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

**Your Pearly Whites: The Story of Your Teeth**

Are you less than 14 years old? If so, chances are you have had at least one loose tooth. Having loose teeth when you are young is normal. In fact, after spending the first three years of your life getting a set of teeth, you then spend the next ten years slowly losing them one by one. Do you have a loose tooth, or have you lost one lately? If so, this topic will interest you.

**The Primary Teeth**

Teeth aren’t organs like our heart or brain – they aren’t there and ready to work as soon as we are born. Although as babies we have the beginnings of our first teeth, they aren’t visible until we are about six or seven months old. Once the teeth begin to appear, most children get all of them by the time they are three years old. These are called primary teeth, and there are twenty of them in all. These teeth are also known as baby teeth. As we get older, one by one, these teeth begin to loosen and eventually fall out. The first primary tooth usually falls out when a child about five or six years old.

**The Secondary Teeth**

Primary teeth fall out because they are pushed out by the secondary teeth, which are beneath them in the gums. Secondary teeth are also called permanent teeth. Slowly, the permanent teeth grow in and push the baby teeth out, and by age fourteen most children have all their permanent teeth. There are twenty-eight teeth in a permanent set. That is eight more than in the first set of primary teeth. By age twenty, four more permanent teeth will have grown in at the back of the mouth. These last four are called wisdom teeth. They don’t make us smarter, though. In fact, they sometimes cause problems and have to be extracted by a dentist.

**Inside a Permanent Tooth**

The first part of the tooth that you can see above the gums is called the crown. The crown of each tooth is covered with a very hard, shiny material called enamel. Enamelis the hardest substance in your whole body. It is the tooth’s shield, protecting it from being cracked by hard things you eat.

The next layer of a tooth is called dentin. It makes up the largest part of the tooth and is similar to bone. Although it is not as tough as enamel, it is still very hard. Dentin protects the innermost part of the tooth, which is called the pulp.

The pulp, or the third layer, contains the tooth’s nerves and blood vessels. When you eat very hot soup or suck on a super-cold Popsicle, it is the pulp that hurts. The nerves inside the pulp allow us to feel pain by sending pain messages to the brain. The blood vessels feed the tooth and keep it alive and healthy.

Both the dentin and the pulp go all the way down into the last layer of the tooth called the root. The rootis covered by cementum, which is a kind of glue. This cementum connects the root of each tooth to the jawbone, keeping each tooth in place.

**\*Use sequence clue words to draw and label a diagram that describes the parts of a permanent tooth from the outside to the inside. Then describe your diagram to a partner.**

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