THE
BASIC/NOT BORING
MIDDLE GRADES
LANGUAGE ARTS
BOOK
Grades 6–8+
Inventive Exercises to Sharpen Skills and Raise Achievement

Series Concept & Development by Imogene Forte & Marjorie Frank

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INTRODUCTION

Do basic skills have to be boring? Absolutely not! Mastery of basic skills provides the foundation for exciting learning opportunities for students. Content relevant to their everyday life is fascinating stuff! Kids love learning about topics such as UFOs and weather maps, famous quotations and seashore sounds, detectives and mysterious characters, peculiar laws and mind-blowing trivia, foreign words and surprising sequences, and more. It is on acquired knowledge bases that they develop basic skills which enable them to ponder, process, grow, and achieve school success.

Acquiring, polishing, and using basic skills and content is a cause for celebration—not an exercise in drudgery. The BASIC/Not Boring Middle Grades Language Arts Book invites you to celebrate with students as you help them sharpen their abilities in the essentials of language arts.

As you examine The BASIC/Not Boring Middle Grades Language Arts Book, you will see that it is filled with attractive age-appropriate student exercises. These pages are no ordinary worksheets! The BASIC/Not Boring Middle Grades Language Arts Book contains hundreds of inventive and inviting ready-to-use lessons based on a captivating theme that invites the student to join an adventure, solve a puzzle, pursue a mystery, or tackle a problem. Additionally, each fittingly illustrated exercise provides diverse tools for reinforcement and extension of basic and higher-order thinking skills.

The BASIC/Not Boring Middle Grades Language Arts Book contains the following components:

• A clear, sequential list of skills for 6 different content areas
  Checklists of skills begin each content section. These lists correlate with the exercises, identifying page numbers where specific skills can be practiced. Students can chart their progress by checking off each skill as it is mastered.

• Nearly 250 pages of student exercises
  Each exercise page:
  . . . addresses a specific basic skill or content area.
  . . . presents tasks that grab the attention and curiosity of students.
  . . . contains clear directions to the student.
  . . . asks students to use, remember, and practice a basic skill.
  . . . challenges students to think creatively and analytically.
  . . . requires students to apply the skill to real situations or content.
  . . . takes students on learning adventures with a variety of delightful characters!

• A ready-to-use assessment tool
  Six skills tests, one for each content area, follow each series of exercises. The tests are presented in parts corresponding to the skills lists. Designed to be used as pre- or post-tests, individual parts of these tests can be given to students at separate times, if needed.

• Complete answer keys
  Easy-to-find-and-use answer keys for all exercises and skills tests follow each section.
HOW TO USE THIS BOOK:

The exercises contained in The BASIC/Not Boring Middle Grades Language Arts Book are to be used with adult assistance. The adult may serve as a guide to ensure the student understands the directions and questions.

The BASIC/Not Boring Middle Grades Language Arts Book is designed to be used in many diverse ways. Its use will vary according to the needs of the students, the form of instruction, and the structure of the learning environment.

The skills checklists may be used as:

. . . record-keeping tools to track individual skills mastery.
. . . planning guides for the teacher's instruction.
. . . progress reports to share with parents.
. . . a place for students to proudly check off accomplishments.

Each exercise page may be used as:

. . . a pre-test or check to see how well a student has mastered a skill.
. . . a tool around which the teacher may build a mini-skills based lesson.
. . . one of many resources or exercises for teaching a lesson or unit.
. . . a way to practice or polish a skill that has been taught.
. . . a review of a skill taught earlier.
. . . reinforcement of a single basic skill, skills cluster, or content base.
. . . a preview to help the teacher identify instructional needs.
. . . an assessment for a skill that a student has practiced.

The exercises are flexibly designed for presentation in many formats and settings. They are useful for individual instruction or independent work. They can also be used under the direction of the teacher with small groups or an entire class. Groups of exercises on related skills may make up the practice materials for a series of lessons or may be used as a unit enhancement.

The skills tests may be used as:

. . . pre-tests to gauge instructional or placement needs.
. . . information sources to help teachers adjust instruction.
. . . post-tests to review student mastery of skills and content areas.

The BASIC/Not Boring Middle Grades Language Arts Book is not intended to be a complete curriculum guide or textbook. It is a collection of inventive exercises to sharpen skills and provide students and teachers with tools for reinforcing concepts and skills, and for identifying areas that need additional attention. This book offers a delightful assortment of tasks that give students just the practice they need—and to get that practice in a manner that will definitely be remembered as non-boring.

As your students take on the challenges of the enticing adventures in this book, they will increase their comfort level with the use of fundamental reading, writing, and language skills and concepts. Watching your students check off the skills they have sharpened will be cause for celebration!
It’s great fun to play around with sophisticated words that are not normally used in everyday conversation. Below is a collection of phrases, written in “snoopy” language, but offering some good, sound advice. Match each sophisticated phrase with its contemporary, vernacular translation. (If you don’t know what vernacular means, look it up. By the time you get through with this page, it should be a word you will never forget!) Write the number of each “snoopy” phrase next to its matching translation in ordinary language.

1. Sustain thyself by engorging a goodly portion of the nutritious elements.
2. When the gray aurora dawns in the eastern hemisphere, rouse yourself to a vertical position.
3. Render to each homo sapien his rightful appurtenances.
4. Avoid premature surrender to excessive anticipation.
5. Please refrain from making your bowler a depository for sputum.

6. Ambulate with extreme vigilance.
7. Avoid contumelious comportment.
8. Never extricate foreign matter from your proboscis.
9. Shield your oral aperture when forcibly expelling from the same.
10. Regard with deference and esteem those who are your predecessors.

_____ A. Cover your mouth when you cough.
_____ B. Eat to live.
_____ C. Be patient.
_____ D. Don’t be rude.
_____ E. Watch your step.
_____ F. Don’t spit in your hat.
_____ G. Get up in the morning.
_____ H. Respect your elders.
_____ I. Give everyone his own stuff.
_____ J. Don’t pick your nose.
GET AHEAD!

People do not like headaches. But have you ever wondered how headaches feel about people? An eighth grader wrote this clever essay that will give you some clues.

Fortunately, a headache never has difficulty finding a good home. A toothache has to hope for a vacancy in a holey molar. An earache must wait for a cold day to chase down hatless children, but I just move into a head any time.

Even if an earache is lucky enough to catch an ear, he has the most cramped quarters in which to live. And imagine how confining it is to be a toothache, trapped inside a bicuspid! Neither has as much room as I, and I don’t have to tolerate either bad breath or sticky, yellow wax!

A headache can easily find lodging in any head that has a problem (and most people have plenty of problems!). Why, I’ve lived in some of the best heads—presidents, movie stars, and even athletes—I have known many of them intimately. I’ve met more people than any other ache around. Most of them I like, but the person I wish never to meet is the one who invented aspirin!

1. From what point of view is the essay written? ____________________________

2. What is the main idea conveyed by this essay? _____________________________

3. List at least three details that support the main idea you have written above.
   ________________________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________

4. What does the writer say is the one disadvantage of being a headache? ____________________________

5. Which title below do you think best fits this piece? Write it on the line above the essay.
   • Go to the Head of the Class
   • Down with Aspirin!
   • Advantages of Being a Headache
   • Heads I Have Met

6. Explain your title choice. ____________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________

Name