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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 to assess learning standards from the *Curriculum Framework's* **Language** and **Reading and Literature** strands

## A. Composition

The spring 2009 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 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 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 Scoring Guides for the MCAS English Language Arts Composition are available at [www.doe.mass.edu/mcas/student/elacomp\\_scoreguide.html](http://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 4

### Grade 4 Writing Prompt

#### WRITING PROMPT

Think about a time you were helpful. For example, maybe you helped a new student feel comfortable in school, helped a teacher with a job in the classroom, helped with a project in your neighborhood or school, or helped to care for an animal.

Write a story about a time you were helpful. Give enough details for readers to understand how you were helpful.

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 gave a special gift to someone. It may have been a gift for a holiday, a gift of thanks, or a gift just to show that you cared about the person.

Write a story about a time when you gave a special gift to someone. Include enough details in your story to show why giving the gift meant a lot to you.

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 2009 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 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 4 ELA Reading Comprehension test included three 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 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 released item’s reporting category and the *Framework* general standard it assesses. The correct answers for released multiple-choice questions are also displayed in the table.

# English Language Arts

## READING COMPREHENSION: SESSION 1

### 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.

*Have you ever wondered what it would be like to train as an astronaut? Each year, many children have that opportunity when they spend a week at U.S. Space Academy. Read the selection to learn more about their experiences and answer the questions that follow.*

# ULTIMATE

## Field Trip 5:

### Blasting Off to Space Academy

*by Susan E. Goodman*

### COUNTDOWN TO ADVENTURE

- 1 WHAT'S THE BEST PART of being an astronaut? Is it the thrill of rocketing out of Earth's atmosphere at 25,000 miles per hour? Is it the chance to make new scientific discoveries? Or is it the adventure of leaving the familiar behind and going, as someone once put it, "where no man has gone before?"
- 2 Few people actually get to answer these questions by traveling into space. But some kids took the first step by going to U.S. Space Academy at the United States Space and Rocket Center in Huntsville, Alabama. For almost a week they used the same simulators<sup>1</sup> that real astronauts use and learned how to walk on the Moon and work without gravity. They built their own rockets and visited the ones scientists used to launch the Apollo astronauts to the Moon. They tried tasting space food and wearing space suits. They learned how to eat in space, sleep in space, even how to go to the bathroom without any gravity.

#### AMAZING SPACE FACT

The last time astronauts walked on the Moon was in 1972, but all of their footprints are still there. Since the Moon does not have an atmosphere, there is no wind to blow the prints away.

<sup>1</sup> *simulators* — machines that allow a person to experience what it is like to fly a plane, travel in space, etc., by using computer technology, film, and movement

3 During their training they became a team, Team Europa, named after one of Jupiter’s seven moons. Then, Europa blasted off on a mission of its own. . . .

**ON THE TRAINING FLOOR**

4 “EUROPA, THE TRAINING CENTER is a dirt-free zone,” said Paul. “Gum and drinks can create disasters here.”

5 Paul, one of Europa’s team leaders, led the kids through a maze of strange-looking machines. As they walked, the kids peeked at other teams jumping high enough to dunk a basketball and spinning in what looked like a giant gyroscope.<sup>2</sup> Paul explained that astronauts trained for years before going into space. It takes lots of practice to learn how to function in such a different environment. On space walks, for example, they must make delicate repairs while floating upside down. In their ships they must learn how to drift rather than walk through the air.

6 How do they learn these things while anchored by Earth’s gravity? To find out, Europa tried some of the simulators that astronauts have used.

**THE 1/6 GRAVITY CHAIR**

7 “The Moon has only one-sixth of our gravity,” explained Paul. “If you weigh one hundred twenty pounds here, you’d only weigh twenty pounds on



“I felt like I was on a trampoline,” said Lindsay, “but I didn’t go down—just up!”

<sup>2</sup> *gyroscope* — a wheel that spins inside a frame and causes the frame to balance in any position

the Moon. And you'd have to learn to walk differently because there isn't as much traction."

8 To practice this movement, the kids used a  $\frac{1}{6}$  Gravity Chair similar to the Apollo astronauts'. In fact, Europa learned from the astronauts' experiences. The best ways to get around were a slow jog and the bunny hop.

9 John waited impatiently while Paul adjusted the chair to offset five-sixths of his weight.

10 "Bunny hop for me," said Paul.

11 "You've got to be kidding," answered John. "I can barely reach the ground."

12 Soon, however, he was leaping across the training floor.

13 "This looks like good practice for the high jump," said Stephanie.

14 "It shouldn't be; you want to jump for distance, not height," said Paul. "Astronaut Charlie Duke of *Apollo 16* tried to set a height record. But his life-support pack changed his center of gravity. He landed on his back and couldn't get up, just like a beetle. If John Young hadn't been around to help him, he could have been stuck there until *Apollo 17!*"

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## SPACE SHOT

15 "This is your last chance to change your mind," said the operator. "Once the generator has been charged, we cannot stop."

16 In just seconds, the kids were blasting off on the Space Shot. They would rocket skyward with a force of 4 Gs, one more than astronauts experience during their launches. All that force



Some people call the Space Shot "an elevator with an attitude."

meant that, for a few seconds at the top, before gravity pulled them back, the kids could feel what it was like to be weightless.

17 NASA doesn't use the Space Shot to simulate weightlessness; it trains astronauts aboard its KC-135 airplane. The plane climbs sharply and then free-falls straight toward the ground, up again, then down again, and again. For twenty-five seconds, at the top of each roller-coaster ride, the plane's passengers are weightless. But many astronauts have paid a price for this amazing experience. The KC-135 is nicknamed the "Vomit Comet" for good reason.

18 "I wish I hadn't eaten so much breakfast," said Erin S. as she waited for her turn on the Space Shot. "I'm going to scream. It helps you not throw up."

19 Before her second ride, Erin was too excited to feel sick. "I love that feeling of just shooting up there," she said.

20 "Then you rise up out of your chair and float there for a second," said Stacy. "Weightlessness, I wish it lasted a lot longer."

## THE POOL

21 Another way the earthbound astronauts simulate working in weightlessness is by going underwater. At Houston's Lyndon B. Johnson Space Center, astronauts practice in a huge water tank holding a full-scale model of the Shuttle's payload bay. At Space Academy, the kids went to a swimming pool.

22 "Your job is to build a cube underwater as fast as possible," said Bethany. "It takes teamwork, an ability to work in weightlessness, and—something astronauts don't need, I hope—an ability to hold your breath."

23 The water started boiling as kids grabbed struts and dove underwater. It kept boiling as they came up for air again and again, slowly realizing they needed a better plan. . . .

24 "Ten minutes and fifty-six seconds," Bethany said when they finally finished. "Well, every astronaut has to start somewhere. How could you have gone faster?"

25 "Talk more to each other?" said Isabelle.

26 "That's right," Bethany agreed. "Communication, letting your leaders lead, and teamwork. It's true in the pool, and it will be even more important when you work to make your own space mission a real success."

- 1 What is the **most likely** reason the author asks questions in paragraph 1?
- A. to list the training center’s activities
  - B. to highlight the astronaut’s duties
  - C. to describe the selection’s topic
  - D. to grab the reader’s interest

- 2 Based on the selection, what is the **main** reason that kids visit U.S. Space Academy?
- A. to meet real astronauts
  - B. to view rocket launches
  - C. to ride in a real spacecraft
  - D. to learn about space travel

- 3 Based on the selection, what is the **main** purpose of the 1/6 Gravity Chair?
- A. to teach kids how to sit in space
  - B. to teach kids how to work underwater
  - C. to teach kids how to walk on the Moon
  - D. to teach kids how to be part of the Apollo team

- 4 Read the sentence from paragraph 15 in the box below.

“This is your last chance to change your mind,” said the operator.

- What does the sentence suggest about a ride on the Space Shot?
- A. It will be loud.
  - B. It will be busy.
  - C. It will be short.
  - D. It will be scary.

- 5 In paragraph 17, which sentence is the topic sentence?
- A. NASA doesn't use the Space Shot to simulate weightlessness; it trains astronauts aboard its KC-135 airplane.
  - B. The plane climbs sharply and then free-falls straight toward the ground, up again, then down again, and again.
  - C. For twenty-five seconds, at the top of each roller-coaster ride, the plane's passengers are weightless.
  - D. The KC-135 is nicknamed the "Vomit Comet" for good reason.
- 6 Based on the section titled "The Pool," how could the students have improved their work on the cube?
- A. by listening to their instructors
  - B. by talking with their teammates
  - C. by practicing in their spare time
  - D. by reading their instruction books
- 7 Based on the selection, which of the following statements about space is true?
- A. Strong winds in space can blow astronauts over.
  - B. Underwater projects in space are difficult to complete.
  - C. Cooking food in space is similar to cooking food on Earth.
  - D. Moving around in space is different from moving around on Earth.
- 8 Which sentence from the selection is an opinion?
- A. "Europa, the training center is a dirt-free zone," said Paul.
  - B. "The Moon has only one-sixth of our gravity," explained Paul.
  - C. "This looks like good practice for the high jump," said Stephanie.
  - D. "Your job is to build a cube underwater as fast as possible," said Bethany.

**Question 9 is an open-response question.**

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

**Write your answer to question 9 in the space provided in your Student Answer Booklet.**

- 9** Based on the selection, explain how the experiences at U.S. Space Academy help kids understand what it is like to be in space. Support your answer with important information from the selection.

# English Language Arts

## READING COMPREHENSION: SESSION 2

### DIRECTIONS

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

*Ida's class is disappointed to learn that their teacher, Ms. W., has a sore throat and won't be able to read aloud to them. Ms. W. suggests that a guest reader help her by beginning their new book. Will Ida be able to save the day? Read the chapter from the book *Ida B* to find out, and answer the questions that follow.*

## from *Ida B*

### . . . and Her Plans to Maximize Fun, Avoid Disaster, and (Possibly) Save the World

by Katherine Hannigan

- 1 “Ida, since I know you’ve read the book,” she said to me weakly, like it was her last request, “could you please read the first chapter today?”
- 2 Well, I was so shocked and embarrassed, sitting there with my mouth wide open, that I almost couldn’t tell that all the other kids were staring at me with their mouths wide open, too. Making words into story music like Ms. W. did was the one thing I wanted to do more than just about anything in the world. But telling a story out loud in front of my class at Ernest B. Lawson Elementary School was nearly the last thing I’d want to do in my entire life. I was so confused about whether I should be happy or scared, I just sat there.
- 3 Ms. W. got up, walked over to me, put her face next to my stunned and frozen one, and whispered, “Ida, I need your help.”
- 4 And there I was, hypnotized\* by that woman again. I was like a dog that would go fetch Ms. W.’s stick, even if it was in a snake’s hole under a thorn bush that had just been sprayed by a skunk.
- 5 I looked at Ms. W., just scared now, because I knew I was going to do it but I didn’t know how.
- 6 “I know you’ll be great,” she croaked.

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\* *hypnotized* — put in a sleeplike condition

- 7 And in my head I was already trotting off, looking for that stick, even though I could smell the stink and the thorns were pricking me.
- 8 “Do you want to sit there, or in my chair?” Ms. W. asked.
- 9 “I’ll sit here,” I mumbled.
- 10 She set the book down on my desk, brought her chair over, sat down next to me, put her head back, and closed her eyes.
- 11 “Whenever you’re ready, Ida,” she rasped.
- . . .
- 12 I got tingly in my fingers thinking about opening up the book and reading those words out loud, making my voice go high and low, rough and smooth, like I did in my room. But my legs were shivering like they were out in a blizzard, and my stomach was flipping forward, then backward, forward, then backward, thinking about all of those people looking at me and hearing my voice.
- 13 I closed my eyes, put my right hand on top of the book, and passed it lightly across the cover. It was cool and smooth like a stone from the bottom of the brook, and it stilled me. A whole other world is inside there, I thought to myself, and that’s where I want to be.
- 14 I opened the book and got ready to read the title, but I could feel everybody’s eyes on me, crowding me so there was hardly any air. The only sounds that came out of me were little peeps, like a baby bird chirping “*Alexandra Potemkin and the Space Shuttle to Planet Z.*”
- 15 Ms. Washington, with her eyes still closed, leaned over and whispered, “You’ll have to read louder, honey, so everyone can hear.”
- 16 “Yes, ma’am,” I whispered back. I took a deep breath, filled my stomach up with air, and then made my muscles squeeze it out, so it pushed a big gust of wind over my voice box and out my mouth.
- 17 “Chapter One,” I bellowed. My voice was so loud it surprised me, and I jumped back a little in my chair.
- 18 But nobody laughed. They were listening.
- 19 The book is about Alexandra, and her parents think she is quite difficult, but actually she is a genius who is assisting the also-genius scientist Professor Zelinski in her quest to explore the lost planet Z. Alexandra gets into some trouble, but really she is just a very focused person.

20 At first, I was worrying about all of those people watching and listening. But after a few minutes, I left that classroom and went into the story. I was in Alexandra’s laboratory instead of at school, and I was just saying out loud everything I saw her do or felt her feel. I let my voice tell the way she did it and saw it and felt it.

21 And I was so looking forward to seeing what happened next, I forgot that I was reading. All of a sudden it was the end of the chapter and it was like I was snatched out of a dream and couldn’t quite recall where I was. I looked around and saw I was sitting at a desk, there was a book in front of me, kids were staring at me, and slowly I remembered.

22 I glanced over at Ms. W., and she smiled and whispered, “Thank you very much, Ida. That was lovely.”

23 I handed Ms. W. the book, and we got back to work and everything was just like always, except that Ms. W. had to write all the instructions on the board instead of talking them.

24 At study time when I went to Ronnie’s desk, he looked right in my eyes and said, “You read real good, Ida.” And this time it was me staring down at my shoes like they might disappear if I didn’t keep watching them.

25 My throat got stopped up so I could hardly say, “Thank you.”

26 Nothing was different except the warm glow that was in my belly and my arms and my legs and my head and wouldn’t go away. Even on the long, cruddy bus ride home.

- 10 In paragraph 2, what does Ida mean when she says that Ms. W. makes words into “story music”?
- A. Ms. W. reads books quickly.
  - B. Ms. W. reads with expression.
  - C. Ms. W. plays music while she reads.
  - D. Ms. W. sings the words in the books.

- 11 Read the sentences from paragraph 13 in the box below.

I closed my eyes, put my right hand on top of the book, and passed it lightly across the cover. It was cool and smooth like a stone from the bottom of the brook, and it stilled me.

- Which two things are being compared in the sentences?
- A. a hand and a stone
  - B. a stone and a brook
  - C. the book cover and a stone
  - D. the book cover and a brook

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

A whole other world is inside there, I thought to myself, and that’s where I want to be.

What does Ida **most likely** mean in the sentence?

- A. The book takes her by surprise.
  - B. The book is challenging to read.
  - C. The book is written about outer space.
  - D. The book takes her imagination to another place.
- 13 According to the chapter, who is Alexandra?
- A. a student in Ida’s class
  - B. the person Ida dreams about
  - C. a friend of Ida’s who is very smart
  - D. the main character in the book Ida reads

- 14 In paragraph 20, what does Ida mean when she says, “I left that classroom and went into the story”?
- A. She went to the library and found another book to read.
  - B. She forgot she was nervous and started to enjoy the story.
  - C. She became tired of the story, so she made one up instead.
  - D. She felt the room was too loud, so she went someplace quiet.

- 15 What lesson does Ida learn in the chapter?
- A. Always help adults when they are feeling ill.
  - B. Try new things, even when they are challenging.
  - C. Always practice reading to yourself before you read to others.
  - D. Keep trying to get things right, even when people laugh at you.

- 16 Read the sentence from paragraph 26 in the box below.

Nothing was different except the warm glow that was in my belly and my arms and my legs and my head and wouldn't go away.

- Which of the following words is an adjective as it is used in the sentence?
- A. Nothing
  - B. warm
  - C. belly
  - D. away

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 According to the chapter, why does reading to the class make Ida feel **both** happy and scared at the same time? Support your answer with important details from the chapter.

**Grade 4 English Language Arts  
Reading Comprehension  
Spring 2009 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	27	<i>Reading and Literature</i>	15	D
2	27	<i>Reading and Literature</i>	13	D
3	27	<i>Reading and Literature</i>	13	C
4	27	<i>Reading and Literature</i>	13	D
5	28	<i>Reading and Literature</i>	13	A
6	28	<i>Reading and Literature</i>	13	B
7	28	<i>Reading and Literature</i>	13	D
8	28	<i>Reading and Literature</i>	8	C
9	29	<i>Reading and Literature</i>	13	
10	33	<i>Reading and Literature</i>	12	B
11	33	<i>Reading and Literature</i>	15	C
12	33	<i>Reading and Literature</i>	15	D
13	33	<i>Reading and Literature</i>	8	D
14	34	<i>Reading and Literature</i>	15	B
15	34	<i>Reading and Literature</i>	11	B
16	34	<i>Language</i>	5	B
17	35	<i>Reading and Literature</i>	12	

\* 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 website later this year.