

# Cerebral Ciphers

Coke and Pepsi McDonald had to crack the code of five ciphers in *The Genius Files #4: From Texas with Love* to stay out of danger. Their genius led them to Joyland, where they disabled Dominator, Dr. Warsaw's robot clone, before it caused them harm. Use your genius to break the five ciphers below to reveal some of the historical places the twins visited on their cross-country trip.

LOCATION  
#1

MOESUMROOLFHTXISEHT

-----  
(Translation)

**HINT:** Read the cipher backwards to reveal the name of the place in Dallas, Texas, that houses exhibits about the assassination of John F. Kennedy, our 35<sup>th</sup> president. On November 22, 2013, we commemorated the 50th anniversary of President Kennedy's assassination and honored his legacy.

LOCATION  
#2

HO TS PRI NGSNA TIO NALP ARK

-----  
(Translation)

**HINT:** Regroup the letters to discover the site of a natural wonder located in Spa City, Arkansas. The McDonalds visited Quapaw Baths and Spa, named after the Indians who were believed to have discovered the healing powers of the waters.

LOCATION  
#3

MSKG

-----  
(Translation)

**HINT:** Add the missing vowels to discover the town in Oklahoma where the first Girl Scout cookies were sold. Founder Juliette "Daisy" Gordon Low organized the first Girl Scout Troop in 1912. Today, there are 2.3 million girl members in the USA.



LOCATION  
#4

20 8 5 1 12 1 13 15

-----  
(Translation)

**HINT:** Write out the alphabet and put numbers 1 through 26 under the letters. Put the matching letter for each number in the cipher above to learn the name of the fort where the most important battle was fought for the independence of Texas in 1836. Among the fort's defenders were Jim Bowie, renowned knife fighter, and David Crockett, famed frontiersman.

LOCATION  
#5

WE ROLLS

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(Translation)

**HINT:** Decode this anagram to discover the city in New Mexico that is famous for UFOs. Will Coke and Pep be abducted by extraterrestrials in an alien spacecraft in *The Genius Files #5*? Remember in an anagram you form a new word from another word.



CCSS - RI 3.4 - 6.4 Determine the meaning of historical words and phrases as they are used in informational texts.  
CCSS - RI 3.1 - 6.1 Referring explicitly to informational text to demonstrate understanding and check answers to questions.  
CCSS - RL 3.1 - 6.1 Answer questions to demonstrate literal textual understanding.

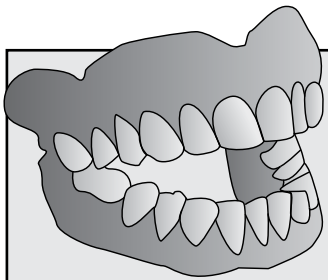
# Everything Has a History

In *The Genius Files #4: From Texas with Love*, Mrs. McDonald had the family going to oddball tourist spots so she could write about them on her website, *Amazing but True*. Some of the unusual museums they visited were the International Bowling Museum, the Washing Machine Museum, and the Toilet Seat Art Museum.

Using the McDonalds' road trip stops as your inspiration, select one peculiar topic or item that you'd like to learn more about and create a museum name, location, and motto for it. Research your object for fun factual evidence to include in a short, amusing description to entice tourists to visit your museum, like something you might find in a guide book. Then, share your writing with your classmates in a small group setting.



## EXAMPLE:



**NAME:** The Museum of Dental Floss

**LOCATION:** Gingivitis, Texas

**MOTTO:** Floss your way through history!

**DESCRIPTION:** Learn fascinating facts about dental floss. Did you know that animal hair was used to clean between the teeth before the invention of dental floss? Did you know the first floss made from silk was invented by dentist Levi Spear Parmly in 1815? Leave with a free sample of flavored and colored dental floss. Join the group of 12% of Americans who floss daily.

**NAME:** \_\_\_\_\_

**LOCATION:** \_\_\_\_\_

**MOTTO:** \_\_\_\_\_

**DESCRIPTION:** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

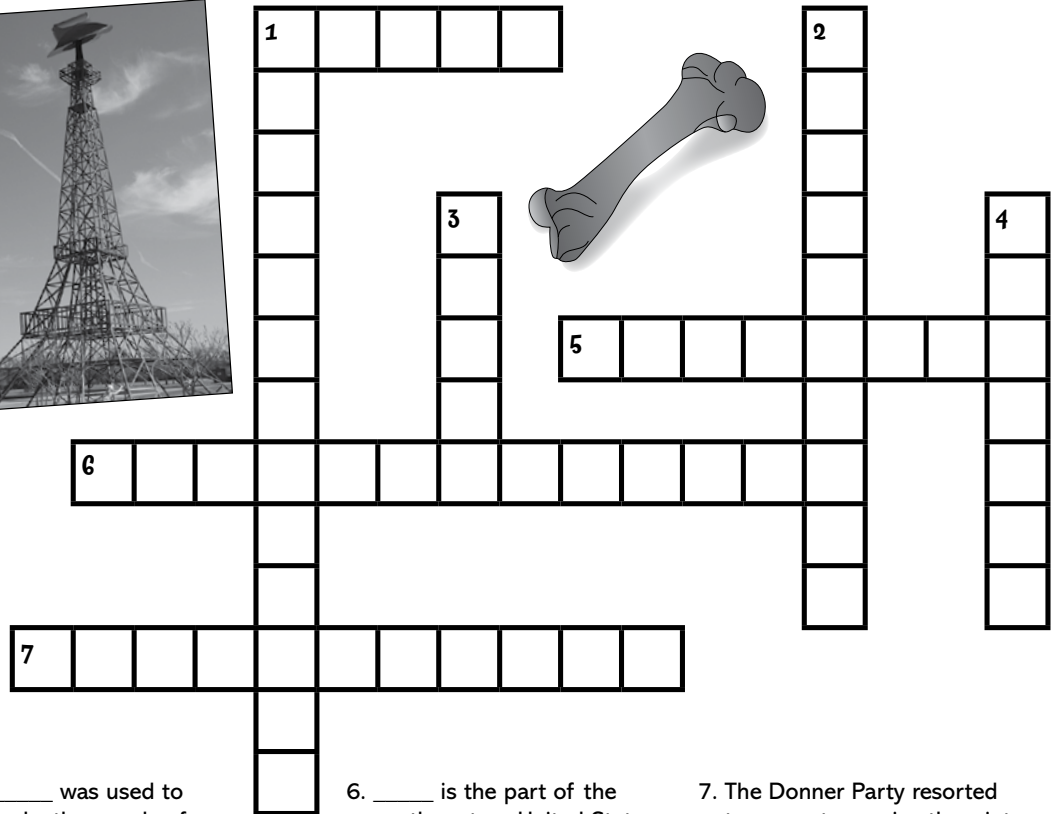
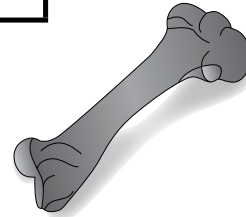
CCSS - RI 3.7 - 6.7 Draw on information from print and digital sources to solve a problem effectively. CCSS - W 3.2 - 6.2 Use informative/explanatory writing to examine a topic and convey ideas clearly. CCSS - W 3.7 - 6.7 Conduct short research projects that build knowledge about a topic.

# From History with Love

Historically speaking, Coke and Pep learned a lot about places and events traveling through the southwestern part of the United States on their summer vacation. Determine the answers to the questions below in order to solve this Texas-inspired crossword puzzle. Refer to *The Genius Files #4: From Texas with Love* for help.

## DOWN:

- The \_\_\_\_\_ of President John F. Kennedy occurred in Dallas, Texas, on November 22, 1963. (page 145)
- Lee Harvey Oswald shot President John F. Kennedy from the sixth floor of the Texas School Book \_\_\_\_\_ in 1963. (page 146)
- A replica of the Eiffel Tower with a giant cowboy hat on top can be found in \_\_\_\_\_, Texas. (page 129)
- Waco, Texas, is the site where a large bone from a 68,000-year-old \_\_\_\_\_ was discovered. (page 190)



## ACROSS:

- The \_\_\_\_\_ symbolized heroism during the fight for independence for Texas during the early 1800s. (page 237)
- \_\_\_\_\_ was used to make thousands of fighter planes and bombs for the U.S. army during World War II. (page 58)
- \_\_\_\_\_ is the part of the southwestern United States that takes in eastern New Mexico and northwestern Texas. (page 123)
- The Donner Party resorted to \_\_\_\_\_ to survive the winter in 1846 while crossing the Sierra Nevada Mountains. (page 87)

## Become a Global Citizen

The Peace Corp was established by President John F. Kennedy in 1961. Its mission to promote world peace and friendship has remained the same for over 50 years. Imagine becoming a Peace Corp Volunteer. How could *you* help the global community? Research the type of work a volunteer does, using your favorite internet search engine. Select four jobs you believe are awesome. Then, draw a peace symbol and write one job within each segment. Visit YouTube or Instagram for photos and videos of Peace Corp Volunteers in action.



CCSS - RI 3.1 - 6.1 Demonstrate understanding of an informational text, referring explicitly to the text as the basis for the answer. CCSS - RI 3.4 - 6.4 Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in informational text. CCSS - W 3.7 - 6.7 Conduct short research projects that build knowledge about a topic. CCSS - SL 3.1 - 6.1 Effectively participate in group discussions.

# Discussion Questions

*The Genius Files # 4: From Texas with Love* is a middle grade novel that includes a whole host of intriguing characters involved in a wide variety of adventurous activities. As the McDonald family travels across the southwestern United States visiting wild and wacky tourist attractions and museums, the reader is challenged to follow the action, learn from it, and make personal decisions with regard to their own future experiences.

Use the following discussion questions to engender group dialogue that will capture the lessons to be learned or themes that author Dan Gutman has woven throughout the plot line and character development. Small literature circles or whole class discussion can be used for this activity. (pages 20 – 90)



1. Dr. McDonald describes the old family cars as *practical, dependable, reliable, and boring*. Would you use the same words to describe him? Why do you think Dr. McDonald wants a cool car like the Ferrari? (pages 23–24)



2. Whenever the twins tried to be honest, their parents didn't believe them. Refer back to the story and recount a time when Mrs. and Dr. McDonald thought they were lying. Has that ever happened to you? Explain.
3. When Dr. Warsaw has Coke and Pep trapped in a vapor cabinet, he tells them a frog story explaining that we don't "react to changes that occur gradually" in our lives. (page 75) All the evil traps set in the

story were meant to harm Coke and Pep slowly and ingeniously. However, the twins' resourcefulness and fast thinking saves them every time. Discuss a few of their clever escapes. Share a time when you acted quickly to avoid danger or solve a problem.

4. Coke and Pep contrast the little Ferrari, "a steel cocoon that would protect them from harm" with the RV, "a rolling prison." (page 85) Why did the twins feel this way? Which car would make you feel "safer"? Which car would make you feel more "free"?
5. The author reflects that "Sometimes we spend so much time and energy thinking about where we want to go that we don't notice where we happen to be." (page 88) Do you think Mrs. McDonald might be a little guilty of this? Why or why not? Has there been a time when you were so focused on something that you missed what was going on around you? Explain.



CCSS - RL 3.1 - 6.1 Answer questions to demonstrate understanding of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text. CCSS - RL 3.6 - 6.6 Distinguish their own point of view from that of the narrator or those of the characters. CCSS - SL 3.1 - 6.1 Participate in group and teacher-led discussions effectively, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.