
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 *English Language Arts Curriculum Framework's* **Language** and **Reading and Literature** strands

A. Composition

The spring 2010 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.

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.

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

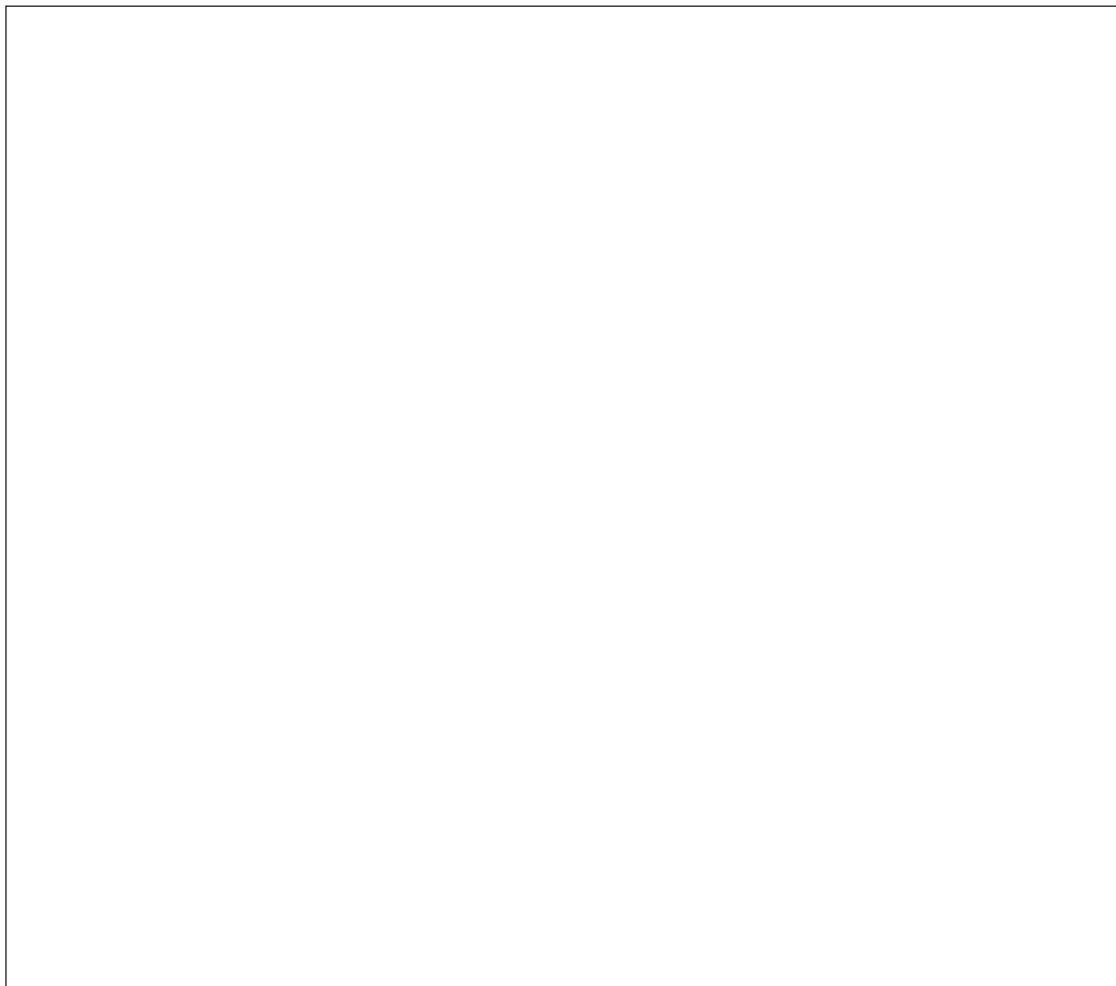
Grade 4 Writing Prompt

WRITING PROMPT

Think about a time when school was closed and you had the day off.

Write a story about what you did on your day off from school. Give enough details in your story to show readers how you spent your day.

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

Write a story about a time when something funny or unusual happened. Give enough details in your story to show readers why the event was funny or unusual.

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 2010 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.

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 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 fifteen 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 roller coasters were like in the past or how they were invented? Read the article to find out and answer the questions that follow.

Word Bank

Golden Age of Roller Coasters—a period during the 1920s when roller coasters were very popular

gravity ride—any ride that uses gravity for power

theme park—an amusement park built around an idea, such as a historical event or entertainment personality

whiplash—a severe sprain of the neck caused by sudden movement or twisting of the head

Coaster History

by Gil Chandler

- 1 The Russians built the very first **gravity rides** in the 1600s. In winter, they built high wooden ramps and covered them with water, which soon became ice. The ramps were about two feet (.6 meter) wide—just wide enough for a small sled.
- 2 Passengers would climb a 70-foot (21-meter) ladder, then sit down on the sled. A helper pushed the sled onto the ramp. Down it went, speeding to the bottom of the hill and then coasting to a stop along a 600-foot (183-meter) straightaway.
- 3 People in big cities and small villages enjoyed the ice slides. They were built outside in public parks and even inside in fancy palaces. Some of the ramps had lanterns for night sliding.
- 4 In the early 1800s, a French builder brought the “Russian mountains” to Paris, the capital of France. But Russia was much colder than France, where ice turned soft in the warmer, rainy winters. So the French ran their sleds over wooden rollers. This is the origin of the term “roller coaster.”

Coasters Cross the Atlantic

- 5 In the 1870s, an old mining railway became the first gravity ride in the United States. This was the *Mauch Chunk Switchback Railway* in Pennsylvania. A steam engine

Reading Comprehension

hauled the cars up a mountain. The cars then coasted down at six miles (10 kilometers) per hour. Passengers on the *Mauch Chunk Railway* paid five cents a ride.

- 6 In 1884, LaMarcus A. Thompson designed a new coaster for Coney Island, an amusement park in Brooklyn, New York. Thompson's *Switchback Gravity Pleasure Railway* was a big hit. Thompson built 44 more of these rides in North America and Europe.

- 7 Other coaster inventors like Phillip Hinckle and Lina Beecher began working at Coney Island. Hinckle was the first to use a chain lift to get his cars up the hill. Beecher built the *Flip-Flap*, the first coaster to run upside-down through a loop. The cars had to go so fast to make it through the loop, however, that several riders suffered **whiplash**. The *Flip-Flap* soon shut down.

- 8 By the 20th century, roller coasters had much more than single cars and simple ramps. The builders put tracks through turns, hills, and figure-eights. The inventor John Miller added a third set of wheels, known as undertrack wheels. The undertrack wheels held the cars firmly on the track at high speeds and through sharp turns.

The Golden Age

- 9 Roller coasters were all the rage in the 1920s. Designers were making them taller, longer, and faster. Some lift hills climbed as high as 100 feet (30 meters).



The *Cyclone*, built in 1927, is still a popular ride today. It is one of the most copied roller coasters in the world, with seven “clones” throughout the United States, Europe, and Japan.

Reading Comprehension

The Coney Island *Cyclone*, built in 1927, rose 85 feet (26 meters) and ran at 55 miles (89 kilometers) per hour over eight steep hills.

- 10 The Depression of the 1930s and World War II (1939–1945) put an end to this **Golden Age of Roller Coasters**. Fewer people were going to amusement parks. There was a shortage of the money and materials needed to build new rides. Instead of raising new coasters, workers were tearing down hundreds of them.

Disneyland

- 11 In 1955, Walt Disney reversed this trend. He built a new amusement park in Anaheim, California. This was the first **theme park**, Disneyland.
- 12 In 1959, the *Matterhorn* opened at Disneyland. This was a steel roller coaster that turned and twisted down the sides of a miniature steel-and-concrete mountain. At the end of the ride, the cars—four-passenger bobsleds—splashed through a pool of water. It became one of the most popular rides in Disneyland.
- 13 Other theme parks appeared around the country. Each had a new roller coaster. At Six Flags Over Mid-America, in Eureka, Missouri, the *Screamin' Eagle* rose 110 feet (34 meters). In 1975, it was the highest wooden coaster in the world.

“Coaster History” by Gil Chandler, from *Roller Coasters*. Text copyright © 1995 by Capstone Press. Reprinted by permission of Capstone Press. Photograph copyright © 1987 by Tom Maglione. Reprinted by permission of Tom Maglione.

Reading Comprehension

- 1 What is the **most likely** reason the article begins with a description of the Russian ice slides?
- A. They differed from other roller coasters of the times.
 - B. They were the most dangerous type of roller coaster.
 - C. They led to the creation of roller coasters.
 - D. They were the first roller coasters to operate in the dark.
- 2 Based on the article, why were the first gravity rides ridden only in the winter?
- A. The rides were too expensive to run year-round.
 - B. The rides were too dangerous to run year-round.
 - C. The rides needed the snow to slow down the sleds.
 - D. The rides needed the cold weather to harden the ice.
- 3 Based on paragraph 4, how did the French make it possible to build gravity rides in Paris?
- A. They created thicker ramps.
 - B. They built new ramps indoors.
 - C. They built larger sleds to fit more people.
 - D. They invented a new way for sleds to travel.
- 4 Based on the article, what was one sign that roller coasters were successful?
- A. They were having fewer problems.
 - B. They were becoming less expensive.
 - C. They were taking more time to design.
 - D. They were being built around the world.

Reading Comprehension

- 5 According to paragraph 7, why did the *Flip-Flap* have to stop running?
- A. It broke down too often.
 - B. Passengers were hurt while riding it.
 - C. It was not as popular as other gravity rides.
 - D. Passengers thought it was not exciting enough.
- 6 According to paragraph 11, what role did Walt Disney play in the history of roller coasters?
- A. He invented the chain lift for the *Flip-Flap*.
 - B. He reintroduced an interest in roller coasters.
 - C. He designed the tallest roller coaster in the country.
 - D. He helped design the *Switchback Gravity Pleasure Railway*.
- 7 Based on the article, what was one way the *Matterhorn* was different from earlier roller coasters and gravity rides?
- A. It was made of steel.
 - B. It took more power to operate.
 - C. It used small cars to carry people.
 - D. It used more than one car at a time.
- 8 Which of the following statements **best** states the main idea of the article?
- A. The Golden Age was a popular time for roller coasters.
 - B. Gravity rides have been built in many different countries.
 - C. The Six Flags theme park had the tallest gravity ride in the world.
 - D. Roller coasters have become the rides they are today as a result of many improvements.

Reading Comprehension

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

A steam engine hauled the cars up a mountain.

Which word means the same as *hauled* as it is used in the sentence?

- A. pulled
- B. rushed
- C. noticed
- D. followed

- 10 In the article, the names of roller coasters are printed in

- A. italics.
- B. bold print.
- C. large print.
- D. all capital letters.

Question 11 is an open-response question.

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

Write your answer to question 11 in the space provided in your Student Answer Booklet.

- 11 Based on the article, describe how roller coasters have changed over time. Support your answer with important details from the article.

Reading Comprehension

Have you ever visited the ocean? “Hear Me” looks at the ocean from an unusual point of view. Read the poem and answer the questions that follow.

Hear Me

I am the ocean.
Give me room!
I need to stretch myself out
from shore to shore.
5 I am the ocean.

Hear my sound.
Shhh. . .Shhh. . .
And *boom!*
And *roar!*
10 I am the ocean.
I am changeable.

I can creep up the sand so slowly,
you won't even notice me.
Yet I can crash over rocks and castles.
15 I can carry your buckets out to sea.
I am the ocean.
Look out for me.

I am deeper than deep.
I am greater than great.
20 Even my floor has mountains.
I am the ocean.
What more shall I say?

I am richer than rich
Plants and creatures (all sizes and shapes),
25 coral and seaweed,
barnacles, sharks, and whales,
shells, storms, and ships are mine.
What more shall I say?

Reading Comprehension

I am the ocean.
30 I never rest.
I have energy and life.
I am constantly moving,
in and out, up and down,
around and around.
35 I am alive.
Hear my sound.

Calm,
gentle,
agitated,
40 strong—
All these I have been before.
You will never know me through and through,
though you explore, explore.

My secrets are deep.
45 I am the ocean.
I never sleep.
Shhh. . .Shhh. . .
I have secrets to keep.

—*Dee Lillegard*

“Hear Me” by Dee Lillegard, from *September to September: Poems for All Year Round*. Copyright © 1986 by Regensteiner Publishing Enterprises, Inc. Reprinted by permission of the author.

Reading Comprehension

- 12 In lines 7 and 47, the words “*Shhh. . . Shhh. . .*” describe the sound of
- A. fish.
 - B. wind.
 - C. water.
 - D. boats.
- 13 Based on the poem, why is the ocean “richer than rich”?
- A. It is very deep.
 - B. It is full of life.
 - C. It is very strong.
 - D. It is full of secrets.
- 14 Which statement would the speaker in the poem **most likely** agree with?
- A. The ocean is always still.
 - B. The ocean is never threatening.
 - C. The ocean should be respected.
 - D. The ocean should not be studied.

Reading Comprehension

- 15 What do lines 42 and 43 **most** suggest about the ocean?
- A. It is dangerous.
 - B. It is mysterious.
 - C. It is welcoming.
 - D. It is uninteresting.

- 16 Read lines 32–34 from the poem in the box below.

I am constantly moving,
in and out, up and down,
around and around.

Which of the following words means the same as *constantly*?

- A. always
- B. quietly
- C. smoothly
- D. sometimes

**Grade 4 English Language Arts
Reading Comprehension
Spring 2010 Released Items:
Reporting Categories, Standards, and Correct Answers***

Item No.	Page No.	Reporting Category	Standard	Correct Answer (MC)*
1	28	<i>Reading and Literature</i>	13	C
2	28	<i>Reading and Literature</i>	13	D
3	28	<i>Reading and Literature</i>	13	D
4	28	<i>Reading and Literature</i>	13	D
5	29	<i>Reading and Literature</i>	8	B
6	29	<i>Reading and Literature</i>	13	B
7	29	<i>Reading and Literature</i>	13	A
8	29	<i>Reading and Literature</i>	13	D
9	30	<i>Language</i>	4	A
10	30	<i>Language</i>	5	A
11	30	<i>Reading and Literature</i>	13	
12	33	<i>Reading and Literature</i>	15	C
13	33	<i>Reading and Literature</i>	14	B
14	33	<i>Reading and Literature</i>	11	C
15	34	<i>Reading and Literature</i>	14	B
16	34	<i>Language</i>	4	A

* 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.

**Grade 4 English Language Arts
Reading Comprehension
Spring 2010 Unreleased Common Items:
Reporting Categories and Standards**

Item No.	Reporting Category	Standard
17	<i>Reading and Literature</i>	13
18	<i>Reading and Literature</i>	13
19	<i>Reading and Literature</i>	13
20	<i>Reading and Literature</i>	13
21	<i>Reading and Literature</i>	13
22	<i>Reading and Literature</i>	10
23	<i>Reading and Literature</i>	13
24	<i>Reading and Literature</i>	12
25	<i>Reading and Literature</i>	12
26	<i>Reading and Literature</i>	8
27	<i>Reading and Literature</i>	12
28	<i>Reading and Literature</i>	8
29	<i>Reading and Literature</i>	12
30	<i>Reading and Literature</i>	12
31	<i>Language</i>	4
32	<i>Language</i>	6
33	<i>Language</i>	5
34	<i>Reading and Literature</i>	12
35	<i>Reading and Literature</i>	17
36	<i>Reading and Literature</i>	17
37	<i>Reading and Literature</i>	17
38	<i>Reading and Literature</i>	10
39	<i>Language</i>	4
40	<i>Reading and Literature</i>	17