A graphic for Unit 1. It features a large, stylized number '1' in the center. To the left of the '1', the word 'UNIT' is written in a bold, white, sans-serif font. Below the '1', the word 'Details' is written in a bold, black, sans-serif font. The entire graphic is set against a dark, textured background.

Details are important to writing because they make things clearer for the reader. For example, fiction writers use details to help readers imagine a setting or character.

Detail questions are often the easiest questions to answer. That's because everything you need to know is right there in the reading selection in front of you. All you have to do is put your finger on it.

The following tips will help you find details quickly and accurately.



Read the entire selection first.

It may surprise you to know that some people try to answer reading questions just by skimming the passage. Skimming helps, but it can also lead you straight to the wrong answer if you don't have the bigger picture first.

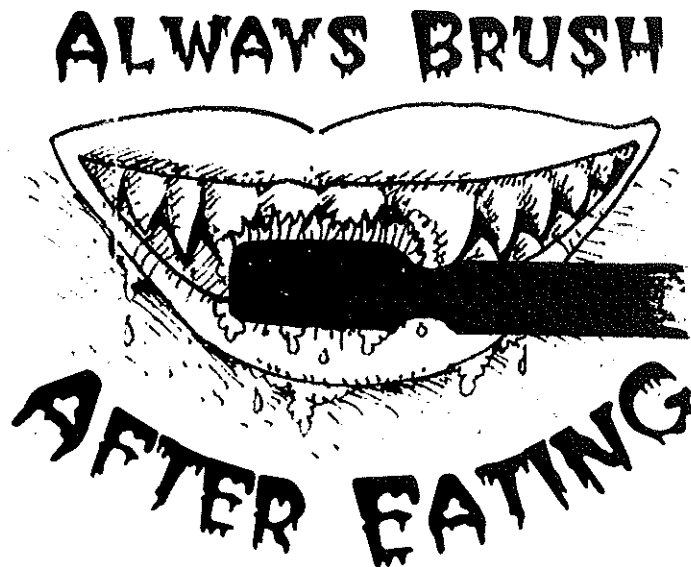
When you first read an article or story, read every word. You don't need to worry about remembering every detail. But you'll have an easier time finding the answers to detail questions if you've read the whole selection.

Practice this tip as you read the selection on the next page.

READING
Selection

Directions:

Read the selection below, then study the tips that follow.



by J. M. Wasson

- 1 Willy entered Dr. Wolfe's waiting room slowly. With superhuman effort he forced one foot in front of the other.
- 2 *I'm like a condemned man walking to the electric chair*, he thought.
- 3 Willy was terrified of dentists, though he really didn't know why. He hadn't even been to a dentist since he was nine, and he was sixteen now. To be fair, Doc Trimble, Willy's last dentist, hadn't been too crazy about seeing Willy either—not after he had almost lost the tips of three fingers in Willy's mouth.
- 4 But Doc Trimble had retired six months ago and now Dr. Wolfe was taking over. At this news, Willy's mother had decided it was high time her son had a checkup.
- 5 When Willy had told his best friend Zoey that he couldn't go to the beach with her on Saturday because he was stuck with a dentist appointment, she'd grabbed his arm. "Don't go, Willy! Dr. Wolfe and his assistant are really creepy. Tyrone said his Uncle Mike went last Wednesday and he hasn't been the same since. Every time anyone talks to him he curls up into a little ball and whimpers like a frightened puppy."
- 6 "Yeah, sure, Zoey," Willy had replied. "You know I'm scared of dentists; you're just trying to get back at me for telling my brother you have a crush on him."
- 7 But Zoey had kept insisting. Willy had meant to ask Tyrone about his Uncle Mike, but Tyrone hadn't been in school for the last couple of days. So Willy had forgotten about the conversation. Until now.
- 8 "This place sure smells strange," Willy thought. He couldn't quite place the odor. It reminded him of his dog Fritz. No, that wasn't quite it, either. The zoo—

that was it. The smell reminded him of the wolf pen at the zoo! Maybe Zoey was telling the truth, after all. He turned and lunged at the door, but his mother's large frame blocked his escape.

9 "No you don't, Willy," she said. "You're not leaving here until Dr. Wolfe is finished with you."

10 Willy took a seat in one of the waiting room's blood-red chairs. His imagination gave him no peace. What if the dentist hurt him—really *hurt* him? Would he bleed all over the place? Or, if he had to have a cavity filled, would the dentist give him a shot—with a *needle*—a foot-long *NEEDLE!*? Would he blubber like some baby? Worse yet, what if the dentist pulled out all of his teeth? He'd die of embarrassment gumming his lunch in front of everybody in the school cafeteria.

11 "Willy Carter?" a woman said from the doorway of the inner office. She was dressed in a white nurse's uniform. A lab coat hung loosely from her thin, wiry body.

12 She said it again, with authority this time, "Willy Carter."

13 Willy didn't answer. Maybe if he ignored her, she'd give up and go on to the next patient—only there weren't any other patients today.

14 "Speak up, son," Mrs. Carter said. "Dr. Wolfe won't bite." She laughed at her own joke. She always thought she was funny, but Willy didn't think so—not now, anyway.

15 "Yes, Ma'am," Willy managed to squeak.

16 "I'm Dr. Wolfe's assistant, Miss Lupine." Her eyes narrowed into slits as Willy slowly stepped forward. She seemed to be sizing him up, like a dog eyeing a bone and wondering if it would be worth the trouble of burying.

17 Burying! Oh no, why couldn't he just relax and keep his mind focused on more pleasant things? Like taking his girlfriend Tamela to the dance next Saturday night. Or practicing some tricks on his skateboard. Willy smiled secretly as he thought about how much better he was getting at axle grinds and rail slides. One of these days he'd be River City's skateboard champion for sure . . .

18 "Willy," his mother said, interrupting his daydreaming. "I'm going to the grocery store while you're in with the dentist. You can take the bus home when you're through." Mrs. Carter pulled open the heavy oak door and stepped into the sunlight outside. She turned to face him. "Willy," she added, "I'm *trusting* you to *behave* yourself." She stared at him until his knees shook, then closed the door firmly behind her.

19 "Come along, Willy," the woman growled at him. "Let's not keep the dentist waiting. It's almost time for lunch."

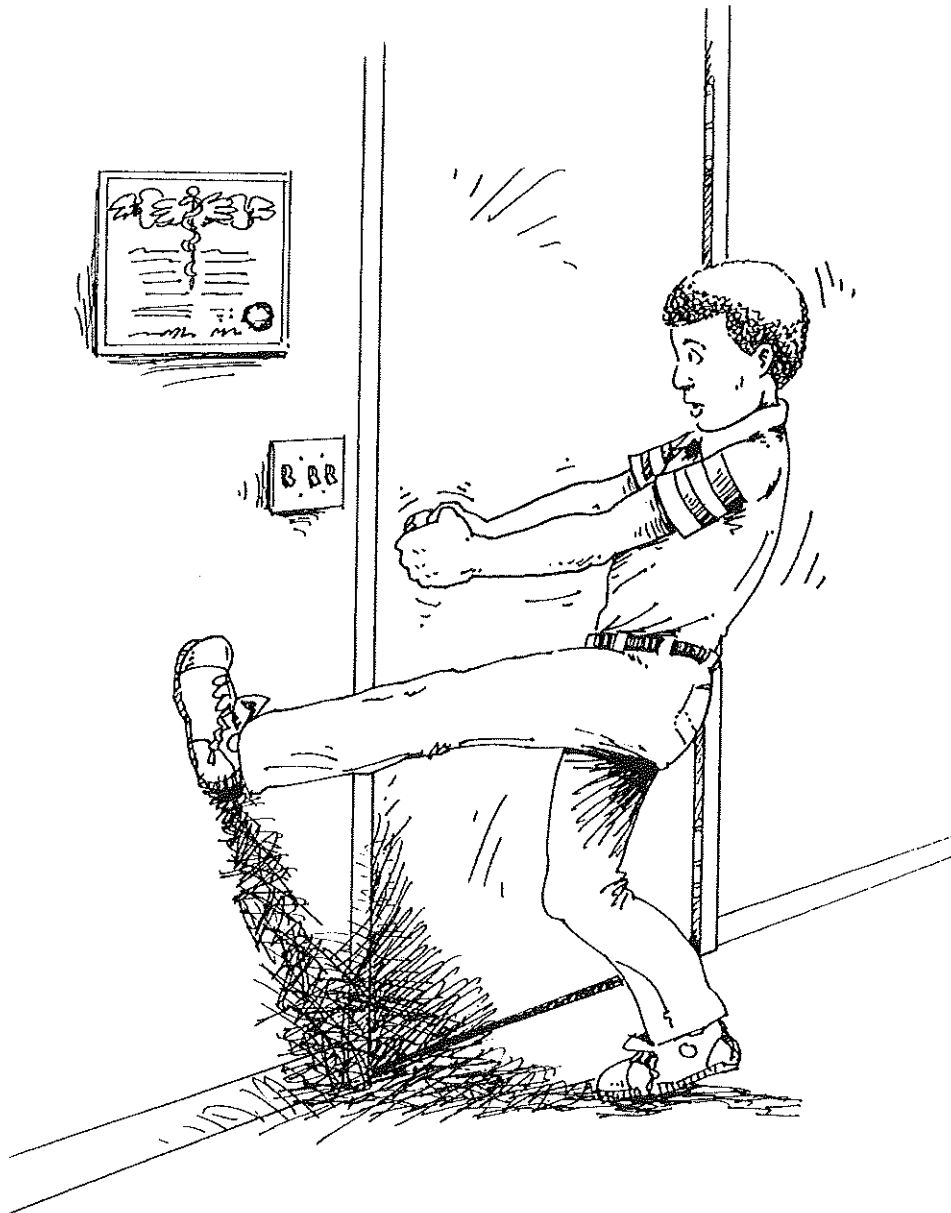
20 Dr. Wolfe's assistant led Willy into an examining room. It didn't look anything like he remembered from his long-ago visit to Doc Trimble. There was no reclining patient's chair, no overhead light to blind the patient, no drill or other tools of dental torture. The room was completely empty. And there were bars on the windows—to keep burglars from breaking in, he supposed. "This place is weird," Willy thought. He shivered nervously.

21 “The doctor will be with you in a minute,” the assistant said. Was he imagining, or had she just run her tongue over her upper lip?

22 Willy looked at her in panic.

23 As the door closed behind the bony woman, Willy heard a soft click. “Hey, Lady, wait a minute,” he said. He pulled on the doorknob—hard—but it was locked! Maybe it was stuck. He slammed his right shoulder into the door, hoping to loosen it—no luck, nothing moved.

24 Willy Carter was trapped—trapped in the one place he feared more than any in the world. “Someone let me out of here!” he cried. The only reply was a harsh barking laugh from the next room. 🐕





Skim the selection to find key words from the question. Then read the sentences surrounding the key words carefully.

Now it's time to skim. Skimming means to look quickly over the selection to find key words. Take a look at the question below and identify a word or words that might help you find this information in the reading selection.

1. Whose uncle went to see Dr. Wolfe last Wednesday?

In the space below, write down a key word or words that will help you find the answer to the question.

Now go back and circle those words each time they appear in the reading selection.

Okay, let's take another look at the question, this time with some answer choices.

1. Whose uncle went to see Dr. Wolfe last Wednesday?
 - A. Zoey's
 - B. Tyrone's
 - C. Willy's
 - D. Tamela's

If you read the sentences around the key words slowly and carefully, the answer to this question should have been easy to find.



Sometimes you'll be asked to find which detail is NOT in the selection.

This kind of question isn't really any harder, it just may take a little longer. Look in the selection for each of the answer choices. Then carefully compare to see which answer choice does NOT fit with the rest. Again, it's a good idea to circle the key words in the passage—or at least put your finger on them once you find them.

2. When Willy is left in the examining room, he does NOT do which of the following?
 - A. call for help
 - B. try the doorknob
 - C. slam against the door
 - D. break the lock on the door

By skimming the selection, you should have been able to locate key words from each of the answer choices. Which thing did Willy NOT do?



Understand the order in which events happen in the selection.

To make a story more interesting, writers often tell things in a different order than they actually happened. In most tests, the events presented in reading selections will be pretty straightforward, but you'll still need to read carefully to be sure. Sometimes a character in a story may be remembering an event that happened earlier.

See if you can sort out the order of events in the story about Willy.

3. Which event happens first?
 - A. Willy tells Zoey he can't go to the beach with her.
 - B. Willy walks into Dr. Wolfe's waiting room.
 - C. Willy almost bites off the tips of Doc Trimble's fingers.
 - D. Willy's mother says she is going to the grocery store.

The very first event that we see taking place in the story is Willy walking into Dr. Wolfe's waiting room. But we know from the narrator that something else happened long ago that affects how Willy feels now. That is, Willy has been afraid of dentists for a long time. He hasn't even been to a dentist in years. On one of his visits as a youngster, Willy bit the tips of Doc Trimble's fingers.

SAMPLE**Detail
Questions**

The questions below are about the selection you have just read. As you work, you may wish to underline or circle key words in the selection to help you locate details.

Directions: Mark your answer choice by circling the correct letter.

1. Why didn't Doc Trimble like having Willy as his patient?
 - A. Willy didn't have any cavities.
 - B. Willy had bitten the dentist's fingertips.
 - C. Willy was Dr. Wolfe's patient.
 - D. Doc Trimble was quitting dentistry.
2. How old was Willy the last time he went to the dentist?
 - A. one
 - B. three
 - C. nine
 - D. sixteen
3. What was it about the dentist's office that reminded Willy of the zoo?
 - A. the smell
 - B. the locked doors
 - C. the bars on the windows
 - D. the assistant's white uniform
4. Who is Zoey?
 - A. Willy's best friend
 - B. Willy's mother
 - C. Willy's girlfriend
 - D. the dentist's assistant
5. What did Willy's mother often do?
 - A. take him to the dentist
 - B. work in the school cafeteria
 - C. laugh at her own jokes
 - D. eat lunch with Dr. Wolfe

ADDITIONAL
Practice
Questions

Directions: Now try answering some other types of questions about the reading selection. These question types are explained in other units in this book. Circle your answers, then be prepared to discuss your choices in class.

6. Who is telling the story?
 - A. Willy Carter
 - B. Dr. Wolfe
 - C. Zoey
 - D. a narrator who is not part of the story
7. What does Willy mean when he says he's "like a condemned man walking to the electric chair"?
 - A. He is in terrible trouble for doing something wrong.
 - B. He is going someplace he really doesn't want to go.
 - C. He is in jail waiting to be sentenced for a crime.
 - D. He always gets a shock from the dentist's drill.
8. What does Zoey think has happened to Tyrone's Uncle Mike?
 - A. He has a very bad toothache.
 - B. He has disappeared from River City.
 - C. He has been badly frightened.
 - D. He has decided to become a dentist.
9. What are "axle grinds and rail slides"?
 - A. tools used by the dentist
 - B. types of food in the school cafeteria
 - C. games Willy and Zoey play at the beach
 - D. skateboarding tricks Willy does
10. How is the examining room different than Willy expects it to be?
 - A. It is much colder than usual.
 - B. It is completely empty.
 - C. It has blood-red chairs.
 - D. It has tools of dental torture.
11. What main problem is Willy faced with at the end of the selection?
 - A. He is trapped in a locked room.
 - B. He has to have a cavity filled.
 - C. He is about to get a shot.
 - D. He will soon have his teeth pulled.
12. If Willy suspects that the dentist and her assistant are not human, which book would be the *best* source to help him find out?
 - A. *The Encyclopedia of Monsters*
 - B. *No More Nightmares: A Guide to Restful Sleep*
 - C. *Relax! It's Only a Toothache*
 - D. *Cavities Are a Thing of the Past: Health Tips from Dentists*

PRACTICE

Reading
Selection

Directions:

Read the selection below and use it to answer the questions that follow.

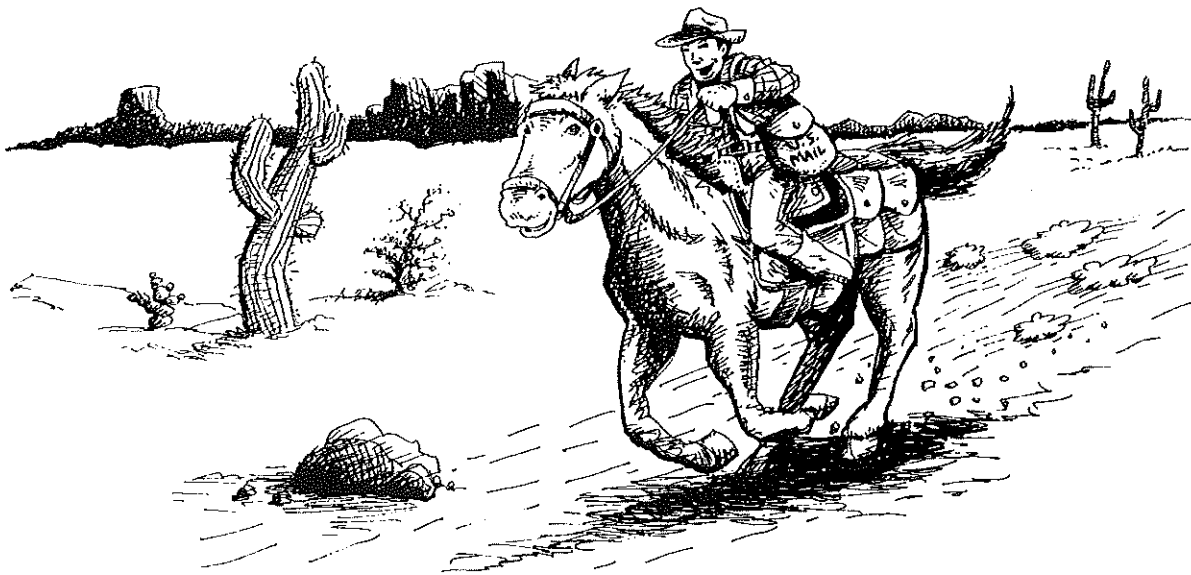
Riders Wanted

by David McDonald

1 The year 1860 was an unsettling time for the young American nation. As tensions mounted between the North and the South, civil war threatened to tear the union apart. Americans across the continent felt a vital need to stay in touch. But a letter filled with pressing news could take several weeks to travel from east to west by stagecoach. It took even longer by sailing ship. A dramatic change in mail delivery was desperately needed. This change came to life on April 3, 1860, in the form of the Pony Express.

2 "Wanted: Daring young men, preferably orphans," read the newspaper advertisement. Fifteen-year-old William F. Cody applied for the job. He knew that this would be no ordinary way to earn an honest wage. It would be filled with danger, excitement, little rest, and most likely a fair number of saddle sores. Yet it offered Cody and more than 200 others a rare opportunity to earn a lot of money in a very short time.

3 From St. Joseph, Missouri, to Sacramento, California, these adventurous young men raced against time to deliver the mail. Each rider traveled about seventy-five miles on horseback, changing horses every ten or fifteen miles. Stopping for no more than a minute or two at each Pony Express station on his route, he then galloped off on a fresh mount. As one rider finished his run, another grabbed the mail pouch and raced on his way. Day and night, the mail moved on. At this rate, a letter could travel almost 2000 miles in an average of only 10 days!



4 In the entire life span of the Pony Express, only one bag of mail was ever lost. Some riders, however, were not so fortunate. Boys as young as 13-year-old David Jay risked their lives riding at a breakneck pace. They rode in blazing sunshine and raging blizzards. They crossed mountain passes and washed out gullies. They were threatened—and sometimes killed—by wild animals and outlaws.

5 Yet it was not the hazards of the trail that unsaddled the Pony Express in October of 1861. Instead, it was the completion of a telegraph system that stretched across North America. Telegraphed messages could now cross the continent in a matter of hours. After only 19 months, the life of the Pony Express ended. But the memory of its brave young riders lives on today. ■

SAMPLE

**Detail
Questions**

Directions: The questions below are based on the selection you have just read. Mark your choices by circling the correct letter.

1. What was one reason given for the creation of the Pony Express?
 - A. Other methods of transporting mail were very slow.
 - B. Sailing ships were unreliable for delivering mail.
 - C. Dangerous people attacked stagecoach mail carriers.
 - D. The telegraph was an expensive way to send a message.
2. About how many boys and men were hired to ride for the Pony Express?
 - A. 13
 - B. 75
 - C. 200
 - D. 1860
3. On each run, about how many miles did a Pony Express rider travel?
 - A. 10
 - B. 15
 - C. 19
 - D. 75
4. The selection tells that the Pony Express riders faced all of the following hardships and dangers EXCEPT
 - A. dangerous people.
 - B. bad weather.
 - C. sudden illness.
 - D. rough trails.
5. Who was David Jay?
 - A. the inventor of the telegraph
 - B. a rider for the Pony Express
 - C. the creator of the Pony Express
 - D. the first person to send mail by Pony Express
6. What caused the Pony Express to be discontinued?
 - A. Not enough boys were willing to be riders.
 - B. Too many riders died on the trail.
 - C. Locomotives began carrying the mail.
 - D. Telegraph lines were completed across the nation.

ADDITIONAL
Practice Questions

Directions: Now try answering some other types of questions about the selection. The various question types are explained in other units in this book. Circle your answers, then be prepared to discuss your choices in class.

7. What is the most likely reason that Pony Express riders were likely to get saddle sores?
- A. The horses were not well trained.
 - B. The mail bags were heavy for the boys to carry.
 - C. The boys rode for very long distances on each trip.
 - D. The riders were too young to know how to ride safely.
8. What is the most likely reason that the advertisement asked orphans to apply for the job?
- A. Orphans had no parents to worry about the danger they would face.
 - B. Young men without parents would be likely to need money.
 - C. Boys with parents would be expected to remain in school.
 - D. Sons would not be allowed to travel far away from living parents.
9. In which of the following books would you be most likely to find out more about the ideas presented in the selection?
- A. *Outlaws of the Wild West*
 - B. *Battle Cry for Freedom: The Civil War Days*
 - C. *Stagecoach to the Western Frontier*
 - D. *History of the American West: 1800–1899*
10. From the way it is used in paragraph 3, you can tell that the word mount means
- A. a trail.
 - B. a horse.
 - C. an assignment.
 - D. an adventure.
11. Which of the following sentences best summarizes the selection?
- A. The Pony Express was a dangerous, yet important, means for young orphan boys to make money.
 - B. Some Pony Express riders were killed while riding the trail, but only one bag of mail was ever lost.
 - C. The threat of civil war in the United States was a major reason for the establishment of the Pony Express.
 - D. Pony Express riders braved difficult conditions to provide speedy mail service across the country.

