

**Topic:** Homelessness

**Text Type:** Narrative Fiction

**Word Count:** 619

**Lexile® Measure:** 1050L

**Skills:** Reading for Meaning  
Phrasing  
Rate  
Timed Reading

**Lesson 1**

**Time:** 10–15 minutes

**Skills:** Reading for Meaning

**Student Pages:** “True Story” (Student Copy)

**Lesson 2**

**Time:** 15–20 minutes

**Skills:** Phrasing

**Student Pages:** “True Story” (Student Copy)

**Lesson 3**

**Time:** 15 minutes

**Skills:** Phrasing with Dashes

**Student Pages:** “True Story” (Student Copy)

**Lesson 4**

**Time:** 15 minutes

**Skills:** Rate

**Student Pages:** “True Story” (Student Copy)

**Lesson 5**

**Time:** 15–20 minutes

**Skills:** Timed Reading

**Student Pages:** “True Story” (Student Copy)

**Teacher Pages:** “True Story” (Teacher Copy), Fluency Chart

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**Note: Words in bold are said aloud by the teacher.**

## Reading for Meaning

Distribute “True Story” (Student Copy). **Follow along with me as I read this story. The title is “True Story.”** Read the story aloud to students. Read the passage with expression, proper phrasing, and intonation. Model appropriate rate as you read. After reading, ask the following questions to engage students in a discussion about the story:

- **What is this story about?**
- **What are some words that describe Gerald? Why?**
- **What are some words that describe Scooter? Why?**
- **What does this story remind you of?**

Discuss any words students may not be familiar with.

Assign partners. Avoid pairing students of significantly different proficiencies. This results in less frustration. Also, the more proficient reader may serve as a model. Partners should be changed periodically.

It is important to model the expectations of partner reading. You may do this by role-playing with one student, or you may select two students to role-play the following:

- how to sit with your partner (Have partners sit close together so that the partner who is reading can use a low inside voice and still be heard.)
- how to read with your partner (Partner A reads. Partner B listens carefully and follows along. Partner A underlines lightly with a pencil any words he or she finds interesting or does not know. Partners may also assist with words if needed by using the following correction procedure:
  - If a student reads a word incorrectly, skips a word, or does not know a word, his or her partner points to the word and says, “What is this word?”
  - If the student reads the word correctly, the partner says, “Yes, that word is \_\_\_\_\_. Please reread the sentence.”
  - If the student does not know the word, the partner says, “That word is \_\_\_\_\_. Please reread the sentence.”
  - The student repeats the word and rereads the sentence.)
- how to dialogue with each other after the reading (Have students discuss what the passage is about and which words in the passage they found interesting or did not understand.)

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After these procedures have been modeled, have students practice. Discuss behaviors that are unacceptable as well.

## Independent Practice

Now, I want you to get with your partner and read “True Story” together. Using a pencil, lightly underline any words you find interesting or do not know as you read. Partner A will read the first paragraph and stop. Then partner B will read the same paragraph. Discuss what you read and any words you found interesting or did not understand. Then follow the same procedure with the following paragraphs until you reach the end of the passage.

Walk around and observe students as they read together. If necessary, remind students of the expectations for partner reading.

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## Teach

Redistribute or have students take out “True Story” (Student Copy). **We will practice reading “True Story” fluently.**

**Reading fluently** means reading the words correctly, at an appropriate rate, and with correct phrasing and intonation. Reading fluently is not about reading fast but about reading at an appropriate rate. Fluent reading should sound like you are talking. The way we read a text affects our comprehension.

Each lesson will focus on one or two aspects of fluency. **Today, we will practice phrasing.**

**Phrasing** involves grouping certain words together when speaking. As we talk, we automatically chunk words into groups. This is also important when reading. There are some words that sound better chunked together, and when this is done, the ideas are easier to understand.

Commas help us with phrasing, too. A comma signals to the reader to pause briefly while reading. Commas separate listed items, characteristics, or events. Paying attention to commas helps us with chunking words as we read.

Sometimes in long sentences there aren’t commas. Fluent readers chunk words automatically to make the reading sound like talking.

**Listen as I read the second sentence of the third paragraph.** Read the following, pausing accordingly at the slashes:

**Gerald suddenly began to panic, / feeling as if Scooter / might have been washed away / on a tide of human oblivion.**

**I paused at the comma, but I also paused briefly after the words *Scooter* and *away*. These are natural pauses to make in this sentence. Pausing briefly after the comma and those words makes the reading sound like talking. The more reading sounds like talking, the easier it is to comprehend the text.**

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## Guided Practice

**Now, let's practice. We'll read the second paragraph of the story.** Allow students time to locate the paragraph. **I will read a sentence. Then, you echo me.** Read the following paragraph one sentence at a time, modeling proper phrasing and expression. Pause accordingly at the slashes, and allow students time to repeat each sentence after you. Make sure the pauses sound like natural breaks and not like choppy phrasing.

**Gerald sat down / on the bench / and carefully surveyed the street. / Scooter was rarely late, / since this corner was practically his front yard. / Shielding the sun / from his eyes, / Gerald squinted / into the darkness / under the nearby overpass, / where Scooter usually slept. / He saw neither his friend / nor the bundle of belongings / that Scooter stowed there / during the day.**

**It is important to use proper phrasing when reading fluently. Commas help with this, but fluent readers use natural pauses, too. This makes the ideas on the page easier to understand.**

## Independent Practice

Review the expectations for partner reading with the students. **Now, with your partner, practice using proper phrasing as you read the passage. Pause briefly at each comma. Commas will help you chunk words together.** Have each student read the passage as before, one paragraph at a time. Walk around and listen in as students are reading. Comment on proper phrasing. If necessary, model how to use proper phrasing again.

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## Teach

Redistribute or have students take out “True Story” (Student Copy). **We will continue to practice reading fluently. In the previous lesson, we practiced reading with appropriate phrasing. We will continue to practice fluency by looking at signals authors include in the text, such as dashes.**

**A dash inserted in the text usually means that the author is going to add additional information or an example. When you come to a dash in the text, you pause longer than you would for a comma.**

**Listen as I read the second sentence of the first paragraph.** Allow students time to find the sentence. Read the sentence aloud with expression, pausing at each dash. **He had two breakfast burritos in his backpack—one for himself and one for Scooter—and a couple of ripe peaches, too. Pausing a little longer at each dash adds drama to the sentence.**

## Guided Practice

**Let’s practice reading this sentence together. Try to make your voice stay with mine.** Read the sentence with the students, pausing at each dash.

**He had two breakfast burritos in his backpack—one for himself and one for Scooter—and a couple of ripe peaches, too.**

**Now, scan the passage for additional places where the author uses dashes.** As students locate the sentences with dashes, have them practice reading them aloud.

## Independent Practice

**Now, it is time to practice with your partner.** Have each student read the passage as before, one paragraph at a time. Walk around and listen in as students are reading. Comment on proper phrasing. If necessary, model how to use proper phrasing again.

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## Teach

Redistribute or have students take out “True Story” (Student Copy). **Let’s continue to practice reading fluently. This time we will focus on rate.**

**Rate is the speed at which you read the passage. Most of the time, reading is done at a normal pace. But sometimes, to add interest, you might read a sentence more quickly or slowly than the rest of the passage. The message that the author is conveying lets you know how to read the words.**

**This story is read at a normal rate.**

## Guided Practice

**Let’s practice with the first two paragraphs. First, listen to me read.** Read the first two paragraphs aloud, fluently.

**Now, read with me. Try to make your voice stay with mine.** Read along with students.

## Independent Practice

**Now it is your time to practice with your partner.** Have students read the passage with their partner. Partners should take turns reading one paragraph at a time. After both have read the passage, have students discuss what the passage is all about. Walk around and listen in as students are reading. Comment on rate and phrasing. If necessary, model rate and phrasing again for students.

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## Timed Reading

Redistribute or have students take out “True Story” (Student Copy). **While you are reading with your partner today, I will listen to each of you read. I will call you over one at a time and have you read for 60 seconds. Then we will set fluency goals together. Remember what is expected during partner reading. I want each partner to read the passage twice. You may begin.**

While students are reading, call one student over at a time and listen to him or her read the passage for 60 seconds. Encourage students to do their best reading.

For each student, use a copy of “True Story” (Teacher Copy) to mark words that the student has trouble reading. If the student does not know a word, point to the word and say “This word is \_\_\_\_.” Have him or her read the word and continue reading the passage.

As students read, listen for proper phrasing and intonation. Provide positive feedback on their efforts when they are done.

When the student begins reading, start a timer or use a clock with a second hand. At the end of 60 seconds, tell the student to stop reading. Subtract the number of words that gave the student trouble from the total number of words the student read. This results in the student’s Words Correct Per Minute (WCPM).

(Total Number of Words Read) – (Number of Problematic Words) = (Number of Words Correct Per Minute)

Example: (101 Words Read) – (3 Problematic Words) = 98 WCPM

Give each student a Fluency Chart. Assist the student in charting his or her WCPM with a bar graph. The student should keep the graph to record readings of various other passages over time. Readings of the same passage may be recorded as well. Each time a passage is read, have the student write its title in the Title section of the chart and shade in the correct amount for WCPM on the graph. It will be motivating for the student to see his or her growth over time.

Each student will need to set his or her own fluency goal. Take the student’s initial WCPM and help him or her set a reasonable goal. A reasonable goal would be adding one or two words to his or her WCPM each week. The goal can be a monthly goal or a six- to nine-week goal.

Have students take the passage home and continue to practice. They can read the passage to a family member while practicing rate, phrasing, and intonation. They can also have a family member time them as they practice reading for 60 seconds.



## True Story

Gerald arrived at the bus stop early, just as he did every day. He had two breakfast burritos in his backpack—one for himself and one for Scooter—and a couple of ripe peaches, too. Since it was the last day of summer school, he felt like celebrating, and he figured Scooter didn't eat a healthy breakfast very often.

Gerald sat down on the bench and carefully surveyed the street. Scooter was rarely late, since this corner was practically his front yard. Shielding the sun from his eyes, Gerald squinted into the darkness under the nearby overpass, where Scooter usually slept. He saw neither his friend nor the bundle of belongings that Scooter stowed there during the day.

People hurried by on their way to work—dressed in expensive suits, carrying expensive briefcases, talking on expensive phones. Gerald suddenly began to panic, feeling as if Scooter might have been washed away on a tide of human oblivion. Most people didn't notice Scooter—or pretended not to—despite his voluminous gray hair and unkempt beard, despite the fact that he wore several layers of clothing even in summertime. Gerald might have ignored Scooter, too, if Scooter hadn't spoken to him that morning in June.

"Summer school, huh?" Scooter had commiserated, noticing Gerald's backpack and sullen expression. Gerald had felt instantly uncomfortable; he had never conversed with a homeless person.

"I suffered the same misfortune," Scooter continued, "decades ago." To Gerald's consternation, Scooter proceeded to narrate the story of his thirty-year romance with a woman named Tabitha. "Tough-loving Tabitha," Scooter mused with affection, "who insisted I graduate and get a job before she would even consider marrying me."

Gerald was surprised by the eloquence of Scooter's words but didn't quite believe them. He didn't quite believe that Tabitha existed, and he certainly didn't believe the end of the story—the part where she died after a brief illness and a series of additional misfortunes forced Gerald to forfeit the mortgage on their house. Wasn't that the kind of story all homeless people told to justify their situations?

Gerald's suspicions had become less important, though, as his affection for Scooter had grown. Scooter had surprised Gerald with his extensive knowledge, both scholarly and practical. He could help Gerald solve complicated geometry problems—and he knew where to get free movie tickets around town.

Suddenly, Gerald remembered something Scooter had recently said: "They don't call me Scooter for nothing, you know. I'm thinking of heading to California someday soon." Gerald hadn't paid much attention; Los Angeles had sounded like another of Scooter's fictional dreams. Now, though, the memory of the conversation intensified Gerald's panic. His bus was lumbering up the street—and still, there was no sign of Scooter.

Just then, Gerald felt something wedged between the metal slats of the bench. As he dislodged and unfolded a grimy sheet of paper, a photograph fell out, showing a familiar-looking man and a tired-looking woman, embracing and gazing into the camera. The woman was wearing a bathrobe and slippers, and the man, Gerald realized with surprise, was a clean-shaven Scooter.

"Dear Gerald," began the note, "I'm pretty miserable at good-byes, ever since Tabitha, but like I said last week, it's time for me to scoot along. You've been a good friend, and I'll miss our morning conversations (and geometry lessons). I want you to remember a better version of me, so I'm leaving you this photo. I almost tore it in half to keep the Tabitha part—but then I couldn't."

Gerald left one burrito on the bench, just in case, then shouldered his backpack, and climbed onto the bus with a sad smile on his face and a true story in his pocket.



## True Story

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