

# READING

## Nonfiction Passages

### Toying Around with Reading

**Walking Springs**

Have you ever wondered what the word "slinky" means? It is a fancy word for "peek and graceful". This is the name the wife of the inventor for this plain, simple toy gave it. But the journey of this simple toy is not simple at all.

In 1943, when a navy engineer, Richard T. James, was working quietly in a shipyard in Philadelphia. He was using springs to invent something that could hold ship equipment during rough sails. He accidentally toppled a couple of springs and one of them tumbled down, making flips by itself, and stood right back up. And so an idea "sprung" into Richard's mind - make this spring the next big toy sensation.

He told his wife, Betty, about making a spring "be able to walk" and she wasn't so sure about it until Richard finally polished the toy's design. He used a "high-grade blue-black Swedish steel wire" that curled into 98 coils and made a 2.5 inches spiral toy. Then they took it to a department store in Philadelphia in 1945. Even though the Slinky was just a dollar's worth, it didn't sell because it was displayed with other bigger toys. So Richard set-up a separate display area in the store and showed children some tricks with the Slinky. And in a matter of 99 minutes, all the first 400 created Slinkys were bought with more customers asking for it.

From then on, the Slinky was a toy that was simple and affordable. Kids were overjoyed with it. The Jameses' company, James Industries, tried to keep the price as cheap as possible even though the price of steel went up. The Slinky also attracted co-inventors that led to the Slinky being developed into several other toys. A pulling dog toy with a slinky body was introduced in 1952 and was called "Slinky Dog". Then came an adorable bright yellow pulling worm toy called "Suze the Slinky Worm", which its head and tail is connected by a Slinky. There was also "Slinky the Train Loco" and the "Slinky Crazy Eyes", which are glasses with two blue bulging eyes attached by Slinky. Lastly, rainbow-colored plastic Slinky came to market, as well.

But the Slinky was not just a toy; it was also used in many ways. In classrooms, teachers use the Slinky to discuss about the properties of waves. During the US-Vietnam war, the soldiers used the slinky as a radio antenna and NASA also used the Slinky in experiments for the Space Shuttle. Others used the Slinky for decorative purposes such as drapery holders, light fixtures, window and table decorations, gutter protectors, pigeon repellents, birdhouse protectors, and mail holders.

To date, Slinky has two sizes in steel and two sizes in plastic, and has sold more than 300 million units. Slinky has gone from just being a plain o' simple spiral toy to a wonderful wire of excitement.

**Walking Springs** Name \_\_\_\_\_

Read each question below. Answer it with complete sentences and use evidence from the text to support your answer.

1.) How was the slinky invented?  
Richard James was trying to invent something

2.) The slinky didn't sell at first because it was displayed with all the bigger toys. Why do you think this caused it not to sell?

What other toys were developed as a result of the slinky?

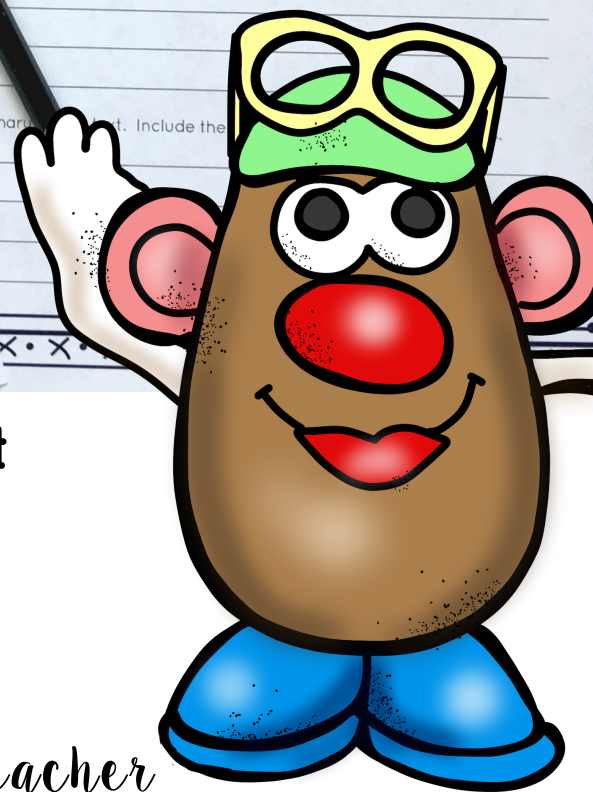
The author states that the slinky has been used many other ways. How does author support this point?

a summary \_\_\_\_\_ . Include the \_\_\_\_\_

Nonfiction Passages about  
how some of our favorite  
toys were invented.



Created By The Owl Teacher



# Playing with Your Vegetables

Parents always scold their children when they play with their food or when they don't eat their veggies. But not Mr. Potato Head!

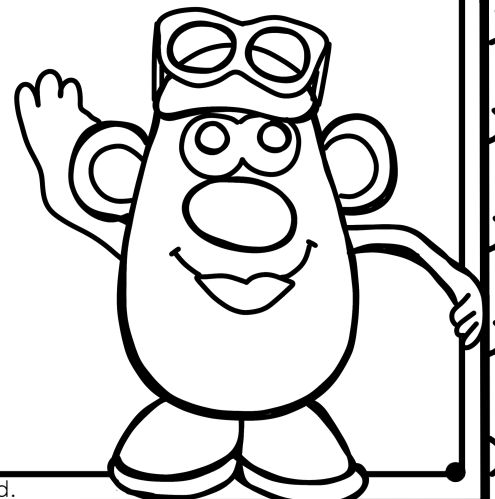
Brooklyn-born George Lerner is an inventor and toy designer in the World War II era. As a boy, he would take some vegetables from the garden and play with them. He would stick pieces of fruit and vegetables together to make a "funny face man". Then in his adult years, George recalled his childhood toy veggie when he saw his wife's nephew putting sticks inside potatoes.

Originally, Mr. Potato Head was known as a "make a face" toy. Lerner started the toy with a cereal company. They made push-pin face parts as cereal treats. Then, on May 1, 1952, Lerner took the idea to Henry and Merrill Hassenfeldt, brothers of a toy company (now known as Hasbro, Inc.) who changed the name of the toy and "Mr. Potato Head" was born. Now, Mr. Potato Head does not have just face parts but also hats, eyeglasses, and other pieces. After a year of success, Mrs. Potato Head joined him, as well as, Brother Potato and Sister Yams to have one complete Potato Head family.

At first, Mr. Potato Head and his family were made of real potatoes. However, complaints started to arise when they would rot in their bedrooms, along with complaints about being a hazard. Sometimes children would choke on the little pieces of real Mr. Potato Head. Finally, he had his head made of plastic. The sharp parts were made dull and the smaller parts were made bigger and rounder to prevent choking.

Mr. Potato Head was actually the first-ever toy to be promoted on TV and his stardom did not stop there. He had a debut acting role in 1995's Toy Story movie as a supporting character and was continuously casted until the movies third installment, Toy Story 3 in 2010. He even had his own show, "The Mr. Potato Head Show", on Fox Children's Network in 1998.

Now, Hasbro have has as much as 30 different Mr. Potato Head models in their store. And kids, and adults alike, cannot run out of making funny faces anymore.



## Playing with Your Vegetables

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Read each question below. Answer it with complete sentences and use evidence from the text to support your answer.

1.) Who invented Mr. Potato Head, and why was it invented?

---

---

2.) What's the main idea of the fourth paragraph? Give supporting details.

---

---

---

3.) What does Mr. Potato Head come with besides a face, eyes, and ears?

---

---

---

4.) How did they fix the hazard problem?

---

---

---

5.) The Potato Head family was created with Mrs. Potato Head, Brother Spud, and Sister Yam. How is a yam related to potatoes?

---

---

---



## Playing with Your Vegetables

Name KEY

Read each question below. Answer it with complete sentences and use evidence from the text to support your answer.

1.) Who invented Mr. Potato Head, and why was it invented?

George Lerner because he enjoyed playing with vegetables and fruit with sticks as a child.

2.) What's the main idea of the fourth paragraph? Give supporting details.

Mr. Potato Head had to change from a real potato to a plastic potato because of the hazards of small parts and because the real potato eventually rots.

3.) What does Mr. Potato Head come with besides a face, ears, and hair?

Eyeglasses; hats; hair ties

4.) How did they fix the hazard problem?

They made the smaller parts bigger, rounder, and dull (rather than sharp).

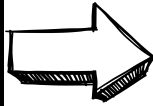
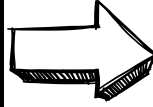
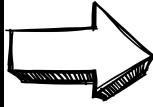
5.) The Potato Head family was created with Mrs. Potato Head, Brother Spud, and Sister Yam. How is a yam related to potatoes?

Answers may vary. Technically they are not related, except that they both grow in the ground as tubers (root growing).

Name \_\_\_\_\_

# Cause

# Effect



PREVIEW