Imagine That! Stories

A sampling of high-interest and engaging stories written to develop imagery for comprehension. Stories span grade levels K-8.
This is a sample packet of fun and informational stories from our Imagine That! series. When using the Visualizing and Verbalizing® program of instruction, you’ll want to provide students with repetition and practice at proper grade levels to develop concept imagery for comprehension. Check out the high-imagery series of Imagine That! books, including Life Science, Earth/Space Science, Fascinating People, Wonders of the Natural World, Anatomy, and Myths and Legends at GanderPublishing.com. Available for grades K–8.
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Introduction:

The mysterious, the unusual, the unexplained... Imagery is the medium through which language that describes our diverse world is revealed in all its detail and complexity.

The Imagine That! series provides nonfiction stories with which to practice building imagery for oral and written language comprehension. These challenging, high-imagery stories introduce true and unusual topics for students to visualize, including natural disasters, human anatomy, unique animals, odd plants, mysteries, scientific phenomena, myths and legends, and great people. Each story is presented in language appropriate to the grade level, and the content is sure to capture the interest of students and instructors alike.

The mysteries of the world are waiting. Let’s fly.

Nanci Bell
2018

How to Use Imagine That! Stories:

The Imagine That! series can be used with any program of instruction to develop imagery for language comprehension. They can also be used specifically with the Visualizing and Verbalizing (V/V) program. These stories give students practice visualizing the big picture, the gestalt, and should be used when doing the steps that develop concept imagery as a base for critical thinking.

While the stories have been arranged in sections that align with specific steps of V/V, all Imagine That! Stories can be used with any of the following steps:

- Sentence by Sentence
- Sentence by Sentence with Higher Order Thinking (HOT) Questions
- Multiple Sentence with HOT Questions
- Whole Paragraph with HOT Questions
- Paragraph by Paragraph with HOT Questions
- Whole Page with HOT Questions
Tips:

● **Story Arrangement**
  Although all the stories in this sampler are written at a kindergarten to sixth-grade decoding level, the goal is to improve comprehension. Therefore, you may wish to read the stories with or to the students. The story content is appropriate for kindergarten to eighth-grade levels. This volume can be used as contextual reading practice for students who decode at grade level.

● **Illustrations**
  Illustrations have been provided for stories that contain unfamiliar subjects. These images can be presented to the students before the paragraph is read, to help them build their own imagery.

● **Sentences**
  You may find that the first sentence of a story introduces an image instead of a topic, and the rest of the paragraph goes on to describe additional detailed imagery to build the gestalt. For example, in the story “Slowed with Sweetness,” the first line reads, “Alexander the Great, a powerful and beloved leader, fell sick and died very far from home.” While the sentence contains concrete detail that can be imaged, such as Alexander, the sentence also contains some concepts that require further information. For example, this sentence does not tell us where his home is, or how or why the leader dies. When working with students, it is appropriate to have them leave portions of their image indistinct. You may explain to the students that the rest of the paragraph will fill in the blanks in their imagery.

● **Higher Order Thinking (HOT) Questions**
  The stories are followed by main idea, inference, conclusion, evaluation, and prediction questions. The order of these HOT questions is such that they stimulate students’ thinking first about the gestalt and then about the details of the story. In some questions, key words are italicized to indicate emphasis. Also, contrast questions are included to stimulate and guide the students’ critical reasoning. Finally, in some instances, the HOT questions introduce additional information from which the students can extend their thinking about the story.
Sentence by Sentence
1 Long Walk

A man hiked up a tall snowy mountain. He carried a large green backpack. A cold wind chilled his face. He reached into his pack. He pulled out a warm blue coat.

From what you pictured...
1. What is the main idea of this story?
2. Why do you think the man carried a backpack?
3. Why do you think he pulled out a warm coat?
4. Do you think he hiked to the top of the mountain? Why or why not?

2 Best Friends

Two fluffy sea otters floated in the cold blue sea. They both yawned. They hooked their paws. Then they closed their eyes. The pair drifted on the sea all night long.

From what you pictured...
1. What is the main idea of this story?
2. Why do you think the sea otters are fluffy?
3. Why do you think the otters yawned?
4. Why do you think they hooked their paws?
5. Sea water can move things far from shore. Do you think the otters were still together in the morning? Why or why not?
3  **Watch That Card!**  

Rick Smith, Jr. holds a deck of cards in one hand, and one card in the other. He grips the card tightly between his first two fingers. Then he throws the card, hard, at a set of propped-up veggies. The card spins, flies through the air, and slices right through a carrot!

From what you pictured…
1. What is the main idea of this story?
2. Do you think it is difficult to slice through a carrot with a card? Explain.
3. Why do you think Rick holds the card with just two fingers? Why not his whole hand?
4. Why do you think there is a set of propped-up veggies?
5. What would you picture happening next?

4  **Sensitive Salamander**

A pale salamander lives deep in a cave, in a pool of cold water. It is dark all the time there, and he has no eyes. He sits very still so he can feel the smallest thing move in the water. When he feels something, he darts after it. If he catches a small shrimp or snail, he eats.

From what you pictured…
1. What is the main idea of this story?
2. Why do you think it is dark all the time where the salamander lives?
3. Do you think it would be helpful if the salamander had eyes? Explain.
4. Why do you think he darts after something if he feels it move?
5. Why do you think the pool of water is cold?
6. How do you think the salamander knows what he has caught?
The beach-going coconut crab has great strength in his huge front claws. He can poke and scratch through the hard shell of a coconut to get at the sweet fruit. He is also known to creep in and steal from tents. When he finds a shiny thing, even if it is a big pot, he drags it through the sand, back to his hole.

From what you pictured...
1. What is the main idea of this story?
2. How do you think the coconut crab got his name?
3. This crab is also known as the robber crab. Why might this name fit?
4. What do you think the coconut crab does with the opened coconut?
5. How do you think the coconut crab drags home a shiny thing?
6. Why do you think people don’t stop the crab from stealing their things?
7. The coconut crab is the largest land crab in the world. How might his size be helpful to him?
6 The Yellow Dwarf Star

The bright Sun is the closest blazing star to Earth. Nothing can live on the huge, blazing orb’s surface. Its warm rays travel millions of miles to light up the much smaller Earth. Yet our sun is one of the smaller stars in space. Gigantic stars like blue supergiants would engulf our little star completely.

From what you pictured...
1. Why do you think the sun is so bright?
2. What do you think would happen if the Earth was closer to the Sun? Explain.
3. What do you think would happen if the Earth was farther away from the Sun? Explain.
4. Why do you think the story calls the Sun both “huge” and “little”?
5. What do you think Earth would be like if the Sun was a blue supergiant star? Explain.

7 Sour Grapes

One beautiful spring day, a red fox saw a purple bunch of wild grapes hanging high on a vine wrapped around the branches of a tree. The fox’s mouth watered as she stared at the juicy grapes. The small fox jumped up, jaws snapping, but she fell short. She tried and tried but could not reach high enough. Hungry and angry, the fox ran off, deciding that the grapes would have been too sour anyway.

From what you pictured...
1. Why do you think the grapevine wrapped around a tree? Why not around a bush?
2. Why do you think the fox’s mouth watered?
3. Why do you think the fox was angry?
4. Why do you think the fox couldn’t reach high enough?
5. Do you think the grapes were sour? Why or why not?
8 Miracle Grow

The amazing axolotl, or Mexican salamander, can regrow parts of her own body. If a fish swoops down and bites off her leg, the leg will regrow in a few months. Crush a section of her spine or cut off her jaw, and soon she’ll have a new one. She can even regrow parts of her own brain. She heals without scarring, and shows no trace of any injury. Doctors study axolotls to see if they can mimic how axolotls grow new tissue.

From what you pictured...

1. Why do you think it might be useful to grow a leg back?
2. Do you think the axolotl cares if her leg gets bitten off? Why or why not?
3. Why do you think it is important that the axolotl can grow back her own brain?
4. Do you think axolotls live longer than other salamanders? Why or why not?
5. Why do you think doctors want to mimic how the axolotl grows new tissue?
Multiple Sentence
9  Sea Lion Learns to Paint

At an aquarium, a sea lion trainer made a paintbrush with a T-shaped handle. She taught a sea lion named Milo to hold the handle of the brush with his mouth. Then, each time Milo touched the brush to a small square canvas, his trainer blew a whistle. After Milo took a few swipes, the trainer dipped the brush in blue paint. Milo used the brush to swipe blue paint on the canvas. Then the trainer gave him a brush dipped in red paint, and later one dipped in black. After a while, the trainer gave Milo a fish and put the canvas in a room to dry. The next week, the trainer hung the painting up for guests at the aquarium to see.

From what you pictured…
1. What is the main idea of this story?
2. Why do you think the trainers made a special brush? Why not use a regular one?
3. Sea lion trainers often use whistles to encourage good behavior. Why do you think the trainer blew the whistle when Milo touched the brush to the canvas?
4. Why do you think the trainer first gave Milo a brush with no paint on it?
5. Why do you think the trainer gave Milo a fish when he finished the painting?
**10  Stuck in Chocolate**

A worker at a factory got stuck in a huge tub of melted chocolate. The chocolate had clogged a hole at the bottom of the tub, where the tub drained. The worker reached into the tub to unclog the hole and fell into the chocolate. The chocolate coated his whole body. The worker tried to climb out of the tub, but his foot got stuck in the hole. Firemen rushed to the factory and started scooping the chocolate out of the tub. Two hours later, they freed the worker’s foot and pulled him out.

From what you pictured...

1. What is the main idea of this story?
2. Why do you think the worker fell in the tub?
3. Why do you think the firemen had to scoop out the chocolate to free the worker?
4. Why do you think the worker couldn’t free his own foot?
5. Do you think the worker liked being in the tub? Why or why not?

**11  Michelle Kwan**

Michelle Kwan has won more medals than any figure skater in the U.S. She first learned to ice skate at age five, and soon won the nickname the “jumping bean” because she could leap and land hard jumps with ease. As Kwan grew older, she learned to put more grace into her dancing leaps, spins, and turns on the ice. She wore stylish costumes and makeup, and wrapped her hair up in a tight bun. The judges and crowd loved her polished look and style. For years, Kwan’s flawless grace has awed crowds all over the world.

From what you pictured...

1. What is the main idea of this story?
2. Why do you think Michelle has won so many medals?
3. Do you think Michelle liked to be called the “jumping bean”? Why or why not?
4. Why do you think she wore stylish costumes and makeup?
5. Kwan said, “Skating has always made me feel like I was flying.” Why might she feel this way?
12 A Festivus for the Rest of Us

On December 25, some people celebrate Festivus, an informal holiday made famous by a TV show. After it first appeared in a sitcom episode, fans began to hold it on their own. They mark the day by putting up a metal pole in place of a Christmas tree. They leave the pole bare and refuse to exchange gifts. At Festivus dinner, friends and family hold an Airing of Grievances. They complain to each other about the ways they have been wronged that year. After they eat, they have a wrestling match called the Feats of Strength. The party ends once the head of the household gets pinned to the ground.

From what you pictured...
1. What is the main idea of this story?
2. Why do you think people would want to celebrate Festivus instead of Christmas?
3. Why do you think it was fans of the show that started to celebrate Festivus and not other people?
4. Why might people want to complain about things?
5. How do you think Festivus is similar to Christmas? How is it different?
6. Would you want to celebrate Festivus? Why or why not?
Whole Paragraph
14 Birds on the Runway

At an airport, a falcon scares away seagulls to prevent a deadly collision with a plane. The seagulls gather on the runway and fly up in the air each time a plane takes off or lands. A gull once smashed through a plane’s window as the plane landed. Another gull flew into the engine of a plane, and the plane crashed. To scare off the gulls, a man with a falcon perched on his arm stands near the runway and swings a rope over his head with a piece of meat attached to the end. The falcon flies in circles above the man, chasing the meat. The gulls see the falcon and fly away as fast as they can.

From what you pictured…
1. What is the main idea of this story?
2. Why do you think the airport wants to scare off the seagulls?
3. What might happen if the airport didn’t have the falcon?
4. What do you think the pilot of the plane did when the seagull smashed through the window?
5. Falcons fly in circles just before they attack prey. Why do you think the seagulls flew away?
15  A Bionic Test

Zac Vawter raced up the 2,109 stairs of the Willis Tower and reached the roof in only forty-five minutes. It was a special victory because Zac was the first person to run this race with an artificial leg. Zac had lost his leg and now had a metal ‘smart’ leg. The computerized leg had thin wires that were attached to Zac’s own nerves. Zac only had to think about walking or running and the motors, belts, and chains in the smart leg responded. The annual race to the top of the tower gave Zac a chance to really challenge his leg.

From what you pictured...
1. What is the main idea of this story?
2. Why do you think Zac ran up the stairs to the roof of the Willis Tower?
3. What do you think the story means when it calls the leg “smart”?
4. Why do you think it is important that the wires in the leg were attached to Zac’s nerves?
5. Why do you think the artificial leg had chains, belts, and motors?
6. Why do you think it was important to Zac to challenge the leg?

16  Neft Dashlari

Just after World War II, the Soviet Union built an entire city on the ocean. Built just off the coast, it had dozens of platforms linked by raised roads. The city still provides homes for about five thousand families. Oil drilling offshore provided jobs, and there were schools, homes, parks, and shopping. Also known as “Oil Rocks,” the city started as one road, or causeway, from land. Seven old ships were sunk to provide the base for the dock-like structure. Then millions of tons of dirt and landfill were dumped into the sea to make a stable base for the raised roads and platforms.

From what you pictured...
1. What is the main idea of this story?
2. Why do you think an entire city was built on the ocean?
3. Why do you think the city was built just off the coast?
4. Why do you think there were schools in the city?
5. Do you think all the jobs were in oil drilling? Why or why not?
6. How do you think seven sunken ships were important?
17 The Rat’s Tail

The rat’s tail plant sprouts a bare reddish brown stalk above its red flowers. This perch is perfect for the malachite sunbird. The bright green bird grasps the tall sturdy stalk sideways. He leans down and pokes his long pointy beak into a tubular flower. While the bird drinks nectar, his chest is dusted with yellow pollen. Then he flies off to find another cluster of rat’s tail flowers.

From what you pictured...
1. Why do you think the stalk is tall and sturdy?
2. Why might it be important that the sunbird has a long beak?
3. How do you think the sunbird helps the plant? Explain.
4. Do you think other birds can drink the plant’s nectar? Why or why not?

18 Kid Crow

Dr. Penny Patterson walks into a large fenced-in area and sees her gorilla friend, Koko, sitting on the ground. Koko lifts her head up at the sound of Penny’s footsteps, hoists her body up onto a plastic chair, and faces the woman. She lifts a large furry black hand. Her thumb, pointer finger, and pinky are sticking straight out, but her middle and ring finger clench toward her palm. Penny beams at Koko and signs her love back to her furry friend. Then Penny and Koko spend the rest of the morning talking back and forth with their hands.

From what you pictured...
1. Why do you think Koko lifts her head up at the sound of Penny’s footsteps?
2. Do you think many gorillas know sign language? Why or why not?
3. Do you think Koko knows more words in sign language? Why or why not?
19 **Firenado!**

In 2014 San Diego was devastated by a swirl of fire that stretched from the sky. Howling winds whipped up the embers and ash from nearby fires into a spinning vortex. Soon the speeding flurry ignited. The deadly fire whirl ripped trees from their roots, burned down homes, and set cars ablaze. Firefighters sprayed the spinning fire with a stream of cold water, but the flames could not be stopped. When the last embers finally burned out, the column of flames collapsed in on itself. Yet a trail of ruin lay in the once fiery wake.

From what you pictured...
1. What do you think would have happened if there was no wind? Explain.
2. Why do you think the flurry ignited?
3. Why do you think the fire whirl was deadly?
4. Do you think the firefighters knew how to stop a fire whirl? Why or why not?
5. Why do you think the flames collapsed when the last embers burned out?
6. How do you think the fire whirl could have left a trail of ruin?
20  Black Sand Beaches

Some rare island beaches have black sand instead of tan! Amazed visitors look up from the dark beach to see a tall volcano in the distance. Years ago, the volcano’s hot orange lava flowed all the way down to the sea. It hit the cold water and hardened into glassy black chunks. The tide’s waves picked up many of the rocky bits, swept them out to sea, and crashed them back onto the shore every day. Now the grainy black sand sticks to any beach-goer’s toes.

From what you pictured...
1. Why do you think these beaches are rare?
2. Do you think black sand beaches could be found away from volcanos? Why or why not?
3. Why do you think the lava flowed to the sea?
4. Why do you think the lava hardened when it reached the water?
5. How do you think the sand got grainy? Explain?

21  Golf on the Moon

American astronaut Alan Shepard takes out a hidden lumpy sock when he gets to the Moon. He shuffles across the low-gravity surface. He bobs up and down with each step. When he stops, he pulls pieces of metal out of the soft sock and puts them together to build a long metal golf club. He drops a pair of white golf balls that float slowly to the ground. Alan swings his club with a weak hit, but sends both white balls flying across the Moon.

From what you pictured...
1. Why do you think Alan hid his golf club in pieces? Why not in one piece?
2. Why do you think Alan’s weak hit sends the white balls flying across the moon?
3. Do you think it would be harder or easier to play golf on the moon? Why?
4. Do you think the people in charge of the moon mission wanted Alan to play golf on the moon? Why or why not?
22  A Few Sick Cows

When a shot in your arm keeps you from catching a contagious disease, you can thank one brave scientist and a few sick cows. Edward Jenner watched the milkmaids in his town break out with oozing cowpox blisters after milking their sick cows. But after the women got better, they never got the similar and deadly virus, smallpox. Edward took some slimy pus from the sick cows. Next, he smeared it in an open cut on a volunteer’s arm. The man felt mildly ill for a few days, got better, and didn’t catch smallpox even when he was near it. Edward then tried his new “vaccine” on others, and the disease nearly went extinct!

From what you pictured...
1. Why do you think story calls Jenner “brave”?
2. Why do you think it was important that he noticed the milkmaids?
3. A vaccine uses a tiny bit of a virus to build immunity to its full strength. Why do you think Jenner used pus from sick cows? Why not healthy ones?
4. Do you think smallpox would be a bad disease to get? Explain.
5. Do you think the people would have gotten smallpox without Jenner’s vaccine? Why or why not?
6. Why do you think the disease nearly went extinct?
7. Would you volunteer to test out a new medicine or vaccine? Why or why not?
23 Slowed with Sweetness

Alexander the Great, a powerful and beloved leader, fell sick and died very far from home. His soldiers wanted to take his precious body back for a proper burial, but they didn’t want it to decompose on the years-long journey. The men looked at the meat they brought from home, cured in honey to preserve it. The tough meat was dry and did not rot or mold. The soldiers decided to put Alexander’s body in a coffin filled with gooey honey. Then they marched home with the heavy coffin. When they finally pulled the body out for the grand funeral, it was a little shriveled but still looked the same as when Alexander died.

From what you pictured...

1. Why do you think Alexander the Great’s body was “precious”?
2. Decomposition is the process of something naturally breaking down. Why do you think the soldiers didn’t want Alexander’s body to decompose?
3. How do you think the body was similar to the meat? Explain.
4. Why do you think the soldiers filled the coffin with honey? Why not put just a little in?
5. What do you think would have happened if the body had not been soaked in honey? Explain.
Paragraph by Paragraph
In a poor city in Bangladesh, a young man caught one of the rarest diseases of all time! One day Abul saw a few small gray bumps growing on the back of his hands and on the top of his feet. Afraid that others would point and jeer, Abul wrapped his hands and feet in soft cloth. But after a few days, he peeled the cloth back and stared in shock. Larger rough gray spots now covered his hands and feet!

After a few years, more and more bark-like warts grew on top of each other. It now looked like stout tree branches sprouted from Abul’s limbs. Abul couldn’t use his hands or feet without a searing pain that shot up his arms and legs. Abul finally went to a hospital with his hands and feet wrapped in long strands of cloth.

At the hospital, a doctor peeled the strands away from Abul’s limbs. Soon a group of doctors with sharp scalpels huddled around Abul’s tree-like hands and feet. They sliced and scraped at the deeply rooted warts. After one long year and sixteen painful surgeries, Abul smiled and wiggled his normal fingers and toes. But each day he checks his still swollen hands for any sign of a raised gray wart.

From what you pictured...
1. Do you think Abul was ashamed of his warts? Why or why not?
2. Why do you think Abul stared in shock?
3. Do you think Abul could work or do normal things after a few years of the warts growing? Why or why not?
4. Why do you think a group of doctors huddled around Abul?
5. Why do you think Abul had to have sixteen surgeries? Why not just one?
6. Do you think it was difficult to remove the warts? Why or why not?
7. One of the names for Abul’s disease is Tree Man Syndrome. Why do you think this is one of the disease’s names?
8. Why do you think Abul checks his hands each day?
25 Kokopelli Brings the Spring

The hunchbacked god Kokopelli dances through the winter plains once every year. He plays his flute in the cold morning air. The high notes of his song bounce through the mountains, melting the snow and ice around him. Pools of water form around every footprint that Kokopelli leaves behind. Soon small seedlings pop up from the soil. They grow into blooming flowers where happy bees buzz among them.

When Kokopelli shimmies past a dormant tree, his five tall braids wave above his head. The tree’s bare limbs sprout fresh green leaves. Colorful birds perch on the branches and sing along with the god’s tune. The warm sun shines, and bright-eyed black bears mosey out of their winter dens. After many long months of cold, all can hear Kokopelli’s lively song.

From what you pictured...
1. Why do you think Kokopelli only dances once every year? Why not all the time?
2. Why do you think pools of water form around his footprints?
3. Do you think spring would come if Kokopelli did not play his flute? Why or why not?
5. Do you think everyone enjoys Kokopelli’s song? Why or why not?
26 The Garden City

Many crowded cities are covered in smoggy air and stark concrete, but now some buildings have green walls instead of gray. These vertical gardens coat high-rises and skyscrapers from Paris to Hong Kong to Detroit. Green vines and fern fronds look like they burst from the walls. The vines weave through fuzzy green and red grasses that blanket all of the outside walls. Each wall garden brings nature into the urban sprawl.

To plant this city oasis, gardeners hang a breathable fabric from the roof that drops over the wall. The fabric has shallow pockets shaped like teacups. Once the fabric is attached and in place, the workers place plants like feathered ferns and red succulents in the pockets. From the rooftops, they hang long, thin irrigation tubes with small holes. The tubes are then attached to the pockets. When rainwater falls on the rooftops, it funnels into the tubes and drips into the pockets. The gardens soon thrive on the buildings’ walls.

These green wall-coverings help cities all over the world. The many plants take in carbon dioxide and put out clean oxygen for the thousands of city residents to breathe in. The living walls also keep the rooms inside warmer when it’s chilly and cooler when it’s sunny. Residents of vertical garden buildings sleep well at night as the thick grasses soften the noise of car horns and jackhammers from outside. More people today want to plant these eco-friendly gardens on every city building.

From what you pictured...

1. Why do you think the vines and fronds on vertical gardens look like they burst from the walls?
2. How do you think the gardens bring nature into an urban sprawl? Explain.
3. Do you think the plants could grow without the fabric the gardeners hang? Why or why not?
4. Why do you think the irrigation tubes start at the rooftop? Why not pump water from the ground?
5. Why do you think the gardeners use rainwater?
6. Cars, factories, and people all put out carbon dioxide. How do you think vertical gardens help cities?
7. Why do you think more people want to plant vertical gardens?
27  The Furry “Freaks”  

Most women have smooth cheeks and bare upper lips. But in 1854 a huge crowd in New York City stared in awe at Julia Pastrana. The young woman had a black mustache and beard, and her hairy legs and arms peeked out from her red dress. People gawked as charming Julia stood on stage singing a Spanish tune. Some of her audience thought she looked like a bear while others were sure she was half-ape. Julia spent the rest of her life performing all over the world for regular folks and kings and queens.

Not long after Julia died at age twenty-four, a new exhibit popped up in the American Midwest. Curious people lined up outside a storefront with a poster that read, “The Woolly Girl.” Inside, each person stared up at two-year-old Alice Dougherty sitting on her mother’s lap. Alice’s blue eyes peeped out through her two-inch long blonde facial hair. The crowd wondered how a smooth-faced mother could have had a little girl who looked so much like a fluffy puppy dog!

From what you pictured...
1. Why do you think the crowd stared in awe at Julia?
2. Do you think the crowd was there to hear Julia sing? Why or why not?
3. Why do you think the people said Julia looked like a bear or ape?
4. Why do you think the people wanted to see “The Woolly Girl”?
5. Parents normally pass on genes to their children that make them look similar to each other. Why do you think the crowd wondered how Alice’s mother could have had her?
6. How do you think Julia or Alice felt about being so hairy?
7. Do you think it was right for Julia and Alice to be “exhibits”? Why or why not?
Kai, a little boy, lives next door to Gerda, a little girl, and they are best friends who pledge to marry one day. One winter, while Gerda naps, Kai takes his red sled to race down rolling hills of fresh snow. Some of the falling snowflakes begin to dance in the air. They form a sleigh of ice driven by a stunning queen with glacier eyes and a tiara of icicles. Kai is amazed and accepts a ride from the queen.

Later that day, Gerda looks everywhere for Kai, but he is lost. Some in the village say Kai drowned in the river. Gerda offers her best red shoes to the river in exchange for Kai, but the river denies his death. Gerda wanders on in the snowy cold thinking about how Kai would bring her red roses. She walks until she sees a sunlit garden bursting with life.

Gerda enters the garden and meets the witch who lives there. The garden is enchanted to enjoy bright sunlight and warm breezes all year round. The witch shows Gerda fine lilies, bright tulips, and happy daisies until Gerda forgets about Kai. But then Gerda sees a perfect red rose on the witch’s hat. The girl remembers her quest for her best friend and is on her way.

Gerda meets a black crow that tells her where to find Kai. She meets a reindeer to ride all the way north to an ice palace. There she finds the Snow Queen on her throne with Kai frozen beside her upon a solid white pond. Gerda’s crow flies in the queen’s face and Gerda runs up to Kai. Gerda’s tears fall on Kai’s face and melt his icy bonds, and the pair runs away home.

From what you pictured...
1. Why do you think Kai is amazed?
2. Why do you think some in the village think Kai has drowned?
3. Why do you think a witch lives in the garden? Why not a girl?
4. Why do you think Kai is in icy bonds? Why not ropes?
5. Why do you think the pair runs?
Mining for minerals may someday take place on huge rocks hurtling through space! Some shiny elements are used in electronics like cell phones and rechargeable batteries. But these rare earth minerals are hard to get. Scientists have found that some rocky asteroids have plenty of these valuable minerals. Many believe it is worth sending a spaceship to harvest the scarce resource.

One company that plans to extract rare earth minerals also wants to mine ice-filled asteroids for water. But they wouldn’t bring the water back to Earth. Instead, space miners would bring the asteroids to a moon base and use the water in space. They want to split the water into oxygen and hydrogen. Then they could use the oxygen for astronauts to breathe and the hydrogen for rocket fuel. Space ships of the future could use the moon as a gas station!

From what you pictured...
1. Why do you think mining on asteroids may be a “strange location”?
2. Why do you think the rare earth minerals are valuable?
3. Launching a spaceship costs a lot of money and has a lot of risks. Why do you think many believe it is worth sending a spaceship for asteroid mining?
4. Why do you think the company wouldn’t bring mined water back to earth?
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