

FASCINATING NEWS STORIES

A READING COMPREHENSION SKILL BUILDER



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illustrated by Gene Fuller

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Contents

<i>To the Teacher</i>	<i>iii</i>
<i>To the Student</i>	<i>vi</i>

Snake Attempts to Eat Master	1
Explorer's Lifetime Goals List: It's 108 Down, Only 19 to Go	5
How Celebrities Recall Their First Dates	11
A Book to Swat Roaches With: They May Be Brainless, But They're Not Stupid ...	15
A Former Beauty Queen: 'There's Life After Size 10'	19
Finding Those Fascinating Facts	25
Surprise Chess Contender: A 15-Year-Old Girl	29
The Little Cat That Could	35
The Sweet Art of Jellybean Mosaics	39
Echo: A Victim of Animal Abuse	45
Gains and Losses for American Women	50
The Care and Feeding of Superstitions	57
Collecting Garbage for Fun and Fame	61
Abie Nathan's War on War Toys	67
Getting It Stuck to You—And Loving It	70
Dick Gregory Starves to Aid Hunger Fight	77
A Food Sampler of Strange Things to Eat	83
A Noah's Ark Survival Plan for Imperiled Species	88
Charlie Parkhurst: The Stagecoach Driver with a Secret	94
Not Pretty at Any Speed: Being an Inspector at a Chicken-Cutting Plant	100
Andrew Hallidie—The Canny Cable Car Inventor	107
Julia Morgan: The Architect Behind the Castle	111
The Giants Are Going Home	117
Idiot Savant: The Extraordinary Sculpture of a Retarded Artist	121
New Delhi Is Talking About Child Marriage	127
Making Paper for Making Money	131
Man Returns After 76 Days on Raft	137
Postal Service for Civilian POW's in Germany	143
New York Subways	146
The Vultures Return to Gettysburg: A Local Legend and a Grim Reminder	153
Unsung Hero Keeps Dangerous Federal Highway Open	159
So You Want to Be a Santa Claus	165
ANSWERS	171

To the Teacher

Fascinating News Stories presents high-interest news stories from national wire services as well as regional newspapers and periodicals.

Reading comprehension questions accompany each article. The questions help students develop all of the major reading comprehension skills they need in order to become mature readers. The questions are grouped and clearly labeled according to the skills they help develop; thus, students can easily recognize the purpose of each set of questions.

THE SKILLS. For each article, there are questions that require the application of these three skills:

1. developing vocabulary knowledge, including the use of context in many cases;
2. achieving literal comprehension (remembering facts);
3. drawing implications (discussing reactions and insights).

In addition, clearly labeled sets of questions requiring the application of two or more of the subsequent skills follow each article:

4. identifying main ideas,
5. drawing inferences,
6. following structure and organization,
7. scanning the information,

8. identifying the sequence of events,
9. interpreting figures of speech,
10. identifying author's tone and purpose.

ORGANIZATION OF THE QUESTIONS. The Prereading Activities, which precede each article, are divided into three sections.

The first, "Making Predictions," asks students to use the title and their everyday knowledge in order to predict facts, points of view, etc., that they are likely to find in the article. This section helps students develop a purpose for reading. The first section of the Postreading Activities reminds students to check their predictions.

The second section of the Prereading Activities, "Understanding New Words," contains questions that promote vocabulary knowledge. In many cases, students are referred to the context of the article to derive meanings. Teachers may also wish to allow students to use dictionaries for this section.

The last Prereading Activities section, "Focusing Your Reading," suggests specific information that students should look for and evaluate while they read. The first question under "Discussing Your Reactions and Insights" after each article asks students for this information and their evaluation of it.

The Postreading Activities after each article also contain sets of questions that develop two or more of skills four through ten previously listed. The line numbers on the right margin of each news story will help students to answer many of these questions.

INTEGRATING READING AND WRITING SKILL DEVELOPMENT. This book was conceived and written to be a systematic aid in developing reading comprehension skill. However, the authors are acutely aware of the desirability and efficiency of using a set of stimulus materials to develop both reading and writing skills. Thus, the articles for *Fascinating News Stories* were selected and many of the reading comprehension questions were written with this possibility in mind.

By having students respond with complete sentences to the "Remembering Facts" questions, which follow each article, teachers can promote knowledge of sentence construction. The questions under "Discussing Your Insights and Reactions," which also follow each article, provide the stimuli for having students write a paragraph or two. These questions ask students to express their opinions regarding specific issues raised in the articles.

In those classes in which an integrated approach to reading and writing skill development will be employed, it is especially important to have students read the student introduction, "To The Student," which points out that their teacher may modify the directions for some sets of questions for this purpose.

WHEN AND WHERE TO USE THIS BOOK. This book is designed for use with secondary and junior college students who need additional practice in developing literal comprehension skills while developing mature interpretation and evaluation skills.

While you and your students use this book, you will notice the rich language used in many of the articles. You will also notice that the articles are not watered-down, simplified versions of stories so common in reading development aids. With *Fascinating News Stories* your students will be dealing with real-life examples of fine North American journalism.

To the Student

This book presents real-life news stories that we hope you will find fascinating.

Before each article there are Prereading Activities that will help you establish a purpose for reading, help you understand difficult vocabulary, and help you focus your reading so that you'll notice the most important aspects of each article. Careful attention to these Prereading Activities will help you get the most out of this book.

Each article is followed by a number of questions that will help you develop mature reading comprehension skills. The line numbers on the right margin of each news story will help you to answer many of these questions.

Before each set of questions are directions that tell you how to answer them. However, since your teacher is in the best position to know exactly which skills you need to develop, he or she may make modifications in the directions. For example, it may be possible to answer some questions in a single word, yet your teacher may ask you to respond in complete sentences in order to give you practice in sentence and paragraph composition. It is important for you to pay special attention to any supplementary instructions your teacher gives so that your work is complete and satisfactory.

We wish you success in building your reading and writing skills. We've tried to select stories that will make your efforts both fascinating and fun.

*Fred Pyrczak
Daniel Levine*

Prereading Activities
THE LITTLE CAT THAT COULD

Part A MAKING PREDICTIONS. You will be reading a true story that has the title given above. The cat was turned in to the animal shelter when she was a kitten because she “acted odd.” Use your hunches to predict what was so odd about her that her owners gave her to the shelter.

Part B UNDERSTANDING NEW WORDS. Find the following words in the story in the lines listed below. Do not read the entire story yet, just the paragraph in which each word appears. Try to determine the meanings of the words from the context. List the words on a separate piece of paper and define each.

- | | |
|---------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1. feline (line 11) | 5. accommodate (line 81) |
| 2. foster (line 23) | 6. compensate (lines 94-95) |
| 3. rehabilitate (line 29) | 7. impairments (line 95) |
| 4. predicament (line 73) | 8. anecdotes (line 114) |

Part C FOCUSING YOUR READING. Now read the entire story. While you read, think about whether you would want the cat described in the story as your own pet. Why?

THE LITTLE CAT THAT COULD

San Francisco, CA

The tiny ball of fur lay silently on the Shelter counter. At eight weeks old, she was the only kitten that “acts odd,” her owners explained. They knew there was something wrong with the animal, but with the mother and other kittens to worry about, the time and money for extensive care was unavailable. So she was given up at the San Francisco SPCA.*

Members of the Shelter staff and a concerned volunteer gathered round, hoping to find out what was so different about the little feline. She was very quiet. She looked healthy and purred happily when touched or held, but her responses to sound and moving objects were more than just slow—they were almost non-existent. Examinations and tests by SF/SPCA veterinarians revealed the source of the problem: the pretty brown and black tiger cat was deaf and blind.

With such serious disabilities, she might be difficult to place. No one could be certain if the kitten would ever adapt and adjust—even under the best of circumstances. She needed a foster parent, a person with lots of patience and love. Through the SF/SPCA’s Foster Care Program, volunteers, staff and other friends of the animals provide temporary refuge for Shelter guests needing extra help. This special care helps to rehabilitate animals recovering from surgery or undergoing medical treatment, and aids the young ones until they mature to an age where they can be placed in good, new homes. In the case of the deaf, blind feline, a temporary home was needed to determine whether the kitten could survive as a pet in a household environment. Although she couldn’t foster the little cat herself, Dixie Tracy-Kinney, an SF/SPCA Volun-

teer, was determined to find someone who could.

“There was something about her,” Dixie replies, when asked why she was drawn to this particular kitten. “She was so innocent and trusting.” Working desperately to find a foster home for “Helen Keller,” as the cat was now being called, Dixie posted flyers describing the handicapped feline all over the Pacific Telephone building where she worked. At first, much of the response was negative. “Everyone laughed at me—they told me I was crazy,” she remembers. But Maggie Sutton’s reaction to the flyer was different. A long-time animal lover, she was touched by Helen’s story and wanted to help. Maggie agreed to act as a temporary parent, to see if Helen could adapt to life without vision or hearing.

“She was very helpless at first,” Maggie recalls. “But after she became used to the house, you’d swear she wasn’t blind.” Helen was doing beautifully in her foster home, but before she was six months old, Maggie and her husband were forced to move to a house where pets were not allowed. The little deaf, blind feline would have to be given up again. Maggie couldn’t bear the thought of losing Helen, and asked her mother-in-law to take the little cat. Helen had proven that she could adjust to a regular home life, Maggie believed. All she needed now was a permanent place to do it in.

With four felines, a dog and a dove already in residence, the last thing Diana Sutton was looking for was another pet. But Helen’s wonderful disposition and interesting personality, combined with her physical predicament, won Diana over, convincing her that one more animal in the

* Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals.

household really wouldn't be much of a problem. "We knew that she really needed looking out for," Diana says. "But we were also confident that Helen could eventually be just like any other pet."

The Suttons made only a few adjustments to accommodate the new addition to their family. Plastic sheeting was put in to guard the open areas around the stairway, just in case of a wrong step. Instead of string or commercial cat toys, Diana came up with the idea of using small onions and potatoes, the perfect playthings to entice the little cat's senses. Helen also developed a love for glazed donuts. Drawn only by the smell, she can detect the presence of dinner, donuts or other delectable treats no matter where she is in the house. "I don't know how she does it, but when food's around, she's right there," Diana reports. Helen's senses of smell and touch have gradually strengthened to compensate for her vision and hearing impairments. She follows the other cats by their scent and has become as well-adjusted as the rest of her seeing, hearing family.

Today, visitors to the Sutton home can rarely tell which of their cats is deaf and blind. "She's always the center of attention because, when people find out, they can't believe it," Diana says. Helen is now called "The Kitten" by Diana and her husband. The little cat gets along fine with the four other feline members of her family. Her favorite, though, is "Sammy," a male Siamese mix that "moved in" with the Suttons after regularly eating meals at their doorstep. The two are often found washing each other or cuddled up on the couch, asleep.

Interested in The Kitten's progress and activities, Dixie inquires periodically to see how the cat is doing. The three women share pictures, anecdotes and warm feelings for the fortunate little feline—a cat that, with faith, patience and help from very special people, defied her physical disabilities and now leads what appears to be a normal, if somewhat pampered, life.

From sensitive, compassionate people to a remarkable little animal, the circle is complete. This formerly helpless kitten has learned—and goes on teaching—the real meaning of love.

Source: "The Little Cat That Could," *Our Animals*, San Francisco Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, 1982. Reprinted by permission of the publisher.

Postreading Activities THE LITTLE CAT THAT COULD

Part A CHECKING YOUR PREDICTIONS. The answer to the question posed in Part A of the *Prereading Activities* is that the little cat was deaf and blind.

Was your prediction correct?

Part B REMEMBERING FACTS. Answer the questions on a separate piece of paper. Try to answer without looking back at the story.

1. How old was the kitten when she was brought to the animal shelter?

2. In what city was the shelter located?
3. What is the purpose of the Foster Care Program?
4. Why did the cat's first foster parents have to give her up?
5. What types of "toys" were given to the cat?
6. Can visitors usually tell that the cat is deaf and blind?
7. What two names were given to the cat?

Part C SCANNING FOR INFORMATION. Quickly scan the story to locate the paragraphs in which the following information is given. Identify each paragraph by writing the number of the line in which the paragraph begins on a separate piece of paper.

8. Which paragraph says that the cat was examined by veterinarians?
9. Which paragraph first mentions that the cat was deaf and blind?
10. Which paragraph says that the cat was called "Helen Keller"?
11. Which paragraph says that the cat enjoyed donuts?
12. Which paragraph says that the cat often slept cuddled up with another cat?

Part D DRAWING INFERENCES. Use everyday reasoning skills to answer the following questions with either a "yes" or "no." Be prepared to explain the reasoning you used to reach each answer.

13. Do most people prefer to have a pet that can take care of itself?
14. Does the SPCA regularly get animals that need special care and attention?
15. Is the cat in this story likely to end up back in the SPCA?

Part E DISCUSSING YOUR REACTIONS AND INSIGHTS. Consider these questions for possible discussion in the classroom.

16. Would you want to be the owner of the cat described in this story? Why?
17. Since many pets without handicaps are homeless, is it fair for the SPCA to use resources to help handicapped pets if this means that there will be fewer resources for nonhandicapped but homeless pets? Why?

Prereading Activities
THE SWEET ART OF JELLYBEAN MOSAICS

Part A MAKING PREDICTIONS. You will be reading a story that has the title given above. A *mosaic* is “a picture or design made by putting together small pieces of colored stone, glass, or other material.” The central character makes mosaics using jellybeans. Predict some of the types of pictures he makes. (*Hint: A famous person is very fond of jellybeans.*)

Part B UNDERSTANDING NEW WORDS. Determine the meaning of each of the following words by reading the sentences in which they appear. Line numbers are given to help you find the sentences. Do NOT read the entire story yet. Show your understanding by writing, on a separate piece of paper, the letter that gives the best meaning for each.

1. **graphics** (line 4)
 - A. the art of making drawings following mathematical rules
 - B. colored pens used by illustrators and other artists
 - C. a special type of camera used to duplicate works of art

2. **predilection** (line 11)
 - A. a premonition that something undesirable will happen
 - B. a partiality or preference for something
 - C. the ability to predict future events

3. **muse** (line 18)
 - A. to think deeply and at length
 - B. to make fun of or to laugh at
 - C. someone who is recognized as a great musical composer

4. **adorn** (line 73)
 - A. to worship and respect
 - B. to put decorations on, to decorate with
 - C. to hold together temporarily

5. **caricature** (line 73)
 - A. a chocolate candy with a liquid, fruit-flavored filling
 - B. the storage space in a vehicle such as a car or truck
 - C. a drawing or representation of a person with certain features exaggerated

6. **perplexed** (line 88)
 - A. full of doubt or uncertainty, puzzled
 - B. extremely happy, joyful
 - C. very eager or willing, submissive

7. **logo** (line 96, short for “logotype”)
 - A. a typesetting machine that puts type into narrow columns
 - B. a type of person who has limited verbal abilities
 - C. a distinctive trademark, often used by a company

8. **hue** (line 104)
 - A. a difficult concept or position
 - B. oversized or larger than normal
 - C. a particular shade or tint of color

9. **barometer** (line 132)
 - A. a measuring cup marked with metric units
 - B. a licensed place for serving alcoholic beverages
 - C. anything that reflects or indicates change or reactions

Part C FOCUSING YOUR READING. Now read the entire story. While you read, think about whether you personally believe that art made with jellybeans is “real art.”

THE SWEET ART OF JELLYBEAN MOSAICS

San Francisco, CA

Peter Rocha can boast that he's king of the "sweet arts." 1

Jellybean art, that is. 2

Rocha, 44, is a San Francisco graphics designer and illustrator. He creates pieces of mosaic art—be they portraits, cowboy boots, hats, plaques, Valentines, whatever—out of hundreds and thousands of jellybeans. 3
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The idea of using sugar-coated candies in art work stemmed from President Reagan's much publicized predilection for jellybeans. 9
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In fact, his first piece of jellybean art work was a full-sized portrait of the President. The four-foot by four-foot caricature contains 9,000 jellybeans! That was followed by a portrait of Reagan, wife Nancy and the ex-actor's horse. "It looked like a picture of Roy Rogers, Dale Evans and Trigger," mused Rocha. 12
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The media and general public responded like ants to, well ... jellybeans. Rocha suddenly appeared on local and national television programs. There was coverage in major magazines. And there were the radio shows. He had created a monster. Jellybean art was formed! 20
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"I told myself I was going to go with the event—with whatever was happening." 27
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Rocha's next jellybean project came after the San Francisco 49ers won the Super Bowl last year. The hoopla and hysteria he observed in the city following the Niners' victory over Cincinnati prompted him to do a jellybean portrait of the Super Bowl's quarterback Joe Montana. 29
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Quite a different type of clash inspired his next jellybean dream. The Falklands. Great Britain vs. Argentina. A portrait of Britain's Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, of course. 36
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Portraits of Elvis Presley and Burt Reynolds followed. Then a portrait of the Pope. 40
41

He created one of Queen Elizabeth II in time for her recent visit to San Francisco. Rocha even tried to hand-deliver the portrait to Her Majesty herself. 42
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“I had some problems with security,” he said, trying to conceal a laugh and delivering perhaps the classic of understatements. “But it was a big hit with the media. Actually, the story came out that I got kicked out the St. Francis Hotel (where the queen was staying in San Francisco), which wasn’t true but it made a good story.”

There was even TV footage of the portrait being loaded aboard the *Britannia*. And the BBC wanted copies of the footage so it could be shown in England.

“People felt that if anywhere they’d find something as absurd as jellybean art, it would be in San Francisco.”

“Real People,” “You Asked for It,” “Claim to Fame” (Canadian television’s version of “What’s My Line?,” created by the same producers, Mark Goodson and Bill Toddman) didn’t have much trouble finding Rocha and encouraging him to appear on their programs. He was highlighted in Herb Caen’s *San Francisco Chronicle* column. Then there were *Time* magazine and other major publications. *National Geographic*, too. Even the cover of the February 1983 edition of *Sesame Street Magazine*, *The Electric Company*, was adorned in a jellybean caricature of the famed Spiderman. Disneyland has also expressed interest in his works.

Soon he will appear on Channel 5’s “Pacific Currents.” For those of you who will be in Southern California Easter Sunday, he’ll be featured in an Easter special on KNXT television, Burbank.

“It’s all been a blur,” observed the native of San Antonio, Texas, trying to describe the jellybean fuss.

Rocha at one time had accumulated between 600 and 700 pounds of jellybeans, an investment that has made the people at Herman Goelitz’s jellybean factory in Oakland very happy, if not somewhat perplexed. Jellybean art has not completely taken over his business (“It’s a fluctuating thing,” he notes), but it has certainly proven to be a major distraction.

He says that in order to survive finan-

cially, he still must rely on and stick with his graphic arts and illustration business, designing logos and labels for businesses such as restaurants and stereo stores, designing stationery, record album covers, movie posters, and packaging labels. But the specter of jellybean art persists.

“At first I tried using tweezers to put the jellybeans on one at a time. Soon, I asked myself, ‘How do I get out of this?’ ”

There are 20 different hues and 36 different flavors of jellybeans. Working from a pile of several hundred jellybeans, Rocha has mastered the technique by utilizing chopsticks in manipulating the pieces of mosaic jellybean art. And besides, he never goes hungry.

The jellybean mosaics—be they the more routine works of plaques, Valentines, birthday greetings and the like, or the occasional portrait—take three to four days to cure, he said.

Never having created any type of mosaic art before, Rocha, who has had some formal art schooling in New York, consulted Roman and Greek art books, mastering the “corn row effect,” as he calls it. Whereas the first portrait of Reagan took him about three weeks to finish, he can generally polish off a jellybean project in about a week’s time now.

But the true satisfaction he gets out of jellybean art is the reactions from people—particularly children—when they first catch sight of one of his works. “It’s the double-take when people first see it,” he observes. “They question the texture. Then they discover the jellybeans. Then they repeat the whole process.”

The “real barometer” for jellybean art is the reaction from children, Rocha admits. “By far, they’re the most spontaneous. Their response is always the most honest ... always right on the surface.”

“It’s not the real world. Jellybean art is so hard ... to fit in. It breaks the standard. Frankly, I don’t know what to do with it myself.”

The future of jellybean art is uncertain. 141
 Rocha already likens himself to a “mad scien- 142
 tist in his lab, somebody who doesn’t fit the 143
 mold.” He says that he hasn’t really prepared 144
 any jellybean art for Easter this year but is 145
 looking forward to coming up with some- 146
 thing for next Easter. “Eddie Rabbit, maybe?” 147
 he asks himself. 148

He was due to work up a portrait of a 149
 well-known Japanese actor (“who looks like 150

James Dean,” he laughed) last week. And 151
 who knows what lies ahead? 152

There is the family—his wife, Jane Lynch 153
 Rocha, a native of Ireland, and two sons, 154
 Peter Ireland, 15, and Romero Shannon, 13. 155
 There are the requests for speaking and 156
 media engagements for which he has little 157
 time anymore. There’s his art and illustration 158
 business. 160

And enough jellybeans to last a lifetime. 161
 “It defies me completely.” 162

Source: John Lynch, “The Sweet Art of Jellybean Mosaics,” *The Sonoma Index-Tribune*, 1983. Reprinted by permis-
 sion of the publisher.

Postreading Activities THE SWEET ART OF JELLYBEAN MOSAICS

Part A CHECKING YOUR PREDICTIONS. The answer to Part A of the *Prereading Activities* is that the central character makes portraits—especially of famous people such as President Reagan—plaques, Valentines, and birthday greetings.

Was your prediction on the right track?

Part B REMEMBERING FACTS. Answer the following questions by writing “T” for “true” or “F” for “false” on a separate piece of paper. Rewrite each false statement to make it a true statement. Try to answer without looking back at the story.

- T F 1. The central character, Peter Rocha, lives in Washington, D.C.
- T F 2. Rocha got the idea for jellybean art from President Reagan’s liking for jellybeans.
- T F 3. Up to this point, the news media has ignored Rocha’s jellybean art.
- T F 4. Rocha has done a portrait of Elvis Presley.
- T F 5. Rocha has done a portrait of Queen Elizabeth II.

7. while playing chess
8. \$250 to \$300
9. foreign languages

- | | | |
|---------------|-------|-------|
| <i>PART C</i> | 10. D | 13. C |
| | 11. B | 14. E |
| | 12. A | |
| <i>PART D</i> | 15. B | 17. C |
| | 16. A | 18. B |

PART E Answers will vary.

The Little Cat That Could

PREREADING ACTIVITIES

PART A See Part A of Postreading Activities in your book.

PART B Allow for variations in wording of meanings.

1. a member of the cat family
2. one who brings up another's child
3. to renew; to train to overcome a handicap
4. difficult situation
5. help out
6. to make up for
7. damages
8. short accounts, usually of true events

POSTREADING ACTIVITIES

PART A Note: This part refers to Part A of the Prereading Activities.

- PART B*
1. eight weeks
 2. San Francisco
 3. to give refuge, rehabilitation and placement to homeless animals
 4. They were moving to a house where pets were not allowed.
 5. onions and potatoes

6. no
7. Helen Keller and “The Kitten”

- PART C*
8. line 9
 9. line 9
 10. line 40
 11. line 80
 12. line 99

PART D Since these questions require inferences, allow for some differences of opinion.

13. yes
14. yes
15. no

PART E Answers will vary.

The Sweet Art of Jellybean Mosaics

PREREADING ACTIVITIES

PART A See Part A of Postreading Activities in your book.

- PART B*
- | | |
|------|------|
| 1. A | 6. A |
| 2. B | 7. C |
| 3. A | 8. C |
| 4. B | 9. C |
| 5. C | |

POSTREADING ACTIVITIES

PART A Note: This part refers to Part A of the Prereading Activities.

- PART B*
1. F (Peter Rocha lives in San Francisco.)
 2. T
 3. F (The media has given Rocha’s art a lot of attention, including coverage on TV, in newspapers, and in magazines.)
 4. T

5. T
6. F (Rocha is a native of San Antonio, Texas.)
7. F (To survive financially, Rocha must continue his graphic arts and illustration business.)
8. F (Each mosaic takes about a week to finish.)

PART C Note that wording may vary.

9. The media is interested in and excited about Rocha's jellybean art.
10. Rocha has to supplement his income from jellybean art with income from his business.
11. Rocha is interested in continuing his work, but doesn't know where it will lead.

PART D Note that wording may vary.

12. They are very attracted to it.
13. The interest in his work was beyond reasonable proportions.
14. All the attention and publicity happened so fast that it's hard to keep track of.
15. finish
16. someone who isn't exactly like everyone else

PART E Answers will vary.

Echo: A Victim of Animal Abuse

PREREADING ACTIVITIES

PART A See Part A of Postreading Activities in your book.

PART B Allow for variations in wording of meanings.

1. cared for and helped
2. springing back; resistant to being held down
3. jailed
4. the condition of being kept or guarded
5. receiver of benefits
6. dog (member of the family of dogs)
7. a place for the care of the sick