
III. English Language Arts, Grade 4

Grade 4 English Language Arts Test

Test Sessions and Content Overview

The spring 2016 grade 4 English Language Arts test was made up of three separate sections:

- Session 1 included three reading selections, followed by multiple-choice and open-response questions.
- Session 2A included two reading selections, followed by multiple-choice and open-response questions.
- Session 2B, the Narrative Writing section, included a single reading selection, followed by four evidence-based selected-response items and a narrative writing response. The items in Session 2B were developed by the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC). Students' performance on Session 2B will **not** be factored into their MCAS scores.

Session 1 and Session 2A contained the common test items on which each student's 2016 MCAS ELA score will be based. Some reading selections from these sessions are shown on the following pages, along with approximately half of the common test items. The selections and items are shown as they appeared in test booklets.

The reading selection and items from Session 2B, the PARCC Narrative Writing section, are not being released in this document. The Department will post information about these items to the Student Assessment webpage in a separate document. See page 4 of the Introduction to this document for more information about the inclusion of PARCC items in the 2016 MCAS tests.

Standards and Reporting Categories

The items in Session 1 and Session 2A of the grade 4 ELA test assessed Pre-K–5 learning standards in two content strands of the *Massachusetts Curriculum Framework for English Language Arts and Literacy* (March 2011), listed below.

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

The *Massachusetts Curriculum Framework for English Language Arts and Literacy* is available on the Department website at www.doe.mass.edu/frameworks/current.html.

ELA test results are reported under two MCAS reporting categories, **Reading** and **Language**, which are identical to the two framework content strands listed above.

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.

Standards and reporting categories for the PARCC items in Session 2B will be listed in a separate document, which will be posted to the Student Assessment webpage.

Reference Materials

During all ELA test sessions, the use of bilingual word-to-word dictionaries was allowed for current and former English language learner students only. No other reference materials were allowed during any ELA test session.

Grade 4 English Language Arts

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 article about an inventor named John Kovac. Then answer the questions that follow.

Musical Plumbing

by Laura Biggs

1 **W**hen plumbing makes funny noises, it's not always a good sign. But John Kovac, a harpist from Virginia, likes the pipes to sing. He thinks plumbing pipes make good musical instruments.

2 Kovac has made standard harps out of wood for more than 20 years. He says he feels a special thrill when he creates an instrument with his hands and uses it to make music come alive. But it takes years of training and special tools to make a traditional musical instrument. Kovac wanted to share the joy of making instruments with people who might not have the time or money to do it. So he decided to find an easier way.

The Music of PVC

3 Plumbing was the answer. Kovac found PVC pipes at a local hardware store. PVC stands for *polyvinyl chloride*. It's the white tubing that many plumbers use. You might find it in your house under a sink or in the basement.

4 Kovac says that PVC pipes are great for making instruments because they are inexpensive, come in many shapes and sizes, and fit together perfectly.

5 Kovac makes harps, guitars, violins, and cellos out of PVC pipes. He also makes uncommon instruments like the *udu* (a curved drum) from Nigeria, the *cuíca* (a friction drum) from Brazil, and the *Rührtrommel* (a stir drum) from Germany.

6 His instruments may look as if they come from outer space, but they really work. He and some of his music students and friends even started a band called the East Coast PVC Band.



When Kovac “stirs” the mallet around this *Rührtrommel*, it makes a clip-clopping sound.

Jamming with Pipes

- 7 Sally Seabright is a violin teacher who plays PVC violin with the band. At first, the rounded shape of the PVC violin made it difficult to hold between her chin and shoulder, but Kovac modified the violin by adding a piece that fits perfectly under her chin.
- 8 That kind of adaptability is what Kovac admires about PVC. He says, “I know it’s not easy for the average person to make a musical instrument, but I hope to enable anyone who has ever dreamed of making a violin, harp, or guitar to fulfill his or her dreams.”
- 9 So if you think making an instrument sounds like fun, try using PVC pipes or other household materials to experiment with different sounds and creations. You could even call a few friends and form your own band! With homemade instruments, you, too, can make the pipes sing.



John Kovac plays his PVC harp.

“Musical Plumbing” by Laura Biggs, from *Highlights for Children* (February 2010). Copyright © 2010 by Highlights for Children, Inc. Text and photographs reprinted by permission of Highlights for Children.

1 What is the **main** purpose of paragraph 2?

- A. to explain how to join a PVC band
- B. to describe how PVC instruments are made
- C. to explain why Kovac came up with his idea
- D. to describe the different instruments Kovac makes

2 Read the sentence from paragraph 6 in the box below.

His instruments may look as if they come from outer space, but they really work.

What does the sentence **mostly** show about the instruments?

- A. They are different than expected.
- B. They are large like the planets.
- C. They are heard from far away.
- D. They are made in dark colors.

3 Based on the article, what should readers do when making their own instruments?

- A. take a class
- B. read many books
- C. get help from a friend
- D. use their imaginations

4 Based on the article, the **most likely** reason the author chose the title “Musical Plumbing” is that the article

- A. describes a group of plumbers who formed a band.
- B. explains why pipes are shaped like musical instruments.
- C. describes musical sounds heard from the pipes under a house.
- D. explains how plumbing materials can make musical instruments.

5 Which of the following best shows that “Musical Plumbing” is an informational article?

- A. It presents facts.
- B. It describes a problem.
- C. It takes place in the present.
- D. It is divided into paragraphs.

6 Read the sentence from paragraph 7 in the box below.

At first, the rounded shape of the PVC violin made it difficult to hold between her chin and shoulder, but Kovac modified the violin by adding a piece that fits perfectly under her chin.

Based on the sentence, what does *modified* mean?

- A. cleaned
- B. changed
- C. collected
- D. compared

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** A creative person is someone who uses imagination to come up with new ideas. Based on the article, explain why John Kovac could be called a creative person. Support your answer with important information from the article.

Read the article “Fear Factors.” Then read the folktale “Conquering Fear” and answer the questions that follow.

Fear Factors

by Jeanna Bryner

1 What gives you the creeps? Does the sight of a mouse cause you to break into a sweat? Does the thought of the dentist’s office send shivers up your spine?

2 Fears come in many varieties. At times, everyone feels afraid. In fact, about 6.3 million people in the United States have specific fears called phobias (FOE-bee-ahz). Scientists are still trying to figure out what causes phobias. One thing they do know: All fears cause a series of reactions inside your body.

3 Let’s take a closer look at what’s happening inside your body as your hair stands on end.

Fight or Flight

4 Believe it or not, fear can be good for you. Fear is your body’s way of protecting you from dangerous situations. “Mother Nature gave us all an alarm system. And that alarm system is fear,” says Michael Telch, the director of the Laboratory for the Study of Anxiety Disorders at the University of Texas.

5 How could fear be healthy? When you spot a growling dog, your body gets prepared for a fast escape. First, a small area in your brain called the amygdala (uh-MIG-duh-luh) sends out an “emergency siren” to your body.

6 Right away, your heart begins to beat faster. A racing heart sends more blood to your muscles. That way, you can run from that angry dog more easily. You will even start breathing heavily so your body takes in more oxygen—giving your muscles an extra boost.

7 Plus, you break out in a sweat. This sweat helps cool off your body, so you won’t get overheated. Your sweat is full of certain “fear” chemicals. And dogs can smell these chemicals. So dogs really can smell fear!

Forget It

8 Sometimes you get frightened in situations that are not dangerous. For instance, some teens are deathly afraid of speaking in public. If this fear of public speaking

keeps you from going out with friends, it is a type of phobia. “When you have fear of something that’s no threat and it interferes with your life, then it’s called a phobia,” says Telch.

9 What causes a person to have a phobia? Some scientists think that childhood experiences could be partly to blame for some phobias. A memory of a scary childhood event would get stored in your amygdala, in your brain. That grape-size area in the brain is considered the fear center. When you recall a past memory, your body prepares to flee.

10 “At times, that alarm system can go off when you’re not in any danger or harm,” says Telch.

Fear Not

11 Scientists and doctors are coming up with effective ways to help you overcome your phobias. If a person is very fearful of heights, the doctor will gradually have that person climb to a higher floor of a building.

12 “The person might be encouraged to go to the second floor and look over the railing,” explains Telch.

13 Over time, the person would realize that it’s not so scary to be up high.

14 Getting over your fears is a slow and complicated process.

CONQUERING FEAR

AN ETHIOPIAN FOLKTALE

1 **O**nce upon a time in an Ethiopian village, there lived a boy who was so shy and fearful of the world around him that his family called him Miobe, frightened one.

2 “Why do you call me that?” the boy asked his grandfather.

3 The old man laughed. “Because you are afraid.”

4 The boy’s grandmother, his mother, his father, and the neighbors said the same thing. Miobe pondered these words and decided he must find a way to conquer fear. So when everyone was asleep, he packed a sack and set off into the world to find out what he feared and to conquer it.



5 That night he slept under the wide umbrella of sky and stared up at the darkness. Before drifting off, he whispered to himself, “I see you, but I will conquer you, fear.”

6 At midnight the wolves began to howl. The sound woke Miobe, but instead of running away, he walked toward the sound, saying aloud, “I will conquer you, fear.”

7 He walked until the sun began to rise, and when he saw its golden orb, he smiled with relief, for he had survived the first night. “I am becoming brave,” he said as he walked on.

8 Soon he came to a village. For a moment he thought, “I don’t know these people at all. They might be unkind to a stranger.” But he straightened up and walked right into the village, saying aloud, “I will conquer you, fear.”

9 He walked into the village square, and there he found the village elders gathered, muttering among themselves. As Miobe came near, they looked up and sneered, “Who are you?”

10 “I’m traveling the world to become brave.”

11 The elders laughed. “Fool! No one can find bravery where it does not exist.”

12 “What do you mean?” Miobe asked.

13 The elders sighed unhappily. “We are finished,” said one old man. “Our village is threatened by a monster up on the mountain.” Miobe followed the man’s gaze to the top of the mountain. “See him, there,” the old man said. Miobe squinted. He did not want to insult the man, but he saw nothing there.

14 “Look,” said another man. “See? It has the head of a crocodile. A monstrous crocodile!”

15 “And his body is as horrible as a hippopotamus. A gigantic hippopotamus!”

16 “It’s like a dragon!” another man cried, “with fire shooting from its snout!”

17 Now Miobe began to see the monster. He began to see the smoke and fire, the wrinkled skin, the fiery eyes. “I see,” he said, but silently he promised himself he would not be afraid. So he walked away from the elders, into the village proper.

18 Everywhere people cowered. The little children hid inside, refusing to go to school. “If the children go outside,” the women said, “the monster will come down from the mountain and eat them. Everyone knows monsters eat children.”

19 The farmers hovered inside their doorways, hoes and rakes in hand; outside their horses stood unharnessed. “We cannot work,” they told Miobe. “If we go into the fields, the monster will come down and get us.”

20 Miobe saw wandering goats, sheep, and cows out at the edge of the village; no one came to milk them or tend to them. No one planted crops. Few left their homes, preferring to hide indoors. “The monster is as big as 10 barges!”* they whispered among themselves as Miobe listened. “The monster is going to destroy us!”

21 Finally Miobe decided it was up to him to destroy the monster. “I wish to conquer fear,” he announced, “and so I shall go slay the monster!”

22 “No, son, don’t do it!” the elders cried. “You will die.”

23 Miobe shivered and his heart fluttered, but he was determined.

24 “I must conquer fear!” he said, and he set off.

25 At the base of the mountain, he looked up and felt a chill. The monster looked bigger and more fiery than any dragon, fiercer than a pack of wolves or a nest of snakes. He remembered the days when he had been afraid. He took a deep breath and began to climb.

26 As he climbed, he looked up, but now he saw the monster seemed to be smaller. “How peculiar,” he said aloud. “My eyes are deceiving me.”

27 He continued to climb. When he was halfway up, he looked again. He squinted, shielding his eyes, but the monster’s eyes no longer seemed so fierce, and the flames no longer shot from its snout.

28 “The closer I get, the smaller he looks,” Miobe said, puzzled. He continued to climb, though now he pulled his dagger from his sack so that he would be prepared.

29 As he came around a bend in the path, he saw the summit before him.

30 He gasped. The monster had disappeared.

31 Miobe looked behind him. Surely the creature would sneak up from behind to attack. But when he turned, he saw nothing. He heard nothing. He held his breath.

32 He looked left. He looked right.

33 He continued to climb. At last he reached the summit and all was empty and quiet. Nothing was there. Suddenly he heard a sound at his feet. He looked down and saw a little creature—a toad with wrinkled skin and round, frightened eyes.

34 He bent down. “Who are you?” he asked. “How did you become so small?” The monster said nothing, so he cradled it in his hand and walked down the mountain.

35 When he reached the village, the people cried, “He’s safe!” and they surrounded him. Miobe held out his hand and showed them the tiny wrinkled toad. “This is the monster,” he said. . . .

* *barges* — huge boats used to carry goods

“Fear Factors” by Jeanna Bryner, from *Scholastic Action* (October 23, 2006). Copyright © 2006 by Scholastic Inc. Reprinted by permission of Scholastic Inc.

“Conquering Fear: An Ethiopian Folktale” from *Scholastic Scope* (December 2013). Text copyright © 2013 by Scholastic Inc. Reprinted by permission of Scholastic Inc.

- 8 Read the questions from paragraph 1 of the article in the box below.

Does the sight of a mouse cause you to break into a sweat? Does the thought of the dentist's office send shivers up your spine?

What is the **most likely** reason the author included the questions?

- A. to explain what fear is
- B. to give examples of fears
- C. to show that fears can be good
- D. to explain why fear is important

- 9 Based on the section "Forget It" in the article, how are phobias different from other fears?

- A. Phobias are less scary.
- B. Phobias are cured faster.
- C. Phobias are about unusual things.
- D. Phobias are about harmless things.

- 10 In the article, what is the **main** idea of the section "Fear Not"?

- A. Everyone has fears.
- B. Scientists study fears.
- C. Fears can be defeated.
- D. Fears are hard to forget.

- 11 In paragraphs 14–20 of the folktale, how does the description of the monster change?

- A. The monster starts to move faster.
- B. The monster begins to roar louder.
- C. The monster becomes more worried.
- D. The monster appears more terrifying.

- 12 What does paragraph 25 of the folktale **mainly** show about Miobe?
- A. He is feeling very cold.
 - B. He is standing up to his fear.
 - C. He thinks the monster is imaginary.
 - D. He wishes an elder had come with him.
- 13 In the folktale, what does the monster at the top of the mountain turn out to be?
- A. a toad
 - B. a wolf
 - C. a snake
 - D. a dragon
- 14 From whose point of view is the folktale **most likely** told?
- A. a villager's
 - B. a narrator's
 - C. the monster's
 - D. the grandfather's
- 15 Reread the section "Fight or Flight" in the article. Which sentence from the folktale **best** supports the information from the section?
- A. Miobe pondered these words and decided he must find a way to conquer fear.
 - B. He did not want to insult the man, but he saw nothing there.
 - C. He began to see the smoke and fire, the wrinkled skin, the fiery eyes.
 - D. Miobe shivered and his heart fluttered, but he was determined.

- 16 Read the sentences from paragraph 8 of the folktale in the box below.

For a moment he thought, “I don’t know these people at all. They might be unkind to a stranger.”

In the sentences, what does the prefix *un-* mean in the word *unkind*?

- A. not
- B. half
- C. over
- D. very

- 17 Reread paragraphs 1 and 2 of the article. Based on paragraph 2, what does the word *varieties* mean?

- A. types
- B. places
- C. animals
- D. numbers

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 article **and** the folktale, explain how fear can affect people. Support your answer with important information from the article **and** details from the folktale.

**Grade 4 English Language Arts
Spring 2016 Released Items:
Reporting Categories, Standards, and Correct Answers***

Item No.	Page No.	Reporting Category	Standard	Correct Answer (MC)*
1	26	<i>Reading</i>	6	C
2	26	<i>Reading</i>	1	A
3	26	<i>Reading</i>	1	D
4	26	<i>Reading</i>	5	D
5	27	<i>Reading</i>	8	A
6	27	<i>Language</i>	4	B
7	28	<i>Reading</i>	2	
8	33	<i>Reading</i>	8	B
9	33	<i>Reading</i>	8	D
10	33	<i>Reading</i>	2	C
11	33	<i>Reading</i>	3	D
12	34	<i>Reading</i>	1	B
13	34	<i>Reading</i>	1	A
14	34	<i>Reading</i>	6	B
15	34	<i>Reading</i>	9	D
16	35	<i>Language</i>	4	A
17	35	<i>Language</i>	4	A
18	36	<i>Reading</i>	2	

* 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.

**Grade 4 English Language Arts
Spring 2016 Unreleased Common Items:
Reporting Categories and Standards**

Item No.	Reporting Category	Standard
19	<i>Reading</i>	3
20	<i>Reading</i>	1
21	<i>Reading</i>	3
22	<i>Reading</i>	3
23	<i>Reading</i>	1
24	<i>Reading</i>	2
25	<i>Reading</i>	4
26	<i>Reading</i>	3
27	<i>Language</i>	5
28	<i>Language</i>	5
29	<i>Reading</i>	3
30	<i>Reading</i>	8.a
31	<i>Reading</i>	3
32	<i>Reading</i>	6
33	<i>Language</i>	4
34	<i>Language</i>	4
35	<i>Reading</i>	3
36	<i>Reading</i>	3
37	<i>Reading</i>	3
38	<i>Reading</i>	2
39	<i>Reading</i>	3
40	<i>Language</i>	4