

DECEMBER

Differentiated Passages



Officemate

Drama December

The Japanese Winter Solstice

Cast: Akio, Hikaru, Kei, Georgie, Mr. and Mrs. Shimoda, a librarian

ACT ONE

Scene 1:

Setting: A library in Japan. A group of children is listening to a winter story.

Narrator: It's December 20th. Two brothers, Akio and Hikaru, are at the library with their sister, Kei. They sit by the librarian. They all gaze at the pictures as they listen to the story. All three children get up to browse for books on the shelves when the story is finished.

Akio: *(nudges his brother then whispers)* I can't wait for the winter solstice celebration tomorrow.

Hikaru: *(picks up a book on lizards and flips through it)* I can already taste my favorite kabocha soup Mom will make.

Kei: *(reaches for a book on a higher shelf)* I'm going to help Mom make that soup this year.

Hikaru: *(groans)* I hope that means it will still taste good. You better not ruin it.

Kei: Hey! *(swats Hikaru's jacket then glares at Akio who is laughing)* I won't ruin the kabocha soup. Mom will make sure I follow the recipe.

Narrator: Georgie, a friend of Akio, Hikaru, and Kei joins them among the bookshelves.



4th & 5th Grade



DECEMBER PASSAGES

4th & 5th grade

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*This product includes 6 differentiated leveled passages in the 4th-5th Grade Text Complexity Band (the range for 4th-5th grade is 740-1010). Each passage is available on two levels and comes with general comprehension questions, a skill-based activity, and a reading response activity.

1. Making Dreidels - *Focus on Character Analysis* (780L, 950L)
2. Boxing Day - *Focus on Main Idea* (740L, 930L)
3. The Japanese Winter Solstice - *Focus on Inferencing* (Drama)
4. The Snow Man - *Focus on Theme* (750L, 900L)
5. The Science of Snowflakes - *Focus on Sequencing* (770L, 900L)
6. Animal Tracking in Winter - *Focus on Non-Fiction Inferencing* (770L, 970L)



ABOUT LEXILE LEVELS



MagiCore Learning, LLC is a certified Lexile® Partner. These texts are officially measured and approved by Lexile and MetaMetrics® to ensure appropriate rigor and differentiation for students.

The Lexile Framework® for Reading measures are scientific, quantitative text levels. When the Lexile of a text is measured, specific, measurable attributes of the text are considered, including, but not limited to, word frequency, sentence length, and text cohesion. These are difficult attributes for humans to evaluate, so a computer measures them.

Common Core State Standards uses Lexile level bands as one measure of text complexity. Text complexity ranges ensure students are college and career ready by the end of 12th grade. Lexile measures help educators scaffold and differentiate instruction as well as monitor reading growth.

Grade Band	Lexile® Bands Aligned to Common Core Expectations
K-1	N/A
2-3	420L-820L
4-5	740L-1010L
6-8	925L-1385L

Keep in mind when using any leveled text that many students will need scaffolding and support to reach text at the high end of their grade band. According to Appendix A of the Common Core Standards, "It is important to recognize that scaffolding often is entirely appropriate. The expectation that scaffolding will occur with particularly challenging texts is built into the Standards' grade-by-grade text complexity expectations, for example. The general movement, however, should be toward decreasing scaffolding and increasing independence both within and across the text complexity bands defined in the Standards."





Making Dreidels

Caleb entered his grandfather's workshop. He inhaled the scent of sawdust and wood stain. "Zayde? Are you in here?"

"Down here," came a muffled voice from the lower level of the workshop.

Caleb walked to the stairs and descended. He found Zayde scrubbing up his hands with lots of soap in his shop sink. "Are you working on a project today, Zayde?"



"Aren't I always working on a project?" Chuckling, his grandfather shut off the water and turned to face Caleb. He toweled off his hands.

"Well, yes," Caleb agreed, "but I thought maybe because it was almost Hanukkah, you'd be taking a break."

Zayde shook his head. "I don't like breaks, Caleb. I like to keep busy." He hung the towel on a small peg above the sink and then shut off the light. Putting his hands on his hips, he said, "How would you like to help me with my project for today?"

There was nothing in the world that Caleb loved more than working with his zayde in the shop. The feel of wood under his fingertips, the amazing tools Zayde let him use, and the creativity involved in making things always filled Caleb with such energy.





"I would love to help you!"

Zayde clapped him on the back and then guided him up the steps to the upper level of the workshop. "I told Rabbi Samuel I'd make and donate some *dreidels* to the synagogue for the children." He held out his rough and callused hands. He flexed his fingers slowly. "But I know making a bunch of them is going to make these old hands hurt." He reached for Caleb's hands. He turned them palms up, wiggling them slightly. "But *these* hands... oh, these hands are nice and young, quite able to work hard."

"Just show me what to do, Zayde." Caleb slid his hands from his grandfather's grasp. He rolled up the sleeves of his shirt.

Zayde walked Caleb over to a pile of wood blocks with somewhat pointed tips and a collection of wooden pegs on the workbench. "I've already cut most of the pieces because the saw does all the work there, but these pieces need sanding. The four letters, *gimel*, *hey*, *nun*, and *shin* need to be carved, one on each side, and painted. Then, the pegs need to be glued to the blocks. We also need to test that all the *dreidels* spin correctly."



Following his grandfather's instructions, Caleb sanded, carved, and painted for hours with Zayde. They filled a cardboard box with brand new *dreidels*.





"Let's take them into the house and get the rest of the family to help test them," Zayde suggested.

Caleb, his two brothers and two sisters, his parents, and his uncle Isaac each grabbed a few *dreidels*. In no time, dozens of small wooden toys were spinning around and around on the wood floor in the living room. All of them worked perfectly. The family even played an actual game at the kitchen table.

The rules were simple. If a player spun the *dreidel*, and it landed on *gimel*, that player received all the candy they'd placed in a pot at the start of a game. If a player's *dreidel* landed on *hey*, they got half of the candy. Landing on *nun* earned nothing from the pot. Getting *shin* meant a player had to put some of their own candy in. They played several rounds until Caleb's sister, Sarah, won all the candy they'd played with.

After Caleb, his brothers, and his sister had a brief contest to see whose *dreidel* could spin the longest, Zayde packed all the *dreidels* into the box.

"Rabbi Samuel will be pleased with this donation. The children will be delighted." He ruffled Caleb's blond hair. "Thanks for your help, Caleb. You've brightened my day by helping me in the shop. Now, thanks to you, the children will have a better Hanukkah because of the *dreidels* you've made. I'm proud of you."

Caleb loved that his grandfather was pleased, and he looked forward to the next time he could work with Zayde in the shop. He wondered what they'd make together next time.





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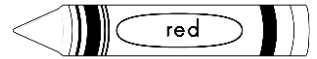
December Comprehension Questions

Answer the following questions. Underline the text evidence in the color indicated. If there is no crayon next to the question, you will need to infer the answer. You should still look for text evidence to help you infer.



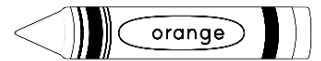
1. What is the setting of the story? (Choose all that apply)

- a. Grandpa's workshop
- b. Grandpa's house
- c. The synagogue
- d. Hannukah

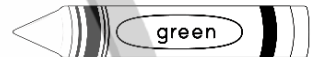


2. Why does Zayde say the following:

"But *these* hands... oh, these hands are nice and young, quite able to work hard."



3. Write a sentence from the text that shows Caleb is eager to help his grandpa.

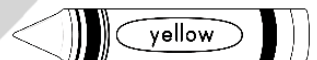


4. Which parts of the dreidel-making does Caleb help with? (Choose all that apply.)

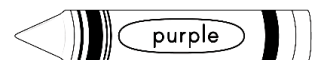
- a. Carving and painting the words on the sides of the dreidel
- b. Cutting out the wooden pieces with the saw
- c. Sanding the wooden pieces
- d. Gluing the tops on the dreidels



5. Why do Caleb and Zayde make so many dreidels?



6. What do the words on the sides of the dreidel mean?



CHARACTER ANALYSIS

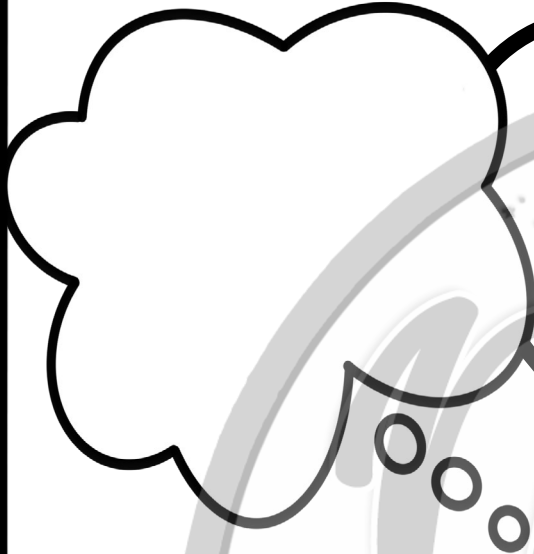


Character's Name: Caleb

Thoughts

Feelings

Actions



Text evidence

Text evidence

Text evidence

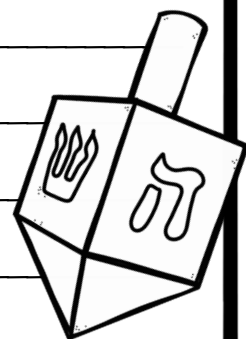
What character traits describe Caleb? Describe him on the lines below.



MAKING DREIDELS RESPONSE



Making Dreidels is a story about working hard to help others. Caleb feels proud and satisfied at the end of the story. Think of a time you worked hard, and it helped someone out. Write about that time below and how it made you feel.





The Japanese Winter Solstice

Cast: Akio, Hikaru, Kei, Georgie, Mr. and Mrs. Shimoda, a librarian

ACT ONE

Scene I:

Setting: A library in Japan. A group of children is listening to a winter story.

Narrator: It's December 20th. Two brothers, Akio and Hikaru, are at the library with their sister, Kei. They sit by the librarian. They all gaze at the pictures as they listen to the story. All three children get up to browse for books on the shelves when the story is finished.

Akio: (*nudges his brother then whispers*) I can't wait for the winter solstice celebration tomorrow.

Hikaru: (*picks up a book on lizards and flips through it*) I can already taste my favorite *kabocha* soup Mom will make.

Kei: (*reaches for a book on a higher shelf*) I'm going to help Mom make that soup this year.

Hikaru: (*groans*) I hope that means it will still taste good. You better not ruin it.



Kei: Hey! (*swats Hikaru's jacket then glares at Akio who is laughing*) I won't ruin the *kabocha* soup. Mom will make sure I follow the recipe.

Narrator: Georgie, a friend of Akio, Hikaru, and Kei joins them among the bookshelves.



December Passages

Georgie: What's *kabocha* soup?

Kei: (*turns to face Georgie*) *Kabocha* is a squash. You cut it up into pieces, boil it, and then puree it in a blender. It is harvested in the summer and autumn. *Kabocha* can be well preserved, however, and eaten in the winter.

Narrator: Mrs. Shimoda, mother to Akio, Hiraku, and Kei, joins the children. She overhears their conversation.

Mrs. Shimoda: *Kabocha* is also very good for the body. It is full of vitamin A and carotene. It can prevent colds. Why don't you come over tomorrow for our winter solstice celebration, Georgie, and you can try some soup?

Georgie: (*smiles widely*) I would love to, Mrs. Shimoda. Thank you.

(*The children check out their books with the librarian, and they all leave together.*)

Scene 2:

Setting: It's December 21st, the winter solstice. The Shimoda family is ready to celebrate at their home after attending a yuzu festival in the city.

Akio: That was a great bonfire at the festival this year.

Mr. Shimoda: I feel we will have a good year ahead. We are cleansed and have prayed for good health and safety for our family at the festival. Soon, the cold and darkness of this shortest day of the year will give way to the warmth and light of spring. There is much to be hopeful about.

Narrator: A soft knock sounds at the door. Mrs. Shimoda lets Georgie in.



December Passages



Georgie: *(holds up a container)* I brought you some of my grandmother's Italian Christmas cookies in exchange for letting me try your *kabocha* soup.

Hikaru: *(swipes the container from Georgie)* I'll take those.

Mrs. Shimoda: *(plucks the container from her son and holds it out of reach)* I think they are safer in my hands, or you won't have any room for soup. Let's all have a seat and warm ourselves up.



Narrator: The children follow Mr. and Mrs. Shimoda. All are soon seated and awaiting soup. Mrs. Shimoda pours soup into bowls and sets them in front of everyone. It's very quiet as everyone tastes their first helpings of soup.

Georgie: *(licks her lips)* Wow, this is so delicious.

Kei: I helped make this batch. I can show you how to make it for your family, Georgie. *(looks at her brothers who are slurping up the soup as if they are starving)* I guess I didn't ruin it, did I?

Hikaru and Akio: *(shake their heads, but don't stop eating)*

Mrs. Shimoda: You did a fine job, Kei. I'm proud of you. Perhaps next year on the winter solstice, you can make the *kabocha* soup all on your own.

Hikaru: *(wipes his mouth with his napkin, his bowl empty in front of him)* Kei should practice making it many times before going solo. Akio and I are happy to be taste testers.

(Everyone laughs and finishes eating the kabocha soup then dives into Georgie's Christmas cookies, enjoying what's left of this winter solstice celebration.)





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December Passages



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(The children check out their books with the librarian and leave together.)

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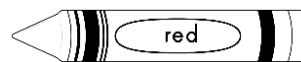
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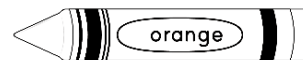


1. What is the setting of the story? (Choose all that apply.)



- a. The library
- b. A classroom
- c. The winter solstice
- d. The Shimoda's home

2. Why is Hikaru worried about Kei helping with the kabocha soup?

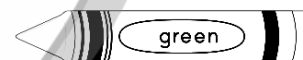


3. Explain why the author includes the following stage directions:



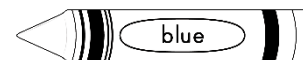
"plucks the container from her son and holds it out of reach"

4. Why did the author decide to split the play into scene 1 and scene 2?



- a. To make the play longer and easier to read.
- b. To show that new characters are introduced in scene 2.
- c. To indicate the setting has changed.
- d. To explain that different families celebrate different holidays.

5. Write a sentence from the text that supports the following claim:



Georgie appreciates the Shimoda's sharing their holiday tradition with her.



INFERCING



Evidence

Details from the text

Schema

Ideas from my brain



Inference or Prediction

Evidence

Details from the text

Schema

Ideas from my brain



Inference or Prediction

Evidence

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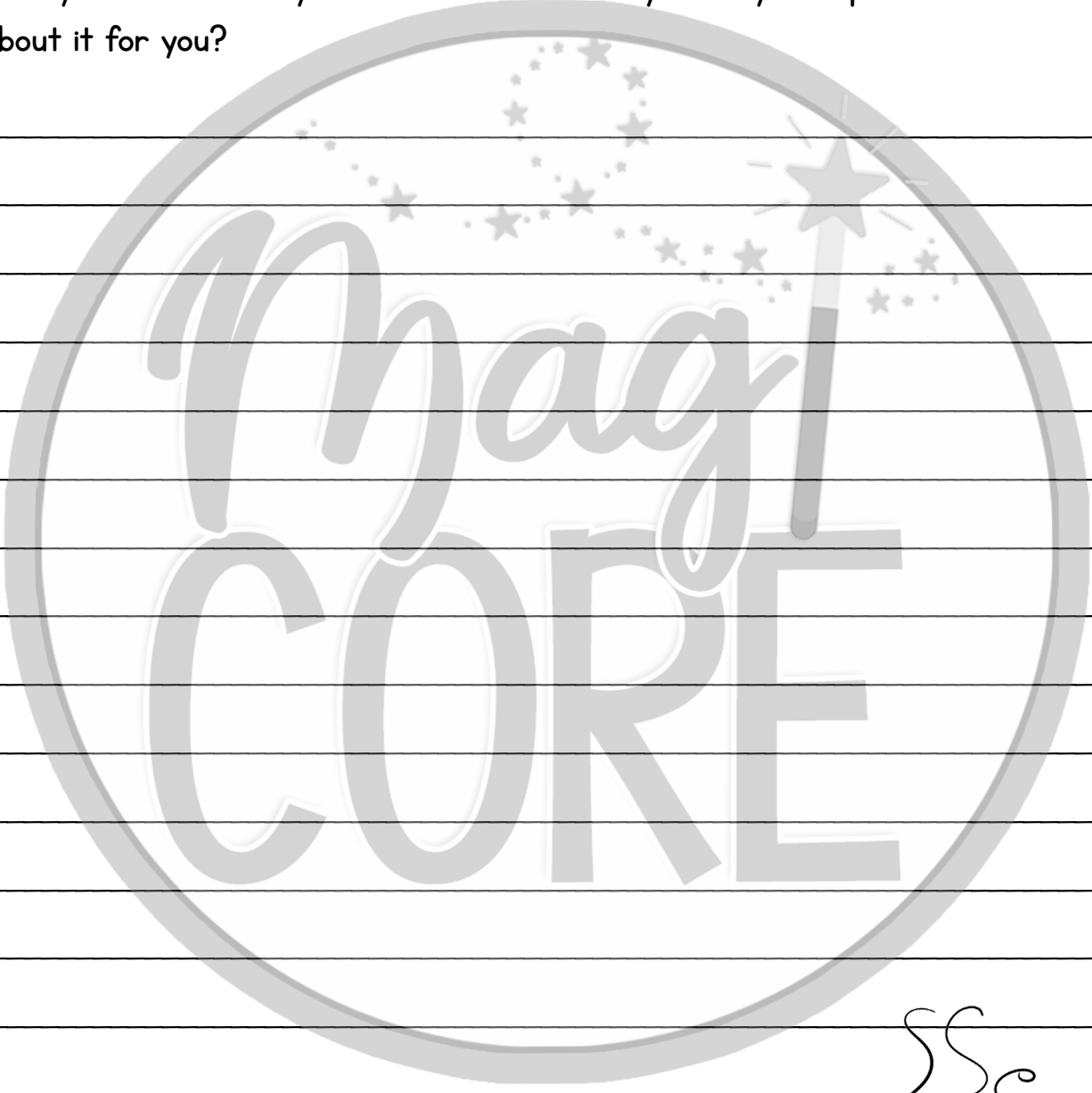
Inference or Prediction



THE JAPANESE WINTER SOLSTICE RESPONSE



The Japanese Winter Solstice is a holiday. The characters in the story celebrate with a special food they always eat on the holiday. The family makes it together. Write about a special food you or someone you know has on a holiday. Have you helped make it? What is special about it for you?





The Science of Snowflakes

You wake up on a winter morning and peer out your window. It has snowed overnight. Now everything is white and glistening. As you wolf down your breakfast, you plan out exactly what you're going to do outside in all that snow. Sled. Construct a snow fort. Make snow angels. Shovel your driveway. Build a snowman. Hike in the snowy woods. You have enough activities to keep you busy until it's time to come in for some hot cocoa.



Close up photo of a snowflake.

But how did all those snowflakes form?

A snowflake forms slowly and grows in a cloud. It begins its life when water vapor travels through the air and **condenses**. This means the gas changes to a solid. Water vapor freezes onto pollen or dust particles in the sky. An ice crystal is created. The way water vapor condenses affects what shape the snowflake will turn out to be.

There are two basic ways water vapor condenses. Forming **facets** is the first way. Facets are flat faces on a 3D shape. These form naturally when a crystal grows. The crystal structure of ice is a six-sided shape, so an icy facet also has six sides. Snowflakes start as **prisms** with six facets. This makes snowflakes **symmetrical**.





Forming branches is the second way water vapor condenses. Water vapor condenses on the first thing it touches. It creates bumps on the snowflake. These bumps will likely catch more water vapor and grow larger to create a snowflake's branches. Snowflake growth can switch between forming facets and branches, or both can be forming at the same time.

It can take 100,000 water vapor droplets to make one snowflake. It's unlikely that such a large number of droplets will arrange themselves in exactly the same way. They also don't travel the same path, so they are met with



Snow covered sidewalk.

different conditions as they journey from the cloud to the ground. Temperature and moisture levels in clouds also affect snowflake shapes. For example, at 23°F, long, needle-like crystals form, while flat, plate-like crystals are made at 5°F. No two snowflakes look the same because of these factors.

Your day of snow fun is made possible by this process happening so many times that all those snowflakes piled up to create a winter wonderland outside. You are a uniquely-designed human playing in uniquely-designed snowflakes!





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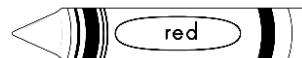


December Comprehension Questions

Answer the following questions. Underline the text evidence in the color indicated. If there is no crayon next to the question, you will need to infer the answer. You should still look for text evidence to help you infer.

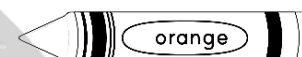
1. What kinds of activities can you do in the snow? (Choose all that apply.)

- a. Build a snow fort
- b. Go sledding
- c. Look for flowers
- d. Build a snowman

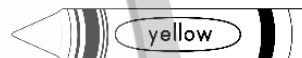


2. In the process of making a snowflake, which step comes after water vapor condensing in the air?

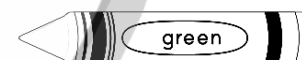
- a. The snowflake grows in the cloud.
- b. Water vapor travels through the air.
- c. An ice crystal is created.
- d. Water vapor freezes onto a pollen or dust particle in the sky.



2. Describe the shape of an icy facet.



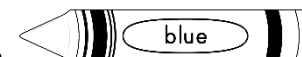
3. What happens when a snowflake forms by forming branches?



4. What factors from the text support the following claim? (Choose all that apply.)

"No two snowflakes look the same because of these factors."

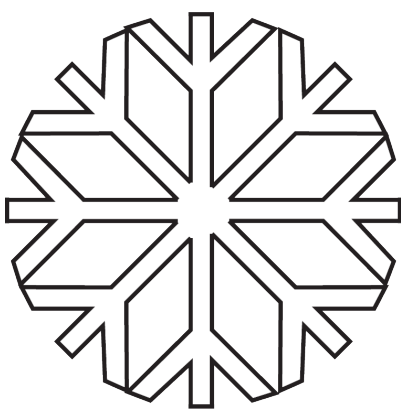
- a. It can take 100,000 water vapor droplets to make one snowflake
- b. Facets are flat faces on a 3D shape that form naturally when a crystal grows.
- c. They also don't travel the same path, so they are met with different conditions as they journey from the cloud to the ground.
- d. Temperature and moisture levels in clouds also affect snowflake shapes.





SEQUENCE

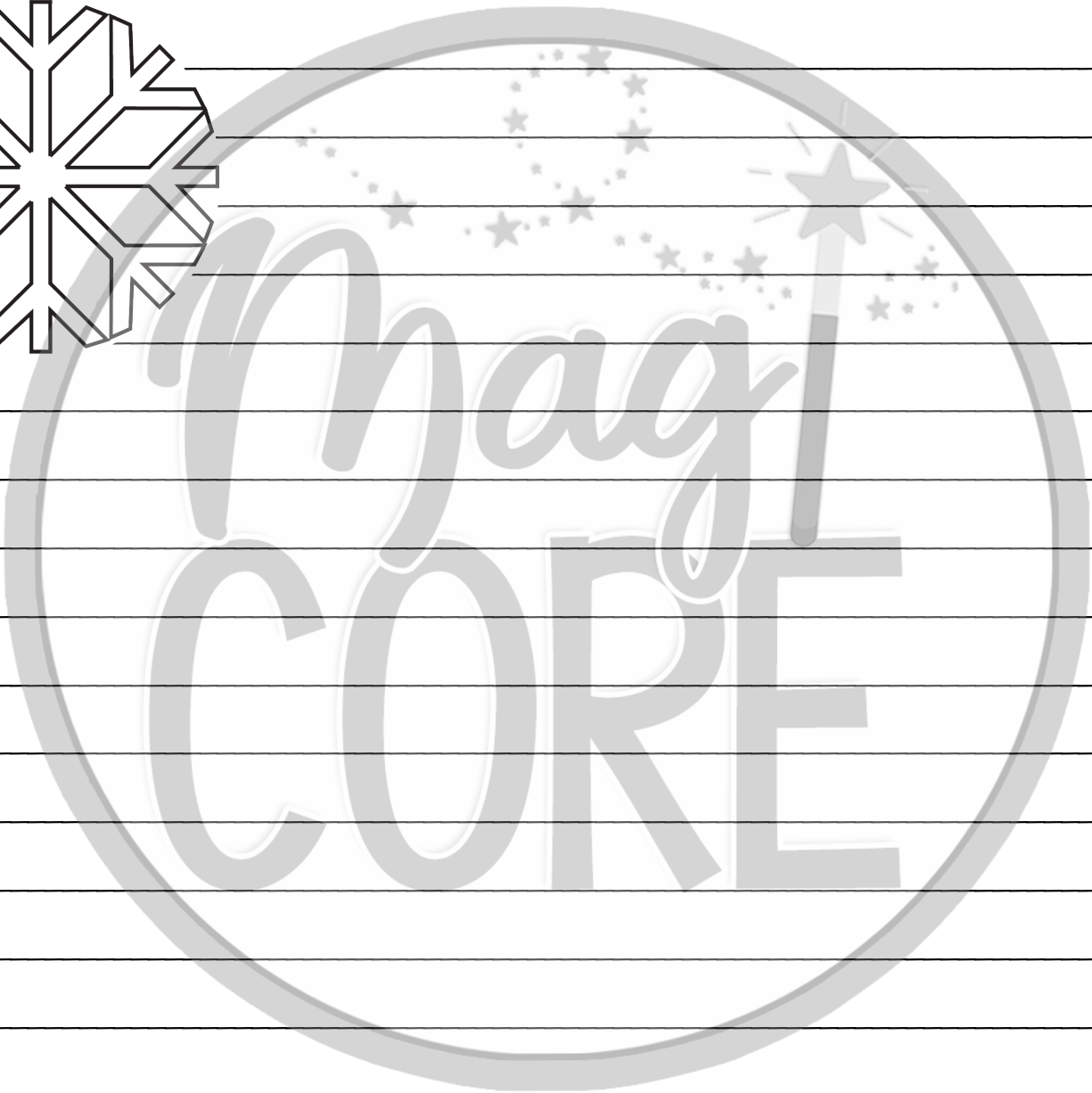
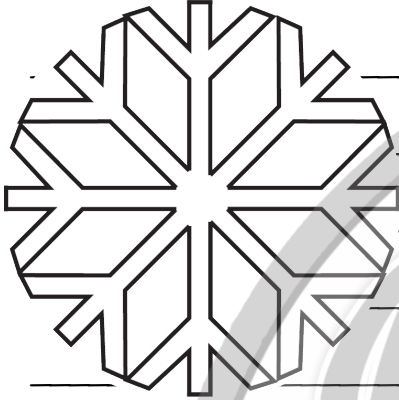
Fill in the steps for how snowflakes are formed in the boxes below. At the bottom, describe the 2 ways the ice crystals can form.



THE SCIENCE OF SNOWFLAKES RESPONSE



The article describes the science behind how snowflakes are formed. In the space below, write a summary describing how they are made and how unique they are. Use details from the text to describe why all snowflakes are different.



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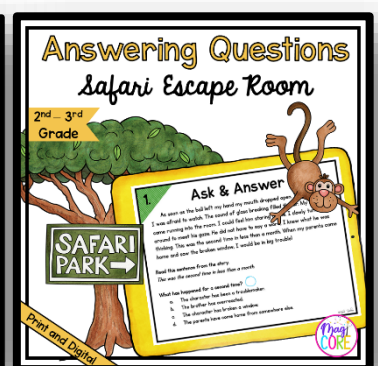
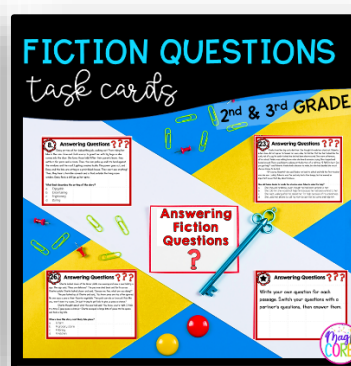


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