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### III. English Language Arts, Grade 4

A. Composition

B. Reading Comprehension

# Grade 4 English Language Arts Test

## Test Structure

The grade 4 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 (items) to assess learning standards from the *Curriculum Framework's* **Language** and **Reading and Literature** strands

## A. Composition

The spring 2007 grade 4 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](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 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 two pages. 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 MCAS Writing Score Guide (Composition Grade 4) is available at [www.doe.mass.edu/mcas/student/scoring4.doc](http://www.doe.mass.edu/mcas/student/scoring4.doc).

## 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 4

### Grade 4 Writing Prompt

#### WRITING PROMPT

Think about the best time that you have ever had. Maybe you played all day with friends outside, went on a special trip, participated in a game, or spent some time at camp.

Write a story about this best time. What were you doing? Who was with you? Where were you? Why was this the best time ever? Give enough details in the story to show the reader what happened.

You may use the space below to plan what you are going to write (notes, outlines, other pre-writing activities).

## English Language Arts Composition, Grade 4

### Grade 4 Make-Up Writing Prompt

#### WRITING PROMPT

Think about a time when you had a great adventure. It could have happened while on a school field trip, going to a relative's home, going on vacation, going to the movies, going to the library, or something totally different.

Write a story about this great adventure. Where did you go? What did you do? Who was with you? Give enough details to show the reader what happened and why the adventure was so great.

You may use the space below to plan what you are going to write (notes, outlines, other pre-writing activities).

## B. Reading Comprehension

The spring 2007 grade 4 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 Web site 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 4 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

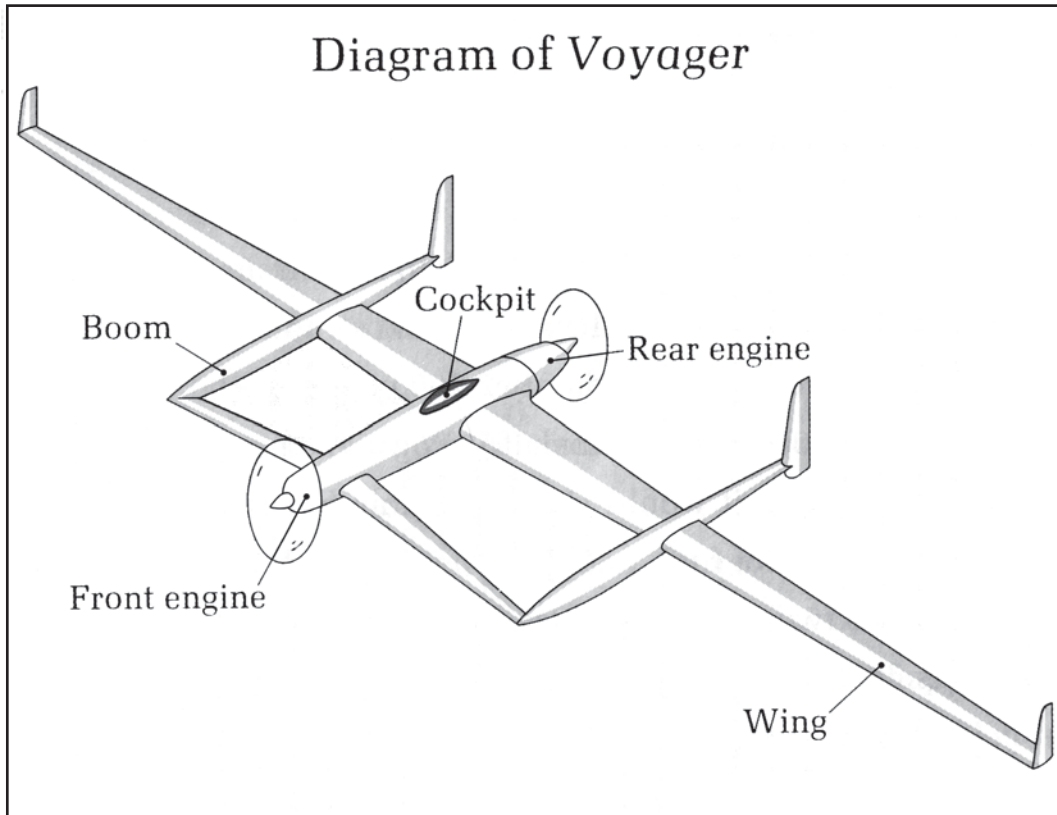
This session contains three reading selections with fifteen multiple-choice questions and two open-response questions. Mark your answers to these questions in the spaces provided in your Student Answer Booklet.

*Sitting at a restaurant in Mojave, California, in 1981, brothers Burt and Dick Rutan and their friend Jeana Yeager came up with an idea. They wanted to design an airplane that could fly nonstop all the way around the world. Would it be possible? Read the article to find out if they were able to make their dream happen. Answer the questions that follow.*

# Voyager's Amazing Journey

by Steve Osborn

- 1 Ever since the Wright brothers built the first airplane in 1903, planes had been getting bigger and faster. By the time Burt designed *Voyager*, some planes could carry hundreds of passengers, while others could go more than 2,000 miles an hour. Almost all these planes were built of a lightweight metal called aluminum. Yet, despite their size and speed, no plane had ever been able to fly nonstop around the world.
- 2 *Voyager* was neither big nor fast. In fact, its top speed was only 120 miles an hour. But *Voyager* could carry fuel—lots of fuel. It could carry so much fuel that Dick once called it a “flying gas tank.”
- 3 *Voyager* was made of a material called Hexcel honeycomb. This material is lighter than aluminum and seven times as strong. Thanks to Hexcel honeycomb, *Voyager*'s body weighed only 2,000 pounds, yet it could carry 7,000 pounds of fuel. If *Voyager* had been made of aluminum, it would have been able to carry only 1,000 pounds of fuel.
- 4 *Voyager* had two very long wings, a cockpit, and two propellers. It also had two smaller wings near the front propeller and two body parts called *booms*. The fuel was stored in the wings and the booms. Small pipes carried the fuel to the engines, which used the fuel to make the propellers move.
- 5 In the cockpit, Dick and Jeana used simple controls to steer the airplane and start the engines. The cockpit itself was very small—only three-and-a-half feet wide and seven-and-a-half feet long. It was also very loud

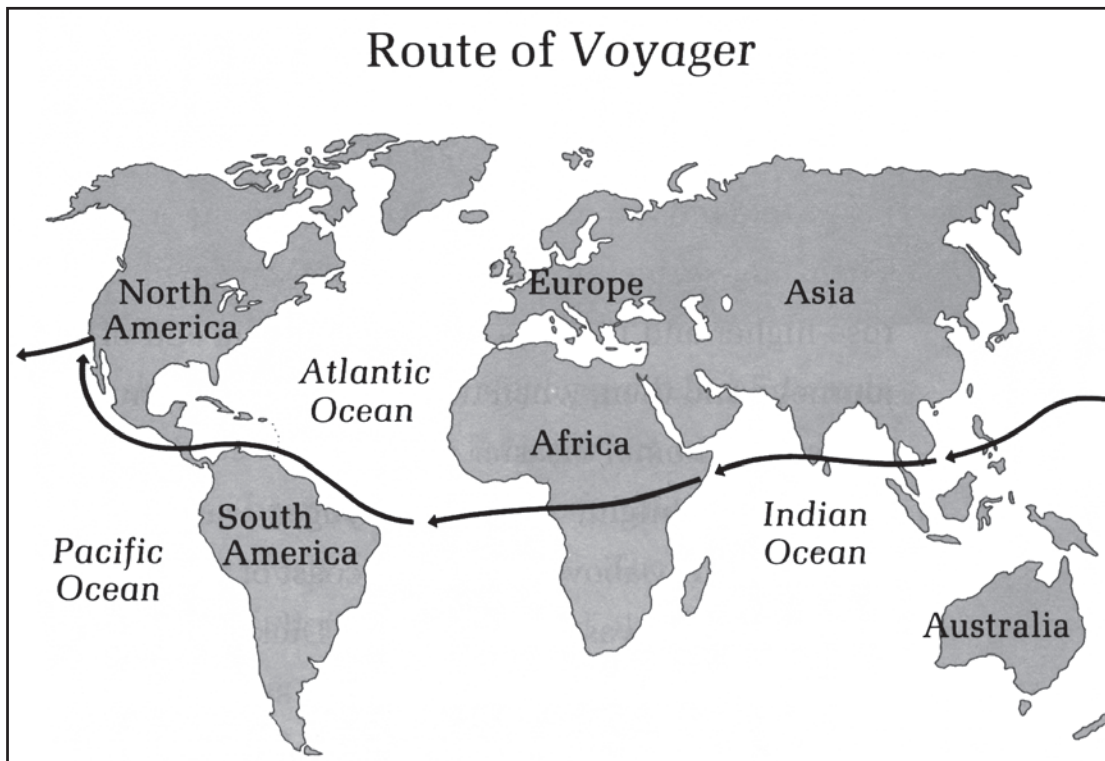


because it was so close to the engines. Dick and Jeana had to wear special headphones so they wouldn't become deaf from all the noise.

6 Soon after Burt designed the plane in 1981, the three of them started trying to raise enough money to build the plane. But no one was interested in their project. Some people said it wouldn't work, while others thought it was just a waste of money. Finally, a few airplane companies started donating materials. For example, one company donated lots of Hexcel honeycomb.

7 The free materials were nice, but they didn't pay all the bills. It took five years to build *Voyager*, and it cost almost two million dollars. Some of this money came from Burt, Dick, and Jeana; the rest came from sales of *Voyager* T-shirts and other souvenirs, as well as a few donations.

8 While they were building *Voyager*, Dick and Jeana prepared for their long flight. They did exercises to improve their muscles. They ate special foods to make their bodies stronger. And, most of all, they learned how to stay up for long periods of time. Dick and Jeana figured that their flight would last for at least nine days and nights. They would have to be wide awake during most of that time.



9 On December 14, 1986, *Voyager* was finally ready for its flight around the world. The plane sat at one end of a long runway at Edwards Air Force Base, just a few miles from the restaurant where it was created. Dick and Jeana walked around the plane one last time and then crawled into the small cockpit. Dick steered the plane, while Jeana worked the radio. They planned to switch back and forth throughout the long flight.

10 “Okay, you are cleared for takeoff,” said a voice from the control tower. Dick started the engines and moved the plane slowly down the runway. . . .

11 The map shows the route the *Voyager* took around the world. On the map, the route looks simple and direct, but the real story was quite different.

12 At the end of the second day of its flight, *Voyager* ran into a gigantic storm called a typhoon. The typhoon had winds of up to seventy-five miles an hour.

13 Dick and Jeana held on for dear life as the typhoon bounced their tiny plane back and forth like a boxer hitting a punching bag. Jeana was hurled around the cockpit and was soon covered with bruises. Somehow, Dick and Jeana managed to go on. They passed the storm and got back on course—but not for long.

14 A few short hours later, *Voyager* neared another storm. Dick and Jeana quickly decided to steer the plane in a giant circle and wait for the storm to

pass. Their plan worked, but it used up a lot of fuel. They began to wonder if they would have enough fuel left to make it home.

15 Everything went well for the next six days. Dick and Jeana gazed in wonder as they passed over the beautiful landscapes of Asia, Africa, and the Americas. Their fuel seemed to be holding out, and their spirits rose higher and higher as they neared the end of their journey. And then, when they were just a few hundred miles from home, disaster struck.

16 It was midnight, and the *Voyager* was humming along smoothly above the Pacific coast of Mexico. Only the rear engine was going, because Dick and Jeana had turned off the front engine in order to save fuel. All of a sudden, the rear engine stopped working. With both engines off, *Voyager* had nowhere to go but down.

17 Dick frantically tried to start the front engine as *Voyager* plunged lower and lower in the pitch-black sky. It fell a thousand feet, then two thousand, then three thousand. Finally, after a 3,500 foot drop, the front engine roared to life. If it hadn't, *Voyager* would have crashed into a watery grave.

18 The skies were cloudy as *Voyager* circled Edwards Air Force Base and came in for a perfect landing. Dick and Jeana had been flying nonstop for nine days, three minutes, and forty-four seconds. They had flown 25,012 miles—all the way around the world. What began as a conversation in a restaurant had ended as a triumph beyond Burt, Dick, and Jeana's wildest dreams.

19 They had set out to do the impossible and they had done it.

"*Voyager's* Amazing Journey" by Steve Osborn, from *Signposts*. Copyright © 1989 by Holt, Rinehart and Winston. Reprinted by permission of the author.

- 1 Based on paragraph 3, how did Hexcel honeycomb improve *Voyager*'s chances of flying nonstop around the world?
- A. It allowed the airplane to travel faster.
  - B. It allowed the airplane to carry more fuel.
  - C. It allowed the airplane to have two engines.
  - D. It allowed the airplane to glide more smoothly.
- 2 Based on paragraph 5, how would the cockpit of *Voyager* **best** be described?
- A. warm and dark
  - B. noisy and crowded
  - C. bright and colorful
  - D. safe and comfortable

- 3 Read the sentence from paragraph 13 in the box below.

Dick and Jeana held on for dear life as the typhoon bounced their tiny plane back and forth like a boxer hitting a punching bag.

Why does the author **most likely** use the simile, or comparison, in the sentence?

- A. to show that boxing is dangerous
- B. to show how the pilots were injured
- C. to show that flying a plane is an exciting sport
- D. to show how the plane was affected by the storm

- 4 Read the sentence from paragraph 17 in the box below.

Dick frantically tried to start the front engine as *Voyager* plunged lower and lower in the pitch-black sky.

What does the sentence tell about Dick?

- A. He was not familiar with the area.
- B. He was not sure how to fly a plane.
- C. He was worried about another storm.
- D. He was scared that the plane would crash.

- 5 Read the sentence from paragraph 18 in the box below.

What began as a conversation in a restaurant had ended as a triumph beyond Burt, Dick, and Jeana’s wildest dreams.

What is the main purpose of the sentence?

- A. to show that the team reached its goal
- B. to describe the team’s work on the project
- C. to describe the plans for building *Voyager*
- D. to show that *Voyager’s* flight was imagined

- 6 Which of the following facts does the map of *Voyager’s* flight **best** show?

- A. The flight was mostly over water.
- B. The flight took nine days to complete.
- C. The flight began at Edwards Air Force Base.
- D. The flight ran into a typhoon in the Pacific Ocean.

- 7 Read the words from the article in the box below.

runway  
headphones  
honeycomb  
takeoff

Which of the following statements is true about the words in the box?

- A. They are adjectives.
- B. They are contractions.
- C. They are proper nouns.
- D. They are compound words.

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, describe the problems that *Voyager*'s team faced, both before **and** during the flight. Support your answer with important details from the article.

*In this folktale, two young wives must agree to a difficult request before they can visit their friends in the old village. Will they be able to honor the request and return home? Read "The Lantern and the Fan" to find out, and answer the questions that follow.*

## THE LANTERN AND THE FAN

by Florence Holbrook

- 1 In a Japanese village there once lived a man who had two sons. When the sons were grown up, each brought home a wife from another village a long distance away. The father was greatly pleased with his two daughters-in-law, and for many months they all lived very happily together.
- 2 At last the two young wives asked to go home to visit their friends. Among the Japanese the sons and the sons' wives must always obey the father, so the two wives said, "Father-in-law, it is a long, long time since we have seen our friends. May we go to our old home and visit them?" The father-in-law answered, "No." After many months they asked again, and again he answered, "No." Once more they asked. The father-in-law thought, "They care nothing for me, or they would not wish to leave me, but I have a plan, and I can soon know whether they love their father-in-law or not." Then he said to the older of the two wives, "You may go if you wish, but you must never come back unless you bring me fire wrapped in paper." To the younger he said, "You may go if you wish, but you must never come back unless you bring me wind wrapped in paper." The father-in-law thought, "Now I shall find out. If they care for me, they will search the country through till they find paper that will hold fire and wind."
- 3 The two young wives were so glad to visit their old friends that for almost a month they forgot all about the gifts that they were to carry to their father-in-law. At last, when it was time to go home, they were greatly troubled about what they must carry with them, and they asked a wise man where to find the strange things. "Paper that will hold fire and wind!" he cried. "There is no such paper in Japan." The two women asked one wise man after another, and every one declared, "There is no such paper in Japan." What should they do? They feared they would never see their home again. They were so sad that they left their friends and wandered a long distance into the forest. Great tears fell from their eyes.
- 4 "I do not let people cry in my woods," said a voice. "My trees do not grow well in salt water."

5 The poor wives were so sorrowful that they forgot to be afraid, and the older one said, “Can we help crying? Unless I can carry to my father-in-law fire wrapped in paper, I can never go home.” “And I,” wailed the younger, “unless I can carry wind wrapped in paper, I can never go home. None of the wise men ever heard of such things. What shall we do?”

6 “It is easy enough to wrap fire in paper,” answered the voice. “Here is a piece of paper. Now watch.” They watched, and the strangest thing in all the world happened right before their eyes. There was no one to be seen, but a piece of paper appeared on the ground and folded itself into a Japanese lantern. “Now put a candle inside,” said the voice, “and you have paper holding fire. What more could you ask?”



7 Then the older woman was happy, but the younger was still sad. She saw now that fire could be carried in paper, but surely no one could carry wind. “O dear voice,” she cried, “can any one carry wind in paper?”

8 “That is much easier than to carry fire,” replied the voice, “for wind does not burn holes. Watch.”

9 They watched eagerly. Another piece of paper came all by itself and lay on the ground between them. There was a picture on it of a tree covered with white blossoms. Two women stood under the tree, gathering the blossoms.

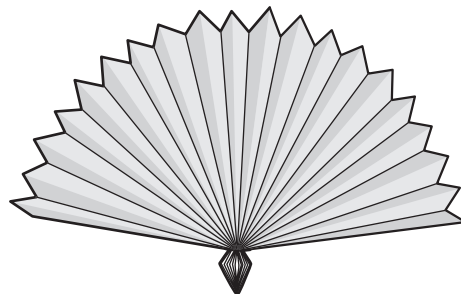
10 “The two women are yourselves,” said the voice, “and the blossoms are the gifts that the father-in-law will give you when you go home.”

11 “But I cannot go home,” the younger wailed, “for I cannot carry wind wrapped in paper.”

12 “Here is the paper, and there is always plenty of wind. Why not take them?”

13 “Indeed, I do not know how,” the younger woman answered sorrowfully.

14 “This way, of course,” said the voice. Some long, light twigs flew to the paper. It folded itself, over, under, together. It opened and closed, and



it waved itself before the tearful face of the younger woman. “Does not the wind come to your face?” asked the voice, “and is it not the fan that has brought it? The lantern carries fire wrapped in paper, and the fan carries wind wrapped in paper.”

- 15 Then, indeed, the two young women were happy, and when they came to the home of their father-in-law, he was as glad as they. He gave them beautiful gifts of gold and silver, and he said, “No one ever had such marvels before as the lantern and the fan, but in my home there are two more precious things than these, and they are my two dear daughters.”

In the public domain.

- 9 In paragraph 2, why does the father-in-law **most likely** tell the wives that they cannot leave?
- A. He does not like their friends.
  - B. He thinks that they will be lonely.
  - C. He is afraid that they will get lost.
  - D. He is worried that they do not love him.
- 10 According to paragraph 3, what problem do the wives have?
- A. They get lost in the woods at night.
  - B. They do not want to come home again.
  - C. They cannot find the gifts that they need.
  - D. They fight with their friends about the gifts.
- 11 Which event from the folktale allows the wives to return home?
- A. The wives receive gifts of gold and silver.
  - B. The wives visit their friends in their old village.
  - C. The voice begins to speak and guides them to the village.
  - D. The voice tells them how to make gifts for their father-in-law.
- 12 Read the sentence from paragraph 11 in the box below.
- “But I cannot go home,” the younger wailed, “for I cannot carry wind wrapped in paper.”
- What does the use of the word *wailed* tell readers about the younger wife?
- A. She is hurt.
  - B. She is upset.
  - C. She is angry.
  - D. She is confused.

*Have you ever had a special pet? Read the poem about getting a puppy and answer the questions that follow.*

## BUYING A PUPPY

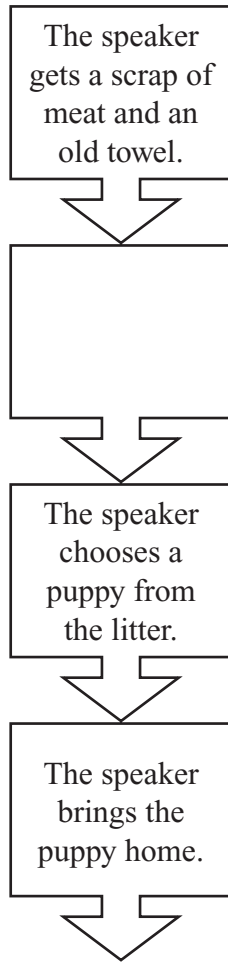
Students read a selection titled “Buying a Puppy” and then answered questions 13 through 17 that follow on pages 57 and 58 of this document.

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“Buying a Puppy” from MERLIN AND THE SNAKE’S EGG by Leslie Norris. The Viking. Copyright © 1978 by Leslie Norris. Used by permission of Brandt & Hochman Literary Agents, Inc.

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- 13 Look at the chart below.



Which of the following events from the poem **best** belongs in the second box?

- A. The speaker lets the puppy sleep.
- B. The speaker turns eight years old.
- C. The speaker goes to see the puppies.
- D. The speaker comes home from school.

- 14 Based on the poem, which word **best** describes the puppy on the ride home?

- A. brave
- B. hungry
- C. excited
- D. peaceful

- 15 How are the last two stanzas different from the rest of the poem?

- A. They describe a different pet.
- B. They describe a different time.
- C. They describe a different town.
- D. They describe a different house.

- 16 Why is “Silk” capitalized in line 20?

- A. It is a type of dog.
- B. It is a proper noun.
- C. It is the name of a type of cloth.
- D. It is the first word of a sentence.

**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** Describe the different feelings that the speaker has throughout the poem. Support your answer with important details from the poem.

# 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.

*Jane and her brothers and sisters are not ordinary cats. They have wings! Read the chapter from Jane on Her Own to learn more about these interesting cats. Answer the questions that follow.*

from **JANE ON  
HER OWN**  
by Ursula K. Le Guin

1 IT WAS A WARM AFTERNOON, and the six cats of Overhill Farm were lying about the barnyard, snoozing and talking, yawning at butterflies, purring in the sun.

2 Alexander Furby, who lived up at the farmhouse, came every day to visit Thelma and Roger, Harriet and James, and their little sister, Jane, who all lived in the barn loft.

3 It was Jane who sat up suddenly. “Thelma!” she said. “Why do we have wings?”

4 “We don’t know, Jane,” her big sister answered. “Our mother didn’t have wings. Alexander doesn’t. Most cats don’t. We don’t know why we do.”

5 “I know why!” said Jane.

6 “Why?” said Thelma.

7 “To fly with!” Jane shouted, and she flew straight up in the air, turned two somersaults and a loop-the-loop, stalled, and crashed right on top of Alexander Furby.

8 Alexander was a fine, sweet cat, but rather lazy.

When his dear friend Jane dived out of the air and squashed him, he just sighed and said, “Oh, Jane, don’t!” And he went back to sleep, a little flatter than before.



9 “If we can fly,” said Jane, “why do we always have to stay here in the same place and never fly anywhere and never see anything?”

10 Her big brother Roger said, “Oh, Jane, you know why.”

11 Her big sister Harriet said, “Because if human beings saw cats with wings, they’d put us in cages in zoos.”

12 Her big brother James said, “Or they’d put us in cages in laboratories.”

13 “Being different is difficult,” Thelma said. “And sometimes very dangerous.”

14 “I know, I know,” Jane said. She flew off and made faces at a woodpecker in one of the oak trees near the barn. To herself she said, “But I like difficult



things, and I like dangerous things, and everything here is boring!”

15 She saw Hank and Susan coming over the hill with a bag of fresh kibble.\* She called down to the others, “Hank and Susan are human beans, and they didn’t put us in cages!”

16 “Hank and Susan are human be-ings,” James said carefully, “but they are special ones.”

17 Jane wasn’t listening. She was flying higher and higher all by herself and singing, “Me-me-me-me-me-me-meeee!”

18 That was a whisper-song she had sung to herself when she was a tiny kitten. Her mother had been chased away from her. Jane had hidden all alone in an attic full of hungry, angry rats. Here on the farm she didn’t think about that terrible time anymore. But when she was unhappy, she sang her old song, “Me-me-me-me-me-me-meeee!”

19 She was unhappy now because everything was always the same, and everybody was always the same, and she wanted to see new places and find new friends. If her brothers and sisters and Alexander were all content to stay here, well, they could stay here, but she was going to stretch her wings.

\* *kibble* — a type of pet food made from grain

- 20 The next morning she did just that. She flew up over the barn roof, and the wind was so sweet and fresh that she knew it was time to go. Alexander was just coming over the hill. She swooped down and kissed his pink nose. “Good-bye. I’m going adventuring!” she called. And off she flew above the forest and the hills.
- 21 “Alexander will miss me,” she thought. But she knew that he would get over it, if he had plenty to eat. “And I will miss them all,” she thought. But she knew that she would get over it, because there were adventures waiting, and the wind was blowing, and she was on the wing.

From JANE ON HER OWN – A CATWINGS TALE by Ursula LeGuin. Text copyright © 1999 by Ursula K. LeGuin. Illustrations copyright © 1999 by S.D. Schindler. Reprinted by permission of Orchard Books, an imprint of Scholastic Inc.

- 18 Which of the following events happens **first** in the chapter?
- A. Jane starts singing to herself.
  - B. Jane asks why she has wings.
  - C. Jane flies away on an adventure.
  - D. Jane says that the farm is boring.
- 19 Where does **most** of the chapter take place?
- A. in the forest
  - B. in a large city
  - C. at Overhill Farm
  - D. at Alexander Furby’s house
- 20 According to the chapter, how are Jane and Alexander different from each other?
- A. Jane is a cat and Alexander is not.
  - B. Jane has wings and Alexander does not.
  - C. Alexander is new to the farm and Jane is not.
  - D. Alexander has a large family and Jane does not.
- 21 What does paragraph 7 suggest about Jane’s character?
- A. She is rude and selfish.
  - B. She is patient and calm.
  - C. She is nervous and fearful.
  - D. She is energetic and daring.

- 22 According to the chapter, why do the cats with wings think they have to stay at Overhill Farm?
- A. They would miss their mother if they left.
  - B. They would get lost if they left.
  - C. They might run out of food to eat if they left.
  - D. They might be captured if they left.
- 23 Based on the chapter, which of the following **most likely** describes what will happen next in the book?
- A. There will be a new setting.
  - B. There will be a different main character.
  - C. Jane will stay at Overhill Farm.
  - D. Jane will take Alexander with her on her travels.

- 24 Read the sentence from paragraph 8 in the box below.

When his dear friend Jane dived out of the air and squashed him, he just sighed and said, “Oh, Jane, don’t!”

Which of the following words in the sentence is a verb?

- A. dear
  - B. friend
  - C. air
  - D. squashed
- 25 Paragraph 21 states that Jane was “on the wing.” What does “on the wing” **most likely** mean?
- A. Jane is sad.
  - B. Jane is late.
  - C. Jane is flying.
  - D. Jane is hurrying.

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**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 Based on the chapter, explain why Jane decides to go on an adventure. Support your answer with important details from the chapter.

# 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.

*Dirt is not only fun to play in, but it is also a very important part of nature. Read the article about dirt, using the box of science terms to help you. Answer the questions that follow.*

# Diggin' Dirt

*by Ellen R. Braaf*

### Science Terms

organic — made from living things  
stresses — pushes and pulls on  
crevices — cracks or splits in something  
primitive — very simple  
complex — having a large number of parts

- 1 **Dirt's gotten a bad rap.** How many times have you been warned “Don't get dirty” or been scolded for tracking dirt into the house? No one wants to be called “as dull as dirt” or to be treated “like dirt.”

...

2 **B**ut if you've ever felt oozy mud squishing between your toes or planted seeds in soil and watched them bloom into beautiful flowers, you know that dirt is amazing stuff!

3 Most of the things you see around you can be traced back to dirt—from the pizza you ate for lunch to the microchips in your computer. Dirt holds the roots of plants and supplies them with nutrients

so the plants can grow. (And without green plants, we'd have no food to eat and no oxygen to breathe.) Dirt is the home for countless living organisms. Just a handful contains more living things than all the men, women, and children on the face of the earth. And dirt is nature's great recycler. When plants and animals die, organisms in the dirt feed on them, releasing their

chemicals and energy into the soil for use by future generations.

- 4 So dirt is really one of the most important things there is! We need dirt as much as we need water and air and sunshine.



Lots of animals dig dirt. A pig's tough, flexible snout is as sensitive to touch as a human hand. It makes a great tool for digging up food.

### Endangered Dirt

- 5 But there isn't as much dirt around as it might seem. The layer of soil covering the earth is only a few feet deep. It's like the thin skin on an apple—except this skin doesn't cover the whole apple.
- 6 Remember that 75 percent of the earth's surface is water. And mountains and deserts and ice-covered polar regions take up their share of the remaining land. Scientists estimate that only about 10 percent of the earth is covered with soil that is useful for farming. People, however, use lots of that valuable land not for farms but for their homes, highways, schools, and shopping malls.
- 7 Far from being "as common as dirt," soil is precious. Some types are even so rare as to be listed as endangered.

### A Rocky Start

- 8 There hasn't always been dirt on earth. Like plants and animals, dirt had to evolve.
- 9 Scientists believe that life on earth first appeared in the oceans about two billion years ago, but living things didn't begin to make their way to dry land for another billion and a half years or more. During all that time, most dry land was very rocky. There may have been windblown sand dunes in desert regions and some gravelly rock particles in mountain valleys, but no fine dirt and rich soil as we know it today. Why not?
- 10 Because fertile soil—soil in which plants can grow—is made up of two kinds of components: finely crumbled rocks, which are rich in minerals, and organic material from rotting plants and animals, which is rich in energy and nutrition. These components had to work together over millions and millions of years to make today's dirt.

### Life Depends on Dirt and Dirt Depends on Life

- 11 How is dirt made? When rock is exposed to the forces of nature, it breaks down into smaller and smaller pieces in a process called "weathering." During the heat of the day, a rock expands. At night, when the temperature cools, the rock contracts. This cycle stresses the rock and eventually cracks it apart. Or water can get into rock crevices and freeze. As the

ice expands, the rock fractures. Wind and rushing water can wear down rocks, too. The growth of plants, which send their roots into the soil, helps complete this weathering process. Over time, the roots break up the rocks into fine particles of dirt.

12 When, millions of years ago, primitive plants and animals moved out of the oceans to the land nearby, soil that could support an abundance of life began to form. The first land plants were small and simple. They could survive on the minerals in rocks along with air, sunlight, and rain. When they died and rotted, they left behind organic material, called humus, that would help feed other plants. Over time, as plants began to spread further inland, they became larger and more complex. Their roots broke up more rocks to help create more soil. Slowly, the world was covered with plants and soil.

13 Animals also began to inhabit the land, living off the plants. When they died, their bodies added to the organic

components of the soil, making it richer and able to support a greater variety of life. Eventually, the land became as full of life as the oceans.

...

### Playing in the Dirt

14 It takes an amazingly long time for the weathering of rocks and the activities of animals and plants to produce dirt—as much as 1,000 years to form just one



inch of fertile soil. So, give dirt some respect. Remember, the whole history of humanity is wrapped up in the history of dirt. But sometimes the best thing to know about dirt is just that it's so much fun to play in.

Text reprinted by permission of Cricket Magazine Group, Carus Publishing Company, from ASK magazine July/August 2004, Vol. 3, No. 6, text © 2004 by Ellen R. Braaf. "Pig," image courtesy of Lynn Stone/Bruce Coleman Inc. "Boy Covered with Mud," image courtesy of C. Lockwood/Bruce Coleman Inc.

- 27 Read the sentences from paragraph 3 in the box below.

Dirt is the home for countless living organisms. Just a handful contains more living things than all the men, women, and children on the face of the earth.

The author **most likely** compares the number of organisms in a handful of dirt to the number of people on the earth to show that

- A. many things live in dirt.
- B. dirt and humans are the same.
- C. there are not many different types of people.
- D. people have not lived as long as there has been dirt.

- 28 According to the article, how is the layer of soil covering the earth different from the skin of an apple?

- A. Soil covers only part of the surface of the earth.
- B. Soil has more minerals than the skin of an apple.
- C. Soil is a different color than the skin of an apple.
- D. Soil forms a thick coating over the surface of the earth.

- 29 According to the article, fertile soil is made of

- A. water and plants.
- B. water and oxygen.
- C. crushed rocks and plants.
- D. crushed rocks and oxygen.

- 30 According to the article, what effect does weathering have on rock?

- A. It helps form humus.
- B. It makes organic material.
- C. It causes the rock to split apart.
- D. It allows the rock to become stronger.

- 31 Which of the following phrases is an opinion from the article?

- A. “. . . dirt had to evolve.”
- B. “. . . dirt is amazing stuff!”
- C. “. . . 75 percent of the earth’s surface is water.”
- D. “. . . roots broke up more rocks to help create more soil.”

- 32 In the article, how do headings like “Endangered Dirt” help the reader?
- A. They introduce a new topic in the article.
  - B. They show that the article presents opinions.
  - C. They use words that are defined in the article.
  - D. They explain information that is in the pictures.
- 33 What makes the article nonfiction?
- A. It takes place in the past.
  - B. It introduces facts about dirt.
  - C. It presents a problem and solution.
  - D. It describes dirt in an informal way.

- 34 Read the sentence from paragraph 11 in the box below.

As the ice expands, the rock fractures.

Which of the following words could replace the word *fractures*?

- A. cools
- B. grows
- C. breaks
- D. strengthens

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 The article states that “dirt is amazing stuff!” Based on the article, explain why dirt is so important. Support your answer with important information from the article.

Three traveling soldiers have a problem when they realize that they have no food. Will the villagers help them? Read *Stone Soup* to find out, and answer the questions that follow.

## *Stone Soup*

A Russian folk tale

by James Buechler

### *Characters*

SERGEANT

PETYA

SASHA

OLGA, *a seamstress*

VERA, *a baker*

DMITRI, *a carpenter*

ANNA

MARYA

OTHER VILLAGERS

TIME: *Two hundred years ago.*

SETTING: *A village street in old Russia. Three houses stand along the street, and through large windows we see the interior of each house—a carpenter's shop, a bakery, and a seamstress's shop. There is a stream with stones right.*

AT RISE: *DMITRI is at work in the carpenter's shop, VERA works in the bakery kitchen, and OLGA sits sewing in the seamstress's shop. Three soldiers enter, and walk down the street. SERGEANT carries an old-fashioned rifle; PETYA, a knapsack; SASHA, a large cooking pot.*

10 SERGEANT (*To soldiers*): Cheer up, you two! We've come through the forest safely. I'm sure the people of this village will share their dinner with us.

SASHA: I hope so. My stomach is empty. It feels like a cave. (SERGEANT *knocks at OLGA's door.*)

OLGA (*Calling out of her window*): Who is it?

15 SERGEANT: Only three loyal soldiers, tramping home across Russia, after fighting for the Czar.<sup>1</sup> Can you spare us some food, good woman?

OLGA: Food! No, I have nothing. Our harvest was bad. You will find nothing here. (*Turns from window*)

PETYA (*Knocking at VERA's door*): Hello in there!

<sup>1</sup> Czar — the ruler of Russia

- 20 VERA (*At window*): What is it you want?  
PETYA: Some supper, if you have any. Here are three loyal soldiers tramping home across Russia.  
VERA: I am sorry to see you so hungry, but you have come to the wrong shop. It is everyone for himself in these times! (*Turns away*)
- 25 SASHA (*Losing his patience*): Let's see if our luck is better here. (*Knocks at DMITRI's door.*)  
DMITRI (*Angrily*): Who are you, anyway? Sensible men are inside their houses, working.  
SASHA: Three soldiers, sir. It would be kind of you to share your dinner  
30 with us.  
DMITRI: I have just enough dinner for myself. If I share, I eat one quarter of a dinner, and so do you (*Pointing*), and you, and you. We shall all be hungry afterward. What good will that be? No, I do not believe in sharing. It is a very bad idea. (*Turns away*)
- 35 PETYA: What selfish people these are!  
SASHA (*Decisively*): They do not know how to share.  
SERGEANT: Let's teach this fellow a lesson!  
PETYA: No, no! We won't rob anyone.  
SERGEANT: Of course not, Petya. All I meant was to teach these peasants to  
40 make stone soup.  
SASHA (*Catching on*): Aha, stone soup!  
PETYA (*Laughing*): Just the thing. (*The three huddle together, whispering. Meanwhile, DMITRI comes to window again.*)  
DMITRI: Still here, you vagabonds?<sup>2</sup> If you have no food, it's your lookout.  
45 Why aren't you on your way?  
SERGEANT (*Pretending not to hear*): Firewood, Sasha! Prepare the kettle, Petya. We will build our fire here, on this spot. (*SASHA goes off left; PETYA finds two Y-shaped sticks on the ground.*)  
PETYA: We can use these to hang the kettle, Sergeant. (*Sets sticks in place*)  
50 SERGEANT: Perfect, Petya. Now for the stones. We must see if they have nourishing stones in this village. Go and find some in that stream over there. (*PETYA takes kettle to right and throws some stones noisily into it. OLGA and VERA turn to windows, watching him. SASHA enters with dead branch.*) Good! That will burn well and heat our soup quickly. (*SASHA lays  
55 fire, pretends to light it.*)

<sup>2</sup> *vagabonds* — people who move from place to place without a fixed home

SASHA: What kind of stones will we use for our soup tonight?

SERGEANT: What kind do you want?

SASHA: Oh, something filling! Granite is a good stone, now. I always like a granite soup. It has body. It sticks to your ribs! (PETYA *brings kettle to center, rattling stones*. DMITRI, VERA, and OLGA *leave houses, come near fire*. ANNA and MARYA *enter, followed by OTHER VILLAGERS*.)

DMITRI (*Tugging SERGEANT'S sleeve*): Excuse me.

SERGEANT: Eh? Oh, it is you, my friend.

DMITRI: I do not understand. What did you say you are cooking here?

65 SERGEANT (*In an offhand manner*): Just a stone soup. (*With sudden friendliness*) Tell me, what kind of stone do you like yourself? You might help us choose.

DMITRI: I! Why, I never heard of making soup from stones!

SASHA: Never heard of Stone Soup?

70 PETYA: I don't believe it.

SERGEANT (*To DMITRI*): Come, sir. If you are not joking, you must dine with us. (PETYA *rattles kettle*.) Have you some good stones there, Petya? Let Sasha choose tonight.

SASHA (*Examining stones*): Hm-m! This chunky one—it will be good! Washed down from the mountains, it has a flavor of snow on it. Ugh! Throw that one away. A flat stone, a flat taste.

PETYA: How about the red one?

SERGEANT: No, no, that is only an old fireplace brick—it will have a smoky taste. Nothing but fresh stones tonight. We shall have a guest.

80 SASHA: Fill the kettle, Petya. My fire is ready. (PETYA *dips water from well into kettle and hangs kettle over fire*.)

SERGEANT (*To DMITRI*): Have you a spoon? We soldiers often make do with a stick. But for a guest, the soup will need proper stirring and tasting.

DMITRI: I have just the thing—it has a nice long handle. It is in perfect condition. I have not had guests in five years.

85 SERGEANT (*Clapping him on back*): Splendid, you generous man! (DMITRI *goes inside for spoon*.)

ANNA (*To MARYA*): What's this? The soldiers are making a soup from stones?

MARYA (*Nodding*): Stones from our own brook. That soldier put them in. I saw him myself.

SASHA (*Sniffing*): Oh, it makes me hungry!

DMITRI (*Returning with spoon*): Here you are. Please be careful.

- SERGEANT: Sir, you shall be served first. (*Stirs, tastes.*)
- MARYA: I am more hungry than usual. It must be the smell of this soup they  
95 are cooking.
- ANNA: I must have a cold, for I can smell nothing.
- MARYA (*Sniffing*): Yes, I am very hungry, indeed. I have worked in the fields  
since morning, with no lunch, either. What good soup! (SERGEANT, SASHA,  
and PETYA each taste by turns, and smack lips.)
- 100 OLGA: Is it good?
- PETYA: Good.
- DMITRI: Good? (*Reaches for spoon*)
- SASHA (*Keeping spoon away from him*): Oh, so good!
- SERGEANT: It might stand an onion, though. Onion is very good for pulling the  
105 flavor from a stone.
- OLGA: You know, I might find an onion in my house.
- 1ST VILLAGER: Hurry then, Olga. Get some. (OLGA *exits.*)
- SASHA (*Tasting*): A whiff of carrot, Sergeant? (VILLAGERS *look at each other.*)
- VERA: Perhaps I could fetch some carrots for this soup.
- 110 SERGEANT: That is gracious of you. And will you bring a bowl for yourself,  
as well? You must dine with us. (VERA *goes inside as OLGA returns with  
onions.*)
- OLGA: Use what you like. I should like to learn to make this soup. (SERGEANT  
*adds onions, tastes. PETYA tastes also.*)
- 115 PETYA: Just a bit of potato, perhaps? I cannot say that stone soup is ever quite  
right without a potato or two.
- OLGA: That is true. A stone is certainly nothing without a potato! (VERA *returns  
with carrots and bowl. SERGEANT adds carrots.*)
- MARYA (*To VILLAGERS*): Vera was invited, did you hear? How can we be invited  
120 as well? (*They whisper together. ANNA goes off right. MARYA calls out*) If  
you need some potatoes for that soup of yours, I have a sack in my cottage!  
(ANNA *appears with sack. Both give it to SERGEANT.*)
- SERGEANT: Many thanks. Please stay for dinner. And now, Sasha, to business!  
(*Tasting*) Add a potato. . . . another . . . . another. (SASHA *is already ahead  
of SERGEANT'S count.*) No, stop, Sasha. Stop!
- 125 DMITRI: What is the matter, Sergeant?
- SERGEANT: Too many potatoes! The potatoes have absorbed the flavor of the  
stones.
- VILLAGERS (*Ad lib*): Oh, too bad! What a shame! (*Etc.*)
- 130 MARYA: Is there nothing we can do?

- PETYA: I have a suggestion. Meat and potatoes go well together. Let's add some meat.
- DMITRI: I have a ham that will do the trick. Wait here. (*Goes inside*)
- SERGEANT: It might work, at that. (*DMITRI returns with ham.*)
- 135 2ND VILLAGER: Good for you, Dmitri!
- 1ST VILLAGER: Quick thinking!
- All (*Applauding*): Hurrah, hurrah! (*SERGEANT adds ham.*)
- MARYA: Can anyone make this stone soup?
- PETYA: Oh, yes. All you need are stones, fire, water—and hungry people.
- 140 ANNA (*Impatiently*): Well, how is it now, soldier? It smells delicious.
- SERGEANT (*Tasting*): Hm. Some stones, as you may know, contain salt in them. These from your brook do not seem to be that kind. (*OLGA goes inside.*)
- OLGA (*Returning*): Here is your salt. (*SERGEANT adds salt, with flourish.*)
- SERGEANT: Friends, I know this will be a very good soup. You have fine stones
- 145 in this village, no doubt of that! Stay and eat with us, one and all. (*VILLAGERS cheer and mill about. 1ST VILLAGER goes offstage, returns at once with bowls. SERGEANT fills them and all taste soup.*)
- DMITRI: Truly a delicious soup, soldiers!
- ANNA: A hearty flavor!
- 150 MARYA: It fills you up!
- DMITRI: And to think, neighbors, it's made only of stones! (*SOLDIERS now advance to stage front and hold out their bowls of soup.*)
- SOLDIERS (*To audience*): Yes, think! It's made only of stones! (*Curtain.*)

THE END

- 36 Read the sentences from line 12 of the play in the box below.

SASHA: I hope so. My stomach is empty. It feels like a cave.

What does Sasha mean in the sentences?

- A. He is very funny.
- B. He is very hungry.
- C. His stomach is large.
- D. His stomach is round.

- 37 Read the sentences from lines 23 and 24 of the play in the box below.

VERA: I am sorry to see you so hungry, but you have come to the wrong shop. It is everyone for himself in these times!

What does Vera mean when she says that it is “everyone for himself”?

- A. People do not like each other.
- B. People do not help each other.
- C. People do not know each other.
- D. People do not talk to each other.

- 38 In lines 31–34, what reason does Dmitri give for not wanting to share his food with Sergeant, Petya, and Sasha?
- A. He does not have anything to eat.
  - B. Everyone will get smaller helpings.
  - C. He does not know how to cook well.
  - D. Everyone will complain about his food.

- 39 Based on the play, what is the **main** reason that Sergeant, Petya, and Sasha make stone soup?

- A. They know the villagers are good cooks.
- B. They know the villagers enjoy stone soup.
- C. They want to make the villagers try stone soup.
- D. They want to trick the villagers into sharing food.

- 40 Read the sentences from lines 102 and 103 in the box below.

DMITRI: Good? (*Reaches for spoon*)  
 SASHA (*Keeping spoon away from him*): Oh, so good!

What is the purpose of the phrases in parentheses?

- A. to describe the setting of the play
- B. to show the lines a narrator speaks
- C. to tell how the characters should act
- D. to give new information to the audience

**Grade 4 English Language Arts  
Reading Comprehension  
Spring 2007 Released Items:  
Reporting Categories, Standards, and Correct Answers**

Item No.	Page No.	Reporting Category	Standard	Correct Answer (MC)*
1	48	<i>Reading and Literature</i>	13	B
2	48	<i>Reading and Literature</i>	13	B
3	48	<i>Reading and Literature</i>	15	D
4	48	<i>Reading and Literature</i>	13	D
5	49	<i>Reading and Literature</i>	13	A
6	49	<i>Reading and Literature</i>	13	A
7	49	<i>Language</i>	4	D
8	50	<i>Reading and Literature</i>	13	
9	54	<i>Reading and Literature</i>	16	D
10	54	<i>Reading and Literature</i>	16	C
11	54	<i>Reading and Literature</i>	16	D
12	54	<i>Language</i>	4	B
13	57	<i>Reading and Literature</i>	14	C
14	57	<i>Reading and Literature</i>	14	D
15	57	<i>Reading and Literature</i>	14	B
16	57	<i>Language</i>	5	B
17	58	<i>Reading and Literature</i>	14	
18	61	<i>Reading and Literature</i>	8	B
19	61	<i>Reading and Literature</i>	12	C
20	61	<i>Reading and Literature</i>	8	B
21	61	<i>Reading and Literature</i>	12	D
22	62	<i>Reading and Literature</i>	8	D
23	62	<i>Reading and Literature</i>	12	A
24	62	<i>Language</i>	5	D
25	62	<i>Language</i>	4	C
26	62	<i>Reading and Literature</i>	12	
27	66	<i>Reading and Literature</i>	13	A
28	66	<i>Reading and Literature</i>	8	A
29	66	<i>Reading and Literature</i>	8	C
30	66	<i>Reading and Literature</i>	8	C
31	66	<i>Reading and Literature</i>	13	B
32	67	<i>Reading and Literature</i>	13	A
33	67	<i>Reading and Literature</i>	10	B
34	67	<i>Language</i>	4	C
35	68	<i>Reading and Literature</i>	13	
36	74	<i>Reading and Literature</i>	17	B
37	74	<i>Language</i>	4	B
38	74	<i>Reading and Literature</i>	17	B
39	74	<i>Reading and Literature</i>	17	D
40	74	<i>Reading and Literature</i>	17	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.

