did you look for Whiskers in the backyard?

Brandon: No. There's a latch on the gate and I couldn't quite reach it.

Madison: I'll open the gate, and you bring Whiskers's food, a spoon, and a dish. Maybe if she knows it's dinnertime, she'll come out.

[After Madison unlatches the gate, they search the backyard, but again there is no sign of Whiskers.]

Brandon: Madison, this is terrible! What's Mrs. Takamatsu going to say when she gets home and discovers that her cat has disappeared?

Madison: We haven't tried the food, so don't give up yet, Brandon. I'll open the can of cat food while you tap the bowl with the spoon. Maybe the smell of the food and the noise will encourage Whiskers to emerge from her hiding spot.

[Brandon taps the bowl while Madison calls "Whiskers." Finally, there is a flurry of movement from the bushes and an orange tabby cat scampers towards them.]

Brandon: [elated] Look, Madison, there she is!

Madison: It looks like she was escaping from the afternoon sun by sleeping under those bushes.

I guarantee you she was here the whole time, but she didn't want to leave her hideout.

Brandon: I can't thank you enough for helping me find Whiskers, Madison.

Madison: I'm glad the situation wasn't as bad as you thought. Sometimes working together as a team makes it easier to solve a difficult problem. Now let's relocate Whiskers to the *front* yard.



The Pet Problem

[Ten-year-old Joshua is reading a book in the living room when he is startled by the sound of the sliding door banging shut. Joshua sees his father coming inside, obviously upset.]

Joshua: Hey Dad, I thought you were going to relax in the backyard, but that was the world's shortest nap!

Dad: I was looking forward to a nap in the hammock, but I was shocked to find it in shreds.

Joshua: How did that happen?

Dad: Well, why don't you come here to the window and take a look.

[Joshua walks over and looks into the backyard.

Joshua sees the hammock, ripped in half, the
remaining two pieces dangling from the hooks.

Joshua gasps when he sees his dog Apollo happily
chewing on a piece of fabric.]

Joshua: Apollo did it! But why would he chew up your hammock? He's got a zillion things to play with.

Dad: This isn't the first time Apollo has damaged something. Remember how Apollo dug up your mother's garden? I know you love Apollo, but we can't continue to let him destroy everything he sees. If we can't figure out how to keep Apollo from being so destructive, we'll have to find him another home.

Joshua: You can't give Apollo away! Besides, he's part of our family.



Dad: I like Apollo too, but I want to be able to relax in the backyard and not worry about which of my things he's going to rip apart next.

Joshua: I could tie Apollo to the tree in the backyard and then he won't be able to dig up or chew on anything.

Dad: Apollo can't stay tied up all the time. We need to talk to someone who knows a lot about dogs. If we talk to Apollo's vet, he might have some information that will help us solve this problem.

[Joshua and his father wait with Apollo inside an exam room at Dr. Hamilton's office. Apollo barks as the door opens and Dr. Hamilton enters.]

Dr. Hamilton: How can I help you today?



Dad: We've got a real problem. Apollo has been destroying everything in our backyard, and we need to find a way to stop this behavior.

Joshua: Apollo is the best dog in the world, and I don't want to send him away.

Dr. Hamilton: Apollo is a German shepherd and needs to stay active. He's probably bored. Try walking him for an hour at least two times a day and take him to a dog park for exercise. And train him so he learns what he can and can't do.

Dad: We'll follow your advice, Dr. Hamilton, and see what happens.

[One month later, Joshua plays with Apollo in the backyard while his dad swings in a new hammock.]

Joshua: Apollo has

Everyone, even the President of the United States, can benefit from **expert advice** when it comes to solving problems. The sixteen members of the Cabinet give the President advice on any subject he requires, including education, health, and transportation.

gotten so much better that I can't believe this is the same dog. I'm glad we talked to the vet.

Dad: I'm glad we found a solution to our pet problem, which means now I can relax in peace.



[Ten-year-old students Jeremy and Sophia approach Mrs. Hernandez, the school librarian, in a hallway. The students are confused by the sight of Mrs. Hernandez struggling to push a shopping cart loaded with books, books that look sopping wet.]

Jeremy: Hi, Mrs. Hernandez! I was going to say, "Good morning," but it looks like you've got a serious problem on your hands.

Mrs. Hernandez: [frowning] Oh, good morning. Unfortunately, you're right, Jeremy.

The school suffered a disaster last night.

Sophia: When you see wet books coming out of a library, you know something really bad must have happened.

KNOW?

The MLK Day of Service takes place in January and honors the birthday of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. During this national day of service, Americans of all ages come together to create solutions to serious national problems.

Jeremy: Yeah, I'm afraid to ask what happened.

Sophia: Me, too. I'm afraid to even glance inside that room because I know it must be bad.

[Jeremy and Sophia approach the door of the library and peer inside. They gasp at the scene before them: water dripping from shelves, wet magazines strewn across the floor, and shelves of books warped by water.]

Mrs. Hernandez: It breaks my heart to say this, but almost everything in the library was ruined.



Something set off the emergency fire sprinklers overnight, and the room was flooded. Our library had hundreds of books, and I cringe to think how much it will cost to replace so many resources.

Jeremy: What a disaster! So many students depend on this library. I come here all the time to gather information for reports, read magazines, and check out books.

Sophia: We keep hearing how tight school budgets are and how there is no money for anything extra. How is the school going to replace these books when we can't even purchase new playground equipment?

Mrs. Hernandez: Replacing the books is only part of the problem. The library will need new carpet, a new computer, and many other things.

Jeremy: This is a problem that affects all the students at our school, and I know many students will want to help find a solution.

Sophia: You're right, Jeremy, I know many kids will want to help. But what can kids do to solve this problem? How would we ever be able to raise enough money?

Jeremy: My teacher says that people can accomplish more when they work together. We need to let people know about this problem, and we need to figure out different ways that people can help.

Sophia: Yes, and we need to find creative ways for people to help. It's not just about raising money to buy books. I am sure there are many things students, parents, and people in the community can do to help.

Mrs. Hernandez: [smiling] I'm so glad you two want to help solve this problem. Let's talk to Principal Evans, and together we can brainstorm ideas and create a plan.

Jeremy: We won't let you down, Mrs. Hernandez.

Sophia: That's right!
We're the Lincoln Lions,
and we never give up
without a fight. We'll get
students to show their lion
pride and their love for
the library.



Student Response Sheet Individual Reading Name ____ Date 🦴 Key Question What are some ways people solve problems? On Your Own 1. Read the Key Question. Then read the story. Look for details in the story that help you answer the Key Question. Highlight these details. 2. Now look back at the story. Use the details you highlighted to describe the problem and solution in the chart below. Problem Solution 3. Think about the Key Question. Write your answer to the Key Question using the details you found in the story you read. **My First Answer**



Student Response Sheet Team Discussion

| Name . | Date |
|--------|------|
| | |



🦴 Key Question

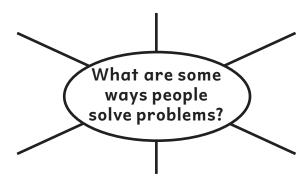
What are some ways people solve problems?

Share Your Ideas

Meet with your team. Talk about each story your team read.

- 1. Tell the team what happens in the story you read. Show the chart you made.
- **2.** Look at the charts your team made. Compare the details in each of your stories by looking at all the charts you made. Answer these questions together.
 - Why aren't the solutions in the stories all the same?
 - How are the solutions to the problems the same?

Next, write the details that answer the Key Question on the Idea Web. Write only the details that are in every story your team read.



Answer the Key Question

Review the details on your team's web. As a team, write an answer to the Key Question. Use details from the stories to support your answer.

What are some ways people solve problems?

Our Team's Answer

