Lesson Plan Summary
Magic Tree House #10: Ghost Town at Sundown

Focus Question:
What was life like in the Wild West and what causes ghost towns?

**DURING THIS BOOK STUDY, EACH STUDENT WILL:**

- Paint a landscape of a ghost town.
- Create a three-panel story board depicting improvements to a ghost town.
- Study the player piano and how it operates.
- Listen to a folk song, “Red River Valley.”
- Demonstrate comprehension of story elements by answering questions on a detailed Reading Guide.
- Comprehend new vocabulary.
- Examine how authors use certain words and styles to involve readers in the plot.
- Research adaptations of animals in the Wild West.
- Write a persuasive speech to convince residents to move to a renovated ghost town.
- Give a persuasive presentation to redesign Rattlesnake Flats.
- Present projects to class and explain how students connected to the text.
- Describe life in the Wild West, including the existence of ghost towns.
- Identify towns and analyze the distance between them on a map.
- Identify stagecoaches and horses as methods of transportation.
- Explain special adaptations of animals in the Wild West.
- Explain how locations of ghost towns were chosen.

**COMMON CORE STANDARDS ADDRESSED:**

**VISUAL ARTS AND MUSIC HISTORY:**
- Creative responses to texts
- Identify technological advances in musical instruments.

**READING:**
- Identify main ideas and supporting details in text.
- Analyze texts to make predictions and conclusions.
- Analyze relationships among characters, setting, and plot.
- Identify figurative language devices.

**WRITING:**
- Text types and purposes

**SPEAKING AND LISTENING:**
- Comprehension and collaboration
- Presentation skills
- Respectful audience behavior

**SOCIAL STUDIES:**
- Westward Expansion
- Map Skills
- Transportation

**SCIENCE:**
- Explain how adaptations of animals help them survive in their habitats.
- Identify natural resources that humans need in their habitats

Created by: Melissa Summer, Woodland Heights Elementary School, Spartanburg, South Carolina
Lesson Plan
Magic Tree House #10: Ghost Town at Sundown

Lessons for Whole-Class Reading

Materials:
- Computer with a connection to a TV or Smart Board
- Copies of Reading Guides and Reading Guide Key
- Rubrics in Accompanying Materials
- Project Menus for each student (in Accompanying Materials)
- Chart paper for ghost town brainstorming

Procedures:

1. Introduce *Ghost Town at Sundown* by asking students to share what comes to mind when they hear the word “ghost town.” Record responses on chart paper to revisit at the end of the book.

2. Suggested activities to use with certain chapters:
   - Chapter 2: Identify Santa Fe, New Mexico, and Fort Worth, Texas on a map. Would students want to travel that distance by stagecoach? Why or why not? (Hint: Google Maps says it is 618 miles between the two cities, which takes 10 hours and 16 minutes by car!)
   - Chapter 3: Learn more about player pianos at this site: [http://www.pianola.com/](http://www.pianola.com/). There are lots of interesting articles in the red “Historical & Technical” box at the bottom of the page. Or, see a player piano in action in this video: [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p33aKW9A-tw](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p33aKW9A-tw).
   - Chapter 4: Look at pictures of mustangs in the Accompanying Materials.
   - Chapter 7: Listen to Woody Guthrie singing “Red River Valley” at this link: [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TM54-ZRd-9k](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TM54-ZRd-9k). The lyrics can be found at end of the book.

3. Choose a project from the Project Menu:
   - Research one of the animals Jack and Annie met in the Wild West, such as a long-legged rabbit or a rattlesnake. What adaptations do they have that let them survive in the west? Include at least 3 more interesting facts and a picture of your animal!
   - Paint a landscape showing a ghost town. Be sure to include old buildings and tumbleweeds!
   - Write your own song that a different ghost town ghost could sing! Include lyrics. Perform for the class!

4. As an entire class, campaign for the re-habitation of a ghost town! Directions are included later in this document.
Lessons for Independent Reading

- Complete the Reading Guide to demonstrate reading comprehension.
- Complete a project or multiple projects from the “Pick a Project” menu.

Lessons for Literature Circles

- The “The Mystery of the Ancient Riddles” cluster includes *Dolphins at Daybreak*, *Ghost Town at Sundown*, *Lions at Lunchtime*, and *Polar Bears Past Bedtime*. In these books, Jack and Annie are trying to solve an ancient riddle.
- Students can jigsaw read in groups of 4-8 and then regroup in literature circles to find connections among the books.
- The entire class can do literature circles with these four books simultaneously to compare and contrast the different story elements.
- Each student will complete activities associated with their book. Then, they can present their findings to other students in the class.
- Additionally, this cluster would lend itself nicely to a class riddle study. Students can choose to write their own riddles and accompanying adventure stories!

Assessment

_All assessment materials are in the Accompanying Materials._

- Reading Guide
- Literature study Rubric
- Culminating Task Rubric
How to Create a Ghost Town Habitation Campaign

For this whole-class project, campaign for the re-habitation of a ghost town! Each student will pretend to be a real estate agent interested in recruiting new residents of Rattlesnake Flats. After each student completes their persuasive speech and three-panel story board, present to the class.

Materials:
- Candy or other small incentives
- “Campaign for Rattlesnake Flats!” sheet for each student
- Materials for story boards (construction paper, poster board, etc.)

Procedures:
1. Before the lesson, hide candy or other small incentives in 2 or 3 places in the classroom. When students re-enter the classroom, point out one location of goodies. Watch as children flock to that area until all the goodies are gone. Then, highlight another goodies location. After the simulation, discuss: what did students do when they heard about the goodies?

2. Tie to the historical causes of many ghost towns: the gold rush. People would establish towns near places where gold had just been discovered. When the gold ran out, the people would desert the town, leaving behind a ghost town.

3. Explain that for this project, students are campaigning for people to re-inhabit a ghost town. As a class, brainstorm reasons you would want to live somewhere. Record on the board.

4. Students will work independently to persuade an audience to move to Rattlesnake Flats. They will assume the identity of a real estate agent prepare a persuasive speech with a three-panel story board to share their improvements to Rattlesnake Flats that will make it inhabitable again.

5. Share with the class! Which presentations were the most effective? Why? Reflect.

6. A rubric is included in the Accompanying Materials.
Ghost Town at Sundown Unit: Accompanying Materials
Chapter Extensions

Chapter 4: Mustangs
### Ghost Town at Sundown Reading Guide

**Chapter 1: How Wild?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Words to Know</th>
<th>Words in Parts</th>
<th>Vocabulary Words</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>mysteriously</td>
<td>enchantress</td>
<td>gazing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. Why does Annie want to check the woods? (p. 1)
2. What is special about this rabbit? (p. 2)
3. **ELA Extension:** Write a synonym for “odd” to fit the context of Morgan’s statement on page 4.
4. What was the title of the research book Morgan gave Jack and Annie? (p. 5)
5. **Text-to-Self:** Why do you think it was called the “Wild West”?

**Chapter 2: Rattlesnake Flats**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Words to Know</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>lone</td>
<td>tombstones</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>hinges</td>
<td>tumbleweeds</td>
<td>scorpions</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. Draw the setting where the tree house landed as described on p. 7.

2. **Predict:** What do you think the answer to the riddle could be? Why? (p. 10)
3. What is Rattlesnake Flats? (p. 11)
4. What is a ghost town? (p. 11)
5. What caused Rattlesnake Flats to become a ghost town? (p. 11)
6. Why did Jack and Annie run after they saw the rabbit? (p. 12-13)
7. What building did Jack and Annie enter? (p. 13)
8. When was the last time someone was in the General Store? How do you know? (p. 14)

9. **Text-to-Self:** Today, we don’t have General Stores, but we do have stores where we can get just about anything we need! What’s a store your family visits that has lots of different items?

10. **Predict:** Where do you think the piano music is coming from?

**Chapter 3: Player Piano**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Words to Know</th>
<th>Words in Parts</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>barrel</td>
<td>galloped</td>
<td>halt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>whinny</td>
<td></td>
<td>saddle</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1. Where is the music coming from? (p. 17)
2. What is unusual about the music? (p. 17)
3. Explain the mystery of the “ghost” piano. (p. 19)
4. Why do Jack and Annie still think a ghost is playing the piano? (p. 19)
5. Why do Jack and Annie hide in barrels? (p. 20)
6. Write the simile about the horse on page 22.
7. Why is the horse upset? (p. 22)
8. What do Jack and Annie find at the end of the chapter? (p. 25)

Chapter 4: Hands Up!

1. What is a mustang? (p. 26)
2. What is a group of horses called? (p. 27)
3. What are the rules for how to treat a horse? (p. 28)
4. What is something that mustangs do not like? (p. 30)
5. Why does the man tell Jack and Annie to put their hands up? (p. 31)

Chapter 5: Slim

1. Were the men that had the adult horse good or bad? How do you know? (p. 33)
2. What does the cowboy do? (p. 33)
3. Why does the author have Slim say “young’uns” on page 35?
4. How do Jack and Annie explain their presence in Rattlesnake Flats? (p. 35)
5. Why does Jack decide to go with Slim? (p. 37)

Chapter 6: Split the Wind

1. Predict: What do you think the title of this chapter means?
3. List every person’s role in the horse rescue mission. (p. 41)
4. What do you think the phrase “split the wind” means? (p. 41-42)
5. How does Jack keep Dusty quiet? (p. 43-44) ____________________________________________

6. What caused the rustlers' horses to panic? (p. 47) _______________________________________

7. **Predict:** What do you think the white figure is?

**Chapter 7: Ghost Story**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Words to Know</th>
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<th>Vocabulary Words</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• wobbly</td>
<td>• unsaddled</td>
<td>• corral</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• coyote</td>
<td></td>
<td>• harmonica</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. How did Jack know where to go? (p. 48) ________________________________________________

2. Where are they heading now? (p. 49) ____________________________________________________

3. What does Slim have to say about the piano? (p. 54) _____________________________________

4. Where did Jack see Lonesome Luke? (p. 54) ______________________________________________

5. What is Lonesome Luke's story? (p. 54-55) ________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________________________

**Chapter 8: Who Am I?**

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Words to Know</th>
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<td>• peered</td>
<td>• canteen</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. Slim says that a cowboy always travels with what? (p. 57) ________________________________

2. Write the similes about the biscuits and coffee on page 58. _______________________________

_____________________________________________________________________________________

3. Why did Slim go out west to start with? (p. 59) __________________________________________

4. Who told Annie, “Bye!”? (p. 62) _______________________________________________________  

5. What is the answer to the riddle? (p. 62) ________________________________________________

**Chapter 9: Lonesome Luke**

1. What does Slim mean when he tells Jack that he's “mighty tall in the brains”? (p. 64) ________

2. What is special about a cowboy promise? (p. 64) _________________________________________


**Chapter 10: Echo from the Past**

1. What do Jack and Annie notice about the research book they’ve been using? (p. 70) __________

2. How did Slim keep his promise to thank Jack and Annie? (p. 72) ___________________________

3. How is reading Slim’s book like an echo from the past? (p. 73) ______________________________

**Write one question you have for Cowboy Slim Cooley.** ________________________________________________________________________________
Chapter 1: How Wild?

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</table>

1. Why does Annie want to check the woods? (p. 1) She says there is a rabbit hopping by.
2. What is special about this rabbit? (p. 2) It has very long legs.
3. **ELA Extension:** Write a synonym for “odd” to fit the context of Morgan’s statement on page 4. Unusual; different; weird.
4. What was the title of the research book Morgan gave Jack and Annie? (p. 5) It was called Days of the Wild West.
5. **Text-to-Self:** Why do you think it was called the “Wild West”? ______________________________________________________

Chapter 2: Rattlesnake Flats

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1. Draw the setting where the tree house landed as described on p. 7.

2. **Predict:** What do you think the answer to the riddle could be? Why? (p. 10) ____________________________

3. What is Rattlesnake Flats? (p. 11) It used to be a rest stop for a stagecoach traveling between Santa Fe, New Mexico, and Fort Worth, Texas.
4. What is a ghost town? (p. 11) It is a town where people used to live, but then they all left.
5. What caused Rattlesnake Flats to become a ghost town? (p. 11) The creek dried up.
6. Why did Jack and Annie run after they saw the rabbit? (p. 12-13) They saw a rattlesnake!
7. What building did Jack and Annie enter? (p. 13) They entered the General Store.
8. When was the last time someone was in the General Store? How do you know? (p. 14) The last time was 1878 because that's what the calendar says.
9. **Text-to-Self:** Today, we don’t have General Stores, but we do have stores where we can get just about anything we need! What’s a store your family visits that has lots of different items? ____________________________
10. **Predict:** Where do you think the piano music is coming from? ____________________________

Chapter 3: Player Piano

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</table>
1. Where is the music coming from? (p. 17) It is coming from the hotel.
2. What is unusual about the music? (p. 17) The keys of the piano are moving, but no one is playing!
3. Explain the mystery of the “ghost” piano. (p. 19) Player pianos played automatically when someone pumped the floor pedals, but later the piano played completely by itself using electricity.
4. Why do Jack and Annie still think a ghost is playing the piano? (p. 19) The Wild West didn’t have electricity, so the piano shouldn’t be playing by itself.
5. Why do Jack and Annie hide in barrels? (p. 20) They hear thundering hooves coming closer.
6. Write the simile about the horse on page 22. “She was as red as the sunset.”
7. Why is the horse upset? (p. 22) She misses her colt.
8. What do Jack and Annie find at the end of the chapter? (p. 25) They find the wild horse’s colt.

Chapter 4: Hands Up!

Words to Know
- distress

Words in Parts
- descendants

Vocabulary Words
- darting

1. What is a mustang? (p. 26) It is a wild horse. They are usually tough and fast. They came from runaway Spanish horses.
2. What is a group of horses called? (p. 27) A group of horses is called a herd.
3. What are the rules for how to treat a horse? (p. 28) Use a soft hand, a firm voice, a sunny attitude, praise, and reward.
4. What is something that mustangs do not like? (p. 30) They don’t like to be alone.
5. Why does the man tell Jack and Annie to put their hands up? (p. 31) He thinks they are horse thieves.

Chapter 5: Slim

Words to Know
- rustlers

Words in Parts
- cowpoke

Vocabulary Words
- knack

1. Were the men that had the adult horse good or bad? How do you know? (p. 33) They were bad because they had stolen 5 mustangs from the cowboy.
2. What does the cowboy do? (p. 33) He herds mustangs.
3. Why does the author have Slim say “young’uns” on page 35? She is creating a dialect.
4. How do Jack and Annie explain their presence in Rattlesnake Flats? (p. 35) They say that they got off the stagecoach.
5. Why does Jack decide to go with Slim? (p. 37) He wants Slim to think he was brave.

Chapter 6: Split the Wind

Words to Know
- reins

Words in Parts
- moonlit
- panicking

Vocabulary Words
- saddle horn

1. Predict: What do you think the title of this chapter means? _____________________________________________________
2. Where do Jack, Annie, and Slim go? Why? (p. 40) They go to the rise to find the mare at the men’s camp.
3. List every person’s role in the horse rescue mission. (p. 41) Annie will protect Sunset the colt. Jack will keep Slim’s horse quiet. Slim will cut the mare loose.
4. What do you think the phrase “split the wind” means? (p. 41-42) It means to travel quickly.
5. How does Jack keep Dusty quiet? (p. 43-44) He patted him softly, said “Whoa” firmly, and used a sunny attitude.

6. What caused the rustlers' horses to panic? (p. 47) There was a white figure on top of the rise.

7. Predict: What do you think the white figure is? ________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________

Chapter 7: Ghost Story

Words to Know
- wobbly
- coyote

Words in Parts
- unsaddled

Vocabulary Words
- corral
- harmonica

1. How did Jack know where to go? (p. 48) He let Dusty lead him to the other horses.
2. Where are they heading now? (p. 49) They are going to Blue Canyon.
3. What does Slim have to say about the piano? (p. 54) He says Lonesome Luke, a cowboy ghost, is playing.
4. Where did Jack see Lonesome Luke? (p. 54) He was the white figure on top of the rise.
5. What is Lonesome Luke's story? (p. 54-55) He really liked a girl, but she didn’t like the Wild West. When she went back east, Lonesome Luke went crazy and played “Red River Valley” on the piano. He disappeared in the prairie and his bones were found a year later.

Chapter 8: Who Am I?

Words to Know
- grazing

Words in Parts
- peered

Vocabulary Words
- canteen

1. Slim says that a cowboy always travels with what? (p. 57) A cowboy always has biscuits and coffee.
2. Write the similes about the biscuits and coffee on page 58. The biscuit is “hard as rock.” The coffee is “bitter as muddy river water.”
3. Why did Slim go out west to start with? (p. 59) He wanted to write a book.
4. Who told Annie, “Bye!”? (p. 62) It was an echo.
5. What is the answer to the riddle? (p. 62) The answer is “echo”!

Chapter 9: Lonesome Luke

1. What does Slim mean when he tells Jack that he's “mighty tall in the brains”? (p. 64) Slim means that Jack is smart.
2. What is special about a cowboy promise? (p. 64) A cowboy never goes back on his word.
3. Where do Jack and Annie find Lonesome Luke? (p. 66) He was playing the piano again.

Chapter 10: Echo from the Past

1. What do Jack and Annie notice about the research book they've been using? (p. 70) Slim wrote it!
2. How did Slim keep his promise to thank Jack and Annie? (p. 72) He dedicated his book to them.
3. How is reading Slim’s book like an echo from the past? (p. 73) It’s like Slim is still talking to them.

Write one question you have for Cowboy Slim Cooley. ________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________

Words to Know
- grazing

Words in Parts
- unsaddled

Vocabulary Words
- corral
- harmonica
Now that you’ve finished reading Ghost Town at Sundown, pick a project to share with the class. Here are your options:

**Write your own song that a different ghost town ghost could sing! Include lyrics. Perform for the class!**

**Paint a landscape showing a ghost town. Be sure to include old buildings and tumbleweeds!**

Research one of the animals Jack and Annie met in the Wild West, such as a long-legged rabbit or a rattlesnake. What adaptations do they have that let them survive in the west? Include at least 3 more interesting facts and a picture of your animal!

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**RUBRIC:**

<table>
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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>3</th>
<th>2</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Directions</strong></td>
<td>Student followed all directions.</td>
<td>Student followed some directions.</td>
<td>Student followed few directions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Detail</strong></td>
<td>Student includes many important details from reading.</td>
<td>Student includes some important details from reading.</td>
<td>Student includes few or no important details from reading.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Creativity</strong></td>
<td>Project is creative, unique, and relevant.</td>
<td>Project is somewhat creative, unique, and relevant.</td>
<td>Project is not creative, unique, or relevant.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Time</strong></td>
<td>Student stayed on-task the whole time.</td>
<td>Student stayed on-task some of the time.</td>
<td>Student did not stay on task.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**TOTAL:_____/12=______**

**COMMENTS:**

*Designed by Melissa Summer, Woodland Heights Elementary School, Spartanburg, South Carolina*
Jack and Annie visit the ghost town of **Rattlesnake Flats**. Now, you are a **REAL ESTATE AGENT** who wants people to move to Rattlesnake Flats. You have some work ahead of you. Answer the questions below to launch your **CAMPAIGN**!

1. Why did Rattlesnake Flats become a ghost town?

2. What will you do to fix that problem?

3. What is another problem with Rattlesnake Flats in its present state?

4. How will you fix it?

5. What are some things that are awesome, unique, or special about Rattlesnake Flats?
   - 
   -

6. What else could you do to make Rattlesnake Flats a place where people want to live?

7. Now, take these campaign questions and turn them into a **PERSUASIVE SPEECH**. When you are done, complete a **THREE-PANEL STORY BOARD**. One panel should show Rattlesnake Flats in its **PRESENT, GHOST-TOWN** state, and the other two panels should show your **NEW-AND-IMPROVED** Rattlesnake Flats. Be **CREATIVE**!

*Designed by Melissa Summer, Woodland Heights Elementary School, Spartanburg, South Carolina*
Project Rubrics: Use these to grade the Ghost Town Habitation Campaign Project. Multiple are on a page to save paper!

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ghost Town Habitation Campaign Rubric</th>
<th>Name: _________________________</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Campaign Planning</strong></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Campaign sheet is detailed and</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>responses are well-planned.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student completes, revises,</td>
<td>Campaign sheet is incomplete</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and edits persuasive speech.</td>
<td>and lacking significant details.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Include 3 colorful, detailed panels.</td>
<td>Includes 3 panels. Panels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One panel shows the</td>
<td>show the ghost town and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ghost town and two panels</td>
<td>some improvements.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>show the improvements.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time was used wisely throughout the</td>
<td>Time was used wisely for most of</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the project.</td>
<td>the project.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time was rarely used wisely during</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>the project.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total: <em><strong><strong>/15=</strong></strong></em>_ Comments:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Student Grading Rubrics: Use these to send grade reports home. Multiple are on a page to save paper!

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name:</th>
<th>Literature Circles Rubric</th>
<th>Book Title: Ghost Town at Sundown</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tracks text while listening</td>
<td>Prepared to read</td>
<td>Participates in discussion/Reading guide</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>____/10</td>
<td>____/10</td>
<td>____/10</td>
</tr>
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Designed by Melissa Summer, Woodland Heights Elementary School, Spartanburg, South Carolina
Teacher Grading Rubric: Use this to document grades easily. Add more rows for more students.

Book Title: *Ghost Town at Sundown*

*For each off-task behavior, mark off one number (starting with 10).*

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