
VI. English Language Arts, Grade 7

A. Composition

B. Reading Comprehension

Grade 7 English Language Arts Test

Test Structure

The grade 7 MCAS English Language Arts test was presented in the following two parts:

- the ELA Composition test, which used a writing prompt to assess learning standards from the Massachusetts *English Language Arts Curriculum Framework's* **Composition** strand
- the ELA Reading Comprehension test, which used multiple-choice and open-response questions to assess learning standards from the *Curriculum Framework's* **Language** and **Reading and Literature** strands

A. Composition

The spring 2008 grade 7 MCAS English Language Arts Composition test and Composition Make-Up test were based on learning standards in the **Composition** strand of the Massachusetts *English Language Arts Curriculum Framework* (2001). The learning standards for the Composition strand appear on pages 72–83 of the *Framework*, which is available on the Department Web site at www.doe.mass.edu/frameworks/current.html.

In *Test Item Analysis Reports* and on the Subject Area Subscore pages of the MCAS *School Reports* and *District Reports*, ELA Composition test results are reported under the reporting categories **Composition: Topic Development** and **Composition: Standard English Conventions**.

Test Sessions and Content Overview

The MCAS ELA Composition test included two separate test sessions, administered on the same day with a short break between sessions. During the first session, each student wrote an initial draft of a composition in response to the appropriate writing prompt on the next page. During the second session, each student revised his or her draft and submitted a final composition, which was scored in the areas of Topic Development and Standard English Conventions. The Scoring Guides for the MCAS English Language Arts Composition are available at www.doe.mass.edu/mcas/student/elacomp_scoreguide.html.

Reference Materials and Tools

At least one English-language dictionary per classroom was provided for student use during ELA Composition test sessions. The use of bilingual dictionaries was allowed for current and former limited English proficient students only. No other reference materials or tools were allowed during either ELA Composition test session.

Cross-Reference Information

Framework general standards 19–22 are assessed by the ELA Composition.

English Language Arts Composition, Grade 7

Grade 7 Writing Prompt

WRITING PROMPT

Many people develop skills outside of school. For example, some people may draw or paint, others may work on cars, and still others may create Web pages.

Think of a skill that you would like to learn or that you have learned outside of school. In a well-developed composition, describe the skill and explain why it is interesting and important to you.

Grade 7 Make-Up Writing Prompt

WRITING PROMPT

Many students have goals they want to accomplish. These goals may include making the baseball team, learning a new hobby, making the honor roll, or even being a better friend.

Think about a goal you would like to accomplish. In a well-developed composition, describe that goal and explain how you plan to achieve it.

B. Reading Comprehension

The spring 2008 grade 7 MCAS English Language Arts Reading Comprehension test was based on learning standards in the two content strands of the Massachusetts *English Language Arts Curriculum Framework* (2001) listed below. Specific learning standards for grade 7 are found in the *Supplement to the Massachusetts English Language Arts Curriculum Framework* (2004). Page numbers for the learning standards appear in parentheses.

- Language (*Framework*, pages 19–26; *Supplement*, page 14)
- Reading and Literature (*Framework*, pages 35–64; *Supplement*, pages 15–17)

The *English Language Arts Curriculum Framework* and *Supplement* are available on the Department Web site at www.doe.mass.edu/frameworks/current.html.

In *Test Item Analysis Reports* and on the Subject Area Subscore pages of the MCAS *School Reports* and *District Reports*, ELA Reading Comprehension test results are reported under two MCAS reporting categories: **Language** and **Reading and Literature**, which are identical to the two *Framework* content strands listed above.

Test Sessions and Content Overview

The MCAS grade 7 ELA Reading Comprehension test included three separate test sessions. Each session included selected readings, followed by multiple-choice and open-response questions. Common reading passages and test items are shown on the following pages as they appeared in test booklets. Due to copyright restrictions, certain reading passages cannot be released to the public on the Web site. For further information, contact Student Assessment Services at 781-338-3625.

Reference Materials and Tools

The use of bilingual word-to-word dictionaries was allowed for current and former limited English proficient students only, during all three ELA Reading Comprehension test sessions. No other reference materials were allowed during any ELA Reading Comprehension test session.

Cross-Reference Information

The table at the conclusion of this chapter indicates each item's reporting category and the *Framework* general standard it assesses. The correct answers for multiple-choice questions are also displayed in the table.

English Language Arts

READING COMPREHENSION: SESSION 1

DIRECTIONS

This session contains three reading selections with fifteen multiple-choice questions and two open-response questions. Mark your answers to these questions in the spaces provided in your Student Answer Booklet.

Rico is a border collie with an unusual talent. Read the article to find out what scientists discovered about Rico. Answer the questions that follow.

Rico, a Dog of Many Words

by Jeanne Miller



1 **T**he words Panda, Oscar, and Jumbo may mean nothing to your dog, but to Rico, a border collie from Germany, they're the names of objects in an everlasting game of fetch. Ever since he was 10 months old, Rico's owners have played a game with him using a variety of children's toys, balls, and other items. Now 9, Rico recognizes the names of about 200 objects and can retrieve them on command.

2 Three years ago, he performed this stunt on a German television game show and caught the attention of scientists at the Max Planck

Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology in Leipzig, Germany. They asked his owners for permission to test him and then designed trials to explore what he could do.

3 First, they laid out 10 of his playthings in a room. Out of sight in another room, his owner asked him for one of the objects by name. When he brought that one to her, she rewarded him and asked for another. After he had brought the second one, the researchers laid out a different set of 10 toys and repeated the process. They did this 20 times, using 200 playthings that he knew by name and asking for two of the ten objects in each trial. He successfully retrieved 37 of the 40 objects requested.

4 In the next series of trials, they did something different. They put out eight toys: a blue dinosaur, a ball, a Santa doll, and five others. Seven of them were familiar to him. The eighth — a stuffed bunny — he'd never seen before. From the other room, his owner called in German, "Rico! Where is the *T. rex*?" After a little uncertainty, Rico grabbed a familiar dinosaur and raced with it to her. Next, she asked for the Santa Claus. The dog snatched up the red doll and took it to her. Then, she asked for the "sirikid," a made-up word he'd never heard before. After

looking at all the toys again, Rico went back to his owner with nothing in his mouth. She repeated the question: “Where is the sirikid?” Rico returned to the room with the toys, looked at them again, and then seized the bunny and carried it to his owner.

5 This trial was repeated nine times, using, in all, 70 familiar objects and 10 unfamiliar ones. Seven times out of 10, Rico brought the unknown object when he heard the unknown word. Tested later, Rico continued to associate the same new word with the correct new object.

6 For Rico to connect the strange name with the strange toy suggests learning processes humans use when acquiring language for the first time. Experiments have shown that most children nearing age 2 will begin to make the same connection. An experimenter might put two objects in front of the child, perhaps a teddy bear and a potato masher, and ask, “May I have the bloof?” Most 2-year-olds, on hearing the nonsense word, will choose the unfamiliar object — in this case the potato masher — because they know that the other object — the teddy bear — has a different name.

7 Just how far Rico’s language ability goes, though, is still unknown. His owners say that he can follow directions to put a named toy in a box or to give it to a certain person. The researchers are planning to test this.

8 Is Rico a special dog? He may be, but being a border collie gives him an advantage. For more than a century, border collies have been bred to be working dogs, outstanding in their ability to herd sheep. Donald McCaig, a Virginia sheep farmer and vice president of the American Border Collie Association, says that the breed is “exceptionally biddable, ‘trainable,’ and sensitive to cues. At distances of more than a mile, the shepherd’s whistled commands are fainter than bird songs, yet the dog strains to distinguish them and do as bid.”

9 Rico is a pet rather than a working dog, but his owners spend four to five hours a day playing with him. “Border collies give back what they get,” says McCaig, so it’s no surprise that Rico is highly motivated to master the games they play.

10 Hearing about Rico’s talents may make you want to race out and get a border collie of your own. However, unless you live on a farm with livestock to herd, McCaig advises, “DON’T. They are genetic **obsessive-compulsives**.* They must have work to do, and if not given work, they are very unhappy and often become nuisances. They are too much dog for most families.”

11 Rico, though, may just be the perfect teacher’s pet.

* *obsessive-compulsive* — characterized by a strong need to repeat certain actions or routines

- 1 What is the **main** purpose of paragraph 1?
- A. to pose questions about dog training
 - B. to preview the basic methods of dog training
 - C. to introduce the reader to a special border collie
 - D. to provide the reader with background about border collies
- 2 What is the **main** purpose of paragraphs 3 and 4?
- A. to explain the causes of Rico's behavior
 - B. to show the methods used to test Rico's abilities
 - C. to describe how Rico's behavior changed over time
 - D. to compare Rico's abilities with other dogs' abilities
- 3 In paragraph 6, why does the author compare Rico to a two-year-old child?
- A. to explain why Rico enjoys stories
 - B. to explain how Rico learns language
 - C. to explain how Rico must be kept busy
 - D. to explain why Rico likes stuffed animals
- 4 What does paragraph 7 suggest about Rico?
- A. He remembers all the nonsense words he has learned.
 - B. He understands harder words than the scientists realize.
 - C. He may know many more words than he has been taught.
 - D. He may have the ability to complete more complicated tasks.

- 5 In paragraph 10, what is the **main** argument the author makes?
- A. Border collies are usually obedient.
 - B. Border collies are intelligent animals.
 - C. Border collies may not make good pets.
 - D. Border collies do not work well with children.
- 6 What is the meaning of the word *retrieved* as it is used in paragraph 3?
- A. took out
 - B. lifted up
 - C. played with
 - D. brought back

- 7 Read the sentence from paragraph 6 in the box below.

An experimenter might put two objects in front of the child, perhaps a teddy bear and a potato masher, and ask, “May I have the bloof?”

- What part of speech is the nonsense word *bloof* as it is used in the sentence?
- A. verb
 - B. noun
 - C. adverb
 - D. adjective

Question 8 is an open-response question.

- Read the question carefully.
- Explain your answer.
- Add supporting details.
- Double-check your work.

Write your answer to question 8 in the space provided in your Student Answer Booklet.

- 8 Based on the article, explain why Rico might be considered a special dog. Support your answer with important and specific information from the article.

Where do poets find inspiration for writing? Can poetry be written on demand? Read the following poem by Naomi Shihab Nye to see what she says about the mystery of discovering poems. Use information from the poem to answer the questions that follow.

Valentine for Ernest Mann

You can't order a poem like you order a taco.
Walk up to the counter, say, "I'll take two"
and expect it to be handed back to you
on a shiny plate.

- 5 Still, I like your spirit.
Anyone who says, "Here's my address,
write me a poem," deserves something in reply.
So I'll tell a secret instead:
poems hide. In the bottoms of our shoes,
10 they are sleeping. They are the shadows
drifting across our ceilings the moment
before we wake up. What we have to do
is live in a way that lets us find them.

- Once I knew a man who gave his wife
15 two skunks for a valentine.
He couldn't understand why she was crying.
"I thought they had such beautiful eyes."
And he was serious. He was a serious man
who lived in a serious way. Nothing was ugly
20 just because the world said so. He really
liked those skunks. So, he re-invented them
as valentines and they became beautiful.
At least, to him. And the poems that had been hiding
in the eyes of skunks for centuries
25 crawled out and curled up at his feet.

Maybe if we re-invent whatever our lives give us
we find poems. Check your garage, the odd sock
in your drawer, the person you almost like, but not quite.
And let me know.

—Naomi Shihab Nye

"Valentine for Ernest Mann," by Naomi Shihab Nye. Copyright © 2003 by Naomi Shihab Nye. Used by permission of the author.

- 9 As lines 12–13 suggest, how can people find poetry in their everyday lives?
- A. by being inspired by what they see around them
 - B. by surrounding themselves with people who are poets
 - C. by sleeping longer in order to dream more dreams
 - D. by refusing to let the shadows distract them
- 10 Based on the poem, what can the reader infer about the man who gave his wife two skunks?
- A. He did not have enough money to buy his wife a real gift.
 - B. He thought he was giving her a wonderful gift.
 - C. He was playing a practical joke on his wife.
 - D. He cared more for the animals than for his wife.
- 11 What is the effect of the figurative language in lines 23–25?
- A. It describes the man in the story.
 - B. It makes the skunks less appealing.
 - C. It brings the poems to life.
 - D. It describes what the skunks did.
- 12 Which of the following will **most likely** occur if readers follow the poet's advice in the last stanza?
- A. They will begin to change their opinions of skunks.
 - B. They will look at people and objects in a different way.
 - C. They will be more careful about the friends they choose.
 - D. They will become experts in poetry analysis.

This excerpt from the play Treasure Island is adapted from Robert Louis Stevenson's novel of the same name. The setting for the play's first scene is the Admiral Benbow, an inn where Jim Hawkins works and Captain Bones is staying. Read the excerpt and answer the questions that follow.

from **Treasure Island**

by Timothy Mason

ACT I

SCENE I

Night, the wind, the sea. The weathered signboard, "Admiral Benbow," creaking on its hinges above the tavern door. The inn is empty but for Jim Hawkins polishing glasses behind the bar, and its warm and flickering light makes it feel cozy and safe compared to the windswept cobble-stoned street outside.

5 VOICE OF JIM HAWKINS: Although it's been years, I remember that night as if it were yesterday. The wind was up—and the sea was high—and it was bitterly cold for November. But my mother's inn, the Admiral Benbow, had quite settled down for the evening. Our only lodger, Captain Bones, seemed to be quiet for once, and kept to his room. I had nearly given up hope we'd have any visitors at all when—

10 without warning—my great adventure began. Of course, I—Jim Hawkins—had no notion I was starting out on my journey to Treasure Island.

(We hear the tapping of a stick on the stones, and from the shadows see a hunched figure, wrapped in a huge tattered sea-cloak and hood, slowly drawing near to the tavern, making his way with a stick. He taps, walks, stops, and listens. He

15 *sniffs and cocks his blind head, as though he were smelling something out—and then starts again. Inside, Jim notices the tapping, looks up and listens. Blind Pew stops still. Jim goes back to polishing the glasses. Then he hears the tapping a second time—Blind Pew has reached the tavern door—and Jim leaves the bar, glass and cloth in hand, and walks to the door. Just as he opens the door, Pew*

20 *ducks into a shadow and Billy Bones roars from upstairs.)*

BONES: Hawkins!

(Jim drops the glass and it shatters on the floor.)

JIM: Oh, bother the man!

BONES: Jim Hawkins!

25 JIM: Yessir, Cap'm Bones, sir. Straightaway, sir!

(We hear a thin, high wail from the street which, if we knew it, serves Blind Pew for laughter. Jim hears it and turns back to the door.)

BONES: Hawkins! Will you not stand to!

JIM: *(Turning back into the tavern.)* Aye, sir. Coming, sir! *(Regarding the broken*

30 *glass on the floor.)* Never mind the mess, Jim.

(Jim runs up the staircase and out of sight. The wind rises as Pew opens the tavern door a crack. Wisps of fog crawl in along the floor.)

- PEW: So it's "Captain" Bones, is it? We'll give you "Captain" my mate—aye, we'll give you that and more.
- 35 *(High-pitched wail again. Billy Bones appears on the staircase and clammers down into the taproom, followed by Jim Hawkins.)*
- BONES: Discipline, Jim!
(The tavern door shuts quickly and quietly. Pew feels his way on, into the darkness.)
- 40 BONES: Discipline! Now, if you had sailed along of Bones, you wouldn't o' stood there to be spoke to twice—not you. That was never the way with Cap'm Bones, nor the way of sich as sailed wif him. And you, wif yer paar Daddy dead and done wif, you got to laarn yer propers, don't you Jim? Fetch me a noggin o' rum, boy.
- 45 JIM: Yessir, Cap'm. Aye, sir.
(Jim fills a noggin of rum from the keg behind the bar. Bones suddenly stops dead still, facing the street door. Jim comes around to the Captain with the rum.)
- JIM: Here it be, Cap'm.
(Bones does not respond.)
- 50 JIM: That'll be tuppence, Cap'm.
(Bones does not move.)
- JIM: Cap'm Bones, sir?
BONES: *(Slowly, after a pause.)* What's here?
JIM: Sir?
- 55 BONES: What smells? I got a quare feelin' an' I don't like it. Somethin' rotten is here...or was. Quick, Jim! Step to the door and put yer head out!
(Jim hesitates.)
- BONES: Do as yer told, boy!
(Jim runs to the door, opens it and looks out. The sound of the wind rises.)
- 60 BONES: Sing out if there's ought amiss, Jim!
(The wind. Jim finally closes the door.)
- JIM: Nothin', Cap'm.
BONES: *(Furtive whisper.)* Are ye cartin', Jim? Not a soul?
JIM: Only Emlyn Jenkins, and he's making his way here to the Admiral Benbow,
65 like as not.
- BONES: None other, then? Not a man—listen to me, Jim—not a man wif no eyes in his head?
JIM: No eyes?
(Jim opens the door again and looks out. The wind.)
- 70 JIM: No, sir. Bless my soul, sir, there ain't.
BONES: Not even...Jim!
(Jim turns back inside, closing the door.)
- BONES: Not even...a seafarin' man wif only one leg, Jim? There weren't none o' those out there, was there?
75 *(Jim laughs.)*

JIM: Oh, Cap'm! Beggin' your pardon, Cap'm, but you're a sight! One-legged men and men without no eyes, sir? I think you'll be wantin' your rum now, sir...

(Bones slowly begins to laugh.)

80 BONES: That's right, Jim. Ha haaaa! Sharp as a handspike, ain't you, and only a yard long!

(Claps Jim on the back and they both laugh.)

BONES: Jim knows there's nought to be afeard of, don't he? Anyways, I was just tryin' you out, lad—seein' what you was made on. Ha haaaa! Only...see my mark, Jim? *(Bones points to the long scar which runs down the side of his face.)*

85 Not very pretty, is it. The hand what put it there don't move no more, Jim. And when there's evil lurkin' about, I feel it right here, Jim...*(Indicating his scar.)* My mark tells me.

...

Excerpt from "Treasure Island" from *Timothy Mason: Ten Plays for Children* by Timothy Mason. Copyright © 1997 by Smith & Kraus. Reprinted by permission of the author.

- 13 What do lines 5–11 show?
- A. Jim is arriving at the inn.
 - B. Jim is preparing for a trip.
 - C. Jim is recalling a past experience.
 - D. Jim is retelling a story he has heard.

- 14 Read the sentences from lines 33 and 34 in the box below.

PEW: So it's "Captain" Bones, is it? We'll give you "Captain" my mate—aye, we'll give you that and more.

What is the purpose of the quotation marks in the sentences?

- A. to show that Pew is afraid of Bones
- B. to indicate the respect Pew has for Bones
- C. to show that Pew is not used to the language of the sea
- D. to indicate that Pew does not believe Bones is a real captain

- 15 What do lines 63–74 show about Bones?
- A. He is cruel to Jim.
 - B. He has led an easy life.
 - C. He hopes to find his friends.
 - D. He lives in fear of a particular person.
- 16 Who should perform the action described in the stage direction in line 86?
- A. the director
 - B. the narrator
 - C. the actor playing Jim
 - D. the actor playing Bones
-

Question 17 is an open-response question.

- **Read the question carefully.**
- **Explain your answer.**
- **Add supporting details.**
- **Double-check your work.**

Write your answer to question 17 in the space provided in your Student Answer Booklet.

- 17 Based on the excerpt, describe the relationship between Bones and Jim. Support your answer with important and specific details from the scene.

English Language Arts

READING COMPREHENSION: SESSION 2

DIRECTIONS

This session contains one reading selection with eight multiple-choice questions and one open-response question. Mark your answers to these questions in the spaces provided in your Student Answer Booklet.

Gogol Ganguli's parents moved from India to Massachusetts shortly before Gogol was born. Growing up in America, Gogol faces the challenge of having a unique name. Read the excerpt from The Namesake and answer the questions that follow.

from The Namesake
by Jhumpa Lahiri

- 1 As a young boy Gogol doesn't mind his name. He recognizes pieces of himself in road signs: GO LEFT, GO RIGHT, GO SLOW. For birthdays his mother orders a cake on which his name is piped across the white frosted surface in a bright blue sugary script. It all seems perfectly normal. It doesn't bother him that his name is never an option on key chains or metal pins or refrigerator magnets. He has been told that he was named after a famous Russian author, born in a previous century. That the author's name, and therefore his, is known throughout the world and will live on forever. One day his father takes him to the university library, and shows him, on a shelf well beyond his reach, a row of Gogol spines.¹ When his father opens up one of the books to a random page, the print is far smaller than in the Hardy Boys series Gogol has begun recently to enjoy. "In a few years," his father tells him, "you'll be ready to read them." Though substitute teachers at school always pause, looking apologetic when they arrive at his name on the roster, forcing Gogol to call out, before even being summoned, "That's me," teachers in the school system know not to give it a second thought. After a year or two, the students no longer tease and say "Giggle" or "Gargle." In the programs of the school Christmas plays, the parents are accustomed to seeing his name among the cast. "Gogol is an outstanding student, curious and cooperative," his teachers write year after year on report cards. "Go, Gogol!" his classmates shout on golden autumn days as he runs the bases or sprints in a dash.
- 2 As for his last name, Ganguli, by the time he is ten he has been to Calcutta three more times, twice in summer and once during Durga pujo,² and from the most recent trip he still remembers the sight of it etched respectably into the whitewashed exterior of his paternal grandparents' house. He remembers the astonishment of seeing six pages full of Gangulis, three columns to a page, in the Calcutta telephone directory. He'd wanted to rip out the page as a souvenir, but when he'd told this to one of his cousins, the cousin had laughed. On taxi rides through the city, going to visit the various homes of his relatives, his father had pointed out the name elsewhere, on the awnings of confectioners, and stationers, and opticians. He had told Gogol that Ganguli is a legacy of the British, an anglicized way of pronouncing his real surname, Gangopadhyay.

¹ *spines* — backbones of books

² *Durga pujo* — festival to celebrate the Hindu goddess Durga

- 3 Back home on Pemberton Road, he helps his father paste individual golden letters bought from a rack in the hardware store, spelling out GANGULI on one side of their mailbox. One morning, the day after Halloween, Gogol discovers, on his way to the bus stop, that it has been shortened to GANG, with the word GREEN scrawled in pencil following it. His ears burn at the sight, and he runs back into the house, sickened, certain of the insult his father will feel. Though it is his last name, too, something tells Gogol that the desecration is intended for his parents more than Sonia and him. For by now he is aware, in stores, of cashiers smirking at his parents' accents, and of salesmen who prefer to direct their conversation to Gogol, as though his parents were either incompetent or deaf. But his father is unaffected at such moments, just as he is unaffected by the mailbox. "It's only boys having fun," he tells Gogol, flicking the matter away with the back of a hand, and that evening they drive back to the hardware store, to buy the missing letters again.
- 4 Then one day the peculiarity of his name becomes apparent. He is eleven years old, in the sixth grade, on a school field trip of some historical intent. . . . First they visit a textile mill somewhere in Rhode Island. The next stop is a small unpainted wooden house with tiny windows, sitting on a large plot of land. Inside, after adjusting to the diminished light, they stare at a desk with an inkwell at its top, a soot-stained fireplace, a washtub, a short, narrow bed. It was once the home of a poet, they are told. . . .
- 5 The final stop on the field trip, a short distance by bus from the poet's house, is a graveyard where the writer lies buried. They take a few minutes wandering from stone to stone, among thick and thin tablets, some leaning back as if pressed by a wind. The stones are square and arched, black and gray, more often plain than shiny, caked with lichen and moss. On many of the stones the inscriptions have faded. They find the stone that bears the poet's name. "Line up," the teachers say, "it's time for a project." The students are each given several sheets of newsprint and thick colored crayons whose labels have been peeled. Gogol can't help but feel a chill. He's never set foot in a graveyard before, only glimpsed them in passing, riding in cars. There is a large one on the outskirts of their town; once, stuck in traffic, he and his family had witnessed a burial from a distance, and ever since then, whenever they drive by, his mother always tells them to avert their eyes.
- 6 To Gogol's surprise they are told not to draw the gravestones, but to rub their surfaces. A teacher crouches down, one hand holding the newsprint in place, and shows them how. The children begin to scamper between rows of the dead, over leathery leaves, looking for their own names, a handful triumphant when they are able to claim a grave they are related to. "Smith!" they holler. "Collins!" "Wood!" Gogol is old enough to know that there is no Ganguli here. He is old enough to know that he himself will be burned, not buried, that his body will occupy no plot of earth, that no stone in this country will bear his name beyond life. In Calcutta, from taxis and once from the roof of his grandparents' house, he has seen the dead bodies of strangers carried on people's shoulders through streets, decked with flowers, wrapped in sheets.
- 7 He walks over to a slim, blackened stone with a pleasing shape, rounded at the top before rising into a cross. He kneels on the grass and holds up the newsprint, then begins to rub gently with the side of his crayon. The sun is already sinking and his fingers are stiff with cold. The teachers and chaperones sit on the ground, legs extended, leaning

back against the headstones, the aroma of their menthol cigarettes drifting through the air. At first nothing appears apart from a grainy, featureless wash of midnight blue. But then, suddenly, the crayon meets with slight resistance, and letters, one after another, emerge magically on the page: ABIJAH CRAVEN, 1701–45. Gogol has never met a person named Abijah, just as, he now realizes, he has never met another Gogol. He wonders how to pronounce Abijah, whether it's a man's or a woman's name. He walks to another tombstone, less than a foot tall, and presses another sheet of paper to its surface. This one says ANGUISH MATHER, A CHILD. He shudders, imagining bones no larger than his below the ground. Some of the other children in the class, already bored with the project, begin chasing one another around the stones, pushing and teasing and snapping gum. But Gogol goes from grave to grave with paper and crayon in hand, bringing to life one name after another. PEREGRINE WOTTON, D. 1699. EZEKIEL AND URIAH LOCKWOOD, BROTHERS, R.I.P. He likes these names, likes their oddness, their flamboyance. "Now those are some names you don't see very often these days," one of the chaperones, passing by and looking down at his rubbings, remarks. "Sort of like yours." Until now it has not occurred to Gogol that names die over time, that they perish just as people do. On the ride back to school the rubbings made by the other children are torn up, crumpled, tossed at one another's heads, abandoned below the dark green seats. But Gogol is silent, his rubbings rolled up carefully like parchment in his lap.

8 At home, his mother is horrified. What type of field trip was this? . . . "Death is not a pastime," she says, her voice rising unsteadily, "not a place to make paintings." She refuses to display the rubbings in the kitchen alongside his other creations, his charcoal drawings and his magazine collages, his pencil sketch of a Greek temple copied from an encyclopedia, his pastel image of the public library's facade, awarded first place in a contest sponsored by the library trustees. Never before has she rejected a piece of her son's art. The guilt she feels at Gogol's deflated expression is leavened by common sense. How can she be expected to cook dinner for her family with the names of dead people on the walls?

9 But Gogol is attached to them. For reasons he cannot explain or necessarily understand, these ancient Puritan spirits, these very first immigrants to America, these bearers of unthinkable, obsolete names, have spoken to him, so much so that in spite of his mother's disgust he refuses to throw the rubbings away. He rolls them up, takes them upstairs, and puts them in his room, behind his chest of drawers, where he knows his mother will never bother to look, and where they will remain, ignored but protected, gathering dust for years to come.

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- 18 In paragraph 1, why do the substitute teachers look “apologetic” when they arrive at Gogol’s name on the roster?
- A. They dislike the name Gogol.
 - B. They have hurt Gogol’s feelings.
 - C. They have difficulty pronouncing Gogol’s name.
 - D. They fail to stop the other kids from teasing Gogol.

- 19 What is the **main** effect of contrasting India and America in paragraphs 2 and 3?
- A. It emphasizes how insensitive the cashiers are in America.
 - B. It shows how uncomfortable Gogol’s parents are in America.
 - C. It shows how holidays are celebrated differently in the two countries.
 - D. It emphasizes how differently Gogol’s last name is seen in the two countries.

- 20 Based on paragraph 3, why does Gogol feel that the vandalism to his mailbox is directed at his parents more than at him and his sister?
- A. His parents had been mean to the local kids.
 - B. He and his sister fit in better than their parents.
 - C. His parents rarely buy things from local shopkeepers.
 - D. He and his sister are friends with the kids who ruined the mailbox.

- 21 Read the descriptions of the gravestones from paragraph 5 in the box below.

- some leaning back as if pressed by a wind
- caked with lichen and moss
- the inscriptions have faded

What do the descriptions **mainly** show about the graveyard?

- A. It is very old.
- B. It is frightening.
- C. Few people visit it.
- D. Famous people are buried there.

- 22 Based on paragraphs 5 and 6, why does Gogol **most likely** feel uncomfortable when he first walks in the graveyard?
- A. He is afraid of ghosts.
 - B. Graveyards are foreign to his heritage.
 - C. He thinks his teacher will be angry.
 - D. Children his age are buried there.
- 23 In paragraph 8, why is Gogol's mother so disturbed by the field trip?
- A. She thinks his rubbings are ugly.
 - B. She feels the trip was disrespectful to the dead.
 - C. Gogol had little supervision.
 - D. Gogol learned nothing on the trip.

- 24 Read the sentence from paragraph 5 in the box below.

They take a few minutes wandering from stone to stone, among thick and thin tablets, some leaning back as if pressed by a wind.

In the sentence, to what does the word *tablets* refer?

- A. benches
- B. sidewalks
- C. notebooks
- D. gravestones

- 25 Read the sentence from paragraph 7 in the box below.

Until now it has not occurred to Gogol that names die over time, that they perish just as people do.

Which of the following **best** explains what the phrase “names die over time” means?

- A. Some names are no longer used.
- B. People get used to odd names.
- C. Most people are forgotten.
- D. All people eventually die.

Question 26 is an open-response question.

- **Read the question carefully.**
- **Explain your answer.**
- **Add supporting details.**
- **Double-check your work.**

Write your answer to question 26 in the space provided in your Student Answer Booklet.

- 26** Explain why the field trip to the graveyard has a powerful effect on Gogol in the excerpt. Support your answer with important and specific information from the excerpt.

English Language Arts

READING COMPREHENSION: SESSION 3

DIRECTIONS

This session contains two reading selections with thirteen multiple-choice questions and one open-response question. Mark your answers to these questions in the spaces provided in your Student Answer Booklet.

Queen Elizabeth I ruled England for 45 years. She was such an important monarch that the time period is known historically as the Elizabethan era. Read the excerpt from a biography of Queen Elizabeth I and answer the questions that follow.

Elizabeth I

1533 – 1603

by Milton Meltzer

Students read a selection titled *Elizabeth I* and then answered questions 27 through 35 that follow on pages 161 through 163 of this document.

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- 27 According to paragraph 1, which statement **best** describes England's political conditions when Elizabeth became queen?
- A. England was expanding its territory.
 - B. England was at the height of its powers.
 - C. England was facing a variety of problems.
 - D. England was under the control of another country.
- 28 What is the **main** point of paragraph 1?
- A. Women were unpopular rulers in England.
 - B. Elizabeth had a positive effect on England in the 1500s.
 - C. France and England had a long-standing rivalry in the 1500s.
 - D. England's finances were unstable when Elizabeth became queen.
- 29 What does the author establish with the information in paragraph 3?
- A. Elizabeth's education prepared her to rule well.
 - B. Elizabeth's father favored her over his other children.
 - C. Elizabeth's childhood had a negative effect on her life.
 - D. Elizabeth's education was typical for young women at the time.
- 30 According to paragraph 8, all of the following were important factors in royal marriages in Elizabeth's time **except**
- A. property.
 - B. romance.
 - C. influence.
 - D. nationality.

- 31 Read the statement from paragraph 11 in the box below.

“I am already bound unto a husband, which is the Kingdom of England.”

Based on the excerpt, what is the meaning of Elizabeth’s statement?

- A. She felt restricted by her role as queen.
- B. Her first commitment was to her country.
- C. She resented the power husbands had in her time.
- D. Her hope was to eventually have a happy marriage.

- 32 What does paragraph 13 reveal about Elizabeth?

- A. She was unfair to her counselors.
- B. She took her responsibilities seriously.
- C. She was mainly interested in having fun.
- D. She took advantage of the country’s wealth.

- 33 Based on paragraph 12, which of the following **best** defines an *absolute ruler*?

- A. a ruler who is married
- B. a ruler who has bad judgment
- C. a ruler who has complete power
- D. a ruler who is no longer effective

- 34 Reread paragraph 14. To whom does the word “them” **most** directly refer?

- A. Elizabeth’s suitors
- B. Elizabeth’s advisors
- C. the army of England
- D. the people of England

Question 35 is an open-response question.

- Read the question carefully.
- Explain your answer.
- Add supporting details.
- Double-check your work.

Write your answer to question 35 in the space provided in your Student Answer Booklet.

- 35 Based on the excerpt, describe the qualities Elizabeth possessed that helped her rule England for 45 years. Support your answer with important and specific information from the excerpt.

In this folktale from Germany, a lesson about life comes from an unexpected source. Read the folktale and answer the questions that follow.

The Wooden Bowl

by Heather Forest

GERMANY

1 **T**here was a celebration on the day that the old man came to live on
the small farm owned by his son and his son's young wife. A fine meal of
freshly grown vegetables and home-baked bread was set out on the table.
The couple covered a new bed in a small adjoining room with a warm cover and
soft pillow. "We hope you will be comfortable here," said the son as he carried his
father's few belongings into the room.

2 "As long as I have family around me," the old man said, wiping a tear from his
eye, "I will be happy. Perhaps there is still enough strength in these old limbs to
help a bit on your farm. I want to be useful."

3 "You are welcome to work as you will or rest when you want, Father," said
the son.

4 The next morning, the old man dressed himself in work clothes and went out to
the barn to feed the pigs and chickens. He scooped the chicken feed into a wooden
bowl and scattered it about the yard. He watched with amusement as the rooster
strutted. "Oh, to be young again," he sighed to himself as he rubbed his stiff hands
to subdue the pain he felt in his old joints.

5 Each day the old man did as much as his body would allow, and each night he
sat with his son and his son's wife at dinner. He noticed the swelling of his daughter-
in-law's belly and eagerly looked forward to the day when his first grandchild would
be born.

6 Days melted into months and, finally, the child arrived. The old man held his
grandson with great tenderness. He recalled his own son's small face as he gazed
with wonder at the tiny eyes that stared back at him.

7 "Be careful how you hold him," said the young wife. "Your hands are
trembling."

8 The old man had noticed it too. The dull pain he felt in his joints had increased
each day, and now his hands were betraying him.

9 "Don't drop him," exclaimed the wife, who worriedly snatched the child away.

10 After that, the old man's changes came quickly. By the time the small boy could
sit up by himself, the old man found it harder to cast the chicken feed from the
feeding bowl. His hands could not grip a pitchfork. His son tried to ignore his
father's aging.

- 11 By the time the grandson could walk, the old man could not stride any longer into the barn. His steps were slow. His back was beginning to stoop. He worked as he could but did not accomplish much. Times were hard and the son had to let most of the farm help go. Now he worked from early hours to sunset along with his wife. The old man tended the little boy but could hardly keep up with him.
- 12 One night after a grueling day in the fields, the son and his tired wife sat down to a hastily prepared dinner. The boy sat next to his grandpa as the wife placed a large bowl of porridge on the table. "Times have been better," she sighed. "I am looking forward to the first fresh vegetable crops."
- 13 Grandpa tried to ladle some porridge. His hand shook so much that he toppled the bowl onto the dusty floor. "How clumsy!" the wife shouted.
- 14 It was more than the old man could bear. He slowly got up and left the table. His son ignored the problem and sat silently as his grumbling wife cleaned up the mess.
- 15 Each day the old man's condition worsened. He began to drool. The wife sat him at a small table in the corner, away from the family as they ate.
- 16 One night the old man's trembling hand knocked his porcelain eating bowl off his little table. It landed with a crash and broke on the floor. The wife went out to the barn and got the wooden bowl used for chicken feed. She filled it with food and served the old man another supper. "Now here is one you won't break," she said. Her husband stared into the distance and again said nothing.
- 17 One day when the young child was older and had learned to speak, his father and mother found him industriously chipping away with a stone at two chunks of wood. "What are you doing?" the boy's father asked. His son replied, "I am making you each a present!"
- 18 "What could it be?" his father asked with delight.
- 19 "I am making the wooden chicken-feed bowls I will give you and Mama to eat from when you are old," said the boy.
- 20 The boy's words stunned his father. The future loomed before him, and he saw himself old and forgotten.
- 21 When his vision cleared, he noticed his frail father sitting alone in the corner. He gathered the old man in his arms and led him to the table and set a place for him with their best dishes. That night as the young boy watched, his father fed the old grandpa tenderly with a silver spoon. He handed his wife a cloth napkin, and she gently wiped the old man's drooling lips.
- 22 From that day on, they both treated the old man with the same kindness and respect they hoped to receive from their own son in their elderly years.

*Treat the old with love that is ample.
The very best teacher is a good example.*

- 36 Read the sentences from paragraph 1 in the box below.

A fine meal of freshly grown vegetables and home-baked bread was set out on the table. The couple covered a new bed in a small adjoining room with a warm cover and soft pillow.

What is the effect of the details in the sentences?

- A. They foreshadow the conflict.
- B. They introduce the characters.
- C. They create a mysterious mood.
- D. They suggest a comfortable setting.

- 37 According to paragraph 2, what is **most** important to the old man when he comes to live on the farm?

- A. regaining his health
- B. proving that he can work
- C. being with those he loves
- D. making the farm prosperous

- 38 In the folktale, why does the boy's present surprise his parents?

- A. They had not known he was making a gift.
- B. They did not know their son was good at carving.
- C. They did not realize how much their son loved the old man.
- D. They had not considered how they would be treated when they were old.

- 39 Based on paragraph 21, why does the family **most likely** use its best dishes?
- A. because the old man is now respected in the family
 - B. because the old man no longer eats with the family
 - C. because the family has regained its wealth
 - D. because the family no longer likes wooden bowls
- 40 In the folktale, how does the author **mainly** help the reader follow the passing of time?
- A. by recording the family's changing fortunes
 - B. by referring repeatedly to the wooden bowl
 - C. by mentioning the boy's growth
 - D. by describing changes in the farm

**Grade 7 English Language Arts
Reading Comprehension
Spring 2008 Released Items:
Reporting Categories, Standards, and Correct Answers***

Item No.	Page No.	Reporting Category	Standard	Correct Answer (MC)*
1	143	<i>Reading and Literature</i>	13	C
2	143	<i>Reading and Literature</i>	13	B
3	143	<i>Reading and Literature</i>	13	B
4	143	<i>Reading and Literature</i>	13	D
5	144	<i>Reading and Literature</i>	8	C
6	144	<i>Language</i>	4	D
7	144	<i>Language</i>	5	B
8	145	<i>Reading and Literature</i>	13	
9	147	<i>Reading and Literature</i>	14	A
10	147	<i>Reading and Literature</i>	14	B
11	147	<i>Reading and Literature</i>	15	C
12	147	<i>Reading and Literature</i>	14	B
13	150	<i>Reading and Literature</i>	17	C
14	150	<i>Language</i>	5	D
15	151	<i>Reading and Literature</i>	17	D
16	151	<i>Reading and Literature</i>	17	D
17	151	<i>Reading and Literature</i>	17	
18	155	<i>Reading and Literature</i>	8	C
19	155	<i>Reading and Literature</i>	12	D
20	155	<i>Reading and Literature</i>	12	B
21	155	<i>Reading and Literature</i>	15	A
22	156	<i>Reading and Literature</i>	12	B
23	156	<i>Reading and Literature</i>	12	B
24	156	<i>Language</i>	4	D
25	156	<i>Language</i>	4	A
26	157	<i>Reading and Literature</i>	12	
27	161	<i>Reading and Literature</i>	8	C
28	161	<i>Reading and Literature</i>	8	B
29	161	<i>Reading and Literature</i>	13	A
30	161	<i>Reading and Literature</i>	8	B
31	162	<i>Reading and Literature</i>	13	B
32	162	<i>Reading and Literature</i>	13	B
33	162	<i>Language</i>	4	C
34	162	<i>Language</i>	5	D
35	163	<i>Reading and Literature</i>	13	
36	166	<i>Reading and Literature</i>	16	D
37	166	<i>Reading and Literature</i>	8	C
38	166	<i>Reading and Literature</i>	16	D
39	167	<i>Reading and Literature</i>	16	A
40	167	<i>Reading and Literature</i>	16	C

* Answers are provided here for multiple-choice items only. Sample responses and scoring guidelines for open-response items, which are indicated by shaded cells, will be posted to the Department's Web site later this year.