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VII. English Language Arts,  
Reading Comprehension, Grade 8

# Grade 8 English Language Arts

## Reading Comprehension Test

The spring 2011 grade 8 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. Page numbers for the learning standards appear in parentheses.

- Language (*Framework*, pages 19–26)
- Reading and Literature (*Framework*, pages 35–64)

The *English Language Arts Curriculum Framework* is available on the Department website at [www.doe.mass.edu/frameworks/current.html](http://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 8 ELA Reading Comprehension test included two separate test sessions. Each session included reading passages, followed by multiple-choice and open-response questions. Selected common reading passages and approximately half of the common test items are shown on the following pages as they appeared in test booklets.

### Reference Materials and Tools

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

### Cross-Reference Information

The tables at the conclusion of this chapter indicate each released and unreleased common item's reporting category and the framework general standard it assesses. The correct answers for released multiple-choice questions are also displayed in the released item table.

# English Language Arts

## READING COMPREHENSION

### DIRECTIONS

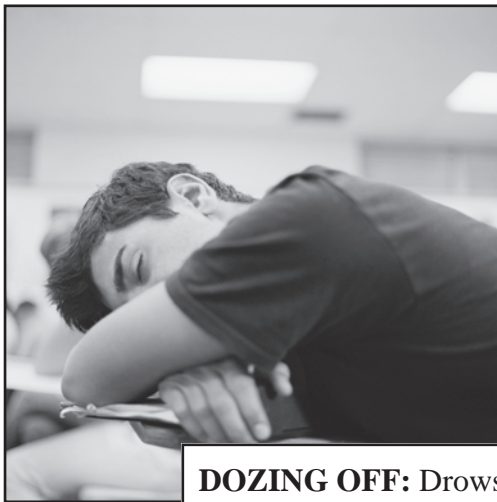
This session contains two reading selections with eleven multiple-choice questions and one open-response question. Mark your answers to these questions in the spaces provided in your Student Answer Booklet.

In this article, authors Dr. Lawrence Epstein and Steven Mardon offer advice for dealing with sleepy teenagers. Read the article and answer the questions that follow.

# Homeroom Zombies

by Lawrence Epstein, M.D., and Steven Mardon

**Teens need at least nine hours of sleep a night, though few get that much and early school start times don't help. Here's what parents can do.**



**DOZING OFF:** Drowsy kids may have trouble staying awake in class

**A**<sup>1</sup> S THE SCHOOL YEAR KICKS OFF, PARENTS are once again struggling to cajole<sup>1</sup> and, if need be, drag their exhausted teens out of bed. Later, teachers get a close-up view of sleep

deprivation's effects, as bleary students zone out and even doze off in class. "I've learned never to dim the lights, even to show a video," says Lauren Boyle, a history teacher at Waltham High School in Massachusetts. "If I do, there are days when a third of the class falls asleep."

<sup>2</sup> That image may make you laugh, but lack of sleep is no joke. Adolescents who don't get enough rest have more learning, health, behavior and mood problems than students who get at least nine hours a night. In some cases, teens may be incorrectly diagnosed with ADHD<sup>2</sup> when sleep deprivation is actually the source of their symptoms. Perpetual lack of sleep is tied to diabetes, heart disease, obesity, depression and a shortened life span in adults, underscoring the importance of establishing good sleep habits early in life. Lack of sleep can be especially deadly for teens; car accidents are the leading cause of death among adolescents, and safety experts believe drowsy driving is a major factor.

<sup>3</sup> Unfortunately, few adolescents get the sleep they need. In one recent study, researchers at Case Western Reserve University found

<sup>1</sup> cajole — persuade

<sup>2</sup> ADHD — attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder, a condition characterized by inattentiveness

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that more than half of students slept seven hours or less, and almost one in five got less than six hours. In a survey of middle- and high-school students, University of Colorado researchers found that 82 percent said they woke up tired and unrefreshed, and more than half had trouble concentrating during the day at least once a week.

4 Blame multitasking for some of this. Many students are juggling after-school activities, homework and part-time jobs. Even when they manage to fulfill these obligations by a reasonable hour, television, the Internet, videogames, phone calls and text messages to friends often keep them awake deep into the night. (On average, 12th graders have four major electronic devices in their bedrooms.) Taking caffeinated soda and energy drinks late in the day and going to late-night parties on weekends add to sleep debt.

5 Biology also works against adolescents' sleep. The body's internal clock, which controls when a person starts to feel tired, shifts after puberty, making it hard for most teens to fall asleep before 11 p.m. Class usually begins before 8:15 a.m., with many high schools starting as early as 7:15 a.m. To get to school on time, most teens have to get up by 6:30 a.m., guaranteeing they'll be sleep-deprived during the week. Teens often sleep much later on weekends to catch up, making it even harder to fall asleep on Sunday night and wake up Monday morning. Playing catch-up on weekends also doesn't help teens stay alert when they need it most: during the week at school.

6 Since the 1990s, middle and high schools in more than two dozen states have experimented with later school start times. The results have been encouraging:

more sleep, increased attendance, better grades and fewer driving accidents. For example, ninth graders' daily attendance rose from 83 percent to 87 percent and overall grades went up slightly when Minneapolis high schools moved the start time from 7:15 to 8:40 a.m. And car crashes involving teen drivers fell 15 percent when high schools in Fayette County, Ky., switched the high-school start time from 7:30 to 8:30 a.m. But most schools still start early, meaning teens have their work cut out for them if they want to get enough sleep.

7 Despite all these obstacles, parents can play a huge role in helping adolescents get the right amount of sleep. Here are some tips:

8 **Educate your kids about sleep.** Teens need to understand that their bodies require at least nine hours of sleep a day in order for them to do their best in school and enjoy their social lives. Explain that even a brief spell of short sleep raises their chances of feeling irritable and anxious, and experiencing minor ills such as headaches and stomach problems.

9 **Keep a regular sleep/wake schedule.** This conditions the body to expect to go to bed and get up at the same time every day. Teens should have a regular bedtime on school nights and should avoid staying up more than an hour later on weekends.

10 **Develop a pre-sleep routine.** This sets the stage for sleep. Wind down with nonstrenuous activities such as reading, listening to relaxing music or taking a shower. Avoid bright light in the evening, which signals the brain to stay alert. That includes TVs and computer screens.

11 **Monitor late-night activities.** Keep TV and videogames in the family room, not the bedroom. Teens are less likely

## Haven't Slept a Wink

Teenagers tend to sleep later than preadolescents, and like adults, they don't get enough sleep on the weekdays. How sleep patterns change with age:

Age	Natural bedtime*	Hours of sleep:	
		recommended	actual†
0–1 yrs.	7–8 p.m.	14–15 hrs.**	12.8 all days**
1–2	7–8	12–14**	11.8**
3–6	7–8	11–13**	10.3**
7–11	8–9	10–11	9.4
12–17	10:30–11:30	8.5–9.5	7.6 weekdays 8.9 weekends
18–54	10–12	7–8.5	6.8 weekdays 7.4 weekends
55–84	8–10	7–8.5	6.9 weekdays 7.5 weekends

\*REFERS TO BEDTIME IN THE NATURAL SLEEP-WAKE CYCLE. ACTUAL BEDTIMES WILL VARY.  
 †BASED ON NATL. SLEEP FOUNDATION (NSF) SURVEYS, 2003-2006. \*\*INCLUDES DAY AND NIGHTTIME SLEEP. SOURCES: NSF; DR. JUDITH OWENS, HASBRO CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL.

to stay up late if these entertainment options are less accessible. Moving these activities out of the bedroom also gives parents a more realistic picture of when their kids really go to sleep.

- 12 **Limit caffeine intake.** Sleep-deprived teens increasingly rely on coffee, soda and caffeinated energy drinks to stay awake during the day. High caffeine intake can make it harder to fall asleep, perpetuating a cycle of bad sleep and daytime fatigue. Adolescents should drink no more than two caffeinated drinks a day and none after 5 p.m. They should also steer clear of stimulant medication as “study aids”; these do not take the place of sleep.
- 13 **Adopt a healthy lifestyle.** Teens who exercise regularly, maintain a healthy diet and avoid alcohol tend to fall asleep

faster and stay asleep longer than those who don't. (The same is true for adults.) Teens who smoke or use chewing tobacco should quit for many reasons, but getting better sleep is an additional motivation. Nicotine is a stimulant that can disturb sleep.

- 14 **Take naps.** Buildup of some sleep debt is inevitable—given most schools' yawn-inducing start times and the obstacles to falling asleep at 11. Teens who routinely get much less sleep than they need can make up for some of the difference with a nap after school. To prevent nighttime sleep disruption, teens shouldn't nap longer than 60 minutes or in the evening after dinner.
- 15 **Set rules.** Forbidding teens to drive after 11 p.m. (when they're most likely to nod off) won't win Mom and Dad any

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- popularity contests, but it can save lives.
- 16 **Be alert for sleep disorders.** Teens may suffer from the same disorders that prevent adults from getting a decent night's sleep. These include obstructive sleep apnea (a nighttime breathing disorder), narcolepsy<sup>3</sup> and restless-legs syndrome.
- 17 **Provide a good example.** If parents are staying up late and battling sleep deprivation with gallons of coffee, why should teens follow their advice to get a good night's sleep?
- 18 Above all, don't give up. Boyle, the teacher in Massachusetts, talks one-on-one with students who repeatedly fall asleep in class about the importance of sleep and calls parents if the problem continues. "These aren't bad kids," she says. "Often, they're highly motivated, spending hours on homework and also working to save money for college. If you talk to them, you can have a big impact."

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<sup>3</sup> *narcolepsy* — a condition characterized by brief attacks of deep sleep, often occurring with sudden loss of muscle power

"Homeroom Zombies" by Lawrence Epstein, M.D., and Steven Mardon, from *Newsweek*, September 17, 2007. Copyright © 2007 by Harvard University. Reprinted by permission of Harvard Health Publications. Photograph copyright © Reza Estakhrian/Getty Images.

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- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <p>1 What is the function of the first sentence of paragraph 1?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>A. to question previous approaches to the issue</li><li>B. to engage readers with a typical scene</li><li>C. to prompt readers to do research</li><li>D. to provide helpful information</li></ul> | <p>2 According to the article, poor sleep can be linked to all of the following <b>except</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>A. heart disease.</li><li>B. car accidents.</li><li>C. skin problems.</li><li>D. poor concentration.</li></ul> |
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- 3 Which of the following would be the **most** appropriate heading to place between paragraphs 3 and 4 of the article?
- A. What Causes Sleep Deprivation?
  - B. How Can Sleep Deprivation Be Treated?
  - C. Who Is Most at Risk for Sleep Deprivation?
  - D. Why Is Sleep Deprivation a Serious Concern?
- 4 According to the table, “Haven’t Slept a Wink,” which age group gets the **least** amount of sleep?
- A. 7–11 years
  - B. 12–17 years
  - C. 18–54 years
  - D. 55–84 years
- 5 According to the article, how can parents **best** help their teens get more sleep?
- A. Punish teens who come home late.
  - B. Allow teens to sleep in on weekends.
  - C. Encourage teens to exercise before bed.
  - D. Model the behavior they want teens to imitate.
- 6 What does the word *stimulant* mean as it is used in paragraphs 12 and 13?
- A. substance that aids memory
  - B. substance that arouses hunger
  - C. substance that increases courage
  - D. substance that encourages activity

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**Question 7 is an open-response question.**

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

**Write your answer to question 7 in the space provided in your Student Answer Booklet.**

- 7 Based on information in the article, explain why it is difficult for teenagers to get enough sleep. Support your answer with relevant and specific details from the article.

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In this poem, the speaker addresses his son. Read the poem and answer the questions that follow.

### *If—*

- If you can keep your head when all about you  
Are losing theirs and blaming it on you,  
If you can trust yourself when all men doubt you,  
But make allowance for their doubting too;  
5 If you can wait and not be tired by waiting,  
Or being lied about, don't deal in lies,  
Or being hated don't give way to hating,  
And yet don't look too good, nor talk too wise:
- If you can dream—and not make dreams your master;  
10 If you can think—and not make thoughts your aim:  
If you can meet with Triumph and Disaster  
And treat those two impostors<sup>1</sup> just the same;  
If you can bear to hear the truth you've spoken  
Twisted by knaves<sup>2</sup> to make a trap for fools,  
15 Or watch the things you gave your life to, broken,  
And stoop and build 'em up with worn-out tools:
- If you can make one heap of all your winnings  
And risk it on one turn of pitch-and-toss,  
And lose, and start again at your beginnings  
20 And never breathe a word about your loss;  
If you can force your heart and nerve and sinew<sup>3</sup>  
To serve your turn long after they are gone,  
And so hold on when there is nothing in you  
Except the Will which says to them: 'Hold on!'
- 25 If you can talk with crowds and keep your virtue,  
Or walk with Kings—nor lose the common touch,  
If neither foes nor loving friends can hurt you,  
If all men count with you, but none too much;  
If you can fill the unforgiving minute  
30 With sixty seconds' worth of distance run,  
Yours is the Earth and everything that's in it,  
And—which is more—you'll be a Man, my son!

—Rudyard Kipling

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<sup>1</sup> *impostors* — those who assume false identities for the purpose of deception

<sup>2</sup> *knaves* — tricky people

<sup>3</sup> *sinew* — a tendon that connects a muscle to a bone



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- 8 How is the poem **mainly** organized?
- A. through a comparison of several challenges
  - B. through a progression of violent conflicts
  - C. through an analysis of several characters
  - D. through a detailed description of setting

- 9 Based on the poem, the speaker **most likely** believes that a fulfilling life requires
- A. family.
  - B. humor.
  - C. wealth.
  - D. balance.

- 10 Read lines 29 and 30 in the box below.

If you can fill the unforgiving  
minute / With sixty seconds'  
worth of distance run,

- What do the lines **most likely** suggest?
- A. Success requires achieving a goal before anyone else.
  - B. Winning is not a factor in living well.
  - C. Time is not the main obstacle in life.
  - D. Success requires using time wisely.

- 11 Which word **best** describes the tone of the poem?
- A. playful
  - B. apologetic
  - C. pessimistic
  - D. motivational

- 12 What is the purpose of the dashes in line 32?
- A. to show a contrasting idea
  - B. to give a specific definition
  - C. to provide an added emphasis
  - D. to indicate the start of a stanza

**Grade 8 English Language Arts  
Reading Comprehension  
Spring 2011 Released Items:  
Reporting Categories, Standards, and Correct Answers\***

<b>Item No.</b>	<b>Page No.</b>	<b>Reporting Category</b>	<b>Standard</b>	<b>Correct Answer (MC)*</b>
1	93	<i>Reading and Literature</i>	13	B
2	93	<i>Reading and Literature</i>	13	C
3	94	<i>Reading and Literature</i>	13	A
4	94	<i>Reading and Literature</i>	13	C
5	94	<i>Reading and Literature</i>	13	D
6	94	<i>Language</i>	4	D
7	94	<i>Reading and Literature</i>	13	
8	96	<i>Reading and Literature</i>	14	A
9	96	<i>Reading and Literature</i>	14	D
10	96	<i>Reading and Literature</i>	14	D
11	96	<i>Reading and Literature</i>	15	D
12	96	<i>Language</i>	5	C

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

**Grade 8 English Language Arts  
Reading Comprehension  
Spring 2011 Unreleased Common Items:  
Reporting Categories and Standards**

<b>Item No.</b>	<b>Reporting Category</b>	<b>Standard</b>
13	<i>Reading and Literature</i>	15
14	<i>Reading and Literature</i>	15
15	<i>Reading and Literature</i>	12
16	<i>Reading and Literature</i>	15
17	<i>Reading and Literature</i>	12
18	<i>Reading and Literature</i>	15
19	<i>Reading and Literature</i>	15
20	<i>Language</i>	5
21	<i>Language</i>	5
22	<i>Language</i>	4
23	<i>Reading and Literature</i>	12
24	<i>Reading and Literature</i>	12
25	<i>Reading and Literature</i>	12
26	<i>Reading and Literature</i>	12
27	<i>Reading and Literature</i>	12
28	<i>Reading and Literature</i>	12
29	<i>Reading and Literature</i>	13
30	<i>Reading and Literature</i>	13
31	<i>Reading and Literature</i>	13
32	<i>Reading and Literature</i>	13
33	<i>Reading and Literature</i>	13
34	<i>Reading and Literature</i>	13
35	<i>Reading and Literature</i>	13
36	<i>Reading and Literature</i>	13
37	<i>Reading and Literature</i>	13
38	<i>Language</i>	5
39	<i>Language</i>	4
40	<i>Reading and Literature</i>	13