

Rate Man! Practice Activities

HOUDINI

I am "The Great Houdini." Give me a lock, and I'll pick it. Snap handcuffs around my wrists, and I'll break free.

I was born in Hungary, and given the name Ehrich Weisz. When I was a toddler, my family moved to the United States. My parents were poor, so by the age of eight, I was expected to do odd jobs to help support the family. When I wasn't selling newspapers or shining shoes, I practiced acrobatic stunts. My parents hung a trapeze in the backyard, and my family became my first audience. I became hooked on performing.

Magic grabbed my interest as a teenager. My hero was a masterful French magician named Robert-Houdin. I thought "Houdini" was a perfect last name for me in the shows I did throughout New York City.

Then I met the love of my life, Bess Raymond, and we joined the circus. After perfecting our act together, we decided to move to Europe. We were broke and only had one scheduled gig. But that gig was important. I was wrapped around a pillar and handcuffed at Scotland Yard. Within minutes, I broke free and the word spread quickly. Soon my shows were sold out all around the world.

I made my stunts more daring to keep people on their edge of their seats. I was locked in prison cells. I was hung upside down in straight jackets. I was chained and locked in trunks that were nailed shut and thrown into rivers. Nothing held me then! Nothing holds me now!

I am... The Great Houdini.

Before You Read:

Think about what you may already know about the great magician, illusionist, and escape artist, Harry Houdini. Think about the idea from the video: reading at the appropriate rate.

While You Read:

Begin reading the passage on Houdini. As you read, record your voice with a tape recorder, computer, iPad, etc.

When you have finished reading, play back your recording. Listen to the rate of your voice.

Compare this reading to how fast you normally talk. Did you read too fast? Too slowly? At an acceptable rate?

Practice reading the passage a few more times. Adjust your rate as needed.

Read, record, and compare your reading rate one more time. Did your rate improve?

After You Read:

Now it's time to try Thinking Aloud. Reread the story one more time with a friend or family member.

After you finish reading, ask your partner if:

- You read at a comfortable pace?
- There are any portions of the text that need additional practice?
- You need to consider any other key fluency elements as you read?

Ask yourself if:

- There were any words you didn't know how to say?
- There were any words that you didn't know the definition of?
- Concentrating on reading rate helped you read more fluently?

Fluency means the ability to read, speak, and write smoothly and easily. To improve your **Fluency Skills** practice reading by concentrating on the following areas:

- Accuracy
- Rate
- Expression
- Phrasing
- Volume

Fluency is an important part of being a good reader, because fluent readers are better able to comprehend what they're reading. Are you fluent?