



Sample Paper 3

Score for Ideas _____

A Little Case of the Hiccups

Hiccups can be very annoying, but most cases last only a few minutes. What if a hiccupping fit lasted longer—say, 68 years? The strange case of Charles Osborne is fascinating because of how long his hiccups lasted. But what exactly is a hiccup? What causes them? How can you make them stop (so you won't have to hiccup for most of your life)?

In 1922, when his hiccups started, Charles Osborne might not have known that a hiccup is a sudden contraction of the diaphragm followed by a quick closing of the throat. The diaphragm is a big sheet of muscle spread across your chest and under your lungs. When it contracts, it tightens and pushes air out of your lungs. When it relaxes, air is pulled in. Once in a while, it contracts and relaxes too fast. Then the brain tells the throat to close and shut off the air flow. It's that sudden stopping of the air that makes the familiar hiccup sound.

Several things can cause hiccups. Think about the last time you had them. Maybe you ate too fast. Maybe you drank too much soda through a straw—and gulped some air with it. You can also get them from jumping into a cold lake or taking a cold shower. Even stretching your neck too much can bring on the hiccups. Charles Osborne's case was unusual. Mr. Osborne, a hog farmer, was dragging around a hog to see how heavy it was. He probably strained his diaphragm, setting off the hiccups. (Remember that next time you are curious about your pig's weight!)

There are also several home remedies for hiccups. They include forcefully holding your breath, plugging your nose while sipping water, eating a spoonful of sugar, breathing into a paper bag—or letting someone scare you enough to make you jump. No doubt Mr. Osborne tried them all over the 68 years he was hiccupping.



What became of Charles Osborne, anyway? Hiccups didn't keep him from having a life. He was married twice, fathered eight kids, and lived to be 97. One day, after 68 years of hiccupping, sometimes up to 40 times a minute, he just stopped—for no apparent reason. He died about a year later. If he were alive today, he might tell us to eat and drink slowly, watch out for quick temperature changes, and avoid lifting hogs—unless we wanted to break his record.