IV. English Language Arts, Reading Comprehension, Grade 5
Grade 5 English Language Arts
Reading Comprehension Test

The spring 2012 grade 5 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. Specific learning standards for grade 5 are found in the Supplement to the Massachusetts English Language Arts Curriculum Framework (2004). Page numbers for the learning standards appear in parentheses.

- Language (Framework, pages 19–26; Supplement, page 10)
- Reading and Literature (Framework, pages 35–64; Supplement, pages 11–13)

The English Language Arts Curriculum Framework and Supplement are available on the Department website at www.doe.mass.edu/frameworks/current.html.

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 grade 5 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

The use of bilingual word-to-word dictionaries was allowed for current and former English language learner students only, during both ELA Reading Comprehension 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.
DIRECTIONS
This session contains two reading selections with sixteen multiple-choice questions and two open-response questions. Mark your answers to these questions in the spaces provided in your Student Answer Booklet.

Read the selection to find out why some plants smell bad. Then answer the questions that follow.

Foul Flora
by Marilyn Singer

The Rancid Rafflesia
1 What weighs as much as a miniature poodle and smells as bad as rotten dog food? Would you believe it’s a flower? The rafflesia is the world’s largest flower. When it’s in full bloom, it can weigh up to fifteen pounds and be a yard wide. Found on rain forest floors in Indonesia, Borneo, and Sumatra, it is a parasite that lives off the roots of a vine related to the grapevine. Having no roots, stems, leaves, or chlorophyll, the rafflesia gets its food from that plant.
2 The rafflesia takes nine months to reach full size. Then it bursts out like a big, orange cabbage and expands into a blossom as much as three feet wide and up to fifteen pounds in weight. Flowering for just four to six days, it fills the air with a stench like carrion,* which has earned it the name “stinking corpse lily.”
3 Why would any flower smell like that? The answer has to do with pollination.

Two, Four, Six, Eight—Now’s the Time to Pollinate!
4 In order to reproduce, most flowers need to be pollinated. For flowers to make fruit and seeds, pollen from the male parts needs to reach the female parts. Some plants can pollinate themselves. Others must be pollinated by wind, water, or animals.
5 If a flower smells yummy during the day, chances are that it is pollinated by butterflies, bees, wasps, certain beetles, or other insects that are attracted to sweet odors. Pollen clings to them and is deposited on other blossoms. Pale or white flowers that are fragrant at night usually attract moths. Dull-colored, odorless plants are often wind-pollinated. Some bright, odorless blooms may be pollinated by birds, such as hummingbirds, which have a poor sense of smell. The birds

* carrion — decaying flesh
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go to drink nectar, and the pollen sticks to their feathers or beaks. Colorful but unscented flowers also appeal to bees, wasps, and butterflies, which look for blossoms of particular colors and shapes and not just scent. And if a flower smells—and sometimes even looks—bad, it lures flies, carrion beetles, or other critters that love the putrid odor of rotten meat or fish.

**Going Batty!**

Flies and beetles aren’t the only creatures attracted to smelly flowers. Many plants are pollinated by bats. What odors do bats prefer? Some like the smell of rotting fruit. And some like the musty aroma of fellow bats.

In Africa, the baobab tree (*Adansonia digitata*) produces gorgeous blossoms that reek rather like these flying mammals. Because bats are nocturnal, the flowers open at night and are pale in color so the bats can see (and smell) them more easily. While they are eating the flowers’ nectar, the pollen sticks to the bats’ fur or mouths. As they fly from bloom to bloom, they transfer it.

The baobab is a magnificent and important plant. Animals live in its branches. People use all of it—the bark for cloth and rope, the leaves for medicine, the fruit for food—and sometimes even take shelter inside its huge trunk.

Another important relative of the baobab is the silk cotton tree (*Ceiba pentandra*). This tree’s fruits produce kapok—a fluffy material once widely used in lifejackets, sleeping bags, quilts, mattresses, and pillows because it is buoyant and warm. In many places the wood is still used to make canoes. Like the baobab, the kapok has malodorous flowers that attract bats. In some places, bats appear to be the plant’s *only* pollinator and seed disperser. Eliminate the bats, and you eliminate the tree—one of many good reasons to protect these mammals.

Baobab and kapok blossoms, like carrion flowers, certainly smell great to their animal pollinators, but there’s a good chance Mom won’t like them. So when it comes to Mother’s Day, it’s best to stick with roses.

“Foul Flora” by Marilyn Singer, from *What Stinks?* Copyright © 2006 by Marilyn Singer. Reprinted by permission of Darby Creek, a division of Lerner Publishing Group, Inc. Photograph 1 copyright © iStockphoto/wrangel. Photograph 2 copyright © iStockphoto/jeu. Photograph 3 copyright © iStockphoto/Angela Bell.
1. Based on the selection, where does the rafflesia get its food?
   A. from carrion beetles
   B. from another plant
   C. from bats
   D. from soil

2. Based on paragraph 5, how does a plant attract insects at night?
   A. by its appearance and odor
   B. by its appearance and size
   C. by its location and odor
   D. by its location and size

3. What is the best conclusion that can be drawn from the information in paragraph 5?
   A. Plants do not rely on pollination to reproduce.
   B. Plants have many ways to appeal to pollinators.
   C. Plants must be pollinated by more than one animal.
   D. Plants do not make pollen at certain times of the year.
4. According to the selection, what would most likely happen if bats were to disappear from Earth?
   A. Flowers would become more fragrant.
   B. Baobab trees would become more common.
   C. Silk cotton trees would no longer reproduce.
   D. Colorless flowers would no longer be necessary.

5. According to paragraph 8, why is the baobab tree important?
   A. It serves many different purposes.
   B. It is one of the oldest trees in the world.
   C. It is one of the largest trees in the world.
   D. It stores water in periods of dry weather.

6. Read the sentence from paragraph 9 in the box below.
   Like the baobab, the kapok has malodorous flowers that attract bats.
   The prefix *mal-* means “bad.” What does the word *malodorous* mean?
   A. stinky
   B. strange
   C. prickly
   D. poisonous
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Question 7 is an open-response question.

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

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

7 Explain how the author makes the selection both entertaining and informative. Support your answer with important details from the selection.
In the imaginary land of Narnia, two animals—an ape named Shift and a donkey named Puzzle—are friends. Read the selection about one of their adventures and answer the questions that follow.

BY CALDRON POOL

by C. S. Lewis

In the last days of Narnia, far up to the west beyond Lantern Waste and close beside the great waterfall, there lived an Ape. He was so old that no one could remember when he had first come to live in those parts, and he was the cleverest, ugliest, most wrinkled Ape you can imagine. He had a little house, built of wood and thatched with leaves, up in the fork of a great tree, and his name was Shift. There were very few Talking Beasts or Men or Dwarfs, or people of any sort, in that part of the wood, but Shift had one friend and neighbor who was a donkey called Puzzle. At least they both said they were friends, but from the way things went on you might have thought Puzzle was more like Shift’s servant than his friend. He did all the work. When they went together to the river, Shift filled the big skin bottles with water but it was Puzzle who carried them back. When they wanted anything from the towns further down the river it was Puzzle who went down with empty panniers* on his back and came back with the panniers full and heavy. And all the nicest things that Puzzle brought back were eaten by Shift; for as Shift said, “You see, Puzzle, I can’t eat grass and thistles like you, so it’s only fair I should make it up in other ways.” And Puzzle always said, “Of course, Shift, of course. I see that.” Puzzle never complained, because he knew that Shift was far cleverer than himself and he thought it was very kind of Shift to be friends with him at all. And if ever Puzzle did try to argue about anything, Shift would always say, “Now, Puzzle, I understand what needs to be done better than you. You know you’re not clever, Puzzle.” And Puzzle always said, “No, Shift. It’s quite true. I’m not clever.” Then he would sigh and do whatever Shift had said.

One morning early in the year the pair of them were out walking along the shore of Caldron Pool. Caldron Pool is the big pool right under the cliffs at the western end of Narnia. The great waterfall pours down into it with a noise like everlasting thunder, and the River of Narnia flows out on the other side. The waterfall keeps the Pool always dancing and bubbling and churning round and round as if it were on the boil, and that of course is how it got its name of Caldron Pool. It is liveliest in the early spring when the waterfall is swollen with all the snow that has melted off the mountains from up beyond Narnia in the Western Wild from which the river comes. And as they looked at Caldron Pool Shift suddenly pointed with his dark, skinny finger and said,

“Look! What’s that?”

“What’s what?” said Puzzle.
“That yellow thing that’s just come down the waterfall. Look! There it is again, it’s floating. We must find out what it is.”

“Must we?” said Puzzle.

“Of course we must,” said Shift. “It may be something useful. Just hop into the Pool like a good fellow and fish it out. Then we can have a proper look at it.”

“Hop into the Pool?” said Puzzle, twitching his long ears.

“Well how are we to get it if you don’t?” said the Ape.

“But—but,” said Puzzle, “wouldn’t it be better if you went in? Because, you see, it’s you who wants to know what it is, and I don’t much. And you’ve got hands, you see. You’re as good as a Man or a Dwarf when it comes to catching hold of things. I’ve only got hoofs.”

“Really, Puzzle,” said Shift, “I didn’t think you’d ever say a thing like that. I didn’t think it of you, really.”

“Why, what have I said wrong?” said the Ass, speaking in rather a humble voice, for he saw that Shift was very deeply offended. “All I meant was—”

“Wanting me to go into the water,” said the Ape. “As if you didn’t know perfectly well what weak chests Apes always have and how easily they catch cold! Very well. I will go in. I’m feeling cold enough already in this cruel wind. But I’ll go in. I shall probably die. Then you’ll be sorry.” And Shift’s voice sounded as if he was just going to burst into tears.

“Please don’t, please don’t, please don’t,” said Puzzle, half braying, and half talking. “I never meant anything of the sort, Shift, really I didn’t. You know how stupid I am and how I can’t think of more than one thing at a time. I’d forgotten about your weak chest. Of course I’ll go in. You mustn’t think of doing it yourself. Promise me you won’t, Shift.”

So Shift promised, and Puzzle went cloppety-clop on his four hoofs round the rocky edge of the Pool to find a place where he could get in. Quite apart from the cold it was no joke getting into that quivering and foaming water, and Puzzle had to stand and shiver for a whole minute before he made up his mind to do it. But then Shift called out from behind him and said: “Perhaps I’d better do it after all, Puzzle.” And when Puzzle heard that he said, “No, no. You promised. I’m in now,” and in he went.

A great mass of foam got him in the face and filled his mouth with water and blinded him. Then he went under altogether for a few seconds, and when he came up again he was in quite another part of the Pool. Then the swirl caught him and carried him round and round and faster and faster till it took him right under the waterfall itself, and the force of the water plunged him down, deep down, so that he thought he would never be able to hold his breath till he came up again. And when he had come up and when at last he got somewhere near the thing he was trying to catch, it sailed away from him till it too got under the fall and was forced down to the bottom. When it came up again it was further from him than ever. But at last, when he was almost tired to death, and bruised all over and numb with cold, he succeeded in gripping the thing with his teeth. And out he came carrying it in
front of him and getting his front hoofs tangled up in it, for it was as big as a large hearthrug, and it was very heavy and cold and slimy.

He flung it down in front of Shift and stood dripping and shivering and trying to get his breath back. But the Ape never looked at him or asked him how he felt. The Ape was too busy going round and round the Thing and spreading it out and patting it and smelling it. Then a wicked gleam came into his eye and he said:

“It is a lion’s skin.”

“Ee—auh—auh—oh, is it?” gasped Puzzle.

“Now I wonder . . . I wonder . . . I wonder,” said Shift to himself, for he was thinking very hard.

“I wonder who killed the poor lion,” said Puzzle presently. “It ought to be buried. We must have a funeral.”

“Oh, it wasn’t a Talking Lion,” said Shift. “You needn’t bother about that. There are no Talking Beasts up beyond the Falls, up in the Western Wild. This skin must have belonged to a dumb, wild lion.”

This, by the way, was true. A Hunter, a Man, had killed and skinned this lion somewhere up in the Western Wild several months before. But that doesn’t come into this story.
8. In the selection, how does Shift mostly control Puzzle’s behavior?
   A. by telling Puzzle that he will be rewarded for obeying
   B. by reminding Puzzle that he is unintelligent
   C. by urging Puzzle to be more daring
   D. by warning Puzzle about danger

9. Based on paragraph 2, which of the following best explains how the Pool got its name?
   A. It is filled with unknown objects.
   B. It is deeper than other bodies of water.
   C. It is black and dirty like a kettle used for cooking.
   D. It is swirling and foaming like soup being stirred in a pot.

10. According to the selection, why does Puzzle think it would be best for Shift to go into the water?
    A. Shift loves to go swimming.
    B. Puzzle feels he is becoming ill.
    C. Shift grabs things more easily than Puzzle.
    D. Puzzle knows Shift enjoys finding treasure.

11. Which of the following best describes what happens in paragraph 14?
    A. Puzzle gives in to Shift’s demands.
    B. Shift expresses concern for Puzzle’s health.
    C. Shift offers to go into the Pool instead of Puzzle.
    D. Puzzle explains why Shift should go into the Pool.
Which of the following statements best describes what happens in paragraph 15?

A. Shift asks Puzzle to forget about the object in the Pool.
B. Shift decides that he should let Puzzle go into the Pool.
C. Shift apologizes to Puzzle for forcing him to go into the Pool.
D. Shift watches while Puzzle gathers his courage to enter the Pool.

Read the description from paragraph 16 in the box below.

Then the swirl caught him and carried him round and round and faster and faster . . . and the force of the water plunged him down, deep down, . . .

What is the main effect of repeating the words “round,” “faster,” and “down” in the description?

A. It suggests that Puzzle is dreaming.
B. It suggests the power of the current.
C. It shows how strongly Puzzle swims.
D. It shows the weight of the yellow object.

Who is telling the story?

A. Shift  
B. a lion  
C. Puzzle  
D. a narrator

Which of the following is the best clue that the selection is a fantasy?

A. The characters find a hidden object.  
B. The characters are animals that talk.  
C. The characters experience a conflict.  
D. The characters perform a brave deed.
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16 Read the sentence from paragraph 7 in the box below.

“Just hop into the Pool like a good fellow and fish it out.”

Which of the following words in the sentence is used as a verb?
A. Just
B. Pool
C. good
D. fish

17 In paragraph 12, what does the word *offended* mean?
A. hurt
B. modest
C. pleased
D. surprised

Question 18 is an open-response question.

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

Write your answer to question 18 in the space provided in your Student Answer Booklet.

18 Based on the selection, describe the differences between Shift’s and Puzzle’s personalities. Support your answer with important details from the selection.
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Reading Comprehension

Spring 2012 Released Items:

Reporting Categories, Standards, and Correct Answers*

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