



acadience® reading k–6

Oral Reading Fluency

Student Materials

Level 4 | Progress Monitoring

Roland H. Good III

Ruth A. Kaminski

with

Kelli D. Cummings, Chantal Dufour-Martel, Kathleen Petersen,
Kelly A. Powell-Smith, Stephanie Stollar, and Joshua Wallin

Acadience Learning Inc.

An Island Festival

► Everyone on the island helped get the village ready for the big festival. Working together was part of the island way. Kiri and her family helped to sweep the walkways of the village. Other families picked up litter and groomed gardens. Some repaired old buildings around town. They all wanted their island to look its best for the guests who would soon arrive from all over the Pacific.

Kiri was happy that the place looked so nice, but she was even more excited about the festival to come. Her island had been chosen to host the big event. People were eager to share their island home and to treat their guests to wonderful feasts. Kiri's mouth watered when she thought of the big platters of food they would serve. There would be tables piled high with fruit, seaweed, fish, and coconuts.

The best part of the festival would be the show when dancers from each country would perform in traditional costumes. Kiri was in a group that was to dance on the first night. Her costume was made of a special cloth that was made from the bark of mulberry trees. It had flowers and leaves painted on it and she knew she would treasure the beautiful dress long after the dance was over.

On opening night, a huge crowd came to see the show. Dancers from each country paraded into the stadium and sat on the ground around the stage. Kiri's group went on first and performed a spirited song and dance. The crowd stood and cheered so loudly that Kiri couldn't stop smiling. Her group left the stage and then other dancers performed. As the other groups danced, she admired their colorful costumes and lively rhythms. Everyone cheered happily for each of the dancing groups. People from many different places chatted and laughed with one another. Kiri beamed with happiness. She knew she would remember this night always.

Exploring South America

► Imagine being so far out in space that the continents look like green and brown shapes on a blue ball. If you look carefully, you'll see one below North America that's shaped like a wobbly ice cream cone. It's wide at the top and pointed at the bottom. That's South America.

Zoom in closer and you'll see that the surface of South America is like a big bowl. The middle of the continent is the scooped out part of the bowl. It is grassland or desert in some places and rainforest in others. The sides of the bowl are mountain ranges near each coast. The tallest ones, the Andes, run down the western side. They are steep and jagged, and many of the peaks are volcanoes. The mountains in the north and east are lower but have many steep drops that create beautiful waterfalls.

To get a better look at the falls, move closer to the planet. You'll easily spot Angel Falls in the northern part of South America. It's the tallest waterfall on Earth. In the time it takes a drop of water to fall from the top of the falls to the bottom, you could sing the whole alphabet song! You'll also see a large river called the Amazon. It stretches two thousand miles from the Andes to the Atlantic Ocean and provides water to almost one-third of South America.

Now imagine being just above the treetops. You're close enough to see that there is little life in the desert of the northwest. It's one of the driest places on Earth and never receives rain. But if you go to the Amazon rainforest, you'll find more kinds of wildlife than anyplace else in the world. Move up into the mountains, and you'll see bears and animals a lot like llamas. Before you leave, be sure to go to the southern tip of the continent to see the penguins.

This quick trip is over, but there's much more to know about South America. If you feel like exploring, your next trip is as close as the library.

A Gift from the Past

► It was the middle of summer and too hot to play outside. Carmen tried to think of something interesting to do. Her mother suggested reading a book or starting a jigsaw puzzle. But Carmen wanted to do something new. Her mother thought for a minute and then disappeared down the hall. She returned with a long, slender box and explained that it held an heirloom that had been in the family for many generations. Carmen removed the lid and found a thick stick with a row of holes carved into it. Her mother explained that it was a flute made from a piece of bamboo.

“Your ancestors played this flute long ago in the mountains of Peru,” she said. “It makes a sweet, haunting sound unlike that of any other flute.”

Carmen felt how smooth and worn the flute was from being held and played by many different hands. It made her wish she could have known the ancestors who played it.

Her mother demonstrated how to hold the flute. Carmen noted how she rested the end of the flute on her chin with its opening near her bottom lip. Her mother blew gently and raised and lowered her fingers, creating a beautiful melody. Carmen loved the sound so much she couldn't wait to try it herself. She blew and blew but couldn't make any sound come out. With her mother's coaching, she learned to tighten her lips into a little half smile and to blow more gently. After a few more attempts, she was able to blow one clear note.

Carmen spent the rest of the summer playing her flute. She practiced covering and uncovering different holes to create different notes. When she could play all the notes clearly, her mother taught her a short song. After days of practice, Carmen could finally play it through smoothly. As she played, she imagined herself in the mountains making music with her ancestors. “Did they ever imagine someone like me, playing this flute far in the future?” she wondered. It made her smile to think that maybe they had.

A Home for Freckles

▶ A friendly collie poked his spotted muzzle through the bars of his kennel and wagged his tail. Emily petted him and thought what a perfect playmate he would be for her dog, Hal. She wished she could take him home.

Emily went to help her father put out fresh water in the kennels. She always met him at the animal shelter after school on Thursdays so they could walk home together. When she was old enough, she wanted to volunteer just like he did.

As they were leaving, Emily noticed a flyer announcing that the shelter needed trainers to help shelter dogs in obedience classes. Best of all, trainers could be as young as ten years old! Emily's dad agreed to let her sign up, and they went to the office. After they completed the application, the woman at the desk asked Emily to start that weekend.

Emily was at the shelter early Saturday morning. The teacher assigned a dog to each of the newly recruited trainers. Her partner was Freckles, the collie with the spotted muzzle!

The teacher helped the trainers teach their dogs to sit and stay. By the end of the class, Freckles was obeying most of Emily's commands. She worked with him every Saturday in class and spent extra time with him on Thursdays. One day, Emily couldn't find Freckles. The teacher said that he'd been adopted, and thanked her for helping him become a great pet.

Emily was happy for Freckles, but she missed him. When she arrived home that day, she opened the front door and called Hal. He always cheered her up. When he didn't come, she went to the back yard and called again. Hal came running, and then something amazing happened. Freckles came running, too! Emily whirled around and saw her dad grinning on the back porch.

"He's all yours!" he called.

Emily dropped and hugged both dogs. "I'm the luckiest girl ever," she thought. "I have two great dogs and a great dad, too!"

Art in Action

► Would you like to make drawings come to life? Try making a flipbook! A flipbook is a series of pictures that seem to move when you thumb through them quickly. To make yours, all you need is a pad of square sticky notes and a pencil.

First, decide on a concept for your pictures. You must re-create the same picture again and again, so choose something simple. Avoid adding unnecessary details, too. That will make it easier to create drawings that are nearly identical.

For your first flipbook, try drawing a face with eyes that move back and forth. Position your pad with the sticky part at the left. Then open it to the last page and draw a simple face toward the right side of the page. That is the part of the page that is visible when you are thumbing through quickly.

Your flipbook face can be a circle or any other basic shape. For each eye, make a horizontal oval with a dark, solid dot at the right end. Once you're satisfied with your picture, darken the lines to make them easy to trace.

Next, draw the second picture on the next to the last page of the pad. Trace everything except the dots in the eyes. Trace accurately so all the details will appear to hold still while the eyes move. Position the dots in the eyes a tiny bit farther to the left than in the first picture.

Repeat this process again and again. Each time, copy all the details and change only the dots in the eyes. For best results, be patient. Make such small changes that they are barely noticeable. When the dots reach the left end of the eye ovals, start moving them gradually back to the right. You should draw about twenty pictures in all.

Hold your finished book so that you can thumb through the pictures from back to front. The eyes on the face should move as if they are following a tennis match!

Empty Lot to a Garden Spot

► Last summer, I spent a few weeks at my aunt’s farm in the country. My cousins and I had a great time helping out at the produce stand where we sold fresh tomatoes, squash, melons, and berries. When I got back to my home in the city, I told my friends about the produce stand.

“If we had a place to grow vegetables, we could have a produce stand right here,” I explained. “I guess there’s really no place to grow a garden in the city, though.”

“There’s that abandoned lot down the street,” Dillan said. “Maybe we could use it.”

We sprinted down to the empty lot to investigate. At first, we felt disappointed. Weeds grew through cracked, dry soil, and trash was jammed against the metal fence. On the fence was a sign that said, “For information, call Mr. Brown.”

I wrote down the information, and we returned to my house. Grandma listened to our plan and offered to help. She called Mr. Brown who said that if we turned it into a neighborhood garden, he would donate the lot to the community!

“This is an opportunity we can’t afford to pass up,” said Grandma. “Let’s see how many volunteers we can enlist to help us.” We made flyers that listed the time, place, and purpose of the gathering and put them up in the library, post office, and grocery store. On Saturday, a large crowd showed up at the lot to help us prepare the soil and begin planting. Before our eyes, the vacant lot was transformed into a garden spot.

Each day, someone from the neighborhood was in the garden weeding, watering, and tending the plants. All of the neighbors seemed to take a lot of pride in the garden. As an added benefit, my friends and I made lots of new friends.

In a few months, there were vegetables ready for harvest. My friends and I set up a produce stand in front of the garden. Then we put up this sign: “Free vegetables. Thank you for helping to make this garden a success!”

The Little Hero

▶ You might not believe that a dog weighing less than ten pounds could stop a car or save someone, but that's just what a little dog named Annie did. Annie's heroic feat occurred late one night. On this particular night, Annie was out for a stroll with her owner, Pam. Pam uses a cane to walk, and as she and Annie stepped cautiously up onto a high curb in the dark, Pam tripped and fell. She was not seriously injured, but she couldn't get up by herself. Annie licked Pam's face and barked as she attempted to assist her owner, but Pam was still unable to stand up.

Annie was determined to get help for Pam, so she continued to bark noisily. She barked so loudly that neighbors called the police. A police officer finally came to investigate. It wasn't difficult to find Annie. The officer just went to the location where he heard the uproar. When the officer's patrol car approached her, Annie stood in the road and barked as fiercely as she could. She wanted to make the officer stop and get out of his car. That's exactly what the officer did. When the police officer tried to catch Annie, she dodged and barked even more ferociously. The little dog didn't run away from the officer, though. She just scurried back and forth to block his way each time he tried to go in another direction.

The officer wondered why Annie was being so insistent about getting his attention. That's when he heard a faint voice calling from near the bushes. Someone was calling for help! He hurried toward the voice and soon found Pam on the ground. The officer helped her up and delivered her and Annie safely home. Pam says she learned a lot from her accident. First, it's best to avoid walking where there are steep curbs and no street lights. More importantly, it is a good idea to take someone with you when you go out at night who can make sure you get home safely. For Pam, that someone is her dog.

A Surprising Little Fish

► Imagine that you are snorkeling near a reef when some clown fish catch your eye. They're zippy little orange fish with black and white stripes. They whirl and wiggle and dart in and out of their ocean home. It seems they are chasing each other in a rollicking game of tag.

The fish you are watching are clown fish, and it's easy to see how they got their name. It looks as if they are clowning around. These clown fish are not playing, though. They are defending their territory from outsiders. What looks like a bushy seaweed plant is really a sea animal that lets clown fish live in its tentacles. The creature is called an anemone. Most fish avoid this animal because its mass of tentacles can deliver a powerful sting. Luckily, clown fish have special protection from the animal's sting. Clown fish are covered in a sticky substance that protects them from the sting.

Living inside a stinging animal is great protection for the clown fish. Hungry predators that would like to eat the clown fish turn away when they see the anemone. If a predator gets too close it gets a severe sting. In return for protection from enemies, the clown fish clean the anemone. They remove dirt from its tentacles. They feed on scraps from the anemone's meals. The anemone and the fish are both quite content with this unusual arrangement.

Clown fish are unusual in another way, too. They are almost all males. Only one female is in every colony, and she is also the leader of the colony. She lays her eggs near the anemone where they are kept very safe. The mother clown fish has laid them where predators don't dare go. She knows the stinging anemone is the best babysitter in the sea.

On the Road to Success

► Everyone was gathered in front of the stage, waiting to hear who had won the design contest. Designing a car of the future was a real challenge, but Tim's entry had made it to the finals. At last, the judges took the stage and announced the winning entries. Tim was thrilled to hear that his car with solar power had won second place. He grinned at the applause and the trophy, but the best part about winning was yet to come. He and the other winners would present their designs to the president of a national car company.

On Friday, Tim and his parents drove to the car factory. The manager led the students and their families on a tour. As they walked along the assembly line, the manager explained each step in making a car. Tim was fascinated by everything he saw. First, the frame of a car was fastened to a big, moveable belt. A huge machine lowered the engine and transmission onto the frame. Then workers fastened the parts in place. As the belt moved the car frame down the line, the car was gradually built from the bottom up. Machines and people worked side by side at many of the stations. Tim got more and more excited as the car took shape.

Finally, the car was ready to send to the body shop, where workers added the doors and the hood and trunk. When the body was complete, machines painted the car. The manager was about to show them where the interior parts were installed when an announcement came over the loudspeaker. The president of the company was ready to meet them.

They hurried to the office. After the students presented and explained their designs, the president told them he was very impressed with their work. As they were leaving, he shook Tim's hand and asked him to come back and apply for a job someday. Tim was thrilled. All the way home, he imagined cars just like the one he'd designed rolling down that assembly line. He could hardly wait for the day to come.

Growing a Rosebush

► Is it possible for a stem to turn into a rosebush? It may sound like a magic trick, but it actually works! With a little patience, you can do it yourself.

Begin by cutting a stem from a healthy rosebush. You should do this in late spring or early summer when it is warm enough for new roots to grow but not so hot that tender leaves will burn. Examine the stems of the rosebush closely and select one that is young but strong. It should have a fading flower or one that has already lost its petals. Cut a stem about twelve inches long.

Next, prepare the stem by removing the flower and most of the leaves. This allows the cutting to put all of its energy into forming roots. Don't remove all of the leaves, though. Two to five leaves should be left on the stem to provide food for the developing plant. You will also need to make cuts at the bottom of the stem to help roots form more rapidly. To do this, start at the bottom edge and cut about one inch up each side.

Next, plant the cutting in a pot containing damp potting soil or sand. Poke a hole in the dirt with your finger and position the cutting in it. Then gently press soil against the cutting to hold it in place. To keep the cutting moist, mist the leaves with a spray bottle and then cover it with a clear plastic bag. Use tall stakes to prevent the bag from resting against the leaves. Then fasten the bottom of the bag around the pot with a rubber band.

After two weeks, uncover the cutting and gently tug on it. If you feel resistance, roots have developed. Give them several more days to grow and then remove the plastic bag. Place your cutting in a shady area away from harsh sunlight.

When you notice that your plant is growing new leaves and getting taller, plant it in a sunny location and water it frequently. Then congratulate yourself on growing your first rosebush!

Rainy Day Savings

▶ Jenna and her sister Ann peered out the window at the lemonade stand sitting vacant by the street. It had been raining for two days, and the weather forecast just predicted more wet weather. The girls had planned to earn money to buy tickets for the amusement park, but they couldn't sell lemonade in the rain.

Ann counted up their money and calculated that the sisters needed ten more dollars to afford their tickets. She wondered if there was a way the girls could still earn the money, despite the rain.

Jenna thought about it. They couldn't offer to walk the neighbors' dogs or wash their automobiles. No one would pay them to do those things in such dismal weather. She and Ann tried to think of what they could do. Just then, their mother entered the room and, overhearing their problem, offered a suggestion.

"You know, that's a pretty soft, gentle rain outside," she said. "There's no thunder or lightning, and a lightweight raincoat would be enough to protect you from getting soaked. Why don't you offer to pull weeds in the neighbors' gardens? The earth will be soft and moist from the rain, so the weeds should come out easily."

The girls thought that was a terrific idea. They decided to charge three dollars per hour to pull weeds. They went down the street, knocking on doors and offering their weeding services. Before long, three neighbors had hired them to maintain their gardens. Jenna and Ann got right to work cleaning out the planting beds.

"Mom was right about a rainy day being the right time for this," announced Ann, as she pulled crabgrass and other weeds easily from the moist soil. "The rain makes weed pulling easier, and keeps us from getting too hot."

By late afternoon, the girls had earned enough money to pay for their tickets. They also knew just how they'd spend rainy days for the rest of the summer.

A Vacation Adventure

► Every summer my family goes camping in the mountains, but this year we did something different. We traveled to a country called Belize. When my mom told me about the trip, it sounded exciting, but I wondered if it would be as enjoyable as a vacation in the mountains. I love the bumpy drive up to our favorite campsite. It's a real adventure watching for wildlife and exploring caves as we hike up to see the incredible view from the mountaintop. Still, I decided to keep an open mind. Our Belize trip would be different, but it might be interesting.

We spent the first few days in Belize on the beach, where my sisters and I enjoyed swimming and learning to surf. On the final day of our vacation, a guide drove us deep into the jungle to see some ancient ruins. The farther we drove, the rougher the road became. We laughed as we bumped up and down and slid from side to side. It was bumpier than the road to our mountain campsite! Along the way we spotted many colorful birds and even a group of monkeys in a tree.

When we arrived at our destination, we were amazed at what we saw. It was a city that the Mayan people had built over a thousand years ago. As we examined fascinating carvings on pyramids and ancient stone walls, we tried to imagine people living there long ago. Our guide pointed out a stone mask as we explored a tomb that was as cool and dark as a cave. Next he took us to the Sky Temple, a huge pyramid with hundreds of steps. My sisters and I raced up the stairs and were completely out of breath when we got to the top. From there we could see how big the ancient city had been. It was an awesome view.

As we flew home, I thought about my trip to Belize. I had done many of the same things I enjoy on our camping trips. Even better, I'd explored a whole new country and an ancient world!

Sunnydale Stars

► Soon after Marco joined the drama club at Sunnydale School, the club members began to work on a special project. They were going to fix up the empty lot located behind their school. Their plan was to build a stage where they could put on outdoor plays for all the students and families in their school. Each day after school that week, the drama club students worked to transform the vacant lot into an outdoor theater.

On their first work day, the drama club teacher, Mrs. Walter, led the way to the empty lot. The first task was weeding. Mrs. Walter gave each student a pair of work gloves to wear and the students got right to work pulling up a tangle of weeds that covered an old concrete patio. This patio would be the stage. Over the next few days, Marco and his friends brought scrub brushes and buckets of water and scrubbed the patio clean. Once the patio was clean, the students painted it bright blue. Then it was time to decorate the stage. Marco opened a can of silver paint and each student grabbed a paintbrush and painted a silver star on the blue stage. When the paint was dry, they used markers to write their names on the stars.

The outdoor theater was ready. What play should they perform first? The students decided to present the play “The Tortoise and the Hare.” Everyone in the club was assigned a job to do. Some students made the programs, some were in charge of refreshments, and others were assigned the job of setting up chairs. Marco’s job was to be the announcer. Together, the members of the club worked to get everything ready for the show. When opening night came, they all took their places backstage. Marco took a deep breath. The play was about to begin.

Wonderful Water

► Some people say, “You are what you eat.” It might be more accurate to say, “You are what you drink.” That is because about two-thirds of the human body is made up of water.

Our bodies use water in many ways to maintain our health and well-being. We need water to help with digesting and absorbing the food we eat. Water controls our body temperature, keeping us from getting too hot in warm weather. It helps to carry oxygen and nutrients to all the body’s cells and even acts as a protective cushion for joints, such as knees and hips.

Each day, our bodies lose as many as six pints of water through evaporation and perspiration. Replacing that water is important for maintaining good health. People who exercise vigorously lose even more water. Running, playing soccer, bicycling, and hiking can increase the amount of water you need to drink.

How can you get all the water you need? First, try to drink plenty of fresh water with every meal and after you exercise. It’s also good to drink water at other times during the day, especially if it is a warm day. Eat plenty of fresh fruits and vegetables, which also contain water. Eating these can also help you get the water your body needs.

Many people do not drink enough water to maintain their health. They say they do not feel thirsty. Sometimes people who do not think they are thirsty are confusing thirst for hunger. They think their body is asking for food, instead of water.

To ensure you get all the water your body needs, you should drink water frequently throughout the day. If you drink enough water throughout the day, you will feel healthy and refreshed. More importantly, your body will have the fluid it needs to work well.

Healthy Choices

► Have you ever wondered where the food you eat really comes from? A tomato at the grocery store can come from many sources. Some stores sell tomatoes that have traveled a great distance across many states to get there. At other shops and markets, the tomatoes you buy come from farms in locations very close to where you live. You can often find these local tomatoes at outdoor markets. Choosing a locally grown tomato is a healthy choice.

A ripe tomato fresh from the vine is full of vitamins and flavor. Locally grown tomatoes are allowed to ripen before they are picked. Ripening all the way gives the tomatoes lots of flavor and color. Once the tomato is picked, its nutrients begin to fade. As the days pass, it keeps losing more and more of its food value. It is still good to eat, but it has less flavor and fewer vitamins than a fresh tomato does. Farmers who ship tomatoes a long distance often pick them while they are still green. Green tomatoes turn red after a few days, but they have far less flavor and color than tomatoes that ripen all the way on the vine.

Tomatoes from local farmers are good for the environment, too. Because they don't have to be shipped very far, farmers don't have to use a lot of packaging that has to be thrown away. Instead, they can transport the foods in bushel baskets that they reuse every week. Transporting local tomatoes this way doesn't generate a lot of waste materials.

Many kinds of fruits and vegetables are shipped across the country every day, but often those same crops can be found much closer to home. Next time you go to the store, keep a lookout for locally grown tomatoes. You may see other locally grown foods you want to choose, too.

A Trip into History

► The ship sounded its horn as passengers hurried to board. Albert's family followed a porter who showed them to their cabins. While his parents began unpacking, Albert went outside and looked through binoculars. He wanted to get a closer look at a distant castle. It was exciting to think that the old castle was once guarded by brave knights in armor. Albert couldn't wait to see more. He was convinced that this two-day voyage on the Rhine River would be the highlight of their trip to Germany.

Albert quickly unpacked so he could explore the rest of the ship. It was as long as a football field! On deck, he discovered that there would be plenty to do while they were onboard. In addition to a library and a gift shop, there was a heated swimming pool. His parents were happy to learn that there would be live music and dancing, too.

The family had just found seats on the deck when the ship began to move. Albert ran to the railing. He waved to people on shore as the boat pulled away. Before long, the ship reached the castle he had spotted earlier.

Albert's father pointed out that the tall walls and moats around castles were built to protect the owners from attacks. "The royal family members who built the castles had soldiers stop boats that passed by," he explained. "They charged them a toll to continue down the river."

As the ship moved slowly down the river, it was as if they were drifting back in time. They saw castle after castle set on rocky cliffs and tree-covered hills. They passed nearly fifty of them! Over the years, some had tumbled down, and only a few rock walls remained. Other castles still looked strong and mighty. In pretty little villages on the shore, they saw churches built hundreds of years ago. Albert decided that he really liked learning about the past this way. "Thanks for taking me on this boat trip," he told his parents. "It's the best history lesson I ever had!"

Keeping Oil on the Job

► Anything with a motor needs clean oil to run smoothly. That includes everything from cars to lawnmowers. To keep motors running clean, people drain the dirty oil every few months and replace it with new oil. What happens to the used oil? Oil that is allowed to soak into the ground or spill into storm drains can pollute the water supply. It can also be toxic to wildlife. The best thing to do with used oil is to recycle it. A lot of cities have oil recycling centers where used oil can be dropped off. Some even pick up used oil at the curb. There are also many service stations that accept used oil for recycling.

The used oil you give to city workers or other collectors is stored in large tanks. When a tank is full, the collector calls a hauler to pick it up. The hauler pumps the used oil into a special collection truck and takes it to a processing plant.

At the plant, the oil is tested for lead and other wastes that must be removed. Any water in the oil must be boiled off so that only the oil remains. Then the oil is tested again to make sure it is clean and safe to use. The whole process costs far less than refining crude oil from the ground.

Once the oil is cleaned, it can be used in many ways. Some is used in motors again or as a heating fuel for buildings or ships. Many power plants are able to use recycled oil to produce electricity. Just two gallons of recycled oil can make enough electricity to power a home all day and all night. If all car owners recycled their used oil, we would save millions of gallons every year. Just imagine how much power that oil could produce!

Recycling oil is a smart move for us all. It keeps our water clean and protects wildlife. It provides cheaper fuel and power. Best of all, it keeps a precious resource out of the landfill and on the job!

Gail Devers

▶ As a child, the girl ran constantly. She enjoyed running races against her brother, but she always lost. The girl didn't give up and started practicing and training hard. Soon she was running faster than her brother. This girl was Gail Devers. Years later, she would become one of the fastest runners in the world.

Gail was an excellent runner. She was on the track team in high school and in college. She was training for the Olympic games in 1988 when she became ill with a mysterious disease. Her muscles hurt, and sometimes she could not feel her legs at all. There were times when her head hurt and she would faint. Soon she could not even walk. It took several years for doctors to discover what was wrong with Gail and figure out how to help her get well. Finally she started to improve, and once again she began to train for the Olympics.

At the Olympic games, Gail ran fast, winning first place and earning the gold medal. She ran so fast that people called her the "World's Fastest Woman." After the Olympics, Gail competed in the World Championships, earning seven medals there. She won gold medals in the one hundred meter dash and the one hundred meter hurdles. It was the first time in many years that a runner was first in both of these events. In the next two years, Gail won so many races that she was named the best runner in the world. The following year, Gail won two more gold medals at the Olympics in Atlanta, Georgia.

Gail knew she would not always be able to run, but she could have a lasting impact on people's lives. She created the Gail Devers Foundation, an organization that helps people with education, health, and athletics. She wanted to show people how to do good things to help others. Her message to others is to never give up because hard work leads to success.

A Day of Surprises

► It was an ideal day for mountain biking. My sister and I didn't know where we were going because Dad wanted to surprise us. As we drove, he gave us clues about our destination. It was a trail that followed nature's lead. It had a history, and it was named for a giant pit. We tried to figure out what the clues meant, but none of our guesses were correct.

After an hour's drive, Dad pointed to a sign and announced that we had arrived. We were at the Quarry Road Trail! Once we were on our bicycles, Dad explained how the trail matched his clues. First, it followed the American River. That was nature's lead. Second, miners from the Gold Rush era had built a flume, or water chute, alongside the trail. They channeled water from the river into the flume and then searched the shallow stream for gold. Third, it was named after the old quarry, an enormous pit where people excavated rock to use in building.

The trail didn't seem particularly steep, but at the halfway point we could feel the strain in our legs, so we stopped to wade in the river. Before long, we were back on our bikes and headed for trail's end. By the time we got there, we were definitely ready to rest, so we relaxed on the grass and watched people rafting on the river below. The water was very swift there, and rafters tipped over if they didn't navigate carefully. Just past the rapids, they were carried over a small waterfall into calm waters. When they landed with a splash, they cheered triumphantly. It looked like great fun. That's when Dad revealed another surprise. We were staying overnight in the park cabins so we could go on a rafting expedition the next morning! My sister squealed in delight and gave me a high-five.

"You're full of fantastic surprises today, Dad," I said.

"I've got one more surprise that I'm sure you'll like," he said with a wink. "The trail back to the car is downhill all the way!"

Rodeo Dreams

► The big day was here at last, and happy crowds filled the rodeo grounds. After months of waiting, Ben was at the rodeo waiting to see his sister, Brook, compete. His family had driven halfway across Canada to be at the Calgary Stampede, the largest rodeo in Canada. Brook’s event was barrel racing, and her dream was to win the big cash prize for her college fund. It wouldn’t be easy. Only the best riders were invited to compete at this rodeo.

Brook had worked hard for this moment, and Ben had been her biggest supporter. Every afternoon, he set up her barrels in the corral while she saddled up her horse, Flash. She rode around the barrels again and again while her brother timed her with the stopwatch. If Brook knocked over a barrel, Ben hopped down from the fence and stood it back up. Each time she got a little bit faster, he hollered and threw his hat in the air.

As Ben waited for the barrel race to begin, the announcer’s deep, friendly voice welcomed the audience. He could hardly believe that today the announcer would say his sister’s name. His secret dream was to hear his own name over that loudspeaker. He wondered if that day would ever come.

At last, the barrel race began. One rider after another came out of the chute and circled the barrels. Brook was the last to ride. She and Flash burst into the arena and rode around the barrels in perfect form. When her time was announced, everyone stood up and cheered. Brook and Flash had the fastest time. Her dream had come true!

The announcer congratulated Brook on her winning ride and added, “This rider wants to send out a big thank you to the person who helped her win this event. Let’s all give a hand to her brother Ben.”

Ben was amazed when he heard his name announced. He couldn’t believe that his secret dream had come true, too.
