

**Today you will research different kinds of houses. You will read a passage from “Grandpa’s Hobbit House.” Then you will read a passage from “Straw Houses: No Need to Fear the Big, Bad Wolf” and the article “Itty-Bitty Houses.” As you review these sources, you will gather information and answer questions about different kinds of houses so you can write an essay.**

Read the passage from “Grandpa’s Hobbit House.” Then answer the questions.

from “Grandpa’s Hobbit House”

*by Harvey Baumgartner*

- 1 My adventure in homesteading began about four years ago, when I decided to make some changes in my life to reconnect with Mother Earth. The one thing I owned was a 12-acre hayfield near Elroy, Wis., so I went out to the field and sat in the tall grass. As I felt the cool earth below me and gazed at the expansive sky above, I began to imagine a dwelling, and then a homestead.

### **AN EARTH-FRIENDLY HOME**

- 2 My idea of a homestead started with building a simple home out of native materials. I wanted an earth-friendly living structure, and my intuition said to build it round, like a Navajo hogan, so the energy could flow around it. I did not want any electricity or plumbing. I feel more at peace when not surrounded by electricity, and plumbing never made much sense to my way of thinking. I think outhouses are very practical because they don’t waste so much water.
- 3 I began the two-month project of creating a home by forming a circle of red cedar posts set upright in the ground. Next, I framed the roof by running logs wagon-wheel fashion from a center pole to the posts. I set rough-sawn oak boards over these rafters. Then, on top of the boards, I put No. 30 felt paper and two layers of 6 mil black plastic. I cut blocks of sod — hunks of earth, with grass, intact roots and all —

and put a 6-inch layer of sod over the plastic. Next came the real work of filling the area between the posts with blocks of sod. Because I'm on a hill and have a terrific view, I chose to have lots of windows, which cut down on the amount of sod I needed.

- 4 After laying the sod blocks, I applied three coats of cob — a clay and straw mixture — to the sod walls. Cob is wonderful stuff and can be molded into any shape imaginable, so I had a lot of fun being artistic. Now here I am in my home, which is about 200 square feet and looks like the hobbit houses that J.R.R. Tolkien wrote about in *The Lord of the Rings*. My house was built one handful at a time using basic hand tools, all for a cost of about \$3 a square foot.

### **THE HOMESTEAD EXPANDS**

- 5 Over the past four years, I've added several buildings to my homestead. The first was a root cellar. When I moved in, I planted a big garden, about 60 feet by 150 feet, so I needed a place to store food — nothing fancy, just a hole in the ground. As I dug the hole for my root cellar, I pried limestone rocks out of the ground and saved them for later use. This "quarry" gave me stone for the walls of the root cellar and provided a solid support for the sod roof. Thanks to the MOTHER EARTH NEWS articles about how and why to build a root cellar, I now have a better way to keep cabbages and other produce fresh year-round.
- 6 Every homestead needs a shed of some sort, and that was my next project. I made this building in the shape of a rectangle by using old hay bales for the walls, then I applied three coats of cob to the bales. The bale construction was much faster than the sod and provides better insulation. I kept two goats in the shed all winter, and they stayed warm.
- 7 Somehow, I always manage to have chickens; they seem to be part of my life here on Earth. I needed to build a chicken coop, so I attached it to the shed and dug it partially into the hill. This, combined with the hay bale construction, made the coop very warm

in the winter and cool in the summer. Because of this, my chickens laid eggs all winter long. My creative juices started flowing as I thought about nest boxes and a roost. I made the nest boxes using the cob mixture and placed them randomly around the walls to resemble swallows' nests. I made roosts from tree branches glued to the walls with the cob. I'm sure my chickens have more fun than most because of their unique coop.

- 8** After two years, I wanted a little more room for my grandkids and other guests, so I built a 200-square-foot addition to the house. The hay bales worked so well for the shed that I used them again for the walls of my addition. In keeping with the hobbit house theme, I made the roof low and put a small rear door in the north wall. Two small windows to the west were mudded into the wall like portholes. All in all, it's a very cozy room.

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**3. Part A**

What is the main idea of the passage from “Grandpa’s Hobbit House”?

- A. A man takes two months to build a home made of blocks of sod using only his hands and small tools.
- B. A man adds on to his homestead by building a chicken coop where his hens are able to lay eggs year-round.
- C. A man dreams of creating a simple life by building a small home without modern conveniences.
- D. A man uses uncommon construction to build and continually improve his homestead.

**Part B**

Which **two** quotations **best** support the main idea in Part A?

- A. “I wanted an earth-friendly living structure, and my intuition said to build it round, like a Navajo hogan, so the energy could flow around it.” (paragraph 2)
- B. “I feel more at peace when not surrounded by electricity, and plumbing never made much sense to my way of thinking.” (paragraph 2)
- C. “I began the two-month project of creating a home by forming a circle of red cedar posts set upright in the ground.” (paragraph 3)
- D. “My house was built one handful at a time using basic hand tools, all for a cost of about \$3 a square foot.” (paragraph 4)
- E. “Somehow, I always manage to have chickens; they seem to be part of my life here on Earth.” (paragraph 7)
- F. “After two years, I wanted a little more room for my grandkids and other guests, so I built a 200-square-foot addition to the house.” (paragraph 8)