



# Holiday Packet

## 7<sup>th</sup> Grade

# Reading/English Language Arts

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Class Period: \_\_\_\_\_

Read the article "Gail Devers" and the poem "Knowing How to Overcome Failure Is Part of Being Successful" before answering Numbers 1 through 9.

# Gail Devers

*by Arlene Bourgeois Molzahn*

**“YOU’VE WORKED HARD FOR THIS.**

Go get it,” Jackie Joyner-Kersey told her friend, Gail Devers, just before the 100-meter dash in the 1992 Olympic Games in Barcelona, Spain.

Devers set her feet in the starting blocks and hoped that she would run a good race. The blast from the starter’s gun sounded, and she burst forward. She ran down the track, using every ounce of strength in her body, and hurled herself across the finish line.

Then she waited. The race was so close that it looked as if at least five sprinters might have won.

The instant replay on the stadium scoreboard kept showing the five runners crossing the finish line. After the judges studied the finish-line photo, they found that Devers’s shoulder had crossed the finish line first. Finally, the announcement came over the loudspeakers. Gail Devers had won the 100-meter dash in 10.82 seconds.

Then Devers experienced the highlight of any sprinter’s career, as she stood on the huge platform in the giant stadium and received an Olympic gold medal.

Eighteen months earlier she wasn’t thinking about running. She was hoping that she would be able to walk again.

Just four years earlier, in the summer of 1988, as Devers was training for the Olympic Games, to be held in Seoul, South Korea, she began to feel very tired all the time and failed to make the Olympic finals.

By 1991, she had lost some of her eyesight, most of her hair, and forty pounds in weight.

Her feet were covered with blisters, which made it too painful for her to walk. Her doctors really did not know what was wrong with her.

Then, just in time, a doctor discovered that Devers had Graves’ disease. If she had gone two more days without proper medication, her doctors might have had to amputate her feet.

With new treatment, Devers began to recover. Soon she was well enough to begin training for the 1992 Olympic Games.

Gail Devers was born in Seattle, Washington, and grew up in San Diego, California. She and her brother were happy, although their parents were strict. At night they had to be in the house as soon as the streetlights came on. Their parents limited the amount of television the children could watch. They taught their children to feel good about themselves, to grow up to be independent; able to live their own lives.

After a successful high school track career at Sweetwater High School in National City, California, Devers enrolled at the University of California at Los Angeles. Bob Kersee, who had become the track coach at the university, gave her much encouragement and told her she could be a world-class runner someday. He was right.

After winning the Olympic gold medal in 1992, Devers brought her winning ways to the 1996 Olympics in Atlanta, Georgia. She won the 100-meter dash, was a member of the 4 × 100-meter relay team that won the gold medal, and finished fourth in the 100-meter hurdles.

Gail Devers is a great runner and an excellent example of the meaning of the saying “Never give up.”

“Use me as an example,” Devers said. “When the walls are closing in, when someone doesn’t know where to turn, tell people I was there. I kept going. So can others.”



## Gail Devers

**BORN:** November 19, 1966; Seattle, Washington.

**HIGH SCHOOL:** Sweetwater High School, National City, California.

**COLLEGE:** University of California at Los Angeles.

**RECORDS/AWARDS:** Won three gold medals in Olympic Games; United States Olympic Committee 1993 Athlete of the Year.

# Knowing How to Overcome Failure Is Part of Being Successful

by *Tim Connor*

“Failure.” It’s only a word. But it carries with it so much pain and so little concern, so much frustration and so little respect, so much stress and so little understanding that people spend their lives running through their days in the hope of avoiding the long arm of this little word.

To test your vision, you must risk failure.

To temper your ego, you must attempt the impossible.

To tell your story, you must take a chance.

To see beyond the horizon, you must spread your wings.

To be all you can be, you must stretch, flex, try, and go beyond your proven limits.

To bridge the silence, you must risk rejection.

To advance into the unknown, you must risk the peril of all your previous beliefs and emotions that feel so secure.

Failure is not negative. It is a teacher. It molds, refines, and polishes you so that one day your light will shine for all to see.

It isn’t the failure you experience that will determine your destiny, but your next step and then the next that will tell the story of your life.

**Answer Numbers 1 through 9. Base your answers on the article “Gail Devers” and the poem “Knowing How to Overcome Failure Is Part of Being Successful.”**

**1 According to the article, how did Bob Kersee influence Gail Devers’ athletic career?**

- A. He recognized that she was suffering from Graves’ disease.
- B. He persuaded her to try to win the gold medal in the Olympics.
- C. He coached Devers at the University of California and in her Olympic trials.
- D. He understood Devers’ potential and encouraged her to become a top athlete.

**2. Read this quotation by Gail Devers.**

**“Use me as an example.”**

**Why is this quotation included in the article?**

- F. to tell how proud Devers is of winning three gold medals
- G. to show that Devers hopes her experiences will inspire others
- H. to explain why Devers chooses to compete with other athletes
- I. to illustrate that Devers believes athletes should follow her routine

**3 What evidence best shows that people in sports were impressed by Devers?**

- A. Devers was named Athlete of the Year in 1993.
- B. Devers was encouraged by friends and coaches to race.
- C. Devers was made a member of the Olympic relay team in 1996.
- D. Devers was awarded the gold medal for the 100-meter dash in 1992.

**4. How does the author organize the article about Gail Devers?**

- F. He presents the symptoms of Graves’ disease and then shows how Devers’ life and career were affected by it.
- G. He describes one of Devers’ successful races and then retraces the challenges she overcame to achieve her big win.
- H. He begins with a quotation from Devers about how important her Olympic medals are to her and then describes Devers’ Olympic feats in detail.
- I. He describes events in the order in which they happened, beginning with Devers’ early Olympic training and ending with her winning the gold medal.

**5. What point of view does Gail Devers share with Tim Connor?**

- A. Both think that people should set goals they can easily reach.
- B. Both think that some people face fewer challenges than others.
- C. Both believe that taking risks can be too demanding to be worthwhile.
- D. Both believe that working through difficulties provides the greatest rewards.

**6. Read these lines from the poem.**

... people spend their lives  
running through their days in  
the hope of avoiding the long  
arm of this little word.

**What is the meaning of these lines?**

- F. Failure can become a pattern that harms a person's future.
- G. People are afraid to admit that they have experienced failure.
- H. Failure can be compared to a hurtful person whom others try to escape.
- I. People pass up potential opportunities trying to stay out of failure's reach.

**7. Which statement best expresses Tim Connor's attitude toward failure?**

- A. There is no excuse for failure.
- B. Some risks are not worth taking.
- C. Instead of avoiding failure, people should learn from it.
- D. For every story of failure, there is a story of great success.

**8. Read these lines from the poem.**

**It isn't the failure you experience that will determine your destiny. . .**

**How would Gail Devers most likely respond to these lines?**

- F. She would state her belief that people must accept their limits.
- G. She would question whether the poet was being overly optimistic.
- H. She would argue that success is impossible without encouragement from others.
- I. She would agree that people should keep trying instead of becoming discouraged.

**9 Which sentence best describes the difference between the poem and the article?**

- A. The poem urges caution in approaching obstacles, while the article inspires readers to take action.
- B. The poem focuses on success, while the article shows how difficult it can be to overcome failures.
- C. The poem develops the idea of facing challenges, while the article tells a true story of overcoming challenges.
- D. The poem lists several ways of achieving while the article concentrates on only one way to achieve a goal.

Read the essay “Poppa and the Spruce Tree” before answering Numbers 10 through 18.

# Poppa and the Spruce Tree

by Mario M. Cuomo

In this essay Mario Cuomo, former governor of New York, recalls an experience with his father that serves as an inspiration to him. It was first published in the Diaries of Mario M. Cuomo.

Poppa taught me a lot about life, especially its hard times. I remembered one of his lessons one night when I was ready to quit a political campaign I was losing and wrote about it in my diary:

Tired, feeling the many months of struggle, I went up to the den to make some notes. I was looking for a pencil, rummaging through papers in the back of my desk drawer, where things accumulate for years, when I turned up one of Poppa’s old business cards, the ones we made up for him, that he was so proud of: *Andrea Cuomo, Italian-American Groceries—Fine Imported Products*. Poppa never had occasion to give anyone a calling card, but he loved having them.

I couldn’t help wondering what Poppa would have said if I told him I was tired or discouraged. Then I thought about how he dealt with hard circumstances. A thousand pictures flashed through my mind, but one scene came sharply into view.

We had just moved to Holliswood, New York, from our apartment behind the store. We had our own house for the first time; it had some land around it, even trees. One, in particular, was a great blue spruce that must have been 40 feet tall.

Less than a week after we moved in, there was a terrible storm. We came home from the store that night to find the spruce pulled almost totally from the ground and flung forward, its mighty nose bent in the asphalt of the street. My brother Frankie and I could climb poles all day; we were great at fire escapes; we could scale fences with barbed wire—but we knew nothing about trees. When we saw our spruce, defeated, its cheek on the canvas, our hearts sank. But not Poppa’s.

Maybe he was five feet six if his heels were not worn. Maybe he weighed 155 pounds if he had a good meal. Maybe he could see a block away if his glasses were clean. But he was stronger than Frankie and me and Marie and Mamma all together.



We stood in the street looking down at the tree. The rain was falling. Then he announced, “O.K., we gonna push ’im up!” “What are you talking about, Poppa? The roots are out of the ground!” “Shut up, we gonna push ’im up, he’s gonna grow again.” We didn’t know what to say to him. You couldn’t say no to him. So we followed him into the house and we got what rope there was and we tied the rope around the tip of the tree that lay in the asphalt, and he stood up by the house, with me pulling on the rope and Frankie in the street in the rain, helping to push up the great blue spruce. In no time at all, we had it standing up straight again!

With the rain still falling, Poppa dug away at the place where the roots were, making a muddy hole wider and wider as the tree sank lower and lower toward security. Then we shoveled mud over the roots and moved boulders to the base to keep the tree in place. Poppa drove stakes in the ground, tied rope from the trunk to the stakes, and maybe two hours later looked at the spruce, the crippled spruce made straight by ropes, and said, “Don’t worry, he’s gonna grow again . . .”

I looked at the card and wanted to cry. If you were to drive past that house today, you would see the great, straight blue spruce, maybe 65 feet tall, pointing straight up to the heavens, pretending it never had its nose in the asphalt.

I put Poppa’s card back in the drawer, closed it with a vengeance. I couldn’t wait to get back into the campaign.



Answer Numbers 10 through 18. Base your answers on the essay "Poppa and the Spruce Tree."

10. Read this sentence from the essay.

A thousand pictures flashed through my mind, but one scene came sharply into view.

The words *came sharply into view* are closest in meaning to the words

- F. appeared like a movie.
- G. appeared as a bright light.
- H. prompted more memories.
- I. stood out clearer than others.

11 Read these sentences from the essay.

I put Poppa's card back in the drawer, closed it with a vengeance. I couldn't wait to get back into the campaign.

The author uses the phrase *with a vengeance* to show that he is

- A. feeling sadness because he misses his father.
- B. displaying anger at being behind in the campaign.
- C. showing great determination after making a decision.
- D. using unexpected force while thinking of something else.

12 According to the essay, how does Poppa teach his children about being successful?

- F. He serves as an example.
- G. He guides them with love.
- H. He shares stories about his life.
- I. He gives them business advice.

13. Mario Cuomo's adult attitude toward his father is

- A. appreciative.
- B. critical.
- C. obedient.
- D. resentful.

**14. Mario Cuomo is most like his father when he**

- F. wins the race for governor in his home state.
- G. records the story of the spruce tree in his journal.
- H. overcomes his discouragement with his campaign.
- I. reads the business card he made for the family business.

**15. Read this sentence from the essay.**

**We came home from the store that night to find the spruce pulled almost totally from the ground and flung forward, its mighty nose bent in the asphalt of the street.**

**The author expresses his idea by including**

- A. a metaphor to compare the tree to a roadway.
- B. personification to give the tree human qualities.
- C. a symbol to hint that the tree represents the strength of the family.
- D. imagery to link the damaged tree to an unsuccessful shopping trip.

**16. How does the author's personal situation compare to the problem faced by his father when the tree falls over in the storm?**

- F. Getting the tree to grow again requires skill, but getting elected to office requires luck.
- G. Saving the tree requires teamwork, while running for office requires the ability to work alone.
- H. Rescuing the fallen tree requires optimism, and running a campaign requires the same positive attitude.
- I. Replanting the tree requires detailed planning, and getting

**17. Which sentence gives the best description of how Mario Cuomo and his father deal with difficult situations?**

- A. Both are easily distracted.
- B. Each relies on the other for help.
- C. Each questions his own decisions.
- D. Both are determined to overcome challenges.

**18 Which sentence best summarizes what happens in “Poppa and the Spruce Tree”?**

- F. The author is discouraged because he is losing a political campaign.
- G. The author helps his father work through what could have been a crisis.
- H. The author returns to his old house and sees a large spruce tree still growing.
- I. The author continues his campaign when he remembers a lesson his father taught him.

# CLOWN ALLEY

by Linda Granfield



Read the article “Clown Alley” before answering Numbers 19 through 27.

*Circus legend has it that a collection of eggs painted with the faces of famous clowns was tragically destroyed by fire long ago. Linda and Leon McBryde of Virginia have honored this egg-painting tradition by creating their Department of Clown Registry, a collection of more than six hundred eggs that documents for history the faces of male and female clowns from around the world. Linda paints each face on a goose egg and then completes the decoration with a variety of materials. It takes up to a week to create one egg portrait.*

Throughout history there have always been people who can make other people laugh. Early clowns, from the *stupidus* of ancient Rome to the court jester, often both offended and delighted listeners with their comments and songs. They were not the silent performers seen in today’s circus rings. Clowns lost their voices when the large dimensions of three-ring circuses made it impossible for the audience to hear them.

There are different categories of circus clowns. Walk-around clowns use an animal or a prop, like a huge rubber hammer, as part of their routines. A carpet clown mingles with the audience and performs while the acts change in the rings. Then there are acrobatic clowns, riding clowns, juggling clowns and others. They all join in the charivari [shiv-uh-ree], the noisy entrance of the clowns.

Everything a clown does looks easy, but it’s not. Making people laugh can be hard work.

Clowns must be in good physical condition to prevent injuries. Each slapstick move is carefully timed and well-rehearsed. Most clowns have also been trained as acrobats, jugglers or aerial artists, and many incorporate such skills into their acts.

Clown alley—from the old ringmaster’s call, “Clowns, allez” [ah-lay] (French for “go”)—is the name of the dressing area where the clowns put on their makeup and costumes. This area is usually near the entrance to the arena because of the frequent number of costume changes, the many props to grab, and the need for the clowns to be ready at all times to hustle out into the ring.

Generally, there are three categories of circus clowns—whiteface, auguste [oh-gust] and character. Each has a specific makeup style and costume. Each has a typical act as well.

The neat whiteface is usually a strict, in-charge character who sets up the punch line for the joke with a partner who is typically an auguste. His facial features are neatly detailed in red or black, and his outfit looks something like loose pajamas with a ruffle around the neck.

Circus legend has it that the auguste clown got his name from a German nickname for someone who is clumsy. The auguste wears light-colored makeup, but white is used around the mouth and eyes, and there's a big red nose. This clown performs a great deal of slapstick humor. An oversized suit or baggy pants with suspenders allows freedom of movement for all the clumsy tumbles he takes. He also wears big shoes.

Character clowns perform as different personalities—cowboys, scarecrows, grandmothers or symphony conductors. The most famous character clown, however, is the tramp. Tramps wear different styles of makeup and costumes that are torn or shabby. Some tramp clowns are happy-go-lucky. Others are extremely sad. Still others act like gentlemen who just happen to be out of money.

### **Making Faces**

Entertainers have been wearing makeup since ancient times. In the early days, the face was sometimes whitened with flour to emphasize large, dark eyes and bright red lips, so everyone in the audience could see each exaggerated facial expression. (Legend has it that a French clown who was a baker by profession was the first to perform with his face white from his job!)

A clown today whitens his face with greasepaint. All the makeup can be ordered from companies whose catalogs advertise everything from “age stipple” and “crepe wool hair” to clown white makeup (often the choice of performers who entertain at a fast-food restaurant).

A closeup look at a clown's face frightens some people because the eyebrows aren't drawn where they naturally grow, lips are lost in a sea of red, and the hairline is often gone completely. But the face is meant to be seen fifty feet above the ring, and from this distance every feature looks right.

It takes clowns a great deal of practice to create their performance faces. A clown's face is a protected trademark and is never to be exactly copied. It's also considered bad taste for a clown to appear in public partially out of costume, or for a clown to do “normal” things, like eating lunch, while in character.

Clowns have a long and interesting history and use serious techniques. However, the children and adults at the circus don't need to know these facts to get ready for fun when they hear “Bring in the clowns!”

**Answer Numbers 19 through 27. Base your answers on the article “Clown Alley.”**

**19 When the author states that clowns “lost their voices,” she means that clowns**

- A. became silent to avoid offending people.
- B. began to perform silently because of larger audiences.
- C. realized audience members often spoke another language.
- D. discovered that physical comedy was becoming more popular.

**20 A poodle would most likely be part of an act performed by a**

- F. riding clown.
- G. juggling clown.
- H. acrobatic clown.
- I. walk-around clown.

**21 “Alley” became a part of the expression “clown alley” because of**

- A. the makeup used by clowns.
- B. the shape of the dressing room.
- C. a foreign word used by the ringmaster.
- D. a hall built to display images of circus performers.

**22. Words such as *allez*, *auguste*, and *stupidus* support the article by showing that**

- F. professional clowning has international roots.
- G. audiences are impressed by fancy expressions.
- H. unusual labels make clowns seem more interesting.
- I. some ideas are best expressed in their original forms.

**23. According to the article, if you worked in the dressing room of a circus and you specialized in baggy clothing, which set of clowns would report to you?**

- A. the stupidus and the tramp
- B. the auguste and the whiteface
- C. the carpet clown and the scarecrow
- D. the court jester and the riding clown

**24. The French clown who “was the first to perform with his face white from his job” most likely appeared with his face coated with**

- F. age stipple.
- G. greasepaint.
- H. bleached flour.
- I. light crepe hair.

**25. A modern clown draws eyebrows where they do not naturally grow and lips that are “lost in a sea of red” in order to**

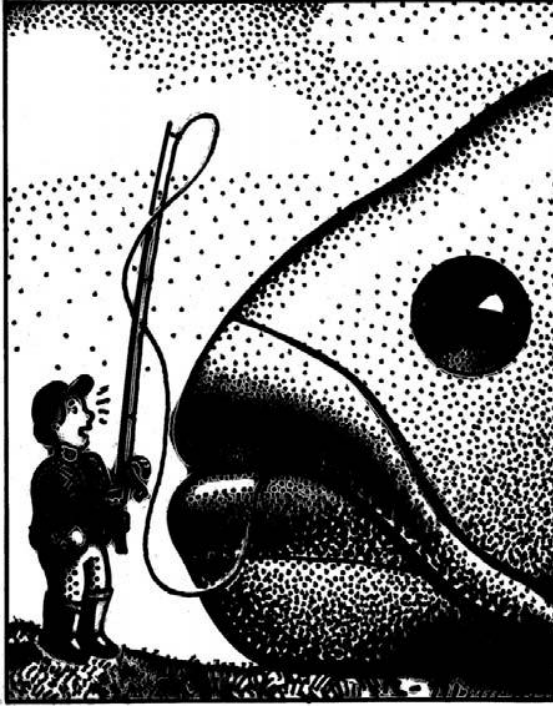
- A. create a frightening image.
- B. make the face visible from far away.
- C. employ the most current style of face design.
- D. copy the makeup of clowns from ancient times.

**26 According to the article, a professional clown in full makeup would NOT be seen**

- F. showing children how to juggle.
- G. posing for an artist painting eggs.
- H. walking among audience members.
- I. eating lunch at a fast-food restaurant.

**27 The work of Leon and Linda McBryde is important because it**

- A. traces modern clowning back to its early origins.
- B. displays how the three categories of circus clowns differ.
- C. creates and preserves a record of trademarked clown faces.
- D. shows techniques used in the design of clowning accessories.



# CATFISH BIGGER THAN KIDS

By Homer Circle

Can you imagine a catfish bigger than a boy? Some bewhiskered giants bigger than *several* boys lurk in South America's jungle rivers. Weighing in at 300 pounds, one of them can feed a lot of hungry catfish lovers.

I encountered one of these whoppers at a remote airstrip in Colombia a few years back. Just as I got off the plane, I saw a man offering a giant catfish for sale. It drooped over a wheelbarrow, head and tail almost touching the ground. I figured it weighed more than 150 pounds.

Locals told me about seeing huge catfish gobble down many things. I can

believe it. The mouth of a 300-pound catfish must be as large as a washtub. There are more than 1,000 kinds of catfish; 28 species are found in the United States' lakes and rivers. This huge family has some mighty peculiar members. Let's meet a few.

*Walking catfish.* Nature equipped this feisty little catfish, found in southern Florida, with an extra lung for breathing on dry land. When its swimming hole dries up, the walking catfish waddles on stiff forward fins in search of another lake or stream. If an enemy attacks, the fish flares its top and front fins like sabers and leaps at the attacker to scare it off.

*Armored catfish.* This cat has heavy, bony plates protecting its body. The armor makes the fish difficult to fillet. To cook it, toss the fish whole into a fire. When it is done, crack it open for eating.



Some armored catfish are found in Florida, but the 100-pounders live in South America.

Rounding out the family of odd catfish are *talking catfish*, which make guttural sounds when you pull them from the water; *climbing catfish*, which scramble up shore brush in search of food; *electric catfish*, which can deliver a mild shock; and *blind catfish*, which dwell in the inky blackness of underwater caves. Blind catfish find food through taste buds in their eight whiskers.

Most catfish have four whiskers on the upper jaw and four on the lower jaw. Sensory pores on these whiskers help the fish smell and taste food even in the muddiest of water. The United States does not have catfish anywhere near the size of those in South America. But in some large U.S. rivers,

blue and flathead catties do top 100 pounds.

Most of the catfish you are likely to catch will be much smaller, about frying-pan size. All 28 kinds of catfish found in the United States are good to eat. When you catch one, remember that the dorsal, or top, fin and the two forward, or pectoral, fins have poison glands at their bases. They can give you painful puncture wounds.

The safest way to handle an average-size catfish is to wear a glove and grab it by the lower jaw. Then use wire cutters to clip off these dangerous fins.

To cook catfish, skin and slice them into fillets or steaks. Flour them and fry in oil until golden brown. You will see how easy it is to overeat these tasty fish.



Base your answers on the article "Catfish Bigger Than Kids."

**28. Why did the author write this article?**

- F. to explain how to catch a variety of catfish
- G. to encourage readers to go fishing for catfish
- H. to tell readers about the world's largest catfish
- I. to describe the unusual characteristics of catfish

**29. Read this sentence from the article.**

**If an enemy attacks, the fish flares its top and front fins like sabers and leaps at the attacker to scare it off.**

**What does the word *sabers* mean?**

- A. jaws
- B. plates
- C. swords
- D. whiskers

**30. Putting an armored catfish into a fire enables a person to**

- F. remove the poisons from the fish's body.
- G. crack open the shell so the fish can be eaten.
- H. remove the dangerous fins so the fish can be handled.
- I. make the fish's poison less harmful without clipping its fins.

**31. How are armored catfish and electric catfish SIMILAR?**

- A. Both have an extra lung.
- B. Both can deliver a mild shock.
- C. Both are best when cooked whole.
- D. Both have ways of protecting themselves.

**32. Which words from the article have almost the same meaning?**

- F. dwell, live
- G. scare, lurk
- H. overeat, taste
- I. gobble, scramble

**33. How does a catfish use its whiskers?**

- A. to give a mild shock to its prey
- B. to injure attackers that try to eat it
- C. to send signals of approaching danger
- D. to detect food when it cannot see clearly

**34. What is the author's attitude toward catfish in this article?**

- F. afraid
- G. hostile
- H. amused
- I. fascinated

**35. Which statement provides the BEST evidence that catfish can be dangerous to people?**

- A. Some catfish can walk from one lake to another.
- B. Many catfish have sharp pectoral fins that release poison.
- C. Most catfish have whiskers on their upper and lower jaws.
- D. Armored catfish have bony plates that protect their bodies.

**36. If the article needed a new title, which would be BEST?**

- F. "Catfish out of Water"
- G. "A Most Unusual Family"
- H. "The Fish That Got Away"
- I. "The Hidden Dangers of Catfish"