

# A School for Heroes

Most students spend their school days sitting at desks learning. Aurelious Woolfolk, however, does a lot more than sit at a desk when he is in school. He scrambles up high ladders, walks down the sides of buildings, and rides in a fire engine. He is learning to be a firefighter at the New Haven Fire Academy.

## Fire School

Woolfolk and 28 other students are currently learning what it takes to become a firefighter. Classes at the fire academy, which is in Connecticut, last for about 22 weeks. On most days, the students go to school from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. However, once a week, school lasts until 10 p.m.

For two days each week, the students sit in a classroom to learn science, math, and emergency medicine. They learn the science of fires, how to calculate water pressure, and how to treat medical emergencies.

During the other three days, the students go outside and learn how to hook hoses to fire hydrants, climb buildings, rescue people trapped in burning buildings, and many other things.

"Firefighters have to know lots of different things," said Pablo Menendez, an instructor at the school. "We have to treat medical emergencies, know how to handle dangerous chemicals, and rescue people who have fallen from cliffs."

Teamwork is one of the most important lessons students learn at the school. "Working together saves lives," said Capt. William Seward, the director of the academy. "Students need to learn that they are part of a team."

## The Heat's On

Fighting fires is not easy. The suits and equipment a firefighter wears weigh about 40 pounds.

Firefighters are very busy. In New Haven, they respond to 32,000 emergency calls a year. Each time firefighters go out, they know they might not come back. Across the United States, about 100 firefighters die each year.

"That's why the lessons learned here at the academy are so important," said Seward. "What they learn here can save their lives."

Firefighters know how dangerous their jobs are. Their training helps them overcome their fear of heights and fires. "When you're up there on the ladder looking down, it's scary," said one student. "To do this job, you've got to wipe out the fear."

Firefighters overcome their fear for one reason. "I wanted to help other people," said Leah Harwin. "I think it is important to help other people whenever you can."

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

1. According to the passage, which activity does a student at New Haven Fire Academy complete?

- A jumping from a plane
- B running on the track
- C swimming in the ocean
- D handling dangerous chemicals

2. How does the author *describe* the New Haven Fire Academy?

- A a school that trains students for two weeks to start fires
- B a school that teaches students to fight fires by using only computers
- C a school that gives lessons and real experience for future firefighters
- D a school selects the best teams to learn firefighting skills

3. Why would it be important for students at the Fire Academy to have lessons inside and outside the classroom?

- A Firefighters need to practice mental and physical skills to succeed.
- B Firefighters need to practice wearing heavy gear to get used to the weight.
- C Firefighters need to practice climbing a ladder to overcome a fear of heights.
- D Firefighters need to practice emotional skills to calm people down when they rescue them.

4. Read the following sentences and answer the question below: "Woolfolk and 28 other students are currently learning what it takes to become a firefighter. Classes at the fire academy, which is in Connecticut, last for about 22 weeks."

In this sentence, what does **academy** mean?

- A a school
- B a fire house
- C a camp
- D a factory

5. The main idea of this passage is

- A to compare the New Haven Fire Academy to public school
- B to persuade students to attend the New Haven Fire Academy
- C to inform the reader of the dangers of being a firefighter
- D to describe the activities at the New Haven Fire Academy

6. What are three things that students learn outside the classroom at New Haven Fire Academy?

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7. What word would the author use to describe firefighters? Find specific examples in the text to support your answer.

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8. The question below is an incomplete sentence. Choose the word that best completes the sentence.

Firefighters are very busy \_\_\_\_\_ they respond to thousands of emergencies each year.

- A because
- B so
- C first
- D until

9. Answer the questions based on the sentence below.

Firefighters need to know a lot of different things to be able to help in different kinds of emergencies.

Who? firefighters

What? \_\_\_\_\_

Why? \_\_\_\_\_

**10.** Read the vocabulary word and definition below and complete questions 10a, 10b, and 11.

**Vocabulary Word:** overcome (ov · er · come): to win, especially when faced with a difficult challenge.

**10a.** Read the five sentences below and underline the word **overcome** in each sentence.

1. Helen Keller was able to overcome being blind and deaf, and become a famous writer.
2. The ballerina had to overcome a leg injury before she could perform on stage.
3. The hiker had to overcome many physical challenges to climb up the mountain.
4. After overcoming a tough childhood, the leader was able to understand what his people wanted, because he had faced similar challenges.
5. Despite a long battle, the army was able to overcome its enemies.

**10b.** Which experience is more difficult to overcome?



**11.** If you were to miss the school bus, is that something you have to overcome? Why or why not?

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## Teacher Guide &amp; Answers

**Passage Reading Level:** Lexile 830

**Passage Text Structure:** Descriptive – the writer explains, defines or illustrates a concept or topic

**Passage Summary:** “A School for Heroes” describes the New Haven Fire Academy, including the types of activities students do, and why the lessons are important for future firefighters.

1. According to the passage, which activity does a student at New Haven Fire Academy complete?

- A jumping from a plane
- B running on the track
- C swimming in the ocean
- D **handling dangerous chemicals**

2. How does the author *describe* the New Haven Fire Academy?

- A a school that trains students for two weeks to start fires
- B a school that teaches students to fight fires by using only computers
- C **a school that gives lessons and real experience for future firefighters**
- D a school selects the best teams to learn firefighting skills

3. Why would it be important for students at the Fire Academy to have lessons inside and outside the classroom?

- A **Firefighters need to practice mental and physical skills to succeed.**
- B Firefighters need to practice wearing heavy gear to get used to the weight.
- C Firefighters need to practice climbing a ladder to overcome a fear of heights.
- D Firefighters need to practice emotional skills to calm people down when they rescue them.

4. Read the following sentences and answer the question below: “Woolfolk and 28 other students are currently learning what it takes to become a firefighter. Classes at the fire academy, which is in Connecticut, last for about 22 weeks.”

In this sentence, what does **academy** mean?

- A **a school**
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5. The main idea of this passage is

- A to compare the New Haven Fire Academy to public school
- B to persuade students to attend the New Haven Fire Academy
- C to inform the reader of the dangers of being a firefighter
- D **to describe the activities at the New Haven Fire Academy**

6. What are three things that students learn outside the classroom at New Haven Fire Academy?

**Suggested answer:** Students learn how to hook hoses to fire hydrants, climb buildings, and rescue people trapped in burning buildings. [paragraph 4]

7. What word would the author use to describe firefighters? Find specific examples in the text to support your answer.

**Suggested answer:** The author would use the word brave to describe firefighters because they know how dangerous their job is, but they still do it to help other people. They use their training to rescue people, even though it may be scary. [paragraphs 5, 10, 11]

8. The question below is an incomplete sentence. Choose the word that best completes the sentence.

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- A because
- B so
- C first
- D until

9. Answer the following questions based on the sentence below.

Firefighters need to know a lot of different things to be able to help in different kinds of emergencies.

Who? Firefighters

What? **need to know a lot of different things**

Why? **to be able to help in different kinds of emergencies**

10. ReadWorks recommends that you teach this vocabulary word to the whole class out loud using the four steps listed below.

**Vocabulary Word:** overcome

**Step 1:** Introduce the word

- a. Teacher writes the word on the board and divides it into syllables: (ov · er · come)
- b. Teacher says: "This word is overcome. What is the word?" [All students reply together out loud: "overcome."]

**Step 2:** Provide a child-friendly definition

- a. Teacher says: "Overcome means to win, especially when faced with a difficult challenge."
- b. Teacher says: "In the passage, firefighters used their training to overcome fears of fire and heights, so that they could be successful in their job."
- c. Teacher says: "What is the word?" [All students reply together out loud: "overcome."]

**Step 3:** Practice the word

Teacher provides examples and additional opportunities to repeat the word. Read the 1<sup>st</sup> sentence out loud to your students. Begin reading it again and when you come to the vocabulary word prompt students to say the vocabulary word out loud. Then, finish reading the sentence out loud to your students.

- 10a.**
1. Helen Keller was able to overcome being blind and deaf, and become a famous writer.
  2. The ballerina had to overcome a leg injury before she could perform on stage.
  3. The hiker had to overcome many physical challenges to climb up the mountain.
  4. After overcoming a tough childhood, the leader was able to understand what his people wanted, because he had faced similar challenges.
  5. Despite a long battle, the army was able to overcome its enemies.

**Step 4:** Check for student understanding

This step can be completed as a whole class activity or as an independent practice.

- 10b.** Which experience is more difficult to overcome?



- 11.** If you were to miss the school bus, is that something you would have to overcome? Why or why not?

**Suggested answer:** No because the situation would not present such a difficult situation that it would need to be overcome in most cases.

*Suggested Additional Vocabulary:* currently, however, calculate, respond