Alexander Graham Bell is best known as the inventor of the telephone. In the following selection, the author imagines how a 16-year-old Alexander might have described his thoughts about his past and future. Read the selection and answer the questions that follow.

A Passion For Discovery
by Rebecca Hazell

I’ve been fascinated by the world around me ever since I can remember. My earliest memory is sitting in the middle of a wheat field and trying to hear it growing. So I suppose that, for a long time, hearing has been as important to me as speaking. Perhaps that’s why I also like to be on my own quite a bit, to wander through the countryside and lie in the sun-drenched Scottish heather. I like to listen to the world, to think and to dream, and to experiment.

I have lots of dreams and ideas. Sometimes they get in the way of what I’m supposed to be doing. I never did well at school, because I saw no point in repeating something I had already understood. Drill work just made me lose interest. My parents were disappointed in me, though. Like many children, my brothers and I had learned at home from Mother until we were ten. We loved learning from her. I collected birds’ eggs and learned to identify plants, and to play the piano, and lots more besides.

And Father taught us, too. For instance, photography is still new and odd to most people, but not to us. Through my father, my brothers and I learned how to develop our own photographs. With such a promising beginning, my parents naturally expected me to do well at school. I wish I could have pleased them, but I became bored.

Finally, when I was fourteen, they despaired of me so that I was sent to stay in London with my grandfather for a year. He turned me into a proper gentleman, although at first I hated all the dressing up and behaving with good manners. But Grandfather also became a companion and a friend. He taught me that our worth as human beings has nothing to do with wealth or social class because, with education, anyone can make something good of himself. He says education is like a ladder for climbing out of the depths of ignorance and misunderstanding. He inspired me to do something with my life, perhaps to teach. And, of course, being a great elocutionist, Grandfather taught me that speech—developing ideas through communicating is what I think he means—is the greatest gift we humans have been blessed with.

1. According to the selection, why were Alexander's parents disappointed in him?
   A  He had too many dreams.
   B  He was not a good student.
   C  He spent too much time alone.
   D  He did not have good manners.

2. According to the selection, who were Alexander's best teachers?
   A  the farmers who lived nearby
   B  his classmates and his parents
   C  his parents and his grandfather
   D  his classmates and his grandfather

3. What is the effect of the simile used in paragraph 4?
   A  to show that ideas are more important than communication
   B  to show that Alexander and his grandfather were good friends
   C  to emphasize that education can help a person grow
   D  to emphasize that speech is very important for teachers

4. According to the grandfather, which of the following is most important to a child's future?
   A  education
   B  grandparents
   C  manners
   D  money

5. What is the effect of the use of first person in this selection?
   A  It makes the information more accurate.
   B  It allows the author to use more descriptive language.
   C  It emphasizes how alone Alexander felt as a child.
   D  It helps the reader better understand Alexander's thoughts and feelings.
6. Which type of person is most like Alexander?
   A  someone who needs time alone to imagine and reflect
   B  someone who is sociable and has many friends
   C  someone who prefers indoors over outdoors
   D  someone who takes pride in memorizing facts

7. Which of these classroom tasks would most likely have bored Alexander?
   A  learning to identify plants that he had never seen before
   B  repeating multiplication tables that he had already memorized
   C  listening to student speeches
   D  learning to sing a new song

End of Set

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## Answers to

### Grade 6 Reading Comprehension Sample Items

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