



New York State Testing Program

English

Language Arts Test

Listening Selection

Grade

8

April 26–28, 2010

This listening selection is to be used in administering Book 2 of the English Language Arts Test. The entire selection is to be read aloud twice to the students. For complete directions, please follow the instructions in the *Teacher's Directions*.

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Listening Selection***Folly or Fortune?***

by Lois Miner Huey

“Fulton’s Folly,” people jeered as they passed Browne’s Shipyard in New York City. It was 1807, and Browne’s was the site where a very strange boat was being built by inventor Robert Fulton and his partner, Robert R. Livingston, Jr. The two men knew that putting a steam engine on a boat was still new and dangerous. But Fulton and Livingston ignored the taunts because they were convinced that their idea would revolutionize transportation in America. And they were right.

Fulton had obtained a ready-made engine from England and performed countless tests with small models. He successfully calculated important factors like water resistance and the hull thicknesses needed to run a boat with steam power.

On August 17, after devoting about five months to its construction, Fulton launched a vessel that measured 150 feet long, 13 feet wide, and 9 feet deep. Fulton and a group of invited guests—mostly Livingston family members—prepared to steam up the Hudson River from New York City to Albany, the state capital. The guests had to put up with primitive conditions—no cabins, no beds, and a roaring, uncovered steam engine mounted in the center of the boat—not to mention the fear of the engine’s exploding!

They cast off at 1 P.M. The vessel puffed away from the dock—and stalled. The passengers’ whispering turned into loud mumbles, which eventually gave way to shouts of “I told you!” Sensing their fear, Fulton promised to return to the dock if he could not fix the problem.

After a short time, there was a huge blast of smoke, and once again, the boat churned upriver. Described as looking like a giant teakettle, the vessel’s engine let off steam, raining down sparks that sizzled in the water. The noise was deafening, but the boat was moving, and the passengers cheered.

Go On

One eyewitness reported that the vessel was “a monster moving on the waters, defying the winds and tide, and breathing flames and smoke.” Chugging upstream against the tide at a fast four to five miles per hour, it easily passed sailing ships and fishing craft.

In its wake, the boat’s two side paddle wheels left waves of foamy water—and lots of terrified onlookers. Sailors on other ships dove overboard to swim to shore. Others ducked down to pray. People crowded the riverbanks—some applauded, while others declared how unnatural this vessel was. Nothing like it ever had been seen before.

Darkness fell, but the boat continued its journey. With a full moon and warm breezes, the passengers stayed up all night singing songs by candlelight. Their fears mostly had been forgotten.

The next day, the boat docked at Livingston’s estate, called Clermont. Here, the passengers ate well and stayed overnight in comfortable beds as Livingston’s guests. The next morning, Livingston and others joined the original passengers aboard the boat to continue steaming to Albany.

They pulled into that city at 5 P.M., having made the 150-mile trip in 32 hours. Crowds cheered their arrival. The governor—and Livingston’s brother-in-law—Morgan Lewis, welcomed them. No longer a joke, “Fulton’s Folly” had become the first successful steamboat in America.

STOP



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