

Read the passage “It’s Never Too Late” before answering Numbers 1 through 12.

It’s Never Too Late

When Anna Mary Robertson was a little girl, her father would bring home big sheets of paper as treats for her and her two older brothers. “He liked to see us draw pictures. Paper cost only a penny a sheet, and it lasted longer than candy. My oldest brother loved to draw steam engines, the next brother went in for animals, but as for myself, I always had to have pictures, and the merrier the better.” Anna always used every bit of her paper, covering both sides of the sheet with drawings.

Anna was born, in her words, “back in the green meadows and wild woods on a farm” in upstate New York on September 7, 1860. Drawing pictures was her favorite thing to do, but a farm child with chores had little time for drawing. Anna’s childhood did not last long. At the age of 12, she left home to work as a “hired girl,” or a live-in servant, on neighboring farms. After being hired out for 15 years, she married Thomas Moses, and together, the couple worked a farm and raised a family.

When Anna, or “Grandma Moses,” as she would come to be called, reached her late 50s, her workload lightened. Most women her age did some kind of needlework—what they called fancy work—so she embroidered pictures with thread. She would sketch a scene, then “paint” it with thousands of stitches. But, when she was in her 70s, her hands began to stiffen with arthritis, and embroidering became a painful task. One day, her sister watched Grandma Moses struggling with a needle and asked, “Wouldn’t it be easier to paint instead?”

Grandma Moses was 78 years old at that time. At her age, she could well have said she wasn’t about to start something new. Many people would have done just that. Instead, she went right out to the barn to look for painting materials. Her time to just sit and draw pictures had finally come.

During all her years as a hired girl, farm wife, and mother, Anna had paid close attention to the world around her. Now, as Grandma Moses, she would paint her memories. She started with paint and brushes that were left over from painting the house and barn and some canvas that had been used to cover a piece of farm equipment. She used toothpicks to add details to her paintings. Even with these crude materials, the pictures came quickly.

From the beginning, her paintings seemed to burst with life. The people in them connected with each other, working, celebrating, and coming to visit in sleighs and carriages. The children worked but also played—sledding, flying kites, and riding horses bareback. Dogs barked and joined in the fun. Thunderstorms and

blizzards bent trees and sent everyone racing to shelter. A sprinkle of glitter on a winter scene showed how the snow sparkled in the sun.

Grandma Moses soon bought better brushes and ordered tubes of oil paint from the Sears and Roebuck catalog. Then, she developed her own practical painting methods. She switched from canvas to Masonite (which would hold up better). Before starting a painting, she would first find a frame and then saw the Masonite to fit the frame. Changing colors meant cleaning brushes and wasting paint, so she would paint as many areas of one color as she could before moving on to another color.

Some months later, Grandma Moses displayed a few of her paintings in the window of a local drugstore. They were priced at two dollars each. In a Hollywood-like turn of events, the paintings caught the eye of a New York art collector who was driving through town, and Grandma Moses was “discovered.”

Soon after, Grandma Moses began exhibiting and selling her paintings. By 1950, when she was 90 years old, people all over America knew her work. And Grandma Moses just kept on painting.

Through her paintings, she showed the world country fairs, quilting bees, barn dances, blacksmith and wagon repair shops, laundry days, and getting hay in before the storm. She painted people plowing and harvesting, making apple butter, and sugaring (making maple syrup). She painted a town with pillars and windows draped in black, her memory of President Abraham Lincoln’s death when she was only five years old.

Her painting called “Halloween” shows an evening of good-natured fun. As a pale moon rises over the farm, children dressed in sheets run through the yard carrying glowing jack-o-lanterns on poles. A team of horses has brought a wagonload of cider in barrels, which men are rolling to the house. The party has started inside, and children lean over a water-filled tub, bobbing for apples. The house must be full of spooky noises, because boys are playing a prank: They’ve hoisted a farm cart onto the roof and are pulling it back and forth.

At 101, Grandma Moses was healthy and still painting, but her legs had become unsteady. Her doctor ordered that her paints be taken away “so she would rest.” She died a few months later, on December 13, 1961.

Despite her late start as a painter, Grandma Moses created over 1,100 paintings—more than most artists paint in a lifetime. Her paintings are like plays, with action, drama, and comedy that pull viewers into each scene. Her human figures may be awkward, and her buildings might sit at odd angles, but it doesn’t matter. Her colorful, detailed paintings are like a living-history museum, where everyone can experience American life in an earlier time.

Benchmark LA.A.2.3.1 (Details and Facts)

- 1 Grandma Moses' paintings are
- A. artificial.
 - B. dreamlike.
 - C. dreary.
 - D. lively.

Benchmark LA.A.1.3.2 (Analyze Words and Text)

- 2 Read this sentence from the passage.

In a Hollywood-like turn of events, the paintings caught the eye of a New York art collector who was driving through town, and Grandma Moses was “discovered.”

The author uses the word *discovered* to explain that

- A. the art collector recognized Grandma Moses' talent.
- B. the art collector found Grandma Moses' hiding place.
- C. the townspeople learned Grandma Moses' real name.
- D. Grandma Moses was in the right place at the right time.

Benchmark LA.A.2.3.1 (Details and Facts)

- 3 Why did Anna Mary Robertson first leave home?
- A. to get married
 - B. to learn to paint
 - C. to sell her paintings
 - D. to work as a hired girl

Benchmark LA.E.2.2.1 (Cause and Effect)

- 4 Why did Grandma Moses take up embroidery?
- A. It was part of her job.
 - B. Her workload had lightened.
 - C. She didn't want to paint anymore.
 - D. Her sister wanted help with her needlework.

Benchmark LA.A.1.3.2 (Conclusions and Inferences)

- 5 Grandma Moses sprinkled glitter on a winter scene to make the snow look
- A. bright.
 - B. cold.
 - C. merry.
 - D. realistic.

Benchmark LA.A.1.3.2 (Organizational Patterns)

- 6 How does the author organize the events in this passage?
- A. by presenting the most important information first
 - B. from the beginning of Grandma Moses' life to the end
 - C. from the end of Grandma Moses' life to the beginning
 - D. by comparing Grandma Moses' childhood to her adulthood

Benchmark LA.A.1.3.2 (Analyze Words and Text)

- 7 Read these sentences from the passage.

Her human figures may be awkward, and her buildings might sit at odd angles, but it doesn't matter. Her colorful, detailed paintings are like a living-history museum, where everyone can experience American life in an earlier time.

What does "like a living-history museum" mean?

- A. Her paintings are on display in a museum.
- B. Her paintings show important moments in history.
- C. Her paintings are like paintings you would find in a museum.
- D. Her paintings capture scenes of life and preserve them like museum exhibits.

Benchmark LA.A.1.3.2 (Conclusions and Inferences)

- 8 Based on information from the passage, Grandma Moses' paintings were popular because of her
- A. realistic likenesses of human figures.
 - B. formal training in artistic technique.
 - C. humorous, emotional, and active themes.
 - D. inexpensive asking price for framed artwork.