

## Open-Book Test: "No Gumption" by Russell Baker

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### ESSAY

**Constructed Response** *Write an extended response to the question of your choice or to the question(s) your teacher assigns you.*

1. **Narrative** Write a letter to Russell Baker in which you tell him about something you had to do that you were not very good at. You can write about a chore, a homework assignment, or anything else that made you feel insecure. In your letter, you should sympathize with Baker's magazine-selling experience in "No Gumption." Refer to the autobiography to find similarities and differences between your experience and Baker's. Include dialogue, description, and other narrative techniques to bring your experience to life.
2. **Informative/Explanatory** "No Gumption" reveals Russell Baker's values, or what he finds important in life. Sometimes these values are directly stated. Other times they are only hinted at. In an informative essay, identify and discuss what Baker seems to value most. Include details from the autobiography to support your points.
3. **Argument** Does a person have to have "gumption" to be successful? Why or why not? Write an argumentative essay in which you state a claim that answers these questions. Explain what "gumption" means in "No Gumption," what Baker means when he says he had none, and why it is or is not important to have it. Be sure to support your claim with evidence from the text and from your own experience.
4. **The Big Question: What should we learn?** Do you think Russell Baker learned anything important from the experiences he wrote about in "No Gumption"? Write a brief informative essay in which you explain what he learned and how it helped him. Support your points with details from the autobiography.

**Oral Response** *Complete the following discussion activity.*

5. **One-on-One Discussion** How would "No Gumption" be different if it were a biography instead of an autobiography? What information might be lost? What information might be gained? Discuss these questions with a partner, and refer to details in the text during your discussion. Be sure to state your points clearly and to listen respectfully to what your partner has to say.