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PRINTABLE · GRADES 3-5 · AGES 8–11

Peach Basket History

Basketball wasn't always played with nets and dribbling. It started in one gym with two fruit baskets! Read the true story of how the game began, then answer the questions. Look back at the passage as much as you need.

Name _____

Date _____

READ THE PASSAGE

How Basketball Began

1 In December 1891, a teacher named James Naismith had a problem. His students at a YMCA school in Springfield, Massachusetts, were stuck inside during the cold winter, and they were bored. His boss asked him to **invent** a new indoor game that was active but not too rough.

2 Naismith nailed two peach baskets to the railing of a balcony, 10 feet above the gym floor. He wrote 13 **original** rules and pinned them up on a bulletin board. For a ball, he grabbed a soccer ball.

3 In the first game, there were 9 players on each team. Players could not run while holding the ball. They had to pass it from the spot where they caught it. The baskets still had bottoms, so after a score someone climbed a ladder to get the ball out. Only one basket was made all game, so the final score was 1–0.

4 The game spread fast and kept changing. Fans in the balcony sometimes reached out and knocked shots away, so **backboards** were added. Players learned to **dribble**, bouncing the ball as they moved. Baskets were replaced by nets with open bottoms. One thing never changed: the hoop is still 10 feet high today.

ROOKIE

1 Why did Naismith invent basketball? Use details from paragraph 1.

_____

_____

ROOKIE

2 In paragraph 2, the word **original** means:

a) copied from another game
b) the very first ones
c) the hardest ones

letter _____

STARTER

3 What did Naismith use for the hoops and the ball in the first game?

_____

_____

STARTER

4 How many players were on the court in the first game, counting **both** teams?

WORK SPACE

players _____

PRO

5 Why were **backboards** added? (paragraph 4)

_____

_____

PRO

6 Which sentence tells the **main idea** of the whole passage?

a) Basketball started simple and changed over time.
b) Peach baskets make good hoops.
c) Soccer is better than basketball.

letter _____

A Build the Timeline

Put the five events in order from oldest to newest. Write the year and the letter in each spot. Then answer the questions.

A	Basketball is played at the Olympics for the first time.	1936
B	James Naismith invents basketball.	1891
C	Pro basketball adds the three-point line.	1979
D	James Naismith is born in Canada.	1861
E	Pro basketball adds a 24-second shot clock.	1954

1ST	2ND	3RD	4TH	5TH
year	year	year	year	year
letter	letter	letter	letter	letter

1. How old was Naismith in 1891 when he invented basketball?
   years old _____
2. How many years after basketball was invented was it first played at the Olympics?
   years _____
3. How many years passed between the shot clock and the three-point line?
   years _____

B Then, Now or Both?

Write **T** if it was true in 1891 only, **N** if it is true now only, or **B** if it is true both then and now.

1. The ball was a soccer ball. _____
2. The hoop is 10 feet high. _____
3. Each team has five players on the court. _____
4. Each team had nine players on the court. _____
5. Players dribble the ball as they move. _____
6. Someone climbed a ladder after every basket. _____
7. Teams try to get the ball through a hoop. _____
8. Nets have open bottoms. _____

C · YOUR TURN

Naismith wrote 13 rules for his new game. Invent **one new rule** for a game in your gym. Tell what the rule is and how it makes the game more fun, more fair or safer.

_____

_____

_____

D Word Work

Match each word from the passage to its meaning. Write the letter on the line.

1. **invent** _____
2. **balcony** _____
3. **dribble** _____
4. **backboard** _____

a) a raised floor that sticks out above a room

b) the flat board behind the hoop

c) to make something new for the first time

d) to bounce the ball while moving

Answer Key (for teachers & parents)

Answers for **Peach Basket History**. Print pages 1 and 2 for students and keep this page for checking. Accept answers to written questions that use details from the passage, even if the wording is different.

Page 1 · How Basketball Began

1. **Answer: His students were stuck inside in the cold winter and bored, so he needed an active indoor game that wasn't too rough.**
2. **Answer: b) the very first ones**
3. **Answer: Peach baskets for hoops and a soccer ball.**
4. **Answer: 18 players**
   9 + 9 = 18
5. **Answer: Fans in the balcony reached out and knocked shots away.**
6. **Answer: a) Basketball started simple and changed over time.**

A · Build the Timeline

Order: 1861 D, 1891 B, 1936 A, 1954 E, 1979 C

Born, invented, Olympics, shot clock, three-point line.

1. **Answer: 30 years old**
   1891 – 1861 = 30
2. **Answer: 45 years**
   1936 – 1891 = 45
3. **Answer: 25 years**
   1979 – 1954 = 25

Quick score

Page 1	_____ / 6
A · Timeline	_____ / 8
B · Then or Now	_____ / 8
C · Your Turn	_____ / 2
D · Word Work	_____ / 4
Total	**_____ / 28**

Skills practiced

Reading comprehension · Main idea · Context clues · Timelines · Elapsed years · Compare & contrast · Vocabulary · Sports history

Teaching tip: For the timeline, have kids underline the years first and circle the smallest one. Then keep crossing off the smallest year left. Point out that the hoop height is the one rule that never changed.

B · Then, Now or Both?

1. **Answer: T**
2. **Answer: B**
3. **Answer: N**
4. **Answer: T**
5. **Answer: N**
6. **Answer: T**
7. **Answer: B**
8. **Answer: N**

C · Your Turn (sample)

1. **Answer: No double teams on the shooter.**
   Give credit for any clear rule plus a reason.

D · Word Work

1. **Answer: c) to make something new for the first time**
2. **Answer: a) a raised floor that sticks out above a room**
3. **Answer: d) to bounce the ball while moving**
4. **Answer: b) the flat board behind the hoop**

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