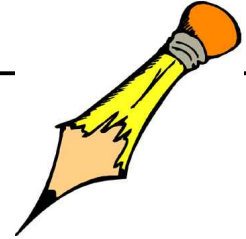


Name: _____

Pencil Points

by Kimberly M. Hutmacher



Have you ever wondered where the idea for the pencil came from? The pencil's history is said to date back to 1564. Legend has it that trees in the British Isles were uprooted by a hurricane. Under one such tree, in Borrowdale, England, a farmer found a strange black substance. The farmer discovered that this substance would not wash off. He and other farmers began using the substance to mark their sheep. The substance they were using was called graphite, and mixed with clay, it is what's inside of the wooden casings of the pencils we use today.

Did you ever wonder what the different numbers on pencils meant? Pencils are identified by the numbers 1, 2, and 3. A number 1 pencil is soft and makes a very dark mark without applying much pressure. Teachers often request that students use a number 2 pencil. These pencils are more medium-soft. A number 3 pencil is very hard, but not as dark. It's good for tracing. Whether we are using a 1, 2, or a 3, it is difficult to imagine life without pencils.

1. According to the passage, what is inside of the wooden pencil casings we use today?
 - a. lead
 - b. graphite
 - c. lead and clay
 - d. graphite and clay

2. What do the different numbers on pencils mean?
 - a. how large the pencil is
 - b. how hard the graphite is
 - c. how much graphite is in the pencil
 - d. how hard the pencil wood is

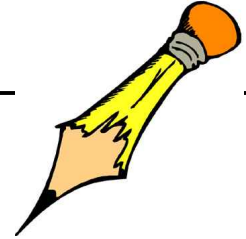
3. Which pencil is likely to make darker lines - number 1 or number 2? _____

4. The first paragraph talks about a farmer who discovers a strange black substance when a tree is uprooted. This part of the story is...
 - a. true
 - b. possibly true, but not proven
 - c. not true
 - d. made up by the farmer

ANSWER KEY

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1. According to the passage, what is inside of the wooden pencil casings we use today? **d**
 - a. lead
 - b. lead and clay
 - c. graphite
 - d. **graphite and clay**
2. What do the different numbers on pencils mean? **b**
 - a. how large the pencil is
 - b. **how hard the graphite is**
 - c. how much graphite is in the pencil
 - d. how hard the pencil wood is
3. Which pencil is likely to make darker lines - number 1 or number 2? **number 1**
4. The first paragraph talks about a farmer who discovers a strange black substance when a tree is uprooted. This part of the story is... **b**
 - a. true
 - b. **possibly true, but not proven**
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 - d. made up by the farmer