

# *The Twenty-One Balloons*

COMPREHENSION GUIDE



**THE TWENTY-ONE BALLOONS**  
*by Pene du Bois*

Comprehension Questions  
by Emily Fischer

Designed by  
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# THE TWENTY-ONE BALLOONS

## *How to Use this Guide*

This guide is intended to help you study, understand, and enjoy *The Twenty-One Balloons*. You might ask if a guide is really necessary to read a book. Is the student not just working to improve reading skills while being taught to enjoy reading a good book? Certainly, it is the case that the more a child reads, the more he should improve his skills, but quantity is not the only issue. Once a child has received adequate phonetic training he should learn how to read a book. Most educators using this guide will have children in the grammar stage, generally understood to be during the elementary years in classical education. (For a thorough understanding of classical Christian education a reading of *Recovering the Lost Tools of Learning* by Douglas Wilson is highly recommended.) The basic goals of reading in the grammar stage are as follows:

The student should be able to:

1. Fluently read a given selection orally.
2. Show an increased desire for reading.
3. Show comprehension on a literal and inferential level.
4. Demonstrate an increased vocabulary.
5. Identify basic Biblical values in the literature being read.
6. Identify various styles (myths, poems, fantasy, fiction, non fiction, etc.)

Answers to the questions are found in the back of the guide. Although the answers are written in complete sentences, they are not as detailed as you should expect from your students. They should restate the question in their answer, and the thoughts should be complete and thorough.

*Example:*

**Question:** Who woke Professor Sherman and advised him to get out of the sun?

**Answer:** Mr. F woke the professor and advised him to get out of the sun.

Such writing practice trains the student to answer thoroughly, completely, and with proper grammar. Another reason is to encourage integration. We want students to understand that how they write something is as important as what they write.

The question of grading is one that always arises. Unless otherwise indicated you should assume that each question is worth one point.

May you and your students gain a great appreciation for this wonderful book.

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# THE TWENTY-ONE BALLOONS

## *Project—“Story Elements”*

Cut out the following words and phrases. Slip each one inside a balloon and blow up the balloon. Give each child a balloon. Let them pop their balloons one by one and tell whether their slip of paper reveals a clue about the setting, characters, or plot. You may want to have them further divide the clues about the plot into conflict and resolution subgroups.

*explosion*

*1883*

*Krakatoa*

*Professor*

*resting in retirement*

*fishing*

*William Waterman Sherman*

*San Francisco*

*hurled seventeen miles  
into the air*

*wind blows in the  
wrong direction*

*Pacific Island*

*float around for  
a year*

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# THE TWENTY-ONE BALLOONS

## *Chapter 1—“Professor Sherman’s Incredible Loyalty”*

1. Describe the conditions in which the ship captain found Professor Sherman. (2 points)

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2. Name three people on the ship that tried to get Professor Sherman to tell his story.

Why did they think he should tell it to them?

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3. To whom was Professor Sherman planning to first tell his story?

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4. What did the mayor give to Professor Sherman? What did he expect from the professor?

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# THE TWENTY-ONE BALLOONS

## *Chapter 1, Page 2*

5. How did the president help the professor to be able to tell his story sooner?

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6. Why was Professor Sherman so set on first telling his story to the special group?

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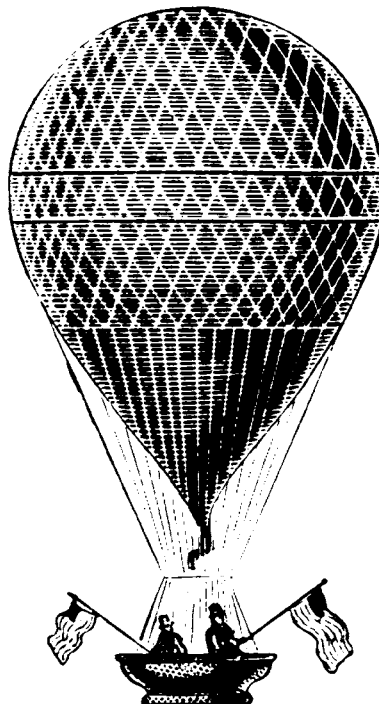
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# THE TWENTY-ONE BALLOONS

## *Chapter 2—“A Hero’s Welcome is Prepared”*

1. Describe how the balloon craze affected the following:

dress fashions

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fat ladies

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grocery decorations

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2. What company was given the contract to make the balloons to decorate the city?

Why was the contract given to them?

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3. Describe how the boy was playing with the balloons that were put up for decorations.

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# THE TWENTY-ONE BALLOONS

## *Chapter 2, Page 2*

4. What happened when that boy's younger brother took the balloon? (2 points)

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5. Why did the Fire Company have to stay up all night?

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6. What happened to the cupola of the Western American Explorers' Club? (2 points)

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7. Describe the invention of the Tomes Aeronautical Studios.

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8. For what was this invention to be used?

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# THE TWENTY-ONE BALLOONS

## *Chapter 2, Page 3*

9. What fact did a boy uncover that renewed interest in Professor Sherman's story?

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10. What happened to the Tomes Studios' invention?

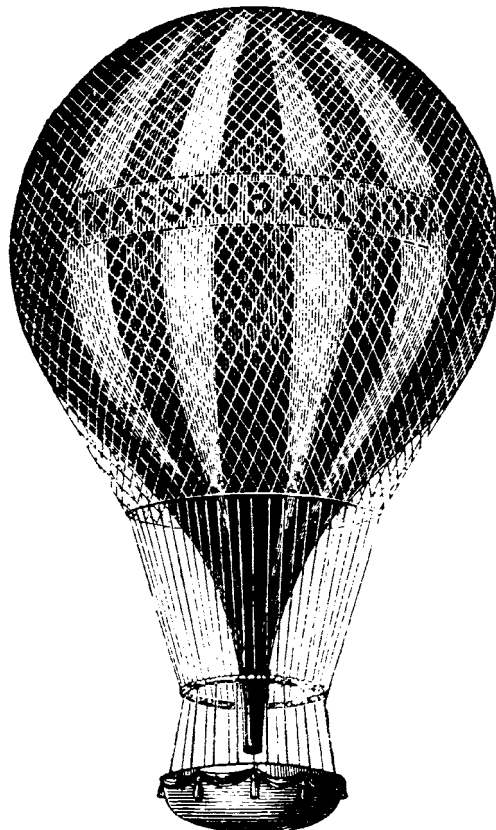
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# THE TWENTY-ONE BALLOONS

## *Chapter 3—“A Description of the Globe”*

1. What was Professor Sherman tired of that made him desire to spend a lot of time by himself?

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2. About how long was Professor Sherman’s journey supposed to last?

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3. What did Professor Sherman design to live in during his journey?

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4. Describe how a ballast works.

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5. What did Professor Sherman use for a ballast?

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# THE TWENTY-ONE BALLOONS

## *Chapter 3, Page 2*

6. What was special about the following things that Professor Sherman took along?

mattress

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books

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clothing

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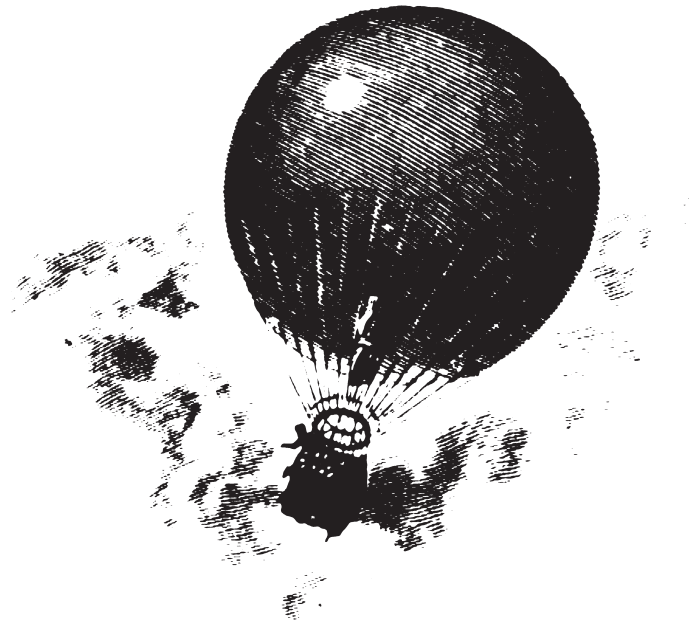
7. How did Professor Sherman plan to do his laundry and wash his dishes?

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# THE TWENTY-ONE BALLOONS

## *Balloon Travel Project*

Fill in the form below. Attach the form to a string tied to a helium balloon. Release your balloon outside far away from trees, powerlines or other obstacles. This is a good opportunity to discuss local geography or weather and make predictions about how far the balloon could travel.

---

Hello! My name is \_\_\_\_\_, and the name of the school I go to is \_\_\_\_\_.

I am studying balloon travel and want to see how far this balloon will go. Since you found this balloon, would you please write me at:

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I would love to know the conditions in which you found my balloon and how far it has traveled.

Thank you!

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# THE TWENTY-ONE BALLOONS

## *Chapter 4—“The Unwelcome Passenger”*

1. What belief about seagulls led mariners to feed them?

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2. What smell became unbearable on Professor Sherman’s trip?

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3. Why was Professor Sherman happy that the people on the fishing boat did not speak English?

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4. What did Professor Sherman spot on the seventh day?

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5. Give two reasons why Professor Sherman threw his garbage overboard on the seventh day?

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# THE TWENTY-ONE BALLOONS

## *Chapter 4, Page 2*

6. What happened when Professor Sherman threw his garbage overboard? (2 points)

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7. Why did Professor Sherman start throwing lots of things overboard?

What items did he throw off first?

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8. What was the problem with landing in the water?

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9. When it became apparent that he was going to land in the water, what last resort action did Professor Sherman take?

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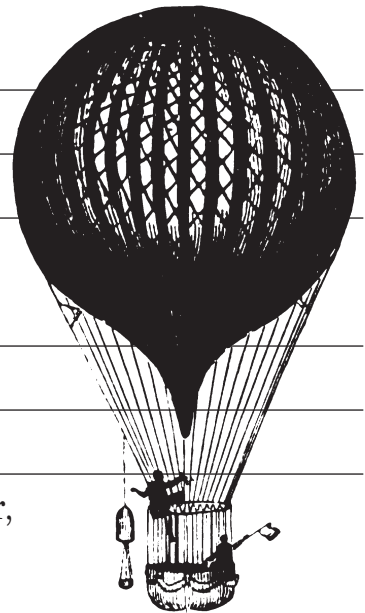
10. Describe Professor Sherman's condition and location at the end of this chapter.

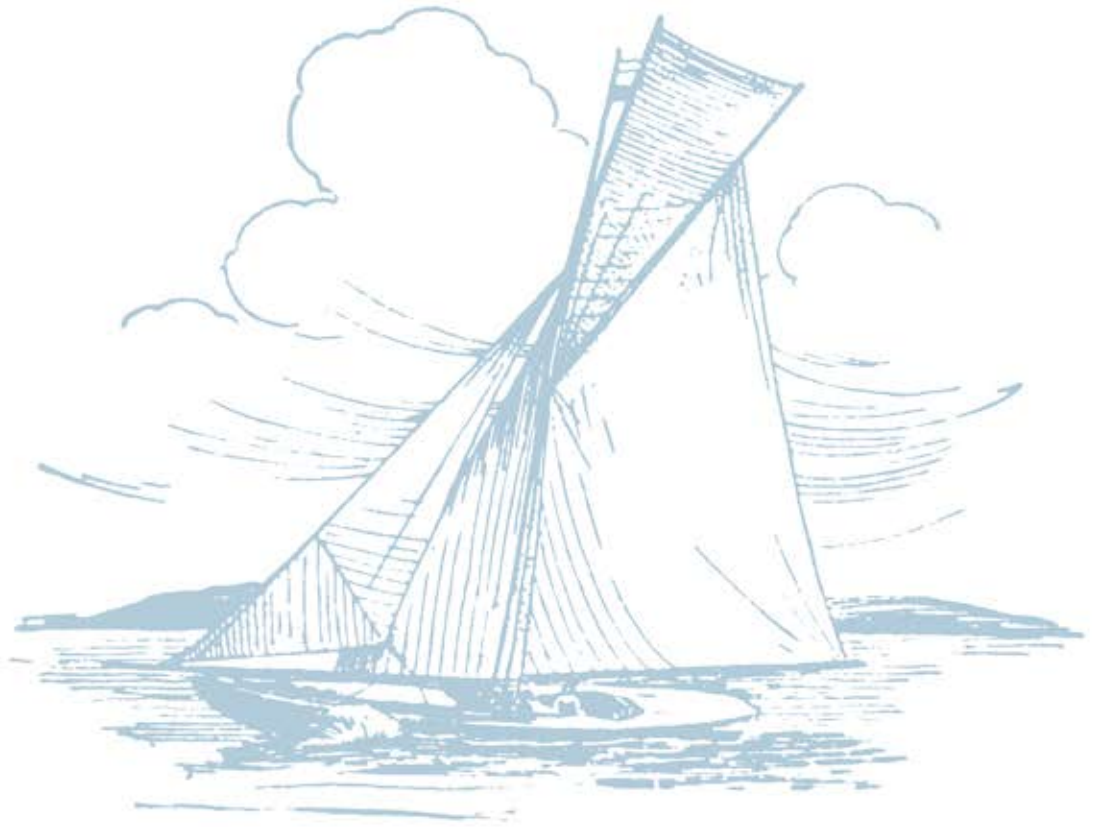
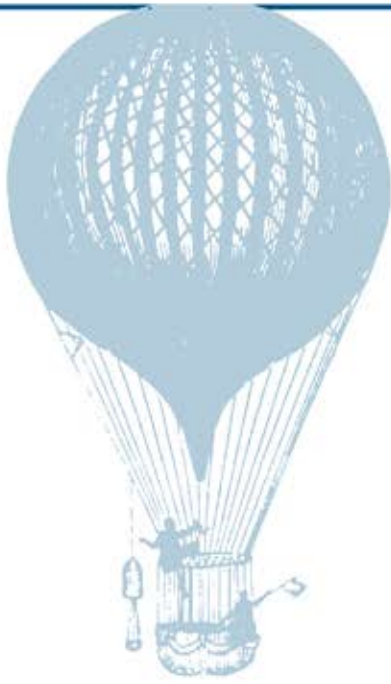
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