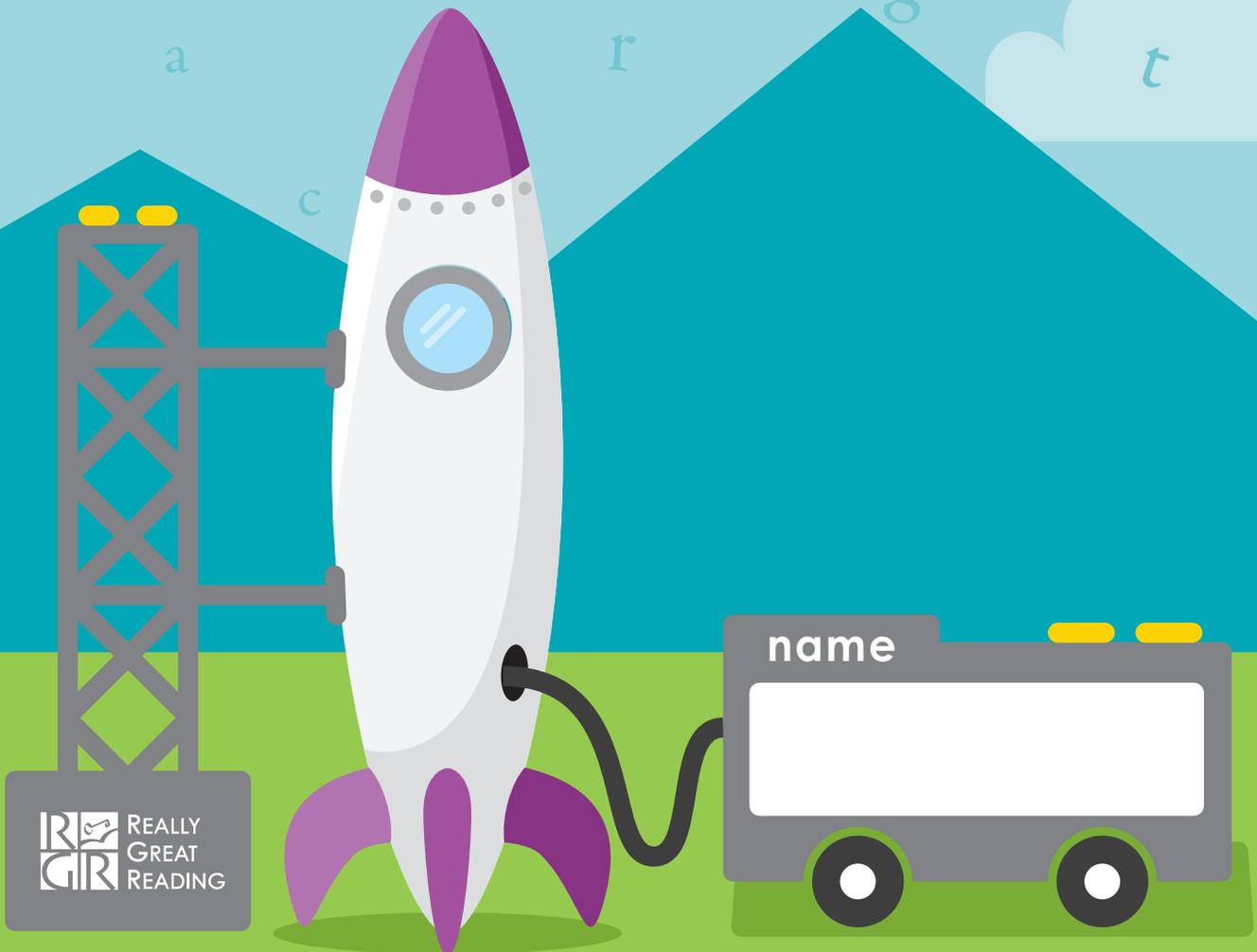




# COUNTDOWN

## PASSAGES





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# INTRODUCTION

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## OVERVIEW

*Countdown* is a series of lessons focused on the essential foundational skills that students should master in their early reading education. It includes explicit instruction and progress monitoring of phonological awareness, letter-sound correspondences, phonemic awareness, high-frequency word fluency, phonics knowledge, and spelling. The lessons are designed to teach these essential skills, which promote strong decoding and fluent, accurate reading.

*Countdown* lessons are designed for young emerging or older struggling readers. *Countdown* is most commonly taught in Kindergarten, but can also be taught to students in Grades 1–4 who are working to master beginning reading skills appropriate for their age and grade level. For students in 1st grade and beyond, *Countdown* is typically reserved for the most severely struggling readers who have not yet learned the skills they should have mastered in Kindergarten.

The *Countdown Passages* are strictly controlled stories that align with the phonics skills and Heart Words taught in *Countdown*. Aside from the Heart Words in the passages, all of the words included are decodable according to the *Countdown Scope & Sequence*; however, due to the use of some Heart Words that have not been explicitly taught in *Countdown* according to the guidelines described below, we consider the passages to be “strictly controlled” rather than completely “decodable.”

There are 12 fiction passages: one for each unit in *Countdown*, beginning with Unit 17. The passages provide students with longer, connected-text opportunities to apply the skills they are learning in *Countdown*. In the *Countdown* workbook, students practice reading words, phrases, and sentences. With the *Countdown Passages*, students extend their practice to longer sections of text. As students develop mastery and automaticity with the skills taught in *Countdown*, the *Countdown Passages* can be used to reinforce these skills, to provide opportunities for practice, and, ideally, to build fluency. Students will also gain confidence as readers. Reading text controlled for the specific skills students have already learned allows them to read with success, leading to confidence and the willingness to tackle more difficult text in the future.

## FEATURES

### Controlled and Cumulative

The *Countdown Passages* are strictly controlled. The passages consist of words containing phonics skills students have explicitly learned in *Countdown*, Heart Words taught in *Countdown*, and other select words from the Pre-Primer and Primer lists on the Dolch 220 high-frequency word list.

Each passage emphasizes the phonics skill(s) students learned in the corresponding unit of *Countdown*. Other words that are not high-frequency words are decodable according to the phonics skills students learned in

## QUICK FACTS

### WHAT?

12 strictly controlled passages, one for each unit in *Countdown Teacher Guide Book 3*, beginning with Unit 17.

### WHEN?

After Lesson 5 of each corresponding *Countdown* unit has been taught.

### WHERE?

Can be used in the classroom, in small groups, or sent home for practice.

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For more information about the *Countdown* program, visit [reallygreatreading.com/content/countdown](http://reallygreatreading.com/content/countdown)



previous units. If a student struggles with a decodable word while reading through a passage, remind him or her to use the strategies learned in the *Countdown* phonics lessons to read the word.

The high-frequency words used in the passages fall into one of two categories: 1) Heart Words that students have been explicitly taught in the current and previous *Countdown* units; 2) up to 5 additional words per passage, not explicitly taught in *Countdown*, from the Dolch 220 Pre-Primer and Primer lists (these are included in a “Words to Preview” section in the standard and differentiated versions of the passages since they may be unfamiliar to students). See below for more information on the Words to Preview and on the differentiated passages.

### Words to Preview

As mentioned above, up to five words from the Dolch 220 list that are from the Pre-Primer and Primer word lists and have not been explicitly taught in the *Countdown* lessons appear in a “Words to Preview” section at the top of each passage. In the passages, these words will be in gray text. The teacher should review these words with the students several times before reading the passage. Since students are not expected to know these words, the teacher may read these words to the students when they are encountered in the passage if necessary. Optionally, the teacher may consider devoting some instructional time to teaching words that frequently appear in the passages. See Words to Preview in the chart on page vii for a list of these words for each passage.

### Heart Words

Heart Words the students have already learned in *Countdown* are not marked in the standard versions of the passages. If a student struggles with a Heart Word, remind him or her this is a Heart Word he or she has learned and, if necessary, encourage the student to look at, think about, and say (Look, Think, Say) the word, or provide the word for the student.

### Increasing Length

The *Countdown Passages* increase in length as the units increase, ranging from half a page to a full page of text. The passages contain only single-syllable words (including only single-syllable Heart Words) until Unit 27 when students are introduced to two-syllable words. The complexity of the passages and the level of vocabulary also increase as students progress.

### Comprehension Questions

You can use the comprehension questions on page 13 to help students practice extracting meaning from the passages. There are three literal questions and one inferential question for each passage.

## USING THE COUNTDOWN PASSAGES

The *Countdown Passages* can be used in the classroom, in small groups, or sent home for practice. Students can begin practicing with a passage after Lesson 5 of the corresponding unit in *Countdown* has been taught. Students should practice with words, phrases, and sentences in the Lesson 5 student workbook activities for their current



unit before moving on to read the passage. The passages can be read as part of the *Countdown* lesson or at another time, such as at the beginning of guided reading groups or at a teacher-led center.

Before asking students to read the passage, review the words in the “Words to Preview” section several times. You should read and pronounce these words for your students and provide definitions or example sentences to clarify the meaning of any unfamiliar words. Students should then practice reading the passages aloud, focusing on reading each word accurately.

### Additional Activities

Once students have read through a passage with you, incorporate other opportunities to practice with the text throughout the next several days. Some ideas for additional practice include:

- Underlining a new phonics concept in words, such as *digraph th* or 2-sound blends
- Highlighting words containing a certain feature, such as *short a* or digraphs
- Drawing a line to separate the syllables of two-syllable words
- Circling the Heart Words
- Reading to a partner
- Reading silently
- Reading to someone at home
- Using the comprehension questions on page 13 to help students practice extracting meaning from the passages

### Building Fluency

To use the *Countdown Passages* to help build fluency, students should reread the passages multiple times over the course of several days. It is important to note that students should be reading accurately before they begin working on reading faster. A quick, informal way to check for accuracy is to have the student read the passage aloud to you. If the student can read the passage with three or fewer errors, he or she can use that passage to work on building his or her reading rate. A more precise way to check for accuracy is to calculate a student’s accuracy percentage with the passage. Have the student read the passage aloud and keep track of the number of errors that are made. To find the number of words correct, subtract the number of errors from the total number of words in the passage, which can be found at the top of each passage in the gray polygon. Divide the number of words correct by the total number of words in the passage (this information is in the top corner of each passage); then, multiply by 100 to get the accuracy percentage. Many teachers consider 95% accuracy to be a good goal to have students meet before beginning to work on increasing reading rate.

To begin working on fluency, ask the students to read the passage out loud; then model fluent reading by reading the passage aloud to them. After modeling what it sounds like when the passage is read fluently, ask the students to read the passage aloud again, trying to make their reading sound like yours. This procedure can be repeated on several occasions. Students can get additional practice building fluency by reading the passages to partners in class or taking the passages home to read aloud to a sibling, parent, or other caretaker or adult.



## DIFFERENTIATED PASSAGES

Each *Countdown Passage* has differentiated versions that can be found in *Countdown Online's Supplemental Resources*. You'll find an example differentiated passage on page 16 of this packet. The differentiated versions can be used for students needing additional support to read the passages accurately and/or fluently. Once a student has been successful reading the differentiated passage, he or she should move on to the standard passage.

### Words with Target Phonics Concepts in the Differentiated Passages

Teachers can use the differentiated passages with students needing additional support with phonics concepts such as digraphs and two-syllable words as well. The differentiated passages direct teachers to work with students to identify and mark words containing the target phonics concept for that unit. For example, students may underline *digraph sh* or draw a line between the syllables in two-syllable words. Words in the passage containing the target phonics concept are listed in a column on the right side of the passage. In small groups, the teacher can guide students to preview the text as they identify words containing the target feature and mark them. The students should decode these words individually and then read the passage. A list of the target phonics concepts students can mark for each unit can be found in the Words to Preview and Differentiation Suggestions table on page vii.

### Heart Words and Dolch Words in the Differentiated Passages

The differentiated version is for students struggling to read the words accurately. All the words in the "Words to Preview" section are in gray text in the passage. In addition, Heart Words that have been taught in the *Countdown* lessons have small hearts above them.

### Utilizing Differentiated Passages for Fluency Practice

Phrase scooping is a useful scaffold for helping students to read more fluently. It involves using a pen or pencil to draw a "scoop" or a curved line underneath groups of words, essentially "chunking" the sentence into phrases. You may guide students in scooping phrases within the sentences of the passage on the standard passage or on the differentiated passage for Heart Words and Dolch words. It may be helpful to review the passage once with the student, helping him or her to scoop the phrases. Then, the student can read the passage independently, using the scooped phrases to guide them to fluency. Generally, phrases of two to five words allow for fluent reading without losing comprehension. Phrases often begin with prepositions (to, for, with, like...), conjunctions (and, but, so, or...), or adverbs (when, how, why...) as in "We take a cab – to the ship – and get on," or "I don't know – how to bake a cake."

### Available Versions of the Countdown Passages

Units 17-28

1. Standard passage
2. Differentiated passage for Heart Words, Dolch words, and phonics features



**Words to Preview and Differentiation Suggestions for Differentiated Passages**

<p><b>COUNTDOWN PASSAGE</b></p>	<p><b>WORDS TO PREVIEW</b></p>	<p><b>DIFFERENTIATION SUGGESTIONS</b> <i>Have the students find and mark these skills before reading the passage.</i></p>
Unit 17: Max and Sam	was, he, out, help, now	Underline words with a certain short vowel sound ( <i>short a, short e, short i, short o, or short u</i> ).
Unit 18: Tim and Ted	they, have, play, out	Underline words with a certain short vowel sound ( <i>short a, short e, short i, short o, or short u</i> ).
Unit 19: Kim the Pig	she, eat, said, good	Underline words with a certain short vowel sound ( <i>short a, short e, short i, short o, or short u</i> ).
Unit 20: On the Ship	we, look, there, new, must	Underline <i>digraph sh</i> – Students should underline the <b>s</b> and <b>h</b> together since the letters work together to spell one sound.
Unit 21: The Rush Down the Path	new, went, when, saw, we	Underline <i>digraph th</i> – Students should underline both letters together since they work together to spell one sound.
Unit 22: A Pet Dog	must, help, play, he, want	Underline <i>digraphs sh</i> and <i>th</i> – Students should underline both letters together since they work together to spell one sound.
Unit 23: A Hen and a Pig	play, out, eat, he	Underline <i>digraphs ch</i> and <i>wh</i> – Students should underline both letters together since they work together to spell one sound.
Unit 24: Tick Tock	find, help, out	Underline <i>digraph ck</i> – Students should underline both letters together since they work together to spell one sound.
Unit 25: The Fall	went, play, pull, help	Underline <i>chunk all</i> and/or <i>digraphs sh, th, ch, wh, or ck</i> .
Unit 26: Our Land	look, out, new	Underline 2-sound blends – Students should underline each letter in the blend separately since each letter in a blend spells its own sound.
Unit 27: The Potluck	play, see	Draw a line to divide two-syllable words into syllables – Students can underline the vowel letters in words first and then divide the word so that there are two Closed Syllables.
Unit 28: The Attic	find, into, away, under, look	Draw a line to divide two-syllable words into syllables – Students can underline the vowel letters in words first and then divide the word so that there are two Closed Syllables.



## Max and Sam

Max was in a red van. He had to get gas. The van hit a rut. A bag hit him in the rib. He got a rip on his hat, too. He got out and sat in the wet mud with the bag. He was sad.

A man in a tan bus did help. The man is Sam. He got Max up, and he set the bag up on the van. He had a rag for Max to dab the mud. He got gas for Max.

Max was sad, but it is not too bad. He can dab the mud, and he can fix the bad rip. He met a pal, Sam, too. Now, Max is not sad.



## Tim and Ted

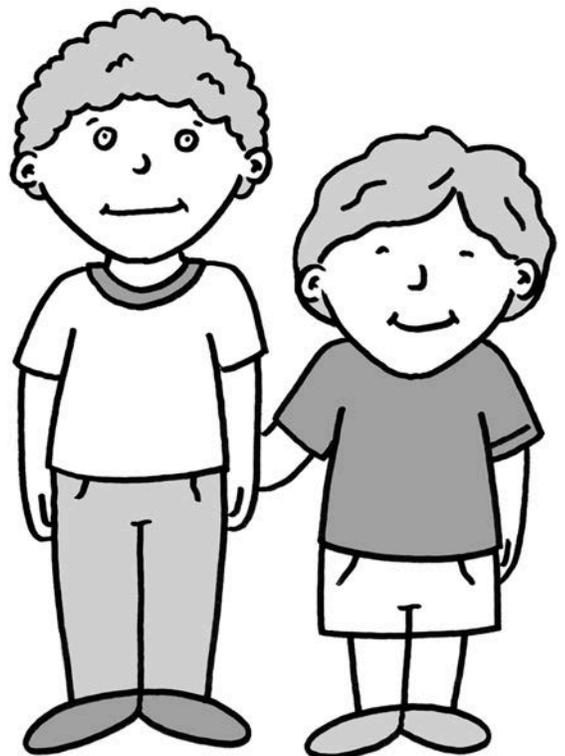
Tim is ten, and Ted is six. Tim and Ted like to have fun. They like to run, jog, and hop. Out in the sun, they play tag in the mud. Ted will not quit, but Tim will let Ted win.

Tim and Ted play with the big dog a lot. They play tug with the dog. They sit on the rug and play fit the hat on the dog. With the hat on, the dog will hop up to run.

The dog is not mad. The dog will run to his bed to nap.

Tim will hug the dog, and Ted will pet the dog.

Tim and Ted like to play and have fun!



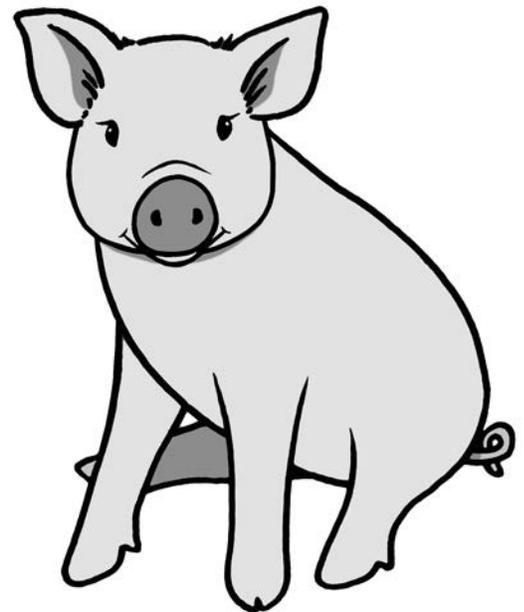
## Kim the Pig

As a kid, I had a pet pig, Kim. Kim was my pet, and she was my pal. She was fat and tan. She dug and dug in the wet mud. She dug a big pit. Did Kim fit in the pit? Yes!

In the pit, she got a cut on the leg. Kim had to sit on the rim, and I had to dab the cut with a rag. She was sad. She had to nap in the pen for a bit.

At six, I had to lug the yam bag to the pen for Kim to eat. Kim did beg for jam, so I got jam in a cup too. She said, "Yum!"

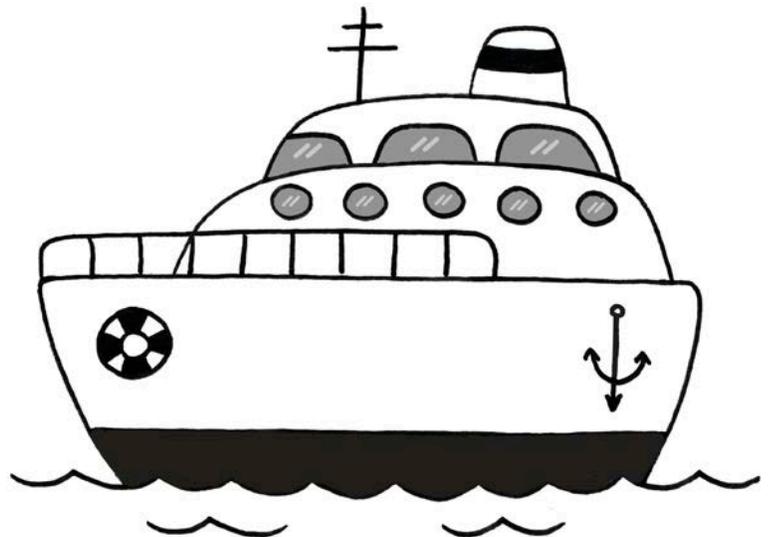
Kim is a good pal and a fun pet!



## On the Ship

Sam, Dad, and I go on a ship. We look for a cab to get to the ship. The ship is big, and there is a lot to do. Sam and I shop for a hat. Dad and I sit on a cot and fish.

I get a fish. It is too big for my rod. I can get a new rod if I dash to the shop. Sam is at the shop. Dad, Sam, and I all go have the hot ham dish. We have hash, too. Sam has the jam and now has a rash. The jam must go in the can, and we can go fish with my new rod. We like the ship!



## The Rush Down the Path

Seth and Thad had to rush down the path. Dad said to rush to come pet the new pup. Seth and Thad had no cash for a cab. They had no cash to go on the bus. They had to run! Thad ran and went down in the mud on the path with a thud.

When they got to dad, dad saw the mud on Thad's hat.

Thad said, "We had no cash, so we had to run in the hot sun. I went down in a rut, so I got mud on my hat." His dad was not mad. Dad ran to hug Thad and said to hop in the bath.

When Thad did not have mud on his hat, they had fun with the new pup.



## A Pet Dog

Shad has a wish for the tan dog at the shop. His mom said that a dog can be fun for a kid, but Shad will have to do a lot with the dog. Shad **must** jog with him on the path and get him to the vet. Shad will have to **help** the dog get in the tub for a hot bath, but not too hot. Shad will have to set mush in the dog dish. If not, the dog will get too thin. Shad **must** **play** with the dog. The dog will rush and dash, and then **he** will **want** a nap. **He** will **want** a bed on the rug to nap on. Shad will go to the shop with his mom to get the tan dog now.

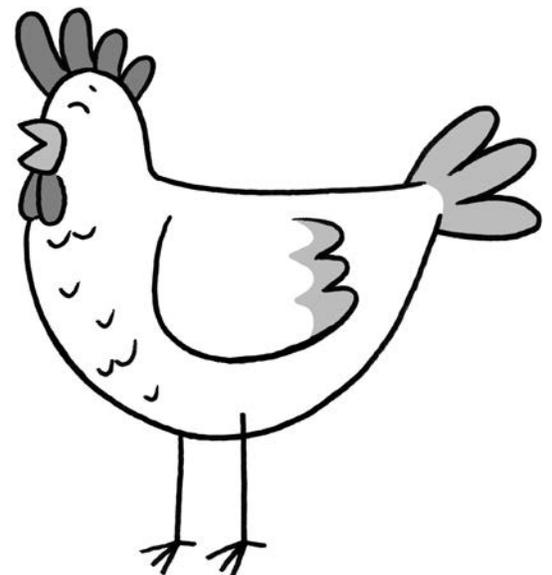


## A Hen and a Pig

Chad has a hen and a pig. His hen is in a big pen. The hen will chat and yak in the pen and play in the sun. The pen has a shed in it. This is where the hen has a bed. When the sun is out, the hen can go in the shed to nap.

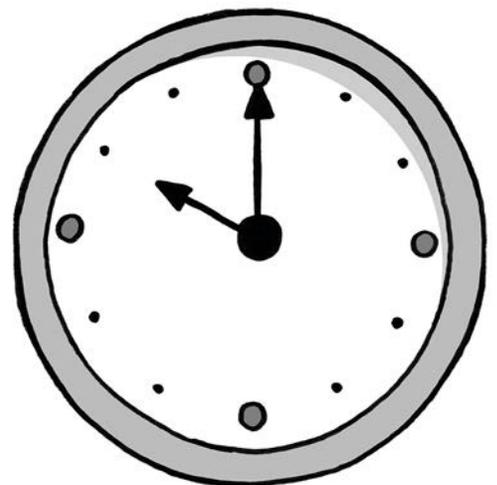
The pig pen has a mud pit in it. The pig will play and jog in the wet mud. The pig will eat the mush in the vat, but he will beg Chad for a rich fig and a yam.

Chad can pat his hen and pig, but they nip. Chad has a pet cat, Whit. Whit the cat is his chum and will go to the hen shed and the pig pen with Chad. Then Whit will sit out in the sun with Chad, and they will nap.



## Tick Tock

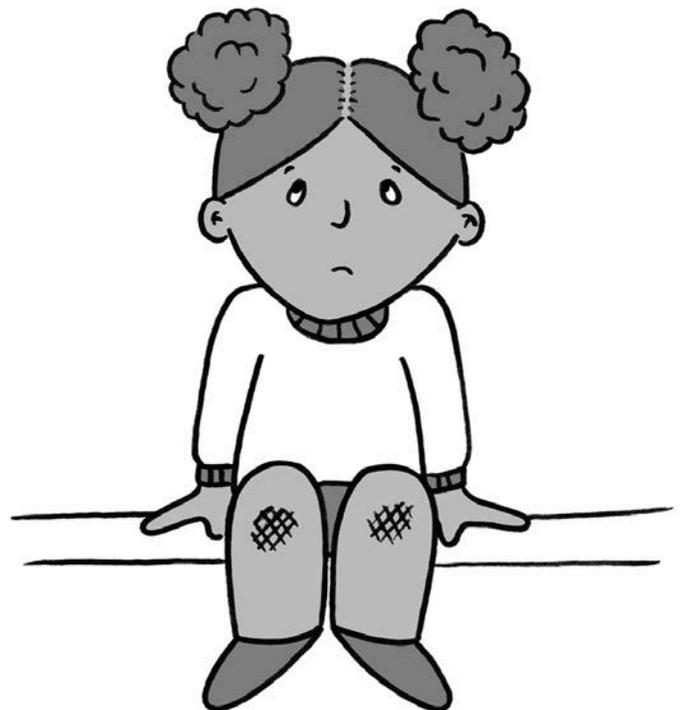
Nick must get the duck and the chick to the vet at ten. Tick tock. Nick must be quick. He will run to the shack to find the duck. Nick must get the fish in his pack for the duck to lick so the duck will not quack so much. Then he must check the van. The van is in the thick muck. Nick can find Rick in the shed. Can Rick help? Yes, Rick can help tug the van out! They tug the van back to the shack. Now, Nick must get the duck in the van. Then they go down the path to pick up the chick. He can tuck the chick in a box. Tick Tock. It is ten! Nick and Rick get the duck and the chick to the vet.



## The Fall

When I went to play ball, my mom said not to rush. She did not want me to fall. I did fall when I went to kick a ball to a pal. I went down in the tall thick mud. My chin had a gash, and I had mud in my sock.

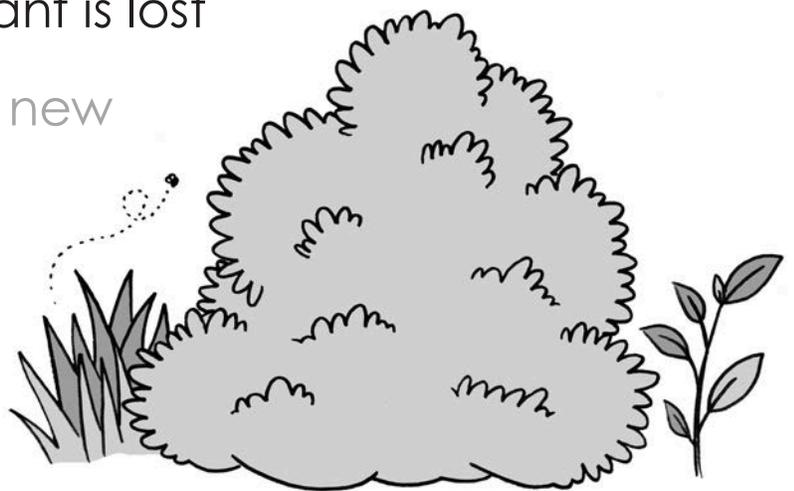
I did not want to call for my mom. I did not wish my mom to come and say, "I said not to rush!" My pal did pull me up and help me to the wall. Then, my mom did come and sit with me on the wall. She sat me down with a hug and said the fall was not too bad. She did dab the gash with a rag and rub the mud that was on my sock. Then, we went down the path to get my ball.



## Our Land

When it is hot and the sun is up, I look for a lush plant on our land. There is a plant that is soft like a cloth, and there is a plant that has a thick stem, too. The plant at the pond must be kept damp. It can look like a thin twig in the wet sand. A frog can jump and snag the bug on the stem. At the west end, there is a grand plant. In the fall, the plant has a red speck on the stem. There is a nest with a small chick in that plant.

This plant is lush when it is hot and the sun is out, but this plant will not like frost. This plant is lost when there is a frost. Then, a new plant can come back when the frost has left.



## The Potluck

The math test will end, and then our class will have a potluck. Robin will make ham and relish. Edwin will make a catfish sandwich. I will make a pumpkin dish. The setup will be quick.

We will set down a plastic cup and a fabric napkin. When we finish, we will set the cup in the trashcan and the napkin back in the picnic box. We will play ball on the blacktop. Then, we will skip up the path to see the sunset.

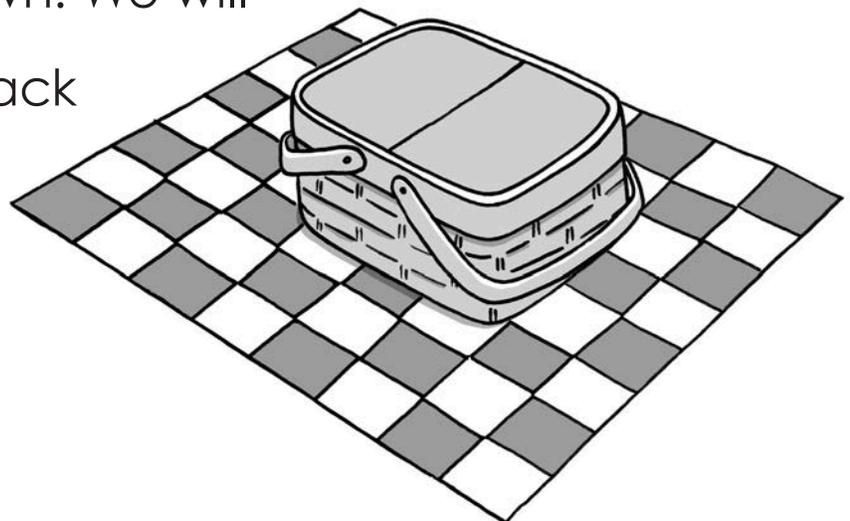
We can have a contest to run to the tiptop. At the top, there is a cabin where we can rest. Edwin will insist that we stop to see the sun dip down. We will

not panic if we must run back

at dusk. Then, we will

pack up. What a classic

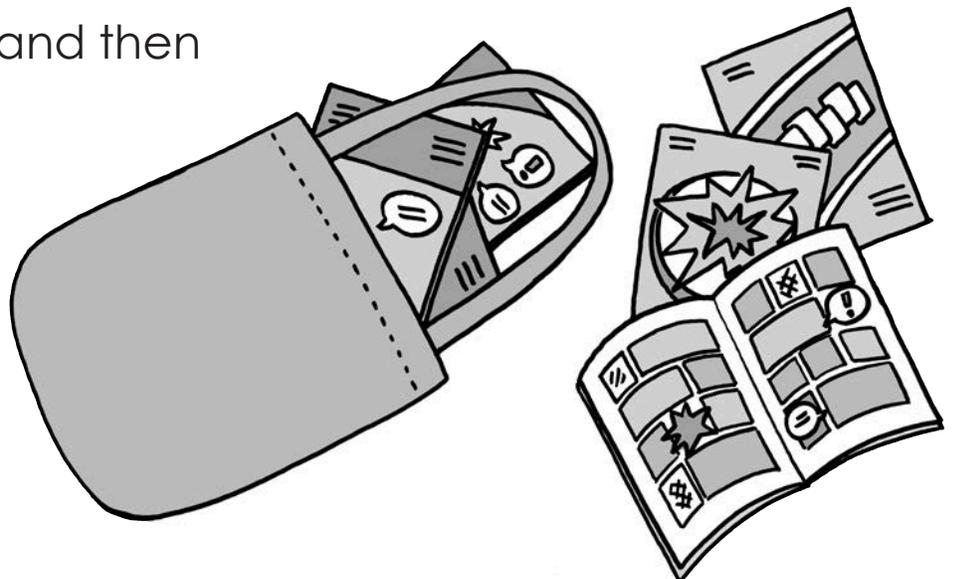
potluck picnic it will be!



## The Attic

Calvin went up to the attic in the cabin to find a comic his mom had when she was a kid. What did he find up there? Not just a comic! A tomcat ran past him in a flash. Calvin was in a panic, and he got a hiccup. He did slip and went down into a plastic trashcan with a tennis ball. When he got out, he saw a satin rabbit on a laptop. He had to brush away a cobweb in disgust. At last, he saw the classic comic in a red fabric handbag under a small bathtub. Then, he went down step by step and sat with the comic and a snack. He went to look at the comic and hit his cup with milk in it.

What luck! The milk did not get on the comic. Calvin will just have his sandwich and then go down the hall to sit at his desk with the comic. He will look at it with his mom!



## COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS FOR COUNTDOWN PASSAGES

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All questions are literal comprehension questions except those marked with an asterisk (\*). These starred questions are inferential in nature.

### UNIT 17: Max and Sam

1. What hit Max in the rib? (A: A bag hit Max in the rib.)
2. \*Why do you think Max was sad? (A: I think he was sad because he got hurt and his hat had a rip.)
3. Who helped Max? (A: Sam helped Max.)
4. How did Max get gas for his van? (A: Sam got the gas for Max's van.)

### UNIT 18: Tim and Ted

1. What do Tim and Ted do for fun? (A: Tim and Ted run, jog, hop, and play tag for fun.)
2. \*Why do you think Tim will let Ted win? (A: I think Tim will let Ted win because Ted is younger than him.)
3. Where do Tim and Ted play fit the hat on the dog? (A: Tim and Ted play fit the hat on the dog on the rug.)
4. Who hugs the dog? (A: Tim hugs the dog.)

### UNIT 19: Kim the Pig

1. What color is Kim the pig? (A: Kim the pig is tan.)
2. Where did Kim dig? (A: Kim dug in the wet mud.)
3. \*Why do you think Kim was sad? (A: I think Kim was sad because she got a cut on her leg.)
4. What time did Kim eat yams? (A: Kim ate yams at six.)

### UNIT 20: On the Ship

1. How do they get to the ship? (A: They get to the ship in a cab.)
2. What do they sit on while they fish? (A: They sit on a cot to fish.)
3. What do they eat with the ham? (A: They eat hash with the ham.)
4. \*Why do you think the jam had to go in the can? (A: I think they put the jam in the can because it gave Sam a rash.)

### UNIT 21: The Rush Down the Path

1. Why didn't Seth and Thad take a cab or a bus? (A: They didn't take a cab or bus because they didn't have any cash.)
2. What happened to Thad's hat when he fell? (A: Thad's hat got mud on it when he fell.)



3. \*How do you think Thad knew his dad was not mad? (A: I think Thad knew his dad was not mad because he hugged Thad.)
4. How did Thad get clean? (A: Thad got clean by taking a bath.)

### UNIT 22: A Pet Dog

1. What color is the dog Shad wished for? (A: Shad wished for a tan dog.)
2. Where will Shad have to jog with the dog? (A: Shad will have to jog with the dog on the path.)
3. What does Shad have to put in the dog dish? (A: Shad has to put mush in the dog dish.)
4. \*Why do you think the dog will want a nap? (A: I think the dog will want a nap because he will rush and dash and get tired.)

### UNIT 23: A Hen and a Pig

1. Where is the hen's shed? (A: The hen's shed is in a big pen.)
2. When does the hen nap? (A: The hen will nap when the sun is out.)
3. \*Why do you think the pig begs for a fig and a yam? (A: I think the pig begs for a fig and a yam because maybe he doesn't like the mush in the vat, but he is hungry.)
4. What do Chad and Whit do in the sun? (A: They sit and nap in the sun.)

### UNIT 24: Tick Tock

1. Where does Nick have to take the duck and the chick? (A: He has to take them to the vet.)
2. \*Why do you think Nick needs help from Rick? (A: I think he needs help from Rick because the van is stuck in thick muck.)
3. What does Nick put the chick in? (A: Nick puts the chick in a box.)
4. Did Nick and Rick get the duck and the chick to the vet on time? (A: Yes, they got them to the vet at ten.)

### UNIT 25: The Fall

1. When did the girl fall? (A: She fell when she went to kick a ball.)
2. Where did the girl get a gash? (A: She got a gash on her chin.)
3. What did mom dab the gash with? (A: Mom dabbed the gash with a rag.)



4. \*Do you think the mom was mad? (A: No, I don't think the mom was mad because the mom gave the girl a hug and told her the fall was not too bad.)

### UNIT 26: Our Land

1. Where is the plant that can look like a thin twig? (A: The plant that looks like a thin twig is in the wet sand at the pond.)
2. What is at the west end of the pond? (A: A grand plant is at the west end of the pond.)
3. When does the plant have a red speck on the stem? (A: The plant has a red speck on the stem in the fall.)
4. \*Why do you think the plant would be lost when there is a frost? (A: I think the plant would be lost because a frost will freeze the plant and harm it.)

### UNIT 27: The Potluck

1. When will the class have a potluck? (A: The class will have a potluck after the math test.)
2. Where will the napkin go after they finish eating? (A: The napkin will go back in the picnic box.)
3. What is at the top of the path? (A: A cabin is at the top of the path.)
4. \*Why do you think they will need to rest at the top? (A: I think they will need to rest because they just ran up to the tiptop of the path and they are tired.)

### UNIT 28: The Attic

1. Why did Calvin go up to the attic? (A: He went up to the attic to find a comic his mom had when she was a kid.)
2. What ran past Calvin quickly? (A: A tomcat ran past Calvin quickly.)
3. Where did Calvin find the comic? (A: He found the comic in a red fabric handbag under a small bathtub.)
4. \*Why do you think Calvin waited to look at his comic until after he finished eating? (A: I think Calvin waited because he already spilled his milk, and he was worried about getting his food on the comic.)



WORDS TO PREVIEW:

must, help, play, he, want

COUNTDOWN UNIT 22

Digraphs sh & th

130 words

### A Pet Dog

Shad has a wish for the tan dog at the shop.  
His mom said that a dog can be fun for a

Underline the digraphs **sh** and **th** with one line. Then read the words.

Shad  
wish  
shop

Available in *Countdown Online's* supplemental resources.

The differentiated *Countdown Passages* offer additional support for students struggling to read the passages accurately and/or fluently.

### QUICK FACTS

1. Students practice with new skill words before reading the passage.
2. All Heart Words students learned in *Countdown* are marked with a heart.
3. All Dolch words not taught in *Countdown* are provided in Words to Preview and appear in gray in the passage.

will rush and dash, and then he will want a nap. He will want a bed on the rug to nap on. Shad will go to shop with his mom to dog now.





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