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

The spring 2013 grade 5 English Language Arts Reading Comprehension test was based on Pre-K–5 learning standards in two content strands of the Massachusetts Curriculum Framework for English Language Arts and Literacy (March 2011) listed below. Page numbers for the learning standards appear in parentheses.

- Reading (Framework, pages 13–19)
- Language (Framework, pages 33–40)

The Curriculum Framework for English Language Arts and Literacy is 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, Reading and Language, 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 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.

This poem is a conversation between a dog and a squirrel. Read the poem and answer the questions that follow.

The bushy flick of your tail
catches my attention.
   I am aware of your presence,
      but I am ignoring you.

Dog and Squirrel: Steps in a Flirtation

5 You are now my bull’s-eye.
This will be a fine game.
   It may be a game,
      but I set the rules.

Whenever you lower your guard,
10 I step forward.
    I never lower my guard.
    All escape routes are intact.

My body is an arrow
pointing at your heart.
15 O large clumsy one,
    have you any idea how fast I can run?

I draw closer.
The space between us is nothing.
20 Odd how the sunlight
    kindles your dark fur.

I can taste the silk of your tail.
You can’t possibly get away now.
25 I know the precise point at which
    I must flee. Still, those eyes . . .

Gaze locked, I pounce!
And you are . . .
   Gone, of course.
   My heart pounds! See you tomorrow?

—Joyce Sidman

**ELA Reading Comprehension**

1. In the poem, what do the indented and italicized sections represent?
   - A. the dog’s comments
   - B. a narrator’s comments
   - C. the squirrel’s comments
   - D. an observer’s comments

2. What do lines 5–8 suggest about both animals?
   - A. Each is worrying about the other.
   - B. Each is challenging the other.
   - C. Each hopes to escape.
   - D. Each can run fast.

3. Which line from the poem contains a metaphor?
   - A. “The bushy flick of your tail”
   - B. “I am aware of your presence,”
   - C. “My body is an arrow”
   - D. “Gone, of course.”

4. Based on the poem, what will the squirrel **most likely** do the next day?
   - A. find a safe hiding place
   - B. play with the dog again
   - C. try a new path to escape
   - D. chase the dog into the woods
5 Based on the poem, what saves the squirrel?
A. its speed
B. its eyesight
C. its ability to hear
D. its sense of smell

6 In line 23, which of the following words could *best* be used in place of the word *precise*?
A. general
B. highest
C. earliest
D. exact
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 Based on the poem, explain how both the dog and the squirrel show confidence. Support your answer with important details from the poem.
Fire can be destructive, but it also plays an important role in the life of our natural environment. Read the selection to find out more and answer the questions that follow.

from *Fire: Friend or Foe*¹
by Dorothy Hinshaw Patent

ADAPTATION TO FIRE

Fire came to Earth long before living things, so it’s no surprise that both plants and animals have ways of dealing with this powerful natural force. Living things are not helpless before fire.

Each kind of natural environment, or ecosystem, has its own rhythms with relationship to fire. While it’s natural for grasslands to burn every few years, the lodgepole pine forests of Yellowstone National Park burn every 250 to 350 years.

Plant Adaptations

Long-lived trees, such as ponderosa pines and redwoods, have thick, fire-resistant bark. A giant sequoia redwood can have bark a foot thick. In an ancient redwood grove, many of the trees are scarred by fires that occurred dozens to hundreds of years ago. Trees like these are rarely killed by fire, which is one reason they manage to live for so long.

Other species, such as the lodgepole pine, are adapted to rare, devastating² fires like those in Yellowstone in 1988. The lodgepole burns easily when dry, but it produces two kinds of cones. One kind opens by itself and contains seeds that sprout during years when there are no fires. The other type of cone is held shut by sticky resin. These fire-resistant cones, called serotinous cones, do not open in an ordinary year. When a hot fire roars through a lodgepole forest, it kills almost all the mature trees. But the heat from the fire also melts the resin that protects the serotinous cones, opening them. Once the seeds are released, they will germinate and grow into the next generation of lodgepoles. Other trees, such as the jack pine of the North and the Baker cypress, which lives in Northwestern forests, also have

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¹ foe — enemy
² devastating — extremely damaging; destructive
serotinous cones. Many shrubs also have seeds that require fire to germinate, which can lie dormant for decades awaiting a burn.

The longleaf pine, which lives in the American Southeast, has its own unique way of dealing with fire. Low intensity fires on the forest floor, which could kill small seedling trees, burn frequently in the longleaf pine forests. Instead of sprouting as a seedling tree, the young longleaf grows like a clump of grass for several years, protecting the growing tip in the center. After the young plant has developed deep roots, the longleaf sends up a strong, fast-growing shoot that carries the vulnerable growing tip quickly above the danger zone.

Aspen trees live in areas with moist soil, such as along creeks or near underground springs. Each clump of trees actually arises from the same roots. Aspen are adapted to periodic fire, which kills the old trees in a clump that may have been damaged by very cold winters or insects. The clump is rejuvenated by fire when healthy new growth sprouts after the old growth is killed off. If the clump goes too long without fire, its health can be weakened by having no young vigorous growth.

Grasses are especially well adapted to fire. The growing point, or crown, of grass lies at the surface of the ground, where it is protected from fire that sweeps quickly through the dry grass. The roots of grasses penetrate deeply into the soil and easily survive a normal fire.

Many wildflowers thrive after fires that open up the ground to sunlight. The underground stems of fireweed are protected from burning, and it flourishes after a fire, blooming with bright pink flowers. Its dandelion-like seeds are also scattered by the wind into burned areas, where they sprout into vigorous plants.

**Winners and Losers**

A burning fire can harm or benefit animals. Hunters, such as hawks and coyotes, are attracted to its edges, where they feed on small animals like mice that are fleeing the fire. Insect-eating birds, too, often feed around a fire as their prey is forced to

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*dormant* — in an inactive state

*vulnerable* — unprotected
fly. Many animals, such as prairie dogs and ground squirrels, are hardly affected. They simply burrow into the ground to wait out the fire. The popular image of frightened deer racing to escape a forest fire as portrayed in the movie Bambi is false. Deer and large grazers, such as elk and bison, will feed right near the edge of a fire. If a fire becomes very intense, they can easily outrun the flames.

AFTER THE BURN

The first rainfall after a fire brings a rapid flush of green. During the spring after the Yellowstone fires of 1988, tiny lodgepole seedlings, surrounded by the blackened trunks of their dead parents, were already stretching their shoots upward toward the abundant sunlight. Joining the pines were twenty kinds of grasses as well as wildflowers such as glacier lilies and shooting stars.

Return of the Birds

Fire may destroy the homes of some birds, but it provides new homes for others. The burned Yellowstone forests rang with the rat-a-tat-tat of woodpeckers feeding on bark beetles and making nest holes where they could raise their young. Warblers and sparrows increased in numbers because they prefer the varied landscape left in the aftermath of fire to the dark and closed mature lodgepole forest. But birds such as goshawks, which need the old growth, retreat into the untouched stands of trees that remain after fire. Their numbers may decrease until the mature forest returns.

Changes over the Years

Every ecosystem has its own timeline, changing with the years after a major event such as a fire. The first plants to grow are those that are resistant to fire and resprout from their roots and also those whose seeds lie dormant, waiting for the stimulus of fire to germinate. These plants are sun lovers, sending up flourishing growth with the stimulation of open space and nutrients in the ashes.

5 stimulus — something that causes a response
Fast-growing shrubs accompany the grasses and wildflowers, as do young trees. Over the years, the shrubs and trees shade out the sun, and some of the plants that grew quickly after the fire, such as fireweed, disappear. In a few more years, the trees grow tall enough to shade the shrubs, and they decline as well.

As the plant species change, so do the animals. Grazers like elk thrive in the burned-over forest on the nutritious new plant growth, and birds feed on insects that specialize on those same plants. Ground nesters, like meadowlarks, and birds that nest in holes in dead trees, such as bluebirds and woodpeckers, are also common in burned-over areas.

By the time the forest is mature again, much of the animal life is gone. With reduced sunlight to fuel plant growth under the trees, there is little food for insects, so insect-eating birds are few. Dead trees fall and block the forest floor, making it difficult for large animals to get around. A mature lodgepole pine forest, for example, is a place of little life other than the pine trees themselves. The deadwood and weaker, old trees provide the perfect fuel, awaiting a dry year, another fire, and another cycle of renewal.

8. According to the section titled “Plant Adaptations,” how are trees such as redwoods protected from fire?

A. The trees contain a large amount of water.
B. Layers of branches preserve the trees.
C. The trees are shielded by their bark.
D. Special chemicals coat the trees.

9. According to the section titled “Plant Adaptations,” how are lodgepole pines able to reproduce after a fire?

A. Some pinecones are buried deep underground.
B. Some pinecones open only when a fire occurs.
C. Some pinecones open in the water used to fight a fire.
D. Some pinecones are eaten or carried away by animals.

10. Based on the section titled “Plant Adaptations,” which of the following statements is true?

A. Only unusual species of plants can adapt to fire.
B. Only large and healthy plants can grow again after a fire.
C. Plants that adapt to fire are varied and found in many areas.
D. Plants that appear after a fire may struggle to grow in burned soil.

11. Based on paragraphs 12 and 13, what important change occurs in an ecosystem immediately after a fire?

A. The average temperature rises.
B. The soil is tightly packed down.
C. The animal populations increase.
D. The ground plants receive more light.
What does the information in paragraph 14 mainly show?
A. the danger plants and animals face
B. the connections plants and animals share
C. the differences between plants and animals
D. the competition between plants and animals

Which conclusion about a burned-over forest is supported by information in the section titled “Changes over the Years”?
A. It will eventually recover and grow again.
B. It faces increased risk of a second forest fire.
C. It provides poor living conditions for all wildlife.
D. It becomes an attractive spot for tourists and researchers.

The popular image of frightened deer racing to escape a forest fire as portrayed in the movie Bambi is false.

What does the word portrayed most likely mean?
A. taught
B. shown
C. claimed
D. threatened
16. Read the sentence from paragraph 11 in the box below.

Warblers and sparrows increased in numbers because they prefer the varied landscape left in the aftermath of fire to the dark and closed mature lodgepole forest.

What is the **most likely** meaning of the word *landscape*?
A. nests
B. damage
C. selection
D. environment

17. Which of the following words from the selection uses the prefix *re-* meaning “again,” with a root word?
A. relationship
B. released
C. retreat
D. resprout
Based on the selection, explain how fire can be both friend and foe. Support your answer with important details from the selection.
### Grade 5 English Language Arts
### Reading Comprehension
### Spring 2013 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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