

FACT AND OPINION**38****Stage 3: Comprehension**

Directions: Read the passage below. Then follow the directions on the next page.

Flower Talk

Queen Victoria ruled Great Britain from 1832 to 1901. She was also the empress of India for 25 years. During her rule, a certain code became popular. This was not a code that used scrambled letters or numbers. It used flowers. In this code, a message might be a white rose, and the answer might be a daisy. But what did these messages mean?

Each different kind of flower or herb had a special meaning. Books listed these meanings, and some of the meanings were very old. Sending a narcissus to someone, for example, meant that you thought the person loved himself or herself too much. The narcissus flower was named after a character in a Greek story who fell in love with his own reflection in a pool of water and drowned.

A hydrangea meant "You are cold," because a blue hydrangea *looked* cold. A bit of yew stood for sadness, since yews were often planted in graveyards. Children loved to play with yellow buttercups, so a buttercup stood for childishness. A bramble, which drags along the ground and pulls at things with its thorns, stood for envy. The rose is the most beautiful flower. It stood for love and beauty.

Some meanings are hard to figure out. Basil is a delicious herb, so why did it stand for hatred in flower language? Nobody knows. The iris is a tall, handsome flower. For some reason, it came to mean "I have a message for you." It makes sense that hawthorn, which blooms early in spring, stands for hope. But why did white heather mean "good luck"?

Today few people know the language of flowers. It would be fun to learn the old meanings and use them in secret messages with your friends. You also might enjoy making up your own flower codes.

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Stage 3: Comprehension (continued)

Directions: Find three facts and three opinions in the passage. Write the sentences on the lines below.

Facts

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Opinions

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

FACT AND OPINION**52****Stage 4: Comprehension**

Directions: Read the passage. Then follow the directions on the next page.

Harlem Photographer

In the late 1960s, the directors of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City decided to put together an exhibit of photographs about the African-American experience, focusing particularly on the lives of African Americans in New York. They asked photographer Reginald McGhee to see what he could find. McGhee was a well respected artist himself, and he had some strong views about what the exhibit should be like.

At first McGhee had little luck. As he went from studio to studio, he was advised repeatedly to go and see the “picture-taking” man, James Van Der Zee. When McGhee finally met the man and looked at his work, he knew he’d found a gold mine. Van Der Zee’s work was the best in the country at that time. Van Der Zee had been a professional photographer for over 50 years, beginning in 1917. His career reached its peak during the Harlem Renaissance, and he still had copies of nearly every photograph he’d ever taken. His collection held more than 40,000 pictures of babies and brides, pool halls and dance halls, fighters, ministers, and writers. Many of these photographs eventually appeared in McGhee’s exhibit, called “Harlem on My Mind.”

Van Der Zee’s career really began at the turn of the century, when he was just twelve. He won his first camera by selling perfume. Unfortunately, his prize didn’t work. Young James soon earned the money to buy a real camera. He began taking pictures of people in his hometown of Lenox, Massachusetts, and he soon showed some real talent for photography.

When James Van Der Zee was a young man, he moved to New York City. He wanted to be a professional violinist, and for a while he did quite well. Van Der Zee was a talented musician, but by 1915, radios were starting to take the place of live bands and he wasn’t making much money. He decided to turn his hobby of photography into a career.

In 1917, he opened a portrait studio in Harlem. It was the best studio of its kind. Van Der Zee used painted backdrops and soft lighting to make people look their best. He photographed many celebrities, but he was also interested in humble people. His collection is a very valuable record of what life was like in Harlem in the 1920s.

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Stage 4: Comprehension (continued)

Directions: Find three facts and three opinions in the passage. Write the sentences on the lines below.

Facts

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Opinions

4. _____

5. _____

6. _____
