**Extended Response**

In “The Gymnast,” Gary Soto wants to be like his cousin Isaac. Using details from the text, explain Soto’s quest to become a gymnast.

*Possible Answer*

Gary Soto wants to become a gymnast like his cousin Isaac. He goes through several steps in his quest, but he has a hard time. First, he wants to have the right outfit and the right stuff. He borrows his cousin’s shoes, which look “slim, black, and cool” on his cousin, but are too loose on him. He also puts the tape his cousin was wearing on his wrists and hands. When he tries a cartwheel, both the shoes and tape fly through the air.

When Soto goes home, he finds some vinyl shoes that look something like his cousin’s shoes. When Soto puts on the shoes, they are too small and make his feet hurt. He says his feet look like “bottled water balloons.” He tries to find tape, but he can only find circle bandages. He tries to find powder like his cousin had, but he can only find flour.

He tries to do some of the things he saw his cousin doing. He practices cartwheels, and then he tries a backflip. He landed on his head, and it really hurt. He goes to the playground wearing his vinyl shoes and tells the kids he is taking gymnastics. He practices cartwheels some more, and then he does another backflip and lands on his neck again.

Soto goes through several steps on his quest to become a gymnast like his cousin Isaac. At the end of the story, he has not succeed, but the reader is led to believe that he will probably keep on trying.
Explain why Gary Soto draws the conclusion that his cousin is a showoff.
In “The Skunk Ladder,” Patrick McManus, the author, and his friend “Crazy Eddie” are problem solvers. The first problem they have to solve is boredom. It is a beautiful summer afternoon, and they need something to do. Their solution is to dig a hole. The hole took them nearly a week to dig and kept them from being bored. Eddie wanted the sides of hole to be squared up, so that created another problem. They had to pull themselves out of the hole by a rope, with one end tied to a pile of stumps nearby. Another potential problem was that Eddie’s father would be upset if he knew they were digging a big hole; the boys solved that problem by digging the hole near some stumps that hid their “digging activities” from Mr. Muldoon, who was cutting hay on the far side of the farm.

When the boys realized that the hole was so big, they realized they had created another potential problem: a cow could fall in the hole and get hurt or killed. The boys decide to fill in the hole, but don’t have time until tomorrow. They attempt to solve this problem—so they think—but putting a big door over the hole. When they reach the hole the next morning, they realize that a skunk was small enough to get under the door.

To solve this problem, the boys decide to build a skunk ladder, so the skunk can get out. At first the skunk doesn’t try to climb the ladder. When Mr. Muldoon moves the door and falls into the hole, however, the skunk does climb the ladder. Mr. Muldoon also gets out of the hole by climbing the ladder. For getting Eddie’s father out of the hole, the ladder becomes a solution the boys had not considered.

The boys are definitely problem solvers and come up with some creative solutions to problems although not everything works out as planned.
**Short Answer**

“Journey to the Middle of the Earth”

Explain how the epic battle between the ichthyosaurus and the plesiosaurus makes the people on the raft feel.
Extended Response

Explain how Bat Conservation International convinced the city of Austin not to destroy the colony of bats under Congress Avenue Bridge.

Possible Answer

Bat Conservation International (BCI) convinced the city of Austin not to destroy the bat colony under Congress Avenue Bridge by giving them important information. They planned to get all of the misinformation about bats out into the open and show the residents what bats are really like.

BCI began by telling people that vampire bats exist and do drink the blood of some animals; however, vampire bats do not prey on humans, and there are no vampire bats in Austin. Second, BCI told people that bats will not fly into people’s hair. Bats can see, and they also use echolocation to get around. Paul Garrett, an ecologist, says that he once watched 10,000 bats move around and not run into each other or get into anyone’s hair.

Another important fact is that bats can carry rabies, but BCI reminded people that dogs, cats, raccoons, and foxes can also carry rabies. Bats carry rabies less often than these animals, and the animals under the bridge are not looking for people to bite.

BCI also gave people information about how the Free-tail bats (the ones under the bridge) are in trouble. They are dying out, and Austin is helping the bats by providing a place for a safe colony. The bats provide benefits for the city. Like honeybees, bats can pollinate flowers and scatter seeds. The bats also help control the insect population. For farmers, the bats eat cutworms and corn-borer moths, which cuts down on the destruction of corn, cotton, and other crops. For the people in the city, the bats cut down the mosquito population, which helps people enjoy their evenings. Another advantage is that bats are also beautiful to watch.

BCI convinced the city of Austin not to destroy the bats because bats are beneficial to the city, and much of what people believed about bats was untrue.