

Golden Gate Bridge



Pre-reading

Questions: What do you know about the subject of this reading? What question do you have about it?

Definitions: Suspend – to hang from above

Toll – a fee paid for the right to do something

Reading

18 What sights do you think of when you picture the city of San Francisco, California? Do you think
35 about the massive and lovely 4,200 foot orange painted steel suspension bridge known as the Golden Gate
35 Bridge? This site attracts over nine million visitors each year.

45 The famous bridge was completed and opened to pedestrian traffic on May 27, 1937. The next day,
62 with a push of a telegraph button in the White House, President Franklin Roosevelt opened the bridge to
80 cars, too. Until 1964, it was the longest suspension bridge in the world. Today, the Akashi-Kaikyo Bridge
98 in Japan boasts the longest span at over 6,500 feet.

108 How did the bridge get its name? The area known as the Golden Gate is the channel formed where
127 the mouth of the San Francisco Bay meets the Pacific Ocean. People used the name Golden Gate as early as
147 1846, even before the gold rush and long before the bridge.

158 Construction of the bridge began in 1932, during the Great Depression, when jobs were scarce. The
174 men working on the four and half year Golden Gate Bridge project were greatly envied. Even though the
192 work was dangerous, the bridge workers were grateful to have employment.

203 Chief Engineer, Joseph Strauss, designed something to combat the dangerous working conditions on
216 the bridge. He introduced the hard hat and a safety net that stretched end to end under the bridge. Nineteen
236 workers fell. Saved by that net, they called themselves the Half Way to Hell Club.

251 Unfortunately, on February 17, 1937, the net did not hold. Up until that date, there had been only
269 one fatality during the construction of the Bridge. On that sad February day, ten men lost their lives when a
289 section of scaffold carrying twelve men fell through the safety net.

300 Painting the Bridge is an ongoing task and the primary maintenance job. The paint protects the
316 Bridge from the high salt content air that rusts and corrodes steel components. The Bridge has always been
334 painted orange vermilion, deemed “International Orange.” Morrow, the main architect, chose the color
347 because it blends well with the span’s natural setting.

356 In May 1987, the bridge celebrated its 50th anniversary. Some 300,000 people reenacted
369 “Pedestrian Day ’37” with an event dubbed “Bridge-walk ’87.” Two years later, the gracefully suspended
384 bridge withstood a 7.1 magnitude earthquake without incident.

392 Today, more the 41 million vehicles cross the Golden Gate Bridge **annually**. Drivers must pay a
408 \$5.00 cash toll to cross the Bridge. While driving on it, make sure not to speed. The speed limit on the
429 Bridge is 45 miles per hour, and it’s a double-fine zone.

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Understanding

1. What safety measures were in place while building the Bridge? Who is credited for them? _____

2. During what era in U.S. history was the Bridge built? _____

3. What do we know about the integrity of the Bridge? _____

4. When did the Bridge first open and to whom? _____

5. What makes the Bridge so unique? _____

6. What was the Half Way to Hell Club? Why would those in the club name it that? _____

7. What is the main maintenance job on the Bridge? Why? _____

8. What does the word **annual** mean in this reading? _____

Writing

Option A: Summarize the reading in your own words.

Option B: Have you every visited the Golden Gate Bridge? If yes, write about it. If no, write about another bridge you have seen or crossed.
