



## Expanded Reading Lessons for the Empire State Carousel

### Overview:

From 'Little Wars to Merry-go-Rounds':

Students will read the document and demonstrate understanding by constructing a timeline of important events from the reading.

Essential Questions:

- Where did the idea of the Empire State Carousel come from?
  - What are the major places and events in the history of the carousel?
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### Overview:

Masters of the American Carousel

Students will read the document and demonstrate understanding of the American masters of American carousels.

Essential Questions:

- How does the Empire State Carousel reflect America's Golden Age of Carousels?
  - What were the three styles of carousels found in America's Golden Age of Carousels?
  - Who were the artists who founded/popularized these styles?
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### Overview:

The New York Experience

Students will complete a reading about how the Empire State Carousel reflects the New York experience. Students will demonstrate ability in this area by answering a series of questions.

Essential Questions:

- How does the Empire State Carousel reflect the influence of Charles Loof, Gustav Dentzel, and Allan Herschell?
- What are the three main ideas represented by the Empire State Carousel?



## Determining the Facts: From “Little Wars” to Merry-go-rounds

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The history of the carousel has been long and changing. The first evidence of carousels is relief carvings, which date back almost 1,500 years. Carousel-like contraptions were used around the world. Places like Mexico, India, and China used them long before they became popular in Europe and America. For example, the Aztecs (from south-central Mexico) had an entire ceremony, called the Game of the Flyers, based on the use of one of these structures. Individuals dressed like birds of prey and were hung by their heels, head down, from an eighty-foot pole. The ropes were wound tightly around the pole then let loose, sending the rider spiraling outward like flying birds.

In Europe and America, carousels originated to aid in military started as a way to train the military. In fact, the word carousel or carosello means “little war” and can be traced to twelfth-century Arabian games of horsemanship. Riders would play a game that involved tossing a perfumed clay ball from one rider to another. The object of the game was to catch the ball without letting it break. When the ball broke it spilled the sweet, “unmanly” perfume contained inside. By the 1500s, this game had become huge tournaments in Europe called “Carrousels.” The most famous of these was Le Grande Carrousel held by King Louis XIV of France in 1662. A modern carousel still stands on this location.

Carousels started being used as a ride in the 1600s. French noblemen who wanted to become knights trained for spearing contests using an early version of the modern carousel. They “rode” legless wooden horses that were attached to a center pole. As they rode in circles around the pole they practiced spearing through small hanging hoops. These early carousels eventually became into a popular form of entertainment for peasants and nobles alike. A horse, mule, or man that pushed, pulled, or cranked a center mechanism powered these early models. Carousels continued to become more ride-like as time went on. In the 1860s Frederick Savage patented both a portable steam engine and the overhead gears.

The engine turned the carousel, while the gears moved the animals up-and-down.



In America, early nineteenth century wheelwrights, carpenters, and blacksmiths built carousels in their off-season. These early American carousels were often made of log-like horses hung from the center pole by chains. These rides were often placed in picnic groves in rural areas of the United States. As early as 1800, advertisements were found for horse “circle” rides in cities like Philadelphia, New York, Baltimore, and Boston. As the country grew, new immigrants brought their carousel-building and carving skills to America. They brought knowledge of carousels from their home countries in Europe. This led to a “golden age” for carousels in the United States. Men like Gustav Dentzel, Charles Loof, and Allan Herschell created new and beautiful hand-made carousels for amusement parks across the country. The “golden age” came to an end when factories started mass-producing carousel animals in the 1920s, especially after World War II.

The Empire State Carousel at The Farmers’ Museum is hand-made like the carousels of the “golden age.” Master carver Gerry Holzman built the Carousel with the help of over 1,000 volunteers. They all believed in the artistic and historic value of handmade carousels. The Empire State Carousel is a complex piece of folk art that stands for the state of New York and its people. The Empire State Carousel is made up of twenty-four carved animals, all native to New York, twenty-three portraits of famous New Yorkers, and eight art panels representing different regions and important events in New York’s history. It is one of only forty three carousels in New York.



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## From “Little Wars” to Merry-go-Rounds Questions

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Answer each question in complete sentences.

1. What other cultures created art or games similar to modern carousels?

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2. Where did the word “carousel” come from?

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3. What were early carousels in Europe like?

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4. How were carousels in America first made and used?

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5. Where did the idea for the Empire State Carousel come from?

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Name: ANSWER KEY

## From 'Little Wars' to Merry-go-Rounds Questions

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Answer each question in complete sentences.

1. What other cultures created art or games similar to modern carousels?

Mexico, India, China, Arabia, France, (also acceptable is Europe) \

2. Where did the word "carousel" come from?

Carousel means little war in Arabian

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3. What were early carousels in Europe like?

Answers may include: Carousels were used to train the military; carousels were big tournaments based on the Arabian games; and riders rode legless wooden horses around a center pole to practice spearing through small hanging hoops.

4. How were carousels in America first made and used?

Early American Carousels were made by immigrants to earn money. They were used in early versions of amusement parks, like Coney Island.

5. Where did the idea for the Empire State Carousel come from?

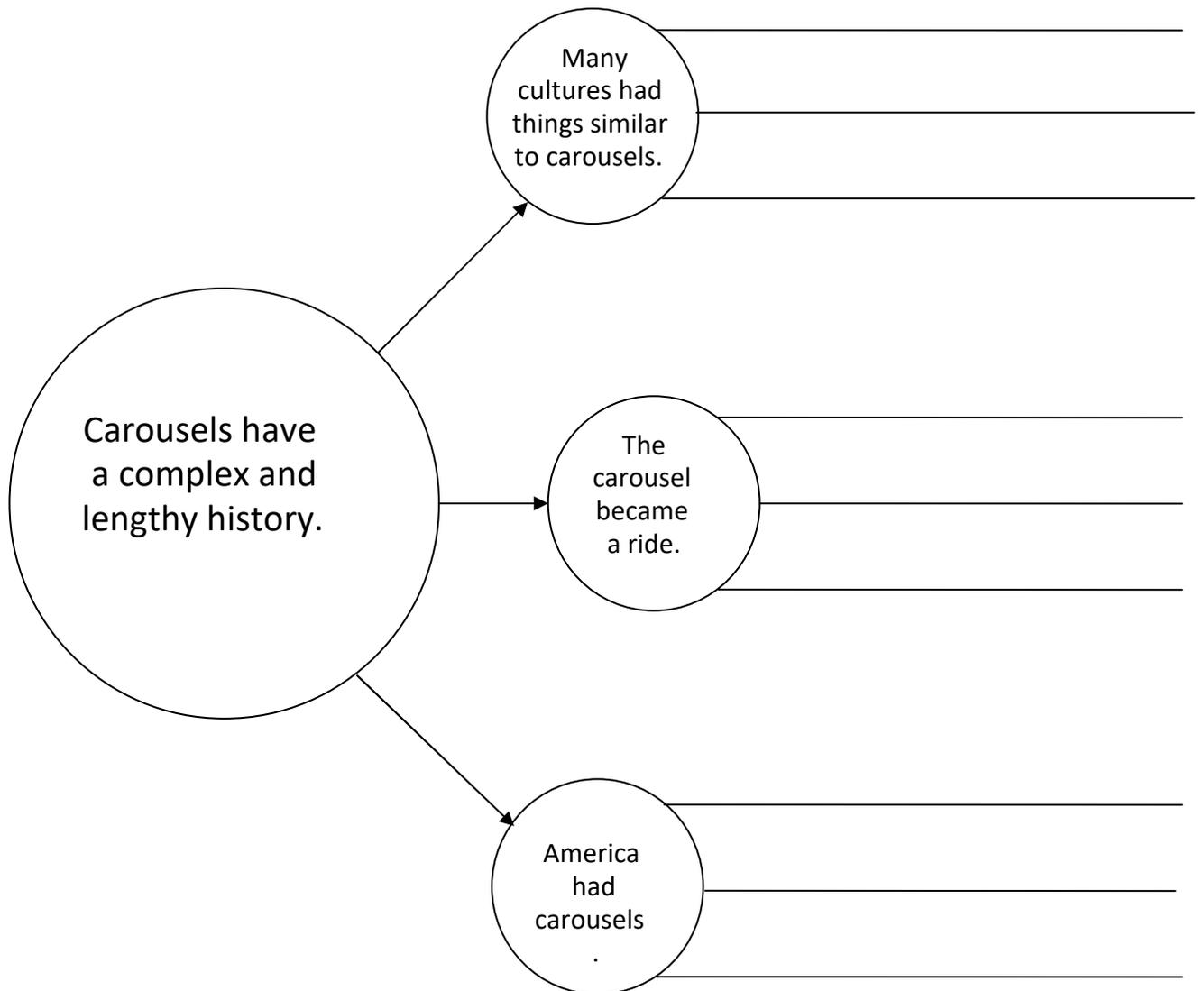
The Empire State Carousel began with Gerry Holzman and spread to many others as a way of preserving the ideas of handmade carousels, New York and its people.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Determining the Facts  
From 'Little Wars' to Merry-go-Rounds

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Graphic organizers can help you break down big ideas in your readings. On this graphic organizer, fill in words or phrases from the readings that support the idea in the bubble.

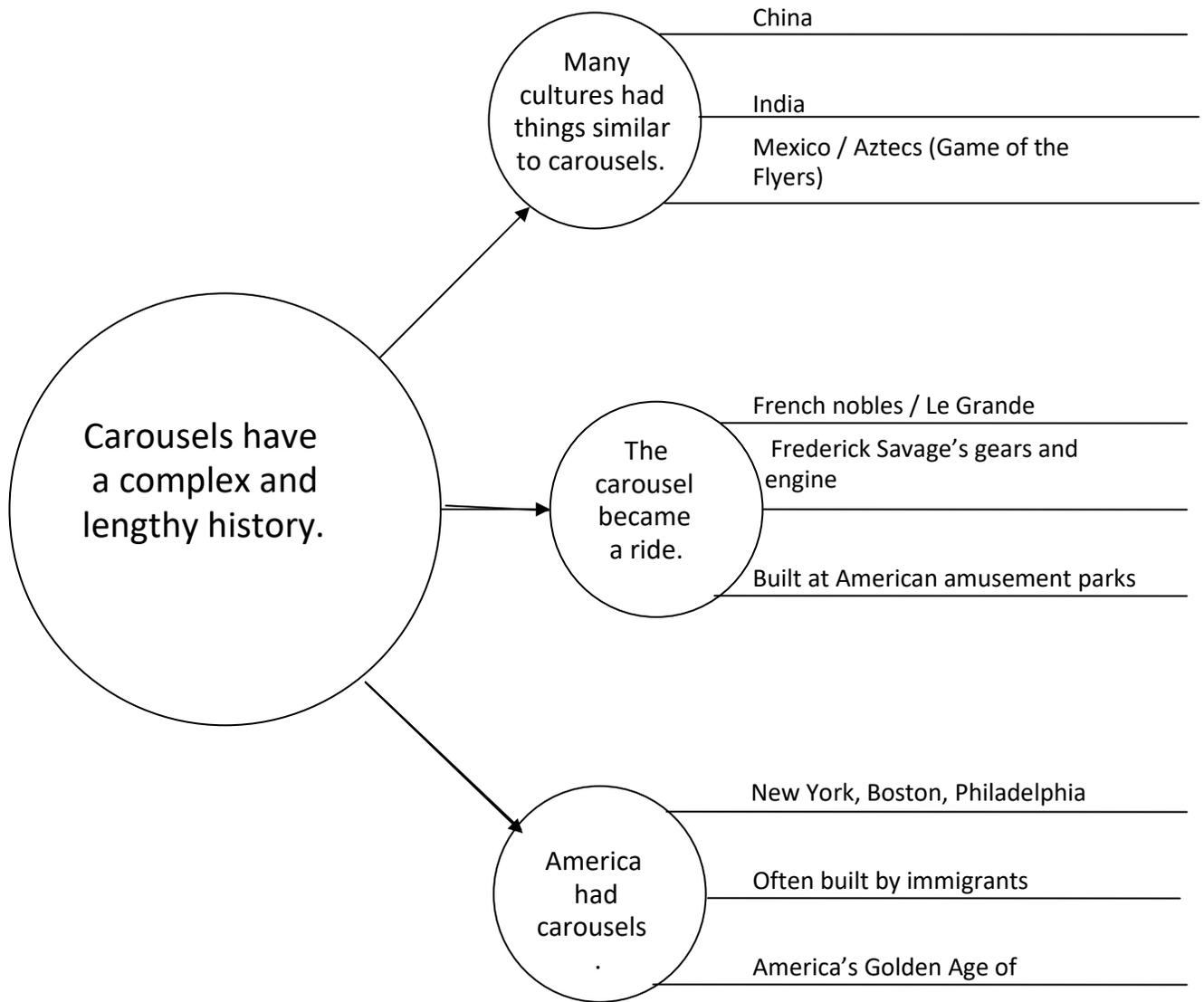


Name: ANSWER KEY

Determining the Facts  
 Reading 1: From 'Little Wars' to Merry-go-Rounds

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## ANSWERS MAY VARY

### Determining the Facts: Masters of the American Carousel

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The tradition of carousel making immigrated to America at the same time as the craftsmen who built them. During the period between 1870 and 1930, many styles of carousel carving developed as specifically American styles. Three of these styles became icons of the American carousel: the Coney Island style developed by Charles Loof, the Philadelphia style popularized by Gustav Dentzel, and the Country Fair style from the Herschell-Spillman Company. Little is known about the men who carved most carousels, but their carving styles are recognizable around the world.

Coney Island, New York, became a center for carousel development for two reasons. Coney Island was the largest and most popular recreation area of its kind in the country. New York was also the main entry point into the United States for immigrants. This provided a flood of workers and craftsmen already familiar with carousels. Many immigrants operated shops producing carousel horses. The horses' appearance changed, moving carousels toward a new, American style. Charles Loof mastered that new style. He immigrated in 1870 from Schleswig-Holstein, in Germany. Loof earned some extra money by carving carousel figures in the evening after work. His carousel animals were different from those that came before. His carousels were elegant, well proportioned, and natural-looking. In 1876, Loof's first full carousel was installed at Balmer's Bathing Pavilion at Coney Island. Four years later, Loof opened a factory in Brooklyn to produce his distinctive and beautiful carousel animals.

Carousels featuring these figures opened throughout the East Coast.

By the time Loof began carving carousel animals, the overhead crank system had been invented. This allowed the up-and-down ride associated with carousels. Loof developed an idea for "the total carousel experience." To Loof, carousels were elegant amusements. Music, bright colors, and lights, as well as the fanciful figures all added to the experience. The Crescent Park Carousel in Riverside, Rhode Island, built in 1895, best illustrates Loof's work. Featuring sixty-two beautifully hand carved figures and four fanciful chariots, the carousel includes elaborate trimmings like decorative panels,



mirrors, glass crystals, electric lights, and colored glass windows. The music played by the carousel's original organ adds to Loof's idea of the "total carousel experience."

Philadelphia also experienced a boom of recreation activities in the late nineteenth century. Gustav Dentzel, a cabinet maker and immigrant from Germany, arrived in Philadelphia in 1860. Dentzel's father had built a carousel and traveled with around Germany. Dentzel continued this tradition in America. Seven years after arriving in the United States, Dentzel opened his own carousel business. In 1870, Dentzel opened his first full carousel in Philadelphia. While this early work did not display the same elaborate handiwork as his later carousels, it hinted at the style and detail for which he would become famous.

Dentzel became known as the "Father of American Carousel Carving." His work blended beautiful movements, sounds, and colors with graceful animals to create a stylish ride. In making carousel figures an art, Dentzel developed a reputation for two distinct features that set him apart from other carousel makers. First, his figures were very realistic. Dentzel's figures usually featured full coats of fur. Most carvers left this feature off or only hinted at it. Dentzel's approach was so authentic that he would put real antlers on when carving a deer. Second, he moved away from making only horse figures. Dentzel's carousels became known for including many diverse and exotic animals. His favorite types of animals, other than horses, were deer, goats, lions, and tigers. Gustav Dentzel was known for the consistently high quality of his product, and his work became easily recognized.

The Country Fair style of carousels developed because earlier carousels lacked mobility. Allan Herschell and his company developed a variety of carousels that were simple, pretty, and could be transported. These carousels became unexpectedly popular. Herschell was a Scottish immigrant with a background in industrial machinery. He built his first carousel in 1883. This carousel focused less on beauty and more on engineering. After suffering from a period of poor health, Herschell's doctor advised that he live "an open air life." Herschell and his carousel went on the road. The portable carousel became such a hit that by 1891 he had produced and sold more than 100 of



these carousels. The horses and other figures of these carousels were relatively simple because they needed to be moved easily.

By the early twentieth century, carousel figures were no longer being completely made of wood. The heads and legs were being mass produced of aluminum. Economic constraints caused by the Great Depression eventually led to entire animal being made this way. As a result, the era of hand crafted American carousels ended.

The “golden age” of American carousels was the height of artistic craftsmanship by Loof, Dentzel, and Herschell. Gerry Holzman and other New York carvers built The Farmers’ Museum’s Empire State Carousel with the same care and artistic craftsmanship. Together they merged the hand crafting techniques used by these masters, and brought characteristics from each of the three main carving traditions into one unique piece of folk art representing New York’s people and places.



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## Masters of the American Carousel Questions

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Answer each question in complete sentences.

1. What were the names of the three distinctly American styles of carousels created between 1870 and 1930?

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2. How did Charles Loof's "Coney Island" carousel animals differ from earlier carousel animals?

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3. Describe the key parts of Charles Loof's "total carousel experience."

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4. What two aspects of Gustav Dentzel's "Philadelphia" carousels set him apart from other carousel craftsmen?

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_



5. Why were the animals on Allan Herschell's "Country Fair" carousels simpler than those on other styles of carousels?

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6. What major event in U.S. history led to the end of the era of hand-crafted carousels? What changes in technology helped to end this era?

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Name: ANSWER KEY

## Masters of the American Carousel Questions

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Answer each question in complete sentences.

1. What were the names of the three distinctly American styles of carousels created between 1870 and 1930?

The three styles of carousel styles between 1870 and 1930 were the Coney Island style, the Philadelphia style, and the Country Fair style.

2. How did Charles Loof's "Coney Island" carousel animals differ from earlier carousel animals?

Loof's carousel animals were elegant, well proportioned, and natural looking.

3. Describe the key parts of Charles Loof's "total carousel experience."

Loof's "total carousel experience" included decorative panels, glass crystals, mirrors, electric lights, colored glass windows, and band organ music.

4. What two aspects of Gustav Dentzel's "Philadelphia" carousels set him apart from other carousel craftsmen?

1. The figures were very realistic, including fur details and real antlers for some animals

2. Dentzel used many types of animals on his carousels, not just horses.

5. Why were the animals on Allan Herschell's "Country Fair" carousels simpler than those on other styles of carousels?



Herschell's carousels had to be lighter and more portable to allow for easy transportation. As time went on, the figures were also partially made of metal, which means they had to be simpler.\_\_\_\_\_

6. What major event in U.S. history led to the end of the era of hand-crafted carousels? What changes in technology helped to end this era?

The Great Depression led to the end of the era of hand crafted carousels. The factories that mass-produced fully made metal animals also helped end this era.

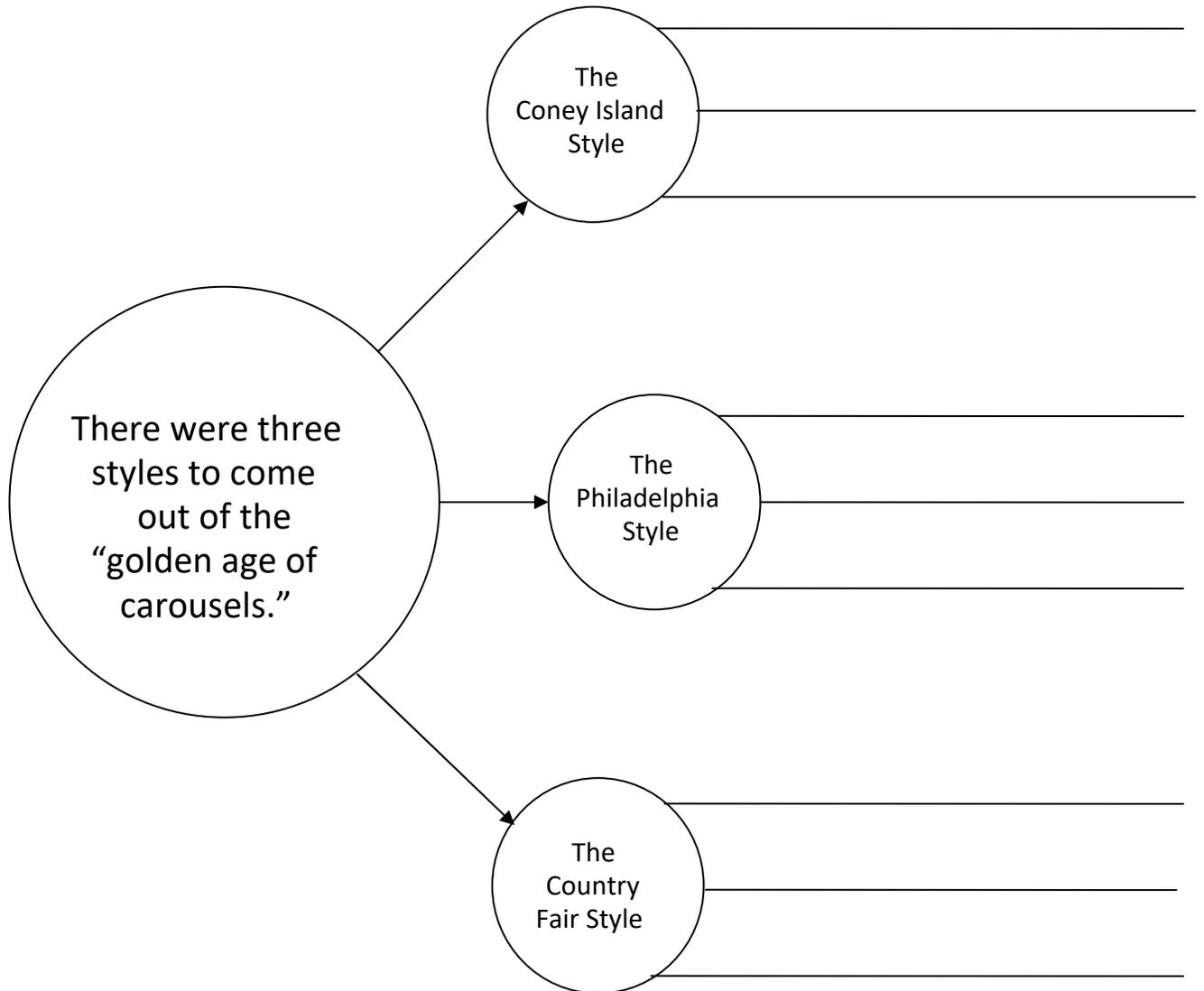
Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Determining the Facts

Reading 2: Masters of the American Carousel

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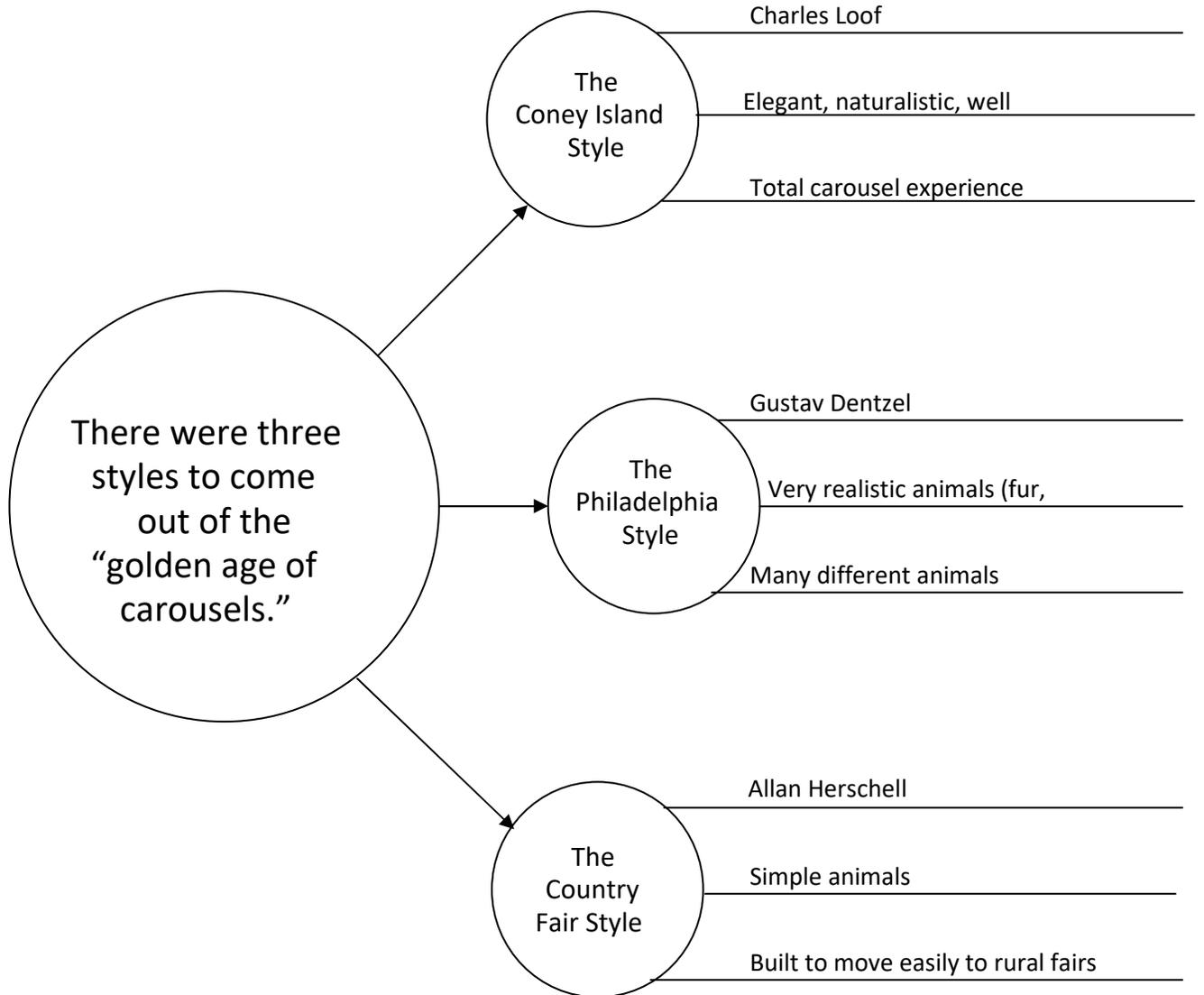


Name: ANSWER KEY

Determining the Facts  
 Reading 2: Masters of the American Carousel

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Graphic organizers can help you break down big ideas in your readings. On this graphic organizer fill in words or phrases from the readings that support the idea in the bubble.





## ANSWERS MAY VARY

### Determining the Facts: The New York Experience

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#### Overview

Students will complete a reading about how the Empire State Carousel reflects the New York experience. Students will demonstrate ability in this area by answering a series of questions.

#### Essential Questions:

- How does the Empire State Carousel reflect the influence of Charles Loof, Gustav Dentzel, and Allan Herschell?
- What are the three main ideas represented by the Empire State Carousel?

#### Procedure

- The teacher opens the lesson by introducing the Empire State Carousel. It is recommended that the Getting Started video and questions are used for this introduction.
- The teacher will distribute copies of the reading, reading diagram worksheet, and Vocabulary list to each student. The teacher will ask the students to fill in words they associate with the main ideas on the lines provided on the Reading Diagram and definitions of words found on their vocabulary list. Not all of the words on the list will be found in this one reading. Students should use the same list for all three readings to allow them to refer back to previous vocabulary.
- The teacher then will give the students time to complete the reading and diagram worksheet and vocabulary list.

#### Evaluation

The teacher will distribute the assessment worksheet to the students and have them answer the questions in complete sentences.



## Determining the Facts Reading 3: The New York Experience

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The Empire State Carousel is a modern day version of America's "golden age" carousels. It is made to represent the state of New York in an unique way. The carousel features twenty-four carved animals, all found in the state, twenty-three portraits of famous New Yorkers, and eight folk-life panels representing different regions and events in New York history. Despite first impressions, the Empire State Carousel is a complex representation of several ideas. At the most basic level, the Carousel is a fun and beautiful ride. Additionally, it represents the history of American carousels and the state of New York. Perhaps most importantly, the beliefs, ideals, and interpretations of the people that created the Carousel are shown. Master carver Gerry Holzman and his volunteers worked to bring the state of New York to life for every rider. This is done with each of the carved panels, animals, and chariots. Just like carvers earlier in America's history, they worked to reveal their skills and pride for their new home country through the carousels they created.

Reflected in the Empire State Carousel are basic ideas from master carousel builders like Charles Loof, Gustav Dentzel, and Allan Herschell. Charles Loof, who created the Coney Island style of carousels, mastered moving carousel figures. He matched the up-and-down motion of the figures with a new artistic carving style. Gerry Holzman and his team of carvers used Loof's ideas of motion in the Empire State figures. Gustav Dentzel, the Father of American Carousels, popularized different and exotic animals. Dentzel's figures were recognizable for their extreme realism. Like Dentzel's work, the Empire State Carousel features a wide variety of realistic animals.

Allan Herschell and the Herschell-Spillman Company made beautiful Country Fair style carousels. These carousels represented the ideas of newly American craftsmen while still being portable to rural communities. The Empire State Carousel represents New York in the same way the Herschell-Spillman carousels represented Americanism, with symbols of New York prominently and proudly displayed. The placement of the Carousel in the Country Fair exhibit at The Farmers' Museum shows the Country Fair style carousels that traveled to rural areas across the United States. The Empire State



Carousel was inspired by the “golden age” of American carousels and makes each style distinctly its own.

As immigration spiked in the United States during the mid-nineteenth century, immigrant carvers utilized their skills, rising to prominent positions as carousel artists. The twilight of the “golden age of carousels” witnessed the use of a multitude of patriotic symbols by these carvers including cowboys, Indians, eagles, Lincoln, Uncle Sam, and the Stars and Stripes. These symbols reflected not only the immigrant’s inclusion in American culture but also their individuality as American artists. Symbols like these are also depicted on the Empire State Carousel. Stars and Stripes bunting can be seen draped around Sam Bear, and nearly every folk-life panel has patriotic symbolism reflecting the shared American and New York experience. Just as nineteenth-century immigrants utilized symbols to reflect their sense of American identity, Gerry Holzman and his team made use of symbols to invoke the New York experience.



Name: \_\_\_\_\_

## The New York Experience Questions

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Answer each question in complete sentences.

1. How does the Empire State Carousel show the influences of carousel builders Charles Loof, Gustav Dentzel, and Allan Herschell?

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2. What types of symbols did immigrant carvers create to represent American society?

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3. The Empire State Carousel represents three main ideas. What are they?

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Name: ANSWER KEY  
The New York Experience

## Questions

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Answer each question in complete sentences.

1. How does the Empire State Carousel show the influences of carousel builders Charles Loof, Gustav Dentzel, and Allan Herschell?

Like Charles Loof's work, the Empire State Carousel's animals show the motion of the figures in the carving. Like Gustav Dentzel's work, the figures of the Empire State Carousel are very realistic and vary in types (more than just horses are represented). Like Allan Herschell, the Empire State Carousel uses symbols to represent the ideas of patriotism and statehood.

2. What types of symbols did immigrant carvers create to represent American society?

Immigrant carvers used symbols like cowboys, Indians, eagles, Lincoln, Uncle Sam, and the Stars and Stripes to represent American society.

3. The Empire State Carousel represents three main ideas. What are they?

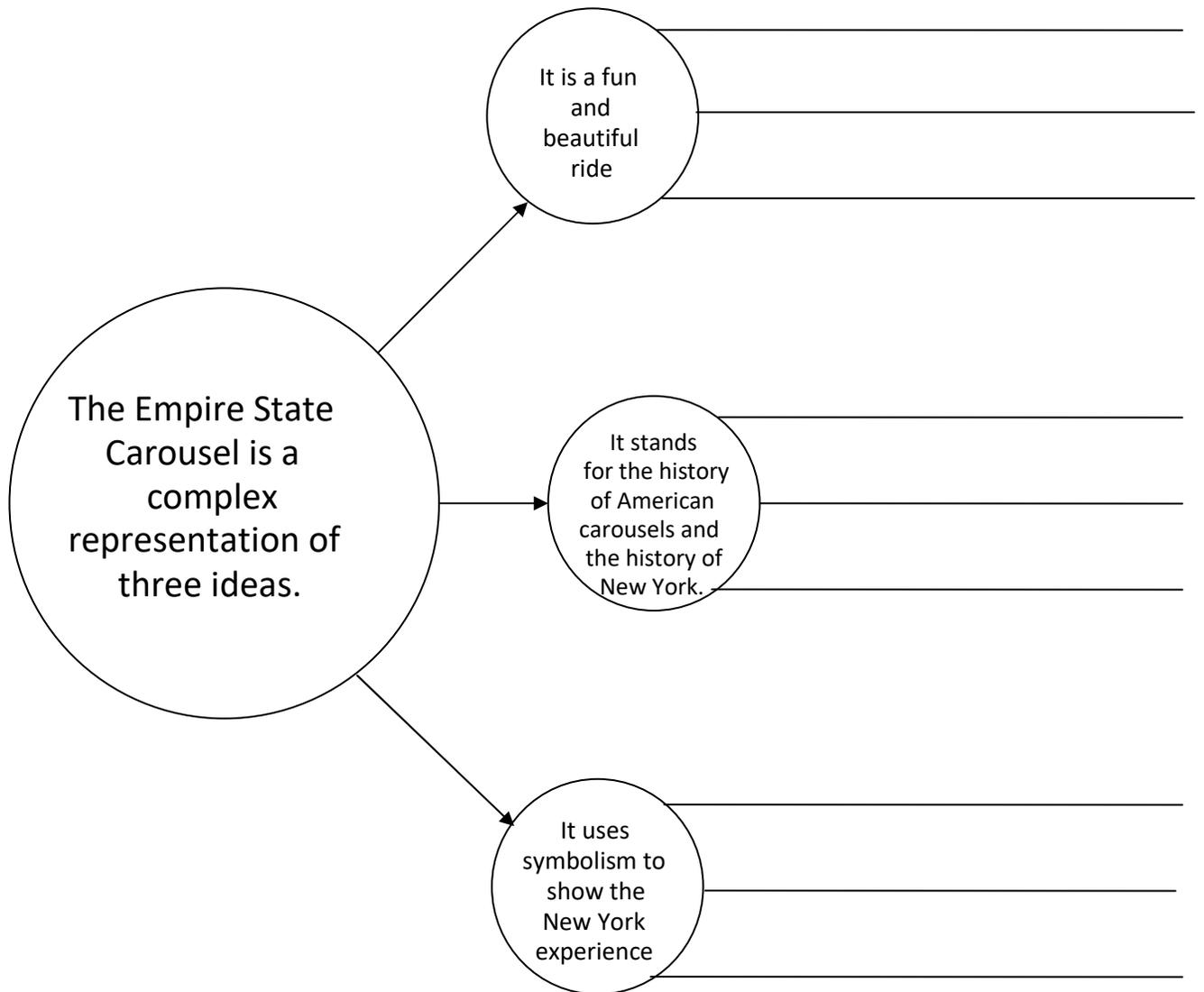
The Empire State Carousel represents the ideas of 1. The history of American carousels and New York state, 2. a fun and beautiful ride, and 3. the beliefs, ideals and interpretations of the people that created the carousel.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Determining the Facts  
Reading 3: The New York Experience

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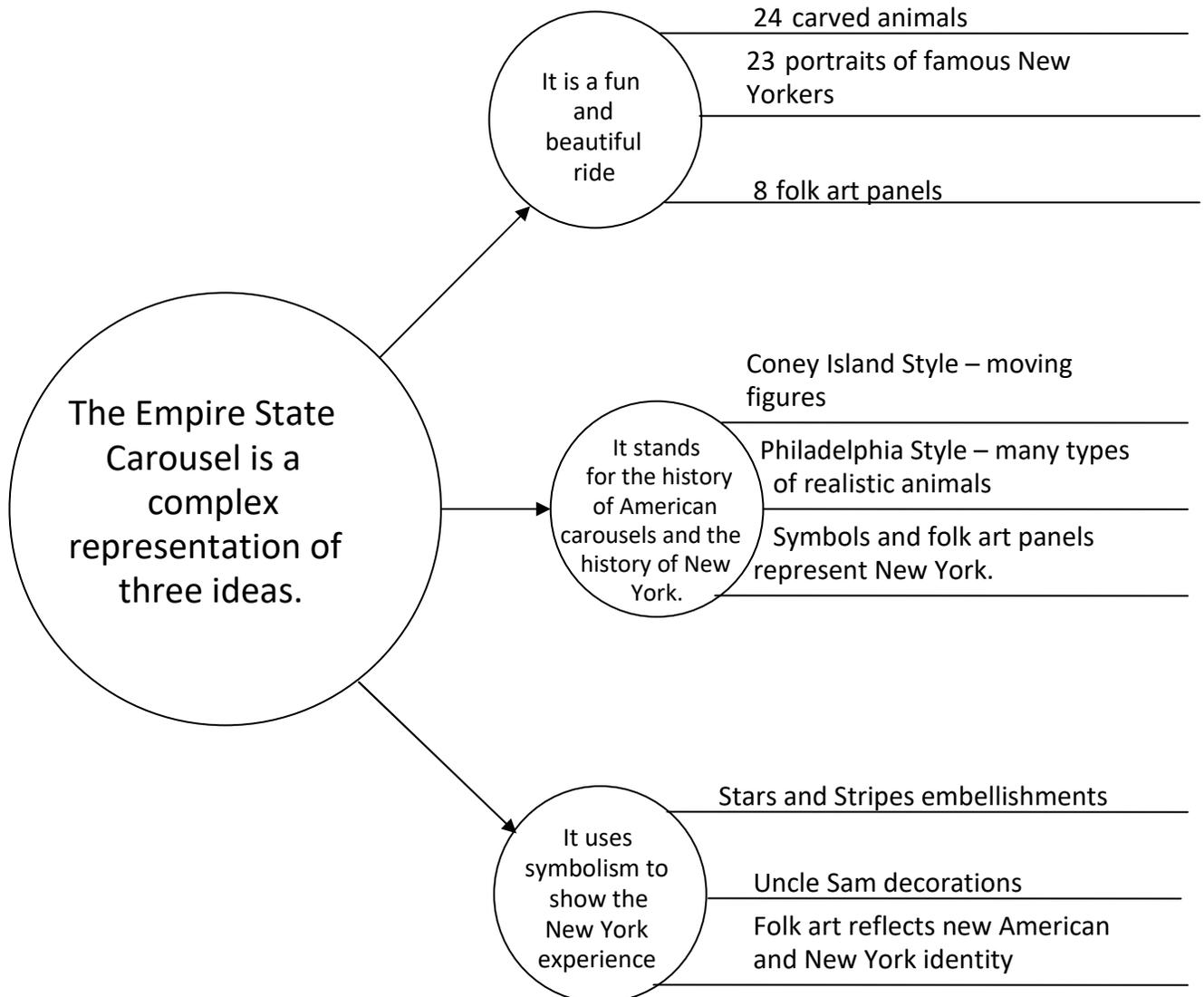


Name: ANSWER KEY

Determining the Facts  
Reading 3: The New York Experience

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ANSWERS MAY VARY