
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 2011 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 memory you have of a teacher. The memory could be something funny your teacher said or did, something your teacher taught you, a field trip your teacher took you on, or a time that your teacher made you feel proud.

Write a story about a memory that you have of one of your teachers. Give enough details for readers to understand why the memory is special to you.

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 to work hard to do something. Maybe you spent a long time working on a school project, building something, learning to ride a bike, or maybe you did something else.

Write a story about a time when you had to work hard to do something and why it was hard for you. Give enough details in your story to show readers why you had to work hard.

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 2011 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.

In Toys Go Out, three toys find themselves in an unusual place. Read the selection from Toys Go Out and answer the questions that follow.

Toy Characters

StingRay—A stuffed sea creature

Plastic—A plastic bouncy ball

Lumphy—A stuffed buffalo

from **TOYS GO OUT**
by Emily Jenkins

- 1 Woosh. Woosh. The backpack begins to swing. Back and forth. Back and forth. Or maybe round and round. “I hope we’re not going to the zoo,” moans StingRay. “They’ll put us in cages with no one to talk to. Each one in a separate cage, and we’ll have to woosh back and forth all day, and do tricks on giant swings, with people throwing quarters at our faces, and teasing.”
- 2 “I don’t think we’re big enough for the zoo,” Plastic says hopefully. “I’m pretty sure they’re only interested in very large animals over there.”
- 3 “I’m large,” says Lumphy.
- 4 “She means really, really, very large,” says StingRay. “At the zoo they have stingrays the size of choo-choo trains; and plastics the size of swimming pools. Zoo buffaloes would never fit in a backpack. They eat backpacks for lunch, those buffaloes.”
- 5 “Is that true?” asks Lumphy, but nobody answers him.
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- 6 Plunk! The backpack is thrown onto the ground.
- 7 Or maybe into a trash can.
- 8 Or onto a garbage truck.

Reading Comprehension

9 “We might be going to the dump!” cries StingRay. “We’ll be tossed in a pile of old green beans, and sour milk cartons, because the Little Girl doesn’t love us anymore, and it will be icy cold all the time, and full of garbage-eating sharks, and it will smell like throw-up.”

10 “I don’t think so,” soothes Plastic.

11 “I’ll be forced to sleep on a slimy bit of used paper baggie, instead of on the big high bed with the fluffy pillows!” continues StingRay.

12 There is a noise outside the backpack. Not a big noise, but a rumbly one. “Did you hear that?” asks StingRay. “I think it is the X-ray machine. The vet is going to X-ray us one by one and look into our insides with an enormous magnifying glass, and then poke us with the giant carrot!”

13 “I’m sure it’s not an X-ray,” says Plastic calmly, although she isn’t sure at all. “An X-ray would be squeakier.”

14 “Then I think it is a lion,” cries StingRay. “A lion at the zoo who does not want to be on display with any small creatures like you and me. A lion who

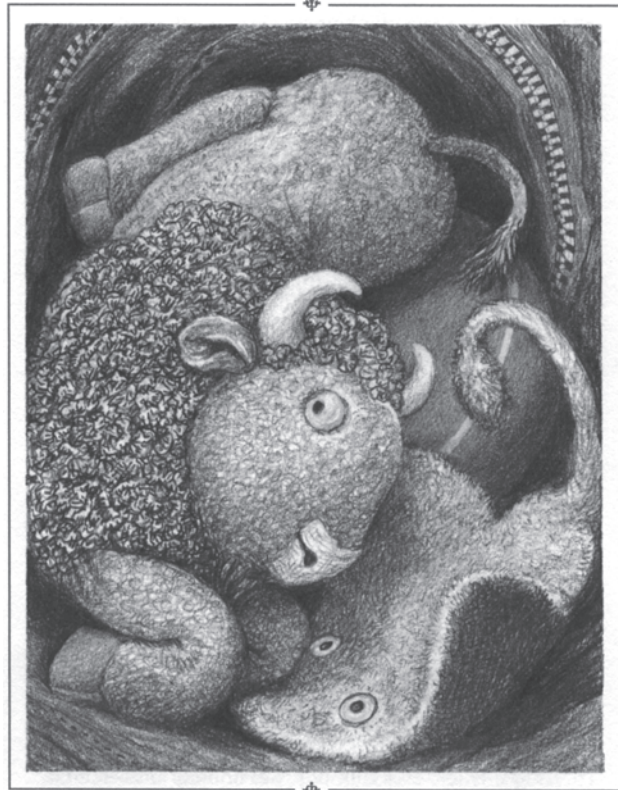
doesn’t like sharing her swing set, and wants all the quarters for herself. She is roaring because she hasn’t had any lunch yet, and her favorite food is stingrays.”

15 “A lion would be fiercer,” says Plastic, a bit uncertainly. “It would sound hungrier, I bet.”

16 “Maybe it is a giant buffalo,” suggests Lumphy.

17 “Maybe it is a dump truck!” squeals StingRay. “A big orange dump truck tipping out piles of rotten groceries on top of us, and trapping us with the garbage-eating sharks and the throw-up smell!”

18 “Wouldn’t a dump truck be louder?” asks Plastic, though she is starting to think StingRay might have a point. “I’m sure it’s not a dump truck.”



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Reading Comprehension

19 The backpack thumps down again with a bang. “I would like to be warned,” moans Lumphy. “Sudden bumps make everything worse than it already is.”

20 “The Girl doesn’t love us and she’s trying to get rid of us!” cries StingRay in a panic.

21 The backpack opens. The rumbly noise gets louder, and the light is very bright—so bright that StingRay, Plastic, and Lumphy have to squinch up their eyes and take deep breaths before they can see where they are. A pair of warm arms takes them all out of the dark, wet-bathing-suit smell together.

22 The three toys look around. There are small chairs, a sunny window, and a circle of fidgety faces.

23 It is not the vet.

24 It is not the zoo.

25 It is not the dump. (They are pretty sure.)

26 But where is it?

27 The rumbly noise surges up. A grown-up asks everyone to Please Be Quiet Now. And then comes a familiar voice.

28 “These are my best friends,” says the Little Girl who owns the backpack and sleeps in the high bed with the fluffy pillows. “My best friends in the world. That’s why I brought them to show-and-tell.”

29 “Welcome,” says the teacher.

30 Sticky, unfamiliar fingers pat Lumphy’s head and StingRay’s plush tail.

31 Plastic is held up for all to admire. “We are here to be shown and told,” she whispers to StingRay and Lumphy, feeling quite bouncy as she looks around at the schoolroom. “Not to be thrown away or put under the X-ray machine!”

32 The teacher says Lumphy looks a lot like a real buffalo. (Lumphy wonders what the teacher means by “real,” but he is too happy to worry much about it.)

33 “We’re special!” whispers StingRay. “We’re her best friends!”

34 “I knew it would be something nice,” says Plastic.

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Reading Comprehension

- 35 Funny, but the ride home is not so uncomfortable. The smell is still there, but the backpack seems rather cozy. Plastic has herself a nap.
- 36 StingRay isn't worried about vets and zoos and garbage dumps anymore; she curls herself into a ball by Lumphy's buffalo stomach. "The Little Girl loves us," she tells him. "I knew it all along, really. I just didn't want to say."
- 37 Lumphy licks StingRay's head once, and settles down to wait. When he knows where he is going, traveling isn't so bad. And right now, he is going home.

Toys Go Out: Being the Adventures of a Knowledgeable Stingray, a Toughy Little Buffalo, and Someone Called Plastic by Emily Jenkins.
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Reading Comprehension

- 1 At the beginning of paragraph 1, the word “woosh” describes
- A. the appearance of the backpack.
 - B. the sound the backpack makes.
 - C. the appearance of the cages.
 - D. the sound the people make.
- 2 According to the selection, what is **one** reason StingRay is afraid to go to the zoo?
- A. She does not like to sleep on piles of trash.
 - B. She does not like to travel in the backpack.
 - C. She does not want to be apart from her friends.
 - D. She does not want anyone to look at her insides.
- 3 In paragraph 15, Plastic thinks that what she hears is not a lion because the sound is not
- A. close enough.
 - B. deep enough.
 - C. long enough.
 - D. wild enough.
- 4 What happens in paragraph 21?
- A. The story changes.
 - B. A lesson is learned.
 - C. A problem is described.
 - D. The narrator is introduced.
- 5 According to the selection, where are the toys when they come out of the backpack?
- A. at a park
 - B. in a house
 - C. at a restaurant
 - D. in a classroom

Reading Comprehension

- 6 What does paragraph 32 **mostly** show about Lumphy?
- A. He does not trust the teacher.
 - B. He thinks buffaloes are funny.
 - C. He does not realize that he is a toy.
 - D. He wants to look like the other toys.
- 7 In paragraph 37, what is the **most likely** reason Lumphy licks StingRay's head?
- A. He cares about StingRay.
 - B. He thinks StingRay is dirty.
 - C. He wants to take StingRay's spot.
 - D. He wants to get StingRay's attention.
- 8 Which of the following **best** shows that the selection is fiction?
- A. The toys are taken outside.
 - B. The toys are loved by a child.
 - C. The toys are talking to each other.
 - D. The toys are carried in a backpack.

- 9 Read the sentence from paragraph 22 in the box below.

There are small chairs, a sunny window, and a circle of fidgety faces.

In the sentence, the words *small*, *sunny*, and *fidgety* are all

- A. verbs.
 - B. nouns.
 - C. adverbs.
 - D. adjectives.
- 10 Based on paragraph 27, which word means the same as *surges*?
- A. rises
 - B. rides
 - C. slows
 - D. surprises

Reading Comprehension

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 selection, describe how StingRay and Plastic are different from one another. Support your answer with important details from the selection.

Reading Comprehension

In the selection, a boy named Journey is visiting his grandparents on their farm. While he is there, Journey looks at photographs of his sister Cat, his grandparents, and baby Emmett. Read the selection and answer the questions that follow.

from *Journey*
by Patricia MacLachlan

- 1 Summer rains came, soft at first, with mists that lay like lace over the meadows. When the sky grew darker and the rain steady, Grandma sent us out to gather peonies.¹ Grumbling, we carried dripping pink and white armfuls into the house, filling all the pitchers we could find and a washtub in the kitchen. The smell filled the house, and so did the ants that crawled down from the blooms, crisscrossing the house like sightseers.
- 2 Grandfather, restless, lurked through the hallways, taking pictures with the new flash attachment bought in town and breaking into sudden dances of ant-stomping. Blasts of light popped everywhere until Grandma ran out of patience.
- 3 “I have spots in front of my eyes, Marcus! I can’t read! Go away. Be a farmer.”
- 4 Grandfather was insulted.
- 5 “I am a farmer who takes pictures,” he said haughtily. Then he brightened. “I am a photographer-farmer.”
- 6 Grandma, only a little amused, banished him to the barn, where I watched him take cow close-ups until the cows, bothered by the lights, showed him their backsides.
- 7 “Maybe the chickens,” he muttered.
- 8 I stood behind Grandfather, trying to see what he saw through the camera. Then I walked to the back of the barn where his pictures hung, looking again at the familiar ones of Grandma and Cat and me. There were new ones, too—Grandma smiling from the stove, and one of Cat hoeing in the garden with a fierce look, the hoe poised above the soil as if she might be killing a black snake. And then I saw it—the picture I had taken of Grandfather with Emmett on his

¹ *peonies* — garden plants with large flowers

Reading Comprehension

knees, Emmett’s mouth opened, light from the window around them both. The edges were blurred and soft, as if it were a painting. Or a memory. *Trot, trot to Boston.*² For a moment I felt like I was Emmett, sitting on someone’s knees. Someone who sang to me. I stared, goose bumps coming up on my arms. I stepped back to bend down to see the picture better and bumped up against Grandfather standing behind me.

9 “You moved the camera,” he said. “That’s why the edges are fuzzy.”

10 I nodded.

11 “It’s not a good picture, I guess.”

12 “Journey,” said Grandfather, his voice soft, “it is a wonderful picture.”

13 “But I moved the camera.”

14 “You did. See how it looks like Emmett and I are the only ones there, how we look like we’re wrapped in a cocoon, away from the rest of the world? See how the edges frame us?”

15 Grandfather’s voice rose with excitement, and I smiled even though I didn’t want to.

16 “Well,” I said, embarrassed and pleased. “Well, it’s not perfect.”

17 “Perfect!” Grandfather almost spit out the word. His face softened. “What is perfect? Journey, a thing doesn’t have to be perfect to be fine. That goes for a picture. That goes for life.” He paused. “Things can be good enough.”

² *Trot, trot to Boston* — singing game played with small children

Reading Comprehension

- 12 Read the sentence from paragraph 1 in the box below.

Summer rains came, soft at first, with mists that lay like lace over the meadows.

What is the **main** purpose of the sentence?

- A. to explain the lesson in the selection
- B. to create a picture in the reader's mind
- C. to form an opinion in the reader's mind
- D. to describe an important event in the selection

- 13 In paragraph 2, what are the "blasts of light"?

- A. pictures on the wall
- B. sparks from a candle
- C. flashes from the camera
- D. reflections in a window

- 14 Based on paragraphs 2 and 3, why does Grandma run out of patience?

- A. She is anxious to put away all the flowers.
- B. She is annoyed by the insects in her house.
- C. She is bothered by Grandfather's behavior.
- D. She is tired of working in Grandfather's garden.

Reading Comprehension

- 15 In paragraph 8, why does Journey **most likely** feel as if he is Emmett?
- A. He sings the same song as Emmett.
 - B. He looks just as Emmett did in the photograph.
 - C. He respects Emmett and wants to be just like him.
 - D. He looks at the photograph of Emmett and imagines himself in it.
- 16 Based on the end of the selection, with which statement would Grandfather **most likely** agree?
- A. People should only do things they can do well.
 - B. Memories are best expressed through words.
 - C. A mistake can turn into something beautiful.
 - D. A job is more important than a hobby.

**Grade 4 English Language Arts
Reading Comprehension
Spring 2011 Released Items:
Reporting Categories, Standards, and Correct Answers***

Item No.	Page No.	Reporting Category	Standard	Correct Answer (MC)*
1	30	<i>Reading and Literature</i>	15	B
2	30	<i>Reading and Literature</i>	12	C
3	30	<i>Reading and Literature</i>	12	D
4	30	<i>Reading and Literature</i>	12	A
5	30	<i>Reading and Literature</i>	8	D
6	31	<i>Reading and Literature</i>	12	C
7	31	<i>Reading and Literature</i>	12	A
8	31	<i>Reading and Literature</i>	10	C
9	31	<i>Language</i>	5	D
10	31	<i>Language</i>	4	A
11	32	<i>Reading and Literature</i>	12	
12	35	<i>Reading and Literature</i>	15	B
13	35	<i>Reading and Literature</i>	15	C
14	35	<i>Reading and Literature</i>	12	C
15	36	<i>Reading and Literature</i>	12	D
16	36	<i>Reading and Literature</i>	11	C

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

**Grade 4 English Language Arts
Reading Comprehension
Spring 2011 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>Language</i>	4
22	<i>Language</i>	6
23	<i>Reading and Literature</i>	13
24	<i>Reading and Literature</i>	15
25	<i>Reading and Literature</i>	14
26	<i>Reading and Literature</i>	14
27	<i>Reading and Literature</i>	14
28	<i>Language</i>	4
29	<i>Reading and Literature</i>	14
30	<i>Reading and Literature</i>	13
31	<i>Reading and Literature</i>	13
32	<i>Reading and Literature</i>	13
33	<i>Reading and Literature</i>	13
34	<i>Reading and Literature</i>	13
35	<i>Reading and Literature</i>	13
36	<i>Language</i>	5
37	<i>Language</i>	4
38	<i>Language</i>	4
39	<i>Language</i>	5
40	<i>Reading and Literature</i>	13