Name: Date: Score: / 6

The Pony Express: Reading Comprehension

Nonfiction: History · about 185 words

Read the passage. Then answer each question. Circle the best answer or write your answer on the lines.

The Pony Express

In 1860, sending a letter from Missouri to California could take weeks or even months by stagecoach or ship. A company decided to try something faster: the Pony Express.

The Pony Express used a relay system. Young riders galloped on fast horses about 10 to 15 miles to a station. There, they quickly jumped onto a fresh horse and kept going. After riding about 75 to 100 miles, a rider handed the mail pouch to a new rider. Day and night, in heat, rain, and snow, the mail kept moving. The trip of nearly 2,000 miles from St. Joseph, Missouri, to Sacramento, California, took about ten days.

The job was dangerous. Riders crossed deserts, mountains, and rivers. To keep the horses fast, the mail and riders had to be light. Riders carried only a few supplies, and the letters were written on thin paper.

Even though it became famous, the Pony Express lasted only about 18 months. In October 1861, the transcontinental telegraph was finished. Messages could now travel across the country in seconds using electric signals through wires. The Pony Express was no longer needed.

1. **Main idea:** What is this passage mostly about?

   A. how to write a letter B. the state of California C. how horses are trained
   D. the Pony Express and why it ended

2. **Detail:** How long did the Pony Express trip take?

   A. about ten days B. about two months C. one year D. one day

3. **Vocabulary:** In the passage, a relay system means...

   A. riders and horses took turns passing the mail along B. letters were sent by phone C. mail went by ship
   D. one horse made the whole trip

4. **Inference:** Why were letters written on thin paper?

   A. to keep the load light so horses stayed fast B. so they would not get wet
   C. because paper was expensive D. because riders liked thin paper

5. **Detail:** What ended the Pony Express?

   A. a lack of horses B. the Civil War only C. the transcontinental telegraph D. a big storm

6. **Detail:** How long did the Pony Express last?

ANSWER KEY

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