

Reading Performance Assessment Practice Task F3
High School – 2009-10 – *That's One Mammoth Molar*

Read the following article carefully and **make notes in the margin** as you read. Your notes should include:

- Comments that show that you **understand** the article. (A summary or statement of the main idea of important sections may serve this purpose.)
- Questions you have that show what you are **wondering** about as you read.
- Notes that differentiate between **fact** and **opinion**.
- Observations about how the **author's craft** (organization, word choice, perspective, support) and **choices** affect the article.

Your **margin notes** are part of your score for this assessment.

Student _____

Teacher _____ **Class Period** _____

School _____ **School District** _____



THAT'S ONE MAMMOTH MOLAR

Bryant Ashton, left, and Charlie Gilpin show the fossilized mammoth's tooth they discovered imbedded in the stream bank of a small tributary of the South Yamhill River.

Photo by Tom Ballard/News-Register. Used by permission of the McMinnville News-Register.

Notes on my thoughts, reactions and questions as I read:

Published: May 31, 2007

By *NICHOLE MONTESANO, News-Register, McMinnville, Oregon*

The woods along the confluence of the South Yamhill River and a tributary creek, on the east side of McMinnville, provide young boys with plenty of opportunity for adventure.

About a month ago, Charlie Gilpin and Bryant Ashton, both 10, found just that when they glanced down through the trees to one of their favorite spots along the creek and spotted what they thought looked like the upturned sole of a boot. Curious, the boys scrambled down to look at it.

They used a stick to try to dig it out of the mud, but that didn't work. "The stick broke in half," Charlie said.

"We tapped it with a machete," he said, "and it felt like stone." They thought it might be a piece of petrified wood.

Reading Performance Assessment **Practice Task F3**
High School – 2009-10 – *That’s One Mammoth Molar*

*Notes on my thoughts,
reactions and questions as I
read:*

But they were unable to dig it out, and eventually lost interest.

"We just sort of forgot about it," Bryant explained. "We were out doing other things."

Last week, another friend, Aspen Nelson, was visiting Charlie, and he spotted the strange object. "We just said, 'Let's get it out,'" Charlie said.

They fetched a pickax and began digging.

John Gilpin was taking a nap when his excited son rushed into the house and asked him to look up the phone number for the newspaper, because they had found something amazing.

What it was, they weren't sure. They guessed maybe the rib cage of some prehistoric animal.

"I thought it was like a saber-tooth tiger or something," Bryant said.

Kneeling to examine one side of the fossil, Charlie added, "It looks like it got bit in half or something, right here, because the ribs get shorter and shorter. We're going to see if we can find the other half."

Geologist Bill Orr, however, knew immediately what the boys had found.

"I can tell you a lot about this," he told John Gilpin, on a visit to the family's home. "I wrote a book that has a picture of this." Orr wrote "Handbook of Oregon Plant and Animal Fossils" with his wife, Elizabeth. The couple are now working on a revision, he said.

Retired from the University of Oregon, where he taught geology for 30 years, Orr is now director of the Oregon State Museum of Fossils. In McMinnville on other business Friday, he made time to check out the boys' fossil find.

Charlie and Bryant were in school, but John Gilpin took time off work to share the find with Orr. It was not an ancient rib cage, but rather the lower left molar of an ancient mammoth, Orr said.

Until about 12,000 years ago, both mammoth and mastodon lived in the area. Orr said he identifies about two or three tusks or teeth a year from the Yamhill Valley area, most commonly from mastodons.

The two animals were different, he said. Mastodons were browsers, while mammoths were grazers. As a result, they had very different teeth.

The corrugated, curved surface that had looked like a boot sole to the boys was actually the flat grinding surface of the tooth, worn smooth with age and use.

The knobby protrusions they thought might be vertebrae were the roots of the tooth. Their backward-sweeping direction even showed the exact spot in the mouth the tooth had occupied - the lower left section.

"It's a wonderful specimen," Orr said, propping the tooth on the porch railing. "This was quite an old animal. It was probably about the fourth time the tooth had erupted."

Reading Performance Assessment **Practice Task F3**
High School – 2009-10 – *That’s One Mammoth Molar*

He explained that mammoths had four molars, and grew new ones continuously throughout their lives, to replace ones they wore down. The replacement teeth grew progressively larger.

"Imagine having wisdom teeth erupting your whole life," he said.

"This animal was probably 8 or 9 years old," he said. "For a fossil, that's old. For a zoo animal, it would not be that big a deal."

He placed the age of the fossil at 12,000 to 15,000 years.

"The animal probably died with this tooth in its mouth," Orr said. "And it didn't get enmired. It just croaked for some reason. Maybe it got eaten."

An extra piece the boys found next to the molar wasn't a broken off bit of tooth, he said, but a part of the skull.

"These guys are going to be back down there now. They're going to have the whole back area dug up," Gilpin predicted.

"They might get the complete skeleton," Orr said, although he said an intact skull would be unlikely.

"This is a real find," he said. "I've seen slightly better specimens from Alaska, but this is awfully nice."

He promised to provide a copy of "Handbook of Oregon Plant and Animal Fossils," so the boys can read about their find.

Gilpin, meanwhile, now has another chore on his list - checking the creek bank, to make sure the boys don't undermine it, or create other hazards in their digging.

Orr is hoping to see more fossils if the boys do continue their digging, and said he'd be happy to help identify further finds.

"That's One Mammoth Molar" By Nicole Montesano, News-Register, May 31, 2007. Used by permission of McMinnville News-Register

Notes on my thoughts, reactions and questions as I read:

1. Use the line below to **create a timeline** of the boys' discovery and the ultimate reporting of it in the newspaper. Include **at least 5 events** in your timeline.

A horizontal line with six vertical tick marks spaced evenly along it, intended for creating a timeline.

Reading Performance Assessment Practice Task F3
High School – 2009-10 – *That’s One Mammoth Molar*

2. What different **possibilities** did the boys consider the object to be when they began to dig it up? **Identify at least three.**

1)

2)

3)

3. Find at least **one fact** and **one opinion** in the article and **explain** why you think it is a fact or opinion.

Fact:	Explain:
Opinion:	Explain:

Reading Performance Assessment Practice Task F3
High School – 2009-10 – *That’s One Mammoth Molar*

4. What was **John Gilpin’s attitude** about the boys’ adventure?
Find **evidence from the article** to support your interpretation of John Gilpin’s attitude. Give two examples.

Evidence	What this shows about John Gilpin’s attitude
1.	
2.	

6. Although he never exactly says how he feels about the boys’ discovery, what does geologist Bill Orr really seem to think of this find? **Refer to statements from Bill Orr** to show how you reached this conclusion.

Statement	What this shows about Bill Orr’s reaction

Reading Performance Assessment Practice Task F3
High School – 2009-10 – *That’s One Mammoth Molar*

7. Explain the **techniques or strategies** the author uses to catch the reader’s attention in the first few paragraphs of the article. Is this an effective beginning? Why or why not?

8. The author uses many **quotations** from Bill Orr in the article. What was most likely her **purpose** for including these quotations?

9. If the author were to re-write this article, what **additional information** would you suggest she include to make it more complete? **Explain** why your suggestions should be added.