

Nonfiction



Clarence Anglin



John Anglin



Frank Morris

3 HARDENED CRIMINALS

A BRUTAL PRISON

HISTORICAL NARRATIVE
A true story from the past

A DARING PLAN TO

ESCAPE FROM ALCATRAZ

BY DEBORAH HOPKINSON

▶ GO TO SCOPE ONLINE FOR OUR AMAZING ALCATRAZ VIDEO!

FELICKR RT/GETTY IMAGES (BACKGROUND); BETTMANN/CORBIS (INMATES)

✓ AS YOU READ, THINK ABOUT WHY THEY TRIED

This article is about a dangerous escape attempt by inmates at Alcatraz. As you read, consider how conditions at Alcatraz may have motivated them to risk their lives.

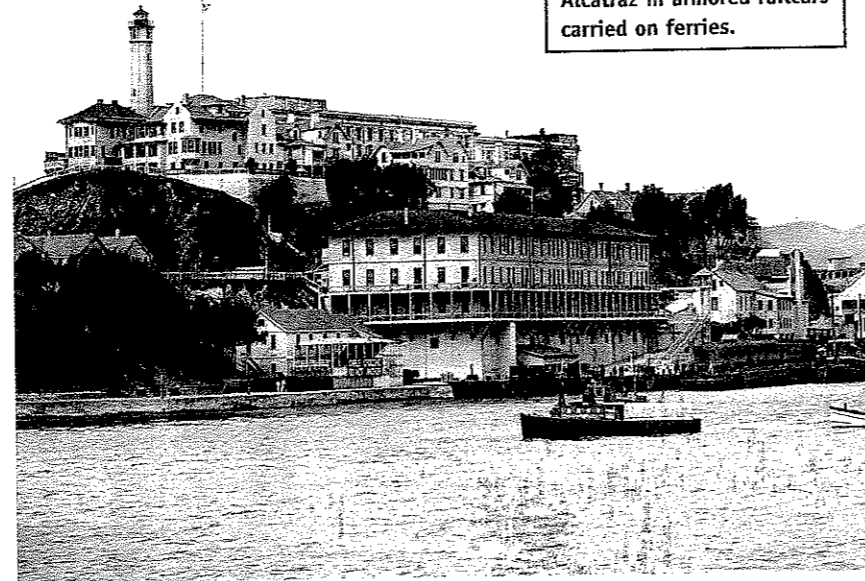
At exactly 9:30 on the night of June 11, 1962, the lights at Alcatraz Prison went out. Most of the inmates shivered on their thin, narrow beds as they tried to get some sleep.

But not Frank Morris.

Morris waited for the prison to quiet, his heart pounding. If all went according to plan, he would never sleep behind bars again.

For months, Morris and three other prisoners, Allen West and brothers Clarence and John Anglin, had been secretly plotting to escape from the bleak prison, perched on an island in the middle of San Francisco Bay. People said it was impossible to break free from “the Rock,” as Alcatraz was known. Morris and his friends were desperate to prove everyone wrong.

They had developed an **ingenious** plan. For months, they had been using tiny tools to chip away at the concrete walls of their cells. It was painstaking work, but eventually, they made holes big enough to crawl through. Once they had a way out, they climbed up the ventilation shafts behind



Prisoners were brought to Alcatraz in armored railcars carried on ferries.

ALCATRAZ WAS NICKNAMED “UNCLE SAM’S DEVIL’S ISLAND.”

their cells and set up a secret workshop.

Many Had Drowned

Men who had tried to escape before had drowned swimming in the frigid waters of San Francisco Bay. Morris and his friends did not intend to swim, though. Using stolen and handmade tools, they’d managed to **fashion** life preservers and a raft made of raincoats.

Morris was certainly no stranger to escape. An armed robber, he had already escaped from several prisons. But Alcatraz was different. Security was tight. Guards counted the inmates many times each day and night. To fool them, Morris and his friends made dummy heads. On the night of their escape, they tucked the heads into their beds. In the dim light, the heads looked real.

Now, as darkness settled over Alcatraz, everything was ready. Well, almost.

At the last minute, West couldn’t get out of his cell. Morris and the Anglin brothers went on without him. They wriggled out of their cells and climbed up plumbing pipes. Finally, they stepped onto the roof. Carefully avoiding the prison searchlight, they crawled silently across the roof and scrambled down a drainpipe.

They were out.

The salty breeze blew against their faces. Now all that stood between them and freedom was a 15-foot fence and the crashing, shark-infested waters of the bay.

Men had made it this far before, only to drown or be turned back by the strong currents. One inmate had hidden in the sea caves, too

ESCAPEE’S TOOLKIT

What it took to bust out of Alcatraz



PATIENCE

At first, the men used nail clippers and stolen spoons to dig holes in the walls of their jail cells. Blisters soon covered their aching hands. Later, they made a power drill out of a vacuum cleaner motor. It took months to dig holes large enough to crawl through.



CUNNING

The men took up a hobby: painting. That way, no one was suspicious when they ordered brushes, paints, and drawing boards—all of which they used to create fake walls to hide the holes in their cells.



CREATIVITY

It wouldn’t take a guard long to notice an empty cell. To buy some time, the men made dummies out of toilet paper, cardboard, and cement chips. They painted faces on them and covered the heads with hair stolen from the prison barbershop.

WHAT ELSE DID THE ESCAPEES NEED?

scared to plunge into the water. He finally got so cold and hungry that he gave up and went back. Morris took a deep breath. Could they pull off the most daring escape in the history of Alcatraz?

“Island of the Pelicans”

By the night of this “great escape” attempt in 1962, the small sandstone island of Alcatraz had been used as a prison off and on for more than 100 years. But its history goes even further back. Alcatraz was named “Isla de los Alcatrazes” (Island of the Pelicans) in 1775 by Spanish explorer Juan Manuel de Ayala.

After 1848, when news of gold in California spread, people worried that San Francisco might be attacked. **Barren** Alcatraz, located a mile from shore, seemed the perfect place to build a fort. During the Civil War, in the 1860s, the small 22-acre island was used as a military prison. Then, in 1934, the U.S. Department of Justice took it over. Alcatraz was about to become the toughest and most feared prison in America.

Ready for Troublemakers

During the 1930s, a crime wave hit the U.S. Robberies and murders were on the rise. Some criminals had become incredibly powerful; they were as famous as celebrities. The public felt that a “super-

prison” was just what the country needed.

Desolate and isolated, Alcatraz

seemed like the ideal place to **incarcerate** these criminals. So officials set out to build the most escape-proof prison in the nation. Cell blocks built in 1909 were turned into a fortress meant to hold those who had tried—and sometimes managed—to break out of other prisons.

Nicknamed “Uncle Sam’s Devil’s Island,” Alcatraz opened as a federal prison in August 1934. **Penitentiaries** across the country were notified that Alcatraz was ready to take troublemakers off their hands. As Alcatraz **Warden** James A. Johnston later wrote, “They would select their worst; I would take them and do my best.”

At 5 a.m. on August 19, 1934, 53 prisoners boarded a train in Atlanta, Georgia, for the long ride to California. They were to be some of the first inmates at Alcatraz. Officials couldn’t help feeling nervous. These men were going to Alcatraz because ordinary prisons couldn’t handle them.

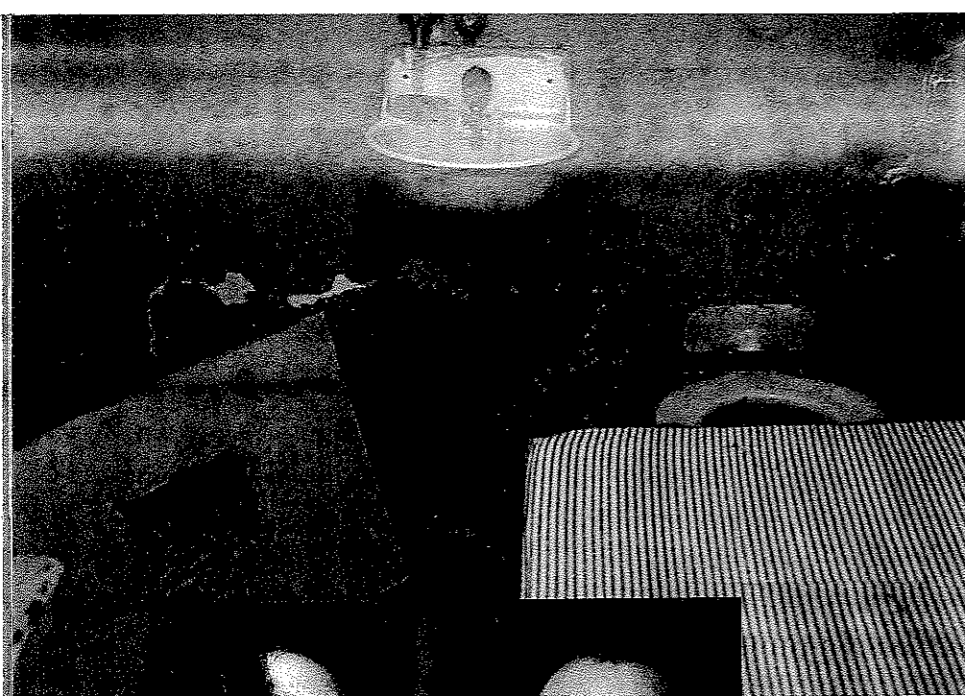
Warden Johnston took every precaution. The prisoners rode in specially designed railroad cars with steel bars across the windows. No prisoner was allowed to leave his seat during any stop.

The inmates arrived on August 22, 1934. By the end of the year, Alcatraz was housing more than 200 of America’s worst criminals.

A Bitter Surprise

A prisoner at Alcatraz found himself in a harsh, isolated world, **punctuated** by





TOP: The hole that Frank Morris carved in his jail cell, along with the fake wall he made out of cardboard. LEFT: Legendary Alcatraz inmate Al Capone was known as "Public Enemy Number One." RIGHT: Famous Alcatraz Warden James A. Johnston.

the clanging of bars and the distant blaring of foghorns. No newspapers were allowed. Inmates could only listen to certain radio programs approved by the warden. A morning gong signaled wake-up at 6:30 a.m. The men stood to be counted, then cleaned their cells. At the shriek of a whistle, they marched single-file to breakfast, which lasted 25 minutes. After breakfast, utensils were counted.

During the day, guards marched the inmates to jobs in the laundry, the garden, and the tailor shop. Head counts took place constantly. In the afternoon, inmates had

supervised recreation time. Lights out was at 9:30 p.m.—on the dot.

Men who broke the rules faced harsh punishment. The most feared was solitary confinement. Prisoners hated to be cooped up in tiny concrete cells apart from everyone else, with only a hole in the floor for a toilet. In solitary confinement, a man was allowed a mattress at night, but even that was removed during the day. There was nothing to do but stare at the walls as time ticked by.

The most notorious felons couldn't beat Alcatraz—not even gangsters like Al "Scarface"

Capone. To many, Capone symbolized the collapse of law and order in the 1920s. He made millions running illegal gambling joints in Chicago. He was said to have murdered at least a dozen people. Capone was used to having power, and he was proud of his reputation as a big shot. He figured he'd be able to pull strings to get special privileges at Alcatraz, just like he had in other prisons.

As soon as he arrived, Capone met with Warden Johnston. "I have a lot of friends," he told the warden. "I expect to have a lot of visitors."

Capone was in for a bitter surprise. He was allowed to see family, but not friends—or fellow gangsters. Every prisoner at Alcatraz was treated the same, and there was nothing he could do about it. Eventually, Capone had to admit, "Alcatraz has got me licked."

Daring Escapes

By 1963, the island prison had become too expensive to operate, and the government decided to shut it down. Today Alcatraz is a landmark managed by the National Park Service. More than a million tourists visit every year. So do about 100 species of birds, including gulls, cormorants, and pelicans.

So what about escapes?

Alcatraz was a federal prison for 29 years. During that time there were 14 escape attempts, involving 36 men. Twenty-three were caught, seven were killed, and one drowned. Two others attempted

escape in December 1937. Officials believe they were swept out to sea.

That leaves three men: Frank Morris and John and Clarence Anglin. After the night of June 11, 1962, they were never seen or heard from again.

After the men were discovered missing, a massive search was conducted. According to some records, a raft was discovered on nearby Angel Island. There was also a report that a car was stolen that night, which could have been used by the escapees. But in the end, officials concluded that the men had drowned. Indeed, a body was found floating in the bay, but it was never identified. If the men had gone overboard, survival would have been unlikely. Hypothermia would have set in right away, and the powerful current would have easily dragged them to their deaths.

People have speculated about their fate for decades. To this day, rumors still circulate that they are alive. There have been many sightings; nothing has been proved.

What do you think? Did Morris and the Anglin brothers make it—or did they perish in the merciless waters of San Francisco Bay? ●

POETRY CONNECTION

A MODERN POET IMAGINES THE PLIGHT OF ALCATRAZ PRISONERS

Vow

By Irene Latham

Inside, we endure relentless routine in a concrete cage.

After countless crimes, we stand to be counted—

twelve times a day.

We're an island of masters.

We dodge brawls and block handmade blades.

At night we battle through dark seclusion and silent, deadly wars.

Torture thrives

in surprising places: from the top tier

we watch gulls wheel across paintbrush sky.

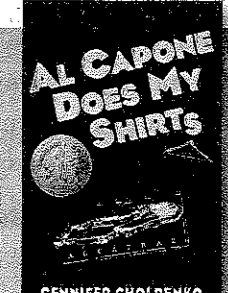
Tugboats cry, *Escape!* Distant windows wink like stars.

We will not die on this rock.

CONTEST

Why Did They Try? What was it like to be an inmate at Alcatraz? How could the conditions have motivated Frank Morris, John Anglin, and Clarence Anglin to risk their lives attempting to escape? Draw on the article as well as the poem in your answer. Then send your answer to **ALCATRAZ CONTEST**. Five winners will get *Al Capone Does My Shirts* by Gennifer Choldenko. See page 2 for details.

GET THIS ACTIVITY ONLINE



Due: _____

SCOPE

Name: _____ Date: _____

NONFICTION: "Escape From Alcatraz" • SKILL: Vocabulary Acquisition, page 1 of 2

Read these words to prepare for reading

Vocabulary: "Escape From Alcatraz"

1. **barren (BA-ruhn)** *adjective*; 1. unable to produce offspring (when referring to a female), or unable to produce fruit (when referring to a plant); 2. bleak and lifeless; producing little to no vegetation
example 1: You won't find any apples on that old apple tree in the backyard; it's barren.
example 2: It was a barren landscape—mile after mile of nothing but rocks and dry grass.
2. **fashion (FASH-uhn)** 1. *noun*; a style of dress that is popular at a certain time or among a certain group; 2. *noun*; a way of doing things; 3. *verb*; to give shape to; adapt
example 1: Pam has no interest in fashion. As long as her clothes are comfortable, she's happy.
example 2: "Please exit the auditorium in an orderly fashion," said Ms. Flynn.
example 3: Sobia and Cassey fashioned a fort out of couches, pillows, and blankets.
3. **foghorn (FOG-horn)** *noun*; a horn (as on a ship) sounded in foggy weather to give warning
example: Jake couldn't see any boats, but he could hear the lonely sound of their foghorns.
4. **hypothermia (hy-poh-THUR-mee-uh)** *noun*; reduction of the body temperature to an abnormally low level
example: Our guide warned that hypothermia would set in quickly if we fell into the frigid water.
5. **incarcerate (in-KAHR-suh-reyt)** *verb*; to put in prison; confine
example: The witch incarcerated Rapunzel in a tower with no stairs and no door.
6. **ingenious (in-JEEN-yuhs)** *adjective*; inventive and original
example: Nathan and Jacob came up with an ingenious plan to win Saturday's paintball rematch!
7. **penitentiary (pen-ih-TEN-shuh-ree)** *noun*; a state or federal prison where criminals are kept
example: Joe wrote his paper about the history of a penitentiary and some of its famous prisoners.
8. **punctuate (PUHNGK-choo-eyt)** *verb*; 1. to mark or divide with punctuation marks; 2. to interrupt at intervals; emphasize
example 1: Clarissa did not punctuate her paragraph correctly. She left out all the commas.
example 2: Cheers punctuated Andrew's speech about the benefits of a four-day school week.
9. **speculate (SPEK-yuh-leyt)** *verb*; to wonder or guess about something without knowing all the facts
example: Aaron speculated on why Lisa was angry, but he didn't really know.
10. **warden (WAWR-dn)** *noun*; an official in charge of a prison, or one charged with the care of something
example: I wanted to go to the movies, but first I had to persuade my wardens: Mom and Dad.

Name: _____

Date: _____

NONFICTION: "Escape From Alcatraz" • SKILL: Vocabulary Acquisition, page 2 of 2

Vocabulary Practice:

"Escape From Alcatraz"

Directions: In each row of words, circle the word that does not belong.

- | | | | | |
|----|----------|-------------|------------|-----------|
| 1. | barren | fruitful | productive | lush |
| 2. | clever | brilliant | ingenious | unskilled |
| 3. | imprison | incarcerate | release | constrain |
| 4. | ponder | ignore | suppose | speculate |
| 5. | warden | guard | prisoner | keeper |

Directions: Next to each word in the column on the left, write the letter of the word with the most similar meaning from the column on the right.

- | | |
|------------------------|----------------|
| _____ 6. foghorn | a. officer |
| _____ 7. barren | b. consider |
| _____ 8. punctuate | c. intelligent |
| _____ 9. fashion | d. signal |
| _____ 10. speculate | e. prison |
| _____ 11. ingenious | f. design |
| _____ 12. penitentiary | g. confine |
| _____ 13. warden | h. accent |
| _____ 14. incarcerate | i. fruitless |

Directions: Write a caption for the photograph on page 6 of your *Scope* magazine. Use at least one of the vocabulary words listed on page 1 of this activity in your caption.

15. _____

NONFICTION: "Escape From Alcatraz" • SKILL: Reading Comprehension, page 1 of 2

Read, Think, Explain

Identifying Nonfiction Elements

Exploring the facts and ideas in a nonfiction article will help you understand it better. Use this worksheet to help you understand "Escape From Alcatraz" in the February 20, 2012, issue of *Scope*.

A. BEFORE READING

1. Read the headline, or title, of the article. Write it here: _____

Now look at the photographs and read the captions. What do you predict the story will be about? Circle one of the choices below and explain.

A person If so, who? _____

An event If so, what? _____

Something else If so, what? _____

2. Look at the photograph on pages 4-5. What does it show? How do you feel when you look at this image?

B. DURING READING

Read the subtitle, or heading, of each section. Then complete the following:

3. The **first section** is the introduction. It is mainly about (summarize): _____

4. The **second section** is called _____. It is mainly about (summarize): _____

5. The **third section** is called _____. It is mainly about (summarize): _____

6. The **fourth section** is called _____. It is mainly about (summarize): _____

7. The **fifth section** is called _____. It is mainly about (summarize): _____

8. The **sixth section** is called _____. It is mainly about (summarize): _____

C. AFTER READING

9. Write down three facts from the article that you didn't know before you read it.

10. What is the MAIN purpose of the article? (circle one)

to teach readers how to
break out of a maximum-
security prison

to inform readers
about a daring prison-
escape attempt

to convince readers
that we need tougher
prisons today

D. TEXT TO TEXT

11. What is the connection between the main article and the poem on page 9? Use textual details to support your answer.

E. MAKING CONNECTIONS

12. Here's how this article relates to (fill in at least two):

Something else I read: _____

Something else I know about: _____

Something in my own life: _____

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Name: _____

Date: _____

NONFICTION: "Escape From Alcatraz" • SKILL: Key Ideas and Details, page 1 of 2

Life at Alcatraz

Directions: Use this graphic organizer to take notes on the conditions at Alcatraz. Read the article again, and when you find a detail that describes what life was like at Alcatraz, jot it down in the category it best fits into. (If you are having trouble fitting a detail into one of the first four categories, there's always "Other Descriptive Details About Alcatraz" on page 2.) We filled in a few details for you.

INMATES' DAILY SCHEDULE AND ACTIVITIES

- a gong woke them at 6:30 a.m.

SUPERVISION OF THE INMATES

- guards counted the inmates many times day and night

PUNISHMENT FOR BREAKING THE RULES

**ADJECTIVES THE WRITER USES TO
DESCRIBE ALCATRAZ**

*Include the page number on which each
adjective appears.*

• "brutal" (p. 5)

**OTHER DESCRIPTIVE DETAILS
ABOUT ALCATRAZ**

NONFICTION: "Escape From Alcatraz" • SKILL: Reading Comprehension

"Escape From Alcatraz" Quiz

Directions: Read the nonfiction article "Escape From Alcatraz" in this issue of *Scope*. Then answer the multiple-choice questions below.

1. Which of the following supports the idea that Frank Morris and the Anglin brothers were clever?
 - Ⓐ Morris had already escaped from several prisons.
 - Ⓑ The three men took up painting as a hobby so they could get supplies for their escape.
 - Ⓒ They didn't tell anyone about their escape plan.
 - Ⓓ They were never heard from again.

2. Information about the small size of Alcatraz prison cells would be *best* inserted into which section?
 - Ⓐ "Island of the Pelicans"
 - Ⓑ "A Bitter Surprise"
 - Ⓒ "Daring Escapes"
 - Ⓓ "Many Had Drowned"

3. Which word from the article comes from the Latin roots meaning *over* and *see*?
 - Ⓐ escape
 - Ⓑ supervise
 - Ⓒ precaution
 - Ⓓ discover

4. Read the following sentence about Al Capone: "He figured he'd be able to pull strings to get special privileges at Alcatraz . . ." The phrase "pull strings" is an example of
 - Ⓐ a metaphor.
 - Ⓑ personification.
 - Ⓒ hyperbole.
 - Ⓓ an idiom.

5. You can infer that the reason Alcatraz is a popular tourist attraction today is that
 - Ⓐ lots of people want to get a good view of San Francisco Bay.
 - Ⓑ lots of people want to prove that Morris and the Anglin brothers really did escape to freedom.
 - Ⓒ lots of people want to see what it was like to live at the notorious, escape-proof prison.
 - Ⓓ lots of people want to see where Al Capone grew up.

6. Both the article and the poem describe life at Alcatraz as which of following?
 - Ⓐ isolated
 - Ⓑ dreary
 - Ⓒ harsh
 - Ⓓ all of the above

7. The author of this article concludes that
 - Ⓐ no one ever escaped from Alcatraz and survived.
 - Ⓑ Alcatraz was the worst prison in the world.
 - Ⓒ it was foolish for anyone to try to escape from Alcatraz.
 - Ⓓ no one knows what happened to Frank Morris and the Anglin brothers after they escaped.

8. What was the author's main purpose in writing this article?
 - Ⓐ to describe a daring escape from Alcatraz
 - Ⓑ to encourage people to visit Alcatraz
 - Ⓒ to educate people about prison life
 - Ⓓ to alert people about escaped criminals

Directions: Answer the questions below on the back of this page or on another piece of paper.

9. Frank Morris and the Anglin brothers were serious criminals. Did you find yourself rooting for them while you read the article? Why or why not? Use textual evidence in your answer.
10. What factors made it difficult for prisoners to escape from Alcatraz? Use details from the article to support your answer.

Critical-Thinking Questions

"Escape From Alcatraz"

1. How did Frank Morris and Clarence and John Anglin manage to escape from Alcatraz?
2. What is the author's attitude toward the escapees? Support your answer with details from the text.
3. What do the sections "Island of the Pelicans" and "Ready for Troublemakers" tell you? Why are they included?
4. How does Irene Latham portray Alcatraz in her poem "Vow"?
5. Besides the conditions at Alcatraz, what could have motivated the men to try to escape?

Not related to "Escape from Alcatraz"



Name: _____ Date: _____

ACTIVITY: "Grammar Falls in Love" • SKILL: Commonly Confused Words

Sight vs. Site

The words **sight** and **site** are often confused and misused. Here's what you need to know:

Use **sight** to refer to the power or act of seeing someone or something, or to something that is seen.

Examples:

*Michael lost his **sight** when he was 24.*

*I was cheered by the **sight** of the sun peeking through the clouds.*

*After Marco spent four weeks alone in the wilderness, his parents were a **sight** for sore eyes.*

Use **site** to refer to the place where something is located, or to a page on the World Wide Web.

Example:

*Hyde Park is the **site** of President Franklin D. Roosevelt's home.*

*There is a beautiful memorial at the crash **site**.*

*Akimi logged on to her favorite movie **site** to read a review of last weekend's blockbuster.*

Directions: Circle the correct boldface word in each sentence below.

1. The painter Vincent van Gogh once said, "The **sight/site** of the stars makes me dream."
2. The building **sight/site** is a busy place crawling with construction workers, architects, and bulldozers.
3. Ms. Singh encourages students to use a grammar Web **sight/site** to find answers to their grammar questions.
4. The **sight/site** of soldiers returning from war moves many people to tears.
5. The quarry we visited in Utah is a world-famous **sight/site** for finding dinosaur fossils.
6. Mr. Liu watched the bus drive down the road, over the hill, across the bridge, and finally out of **sight/site**.
7. The Jacksons returned to the **sight/site** where the home of their ancestors once stood.

Directions: For each sentence below, fill in the blank with **sight** or **site**. Then write your own sentence using **sight** or **site**.

8. Elmwood Park is the _____ of our annual family reunion.
9. Nadav went to see the eye doctor when his _____ began to fail.
10. With the finish line in _____, Maya sprinted the last quarter mile of the race.
11. In ancient Rome, the Colosseum was the _____ of public sporting events and other entertainment.
12. _____
