



Mari Speaks Up

Before Reading Poll

Mari Copeny is a young activist who is committed to solving problems and making changes for people and communities. What do you think about this quote from former President Barack Obama?

"A change is brought about because ordinary people do extraordinary things."

Agree

Disagree

Explain why you voted the way you did.

Article

FLINT, Michigan (Achieve3000, April 21, 2021). Mari Copeny has a strong voice. And even at a young age, she wasn't afraid to use it. In 2016, when she was 8 years old, she sent a letter to a government official about a crisis confronting her hometown of Flint, Michigan. Lead had contaminated the water supply, making it unsafe to bathe in...let alone drink. "I've been doing my best to march in protest and to speak out for all the kids that live here in Flint," Mari wrote. She floated the idea of a face-to-face meeting, although she acknowledged, "My mom said chances are you will be too busy."



Photo credit: Darrel Ellis

Prompted by the water crisis in Flint, Michigan, Mari Copeny has become an activist in her community and beyond.

The recipient of this letter was, indeed, a very busy person—the president of the United States. Barack Obama, who was president at the time, was so impressed by Mari's civic commitment that he agreed to her request. He consulted with her in person when he traveled to Flint to assess the situation. After returning to Washington, Obama pushed Congress to pass new legislation to address drinking water safety issues. Flint also got a grant of \$100 million from the Environmental Protection Agency to begin repairing its water system.

Meanwhile, Mari was marching on. The presidential meeting had attracted international attention. Little Miss Flint, who had gotten that nickname by winning a contest in 2015, made headlines around the world. Mari took advantage of the limelight to advance her cause, leading protests and launching fundraising campaigns that raised money to donate more than a million bottles of water to families in Flint.

Her activism, however, extended far beyond Flint's city limits. She partnered with the company Hydroviv to donate water filters to people in many American cities where lead had compromised the water supply, including Pittsburgh, Newark, and New York City. By January of 2021, she had raised \$400,000 toward these efforts. Filtering contaminated tap water is a win-win—it can remove toxic chemicals from drinking water *and* keep plastic bottles out of landfills and oceans.

But clean water isn't Mari's only concern. The teen has an unquenchable enthusiasm for making the world a better place and has gotten involved in many projects to help her community. One was the Pack Your Back program, which presented students in Flint with backpacks brimming with essential school supplies. But Mari knows there's something else that's crucial for kids—having fun—and her Flint Kids projects have included holiday events, parties, toy drives, and movie screenings.

What does Little Miss Flint do for fun? She likes binge-watching anime, drawing, and showcasing her talent for doing backflips. She also loves to read manga, Japanese comic books. She feels a special kinship with the character Deku from *My Hero Academia*. He doesn't have any magical superpowers, but that doesn't keep him from accomplishing his goals—a lot like a certain go-getter from Flint!

How has someone so young been able to achieve so much? Quoted in the magazine *Elle*, Mari explained that persistence has been the key to her success. "Back in the beginning, nobody believed that anyone would listen to me.... After all, I was just an eight-year-old kid. But I knew I had to keep fighting, keep speaking, keep trying until someone listened."

This outspoken activist doesn't plan to lower her voice or relinquish her leadership role anytime soon. As a matter of fact, she has big ambitions. There may be many additional presidential gatherings in her future. She's determined to run for president herself in the year 2044.

Dictionary

assess (*verb*) to examine carefully

crucial (*adjective*) very important

recipient (*noun*) person or thing that receives something

relinquish (*verb*) to give up

Activity

PART 1

Question 1

The Article primarily discusses _____.

- Ⓐ Mari Copeny's Pack Your Back program, which provided essential school supplies to Flint students
- Ⓑ Mari Copeny's partnership with a company that donates water filters to people throughout the U.S.
- Ⓒ Mari Copeny's historic meeting with President Obama and her ambition to be president herself one day
- Ⓓ Mari Copeny's unquenchable enthusiasm for activism and her efforts to make the world a better place

Question 2

According to the Article, why did Mari write a letter to President Barack Obama?

- Ⓐ Because the president was coming to Flint to participate in her fun projects for kids
- Ⓑ Because she wanted him to push Congress to provide students with essential school supplies
- Ⓒ Because she wanted to learn more about the process of running for president of the United States
- Ⓓ Because the water supply in Flint had become contaminated with lead and was unsafe to use

Question 3

Which is the closest **antonym** for the word *relinquish*?

- Ⓐ revise
- Ⓑ retain
- Ⓒ repeal
- Ⓓ recline

Question 4

Read this passage from the Article:

She likes binge-watching anime, drawing, and showcasing her talent for doing backflips. She also loves to read manga, Japanese comic books. She feels a special kinship with the character Deku from *My Hero Academia*.

The author's purpose for writing this passage was to _____.

- (A) emphasize that Mari, like many other teens, enjoys a variety of interests and activities
- (B) describe Mari's talent for using her voice to take a stand and help her community
- (C) declare Mari's determination to go after her dreams and accomplish her goals
- (D) argue that Mari, unlike other activists, draws her inspiration from a manga character

Question 5

Which of these statements is **contrary** to the ideas presented in this Article?

- (A) Mari's activism has included leading protests and raising money to fund clean water projects.
- (B) Mari's persistence has been a major player in her work as a changemaker.
- (C) Mari has ambitious hopes for the future, including running for president when she's older.
- (D) Mari has little interest in activism beyond supporting the people of Flint.

Question 6

The Article says:

Meanwhile, Mari was marching on. The presidential meeting had attracted international attention. Little Miss Flint, who had gotten that nickname by winning a contest in 2015, made headlines around the world. Mari took advantage of the *limelight* to advance her cause....

Which phrase from the passage helps you understand the meaning of the word *limelight*?

- (A) international attention
- (B) Mari took advantage
- (C) presidential meeting
- (D) Mari was marching

Question 7

Which passage from the Article best supports the idea that Mari is concerned about more than clean water?

- Ⓐ But Mari knows there's something else that's crucial for kids—having fun—and her Flint Kids projects have included holiday events, parties, toy drives, and movie screenings.
- Ⓑ Mari took advantage of the limelight to advance her cause, leading protests and launching fundraising campaigns that raised money to donate more than a million bottles of water to families in Flint.
- Ⓒ "Back in the beginning, nobody believed that anyone would listen to me.... After all, I was just an eight-year-old kid. But I knew I had to keep fighting, keep speaking, keep trying until someone listened."
- Ⓓ She partnered with the company Hydroviv to donate water filters to people in many American cities where lead had compromised the water supply....

Question 8

Based on the Article, the reader can predict that _____.

- Ⓐ Mari will use her voice to speak out for other communities in need
- Ⓑ Mari will become the next president of the United States
- Ⓒ Mari will draw pictures for a new manga book in which she is the hero
- Ⓓ Mari will become known by a new nickname after winning another contest

After Reading Poll

Now that you have read the article, indicate whether you agree or disagree with this statement.

"A change is brought about because ordinary people do extraordinary things."

Agree

Disagree

Explain why you voted the way you did. Then read and respond to what others have to say.

Sorry, comments are not available at this time. Please try again later.

Thought Question

What evidence supports the author's claim that persistence has been the key to Mari Copeny's success as an activist?

Poll Results

OPINION STATEMENT: "A change is brought about because ordinary people do extraordinary things."

BEFORE READING	AFTER READING
<p>HOW YOU VOTED</p> <p>Agree</p> <p>Disagree</p>	<p>Agree</p> <p>Disagree</p>

WORLDWIDE RESULTS					
Agree		93%	Agree		95%
Disagree		7%	Disagree		5%

4% changed their opinion after reading the article.

Stretch Article

FLINT, Michigan (Achieve3000, April 21, 2021). Mari Copeny has a strong voice, and she's not afraid to use it. Even at a young age, she wasn't shy about taking a stand. In 2016, when she was 8 years old, she sent a letter to a government official about a crisis confronting her hometown of Flint, Michigan, where lead had contaminated the water supply, making it unsafe to bathe in...let alone drink. "I've been doing my best to march in protest and to speak out for all the kids that live here in Flint," Mari wrote. She floated the idea of a face-to-face meeting about the issue, although she acknowledged, "My mom said chances are you will be too busy."



Photo credit: Darrel Ellis

Prompted by the water crisis in Flint, Michigan, Mari Copeny has become an activist in her community and beyond.

The recipient of this letter was, indeed, a very busy person—the president of the United States, an office held at that time by Barack Obama. But Obama was so impressed by Mari's initiative and civic commitment that he acceded to her request. He consulted with Mari in person when he traveled to Flint to assess the situation. After returning to Washington, Obama pushed Congress and the Environmental Protection Agency to take action, resulting in new legislation to address drinking water safety issues and a grant of \$100 million to begin the long process of repairing Flint's water system.

Meanwhile, Mari was marching on, promulgating her cause and making headlines. The presidential meeting garnered international attention for the diminutive dynamo, who was known around town—and, eventually, around the world—as Little Miss Flint, a nickname she earned by winning a contest in 2015. Mari leveraged that limelight, leading protests and launching fundraising campaigns that raised money to donate more than a million bottles of water to families in Flint.

Her activism, however, extended far beyond Flint's city limits. She partnered with the company Hydroviv to donate water filters to people in many American cities where lead had compromised the water supply, including Pittsburgh, Newark, and New York City. By January of 2021, she had raised \$400,000 toward these efforts. Filtering contaminated tap water is a win-win—it can remove toxic chemicals from drinking water *and* keep plastic bottles out of landfills and oceans.

But clean water isn't Mari's only concern. The teen has an unquenchable enthusiasm for making the world a better place and has gotten involved in a gamut of projects to help her community, including the Pack Your Back program, which presented students in Flint with backpacks brimming with essential school supplies. But Mari knows there's something else that's crucial for kids—having fun—and her Flint Kids projects have included holiday events, parties, toy drives, and movie screenings.

What does Little Miss Flint do for fun? She likes binge-watching anime, drawing, and showcasing her talent for doing backflips. She also loves to read manga, and she professes a particular affinity for the character Deku from *My Hero Academia*. Deku doesn't have any magical superpowers, but that doesn't keep the Japanese comic book hero from going after his dreams and accomplishing his goals—a lot like a certain indefatigable go-getter from Flint!

How has someone so young been able to achieve so much? Quoted in the magazine *Elle*, she explained that persistence has been the key to her success. "Back in the beginning, nobody believed that anyone would listen to me.... After all, I was just an eight-year-old kid. But I knew I had to keep fighting, keep speaking, keep trying until someone listened."

This outspoken activist doesn't plan to lower her voice or relinquish her leadership role anytime soon. As a matter of fact, she has ambitious hopes for the future, and her historic 2016 meeting with Barack Obama may turn out to be just the first of many presidential gatherings she'll attend. She's determined to run for president herself in the year 2044.

Dictionary

accede (*verb*) to agree

gamut (*noun*) a whole series or range of something

garner (*verb*) to earn or acquire something

indefatigable (*adjective*) never showing signs of tiring or wavering

promulgate (*verb*) to promote or make widely known

Stretch Activity

PART 1

Question 1

The Article primarily discusses _____.

- (A) Mari Copeny's unquenchable enthusiasm for activism and her efforts to make the world a better place
- (B) Mari Copeny's Pack Your Back program, which provided essential school supplies to Flint students
- (C) Mari Copeny's partnership with a company that donates water filters to people throughout the U.S.
- (D) Mari Copeny's historic meeting with President Obama and her ambition to be president herself one day

Question 2

According to the Article, why did Mari write a letter to President Barack Obama?

- (A) Because she wanted to learn more about the process of running for president of the United States
- (B) Because she wanted him to push Congress to provide students with essential school supplies
- (C) Because the water supply in Flint had become contaminated with lead and was unsafe to use
- (D) Because the president was coming to Flint to participate in her fun projects for kids

Question 3

Which is the closest **antonym** for the word *accede*?

- (A) scrutinize
- (B) rebuff
- (C) tolerate
- (D) bolster

Question 4

Read this passage from the Article:

She likes binge-watching anime, drawing, and showcasing her talent for doing backflips. She also loves to read manga, and she professes a particular affinity for the character Deku from *My Hero Academia*.

The author's purpose for writing this passage was to _____.

- (A) argue that Mari, unlike other activists, draws her inspiration from a manga character
- (B) declare Mari's determination to go after her dreams and accomplish her goals
- (C) emphasize that Mari, like many other teens, enjoys a variety of interests and activities
- (D) describe Mari's talent for using her voice to take a stand and help her community

Question 5

Which of these statements is **contrary** to the ideas presented in this Article?

- (A) Mari has little interest in activism beyond supporting the people of Flint.
- (B) Mari has ambitious hopes for the future, including running for president when she's older.
- (C) Mari's activism has included leading protests and raising money to fund clean water projects.
- (D) Mari's persistence has been a major player in her work as a changemaker.

Question 6

The Article states:

What does Little Miss Flint do for fun? She likes binge-watching anime, drawing, and showcasing her talent for doing backflips. She also loves to read manga, and she professes a particular affinity for the character Deku from *My Hero Academia*.

Which is the closest **antonym** for the word *affinity*?

- (A) benevolence
- (B) preconception
- (C) aptitude
- (D) aversion

Question 7

Which passage from the Article best supports the idea that Mari is concerned about more than clean water?

- (A) "Back in the beginning, nobody believed that anyone would listen to me.... But I knew I had to keep fighting, keep speaking, keep trying until someone listened."
- (B) Mari leveraged that limelight, leading protests and launching fundraising campaigns that raised money to donate more than a million bottles of water to families in Flint.
- (C) She partnered with the company Hydroviv to donate water filters to people in many American cities where lead had compromised the water supply....
- (D) But Mari knows there's something else that's crucial for kids—having fun—and her Flint Kids projects have included holiday events, parties, toy drives, and movie screenings.

Question 8

Based on the Article, the reader can predict that _____.

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- (D) Mari will become the next president of the United States