
V. English Language Arts, Grade 6

Grade 6 English Language Arts Test

Test Sessions and Content Overview

The spring 2016 grade 6 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 6 ELA test assessed grades 6–12 learning standards in two content strands of the *Massachusetts Curriculum Framework for English Language Arts and Literacy* (March 2011), listed below.

- Reading (*Framework*, pages 47–52)
- Language (*Framework*, pages 64–67)

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 6 English Language Arts

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.

For 40,000 years, she remained frozen on the Arctic tundra of Siberia—until two brothers walked by and soon discovered they had found something truly special. Read the passage and answer the questions that follow.

from **MAMMOTHS AND MASTODONS**

by Cheryl Bardoe

Surprise in the Snow

1 Ten-year-old Kostia squinted through the snow that blows across northern Siberia even in May. He and his brother Edik had just loaded their reindeer sledge with firewood when they noticed an odd lump by the river. Kostia guessed it was an injured reindeer. But when the brothers drew closer, Kostia could hardly believe his eyes. The strange dead animal had no antlers—but it had a trunk like an elephant. Kostia and Edik poked at the animal and then hurried home.

2 Their father, Yuri, was troubled when he heard about the mysterious creature. Kostia's

family is of the Nenets people, who live a nomadic life herding reindeer across the arctic tundra. Yuri believed the animal his sons saw came from the underworld below the Earth's surface—anything from underground could bring terrible luck. Yuri hiked to a sacred place on the tundra, marked by a pile of reindeer antlers. There he made an offering to the spirits and pondered what to do.

3 Sometimes a Nenets person would come across a mammoth tusk jutting from the ground and could transform a bad omen into good fortune by sharing the valuable ivory with others. Yuri decided to do the same with his sons' discovery. He had heard how others had found tusks, bones, and such, which attracted scientists from all over the world to the icy arctic. Yuri hiked 73 miles over four days to the nearest village to report the sighting of the creature.



Kostia Khudi and his father, Yuri. Kostia follows reindeer herds across the tundra with his family during spring and summer and attends a town boarding school during fall and winter.



Lyuba was found north of the Arctic Circle. Winter in this part of Russia can last up to eight months, and temperatures can dip as low as -59°F , or -50°C .

- 4 Kostia and Edik's find was big. More than once-in-a-lifetime big. More than once-in-a-millennium big. They had discovered a frozen baby woolly mammoth! People had discovered the bones of mammoths before. They had even found large parts of frozen mammoth bodies. Never had anyone found a mammoth—or any other extinct, prehistoric animal—that was completely whole and so well preserved. This baby mammoth died about 40,000 years before she was found in 2007. Yet wrinkles still creased her skin and taste buds dotted her tongue. Her eyeballs rested in their sockets, and her internal organs had retained nearly all their original shapes. Scientists call the baby mammoth Lyuba and study her in hopes of learning secrets from the past.

Mammoths Are Extinct, but Their Story Isn't Over

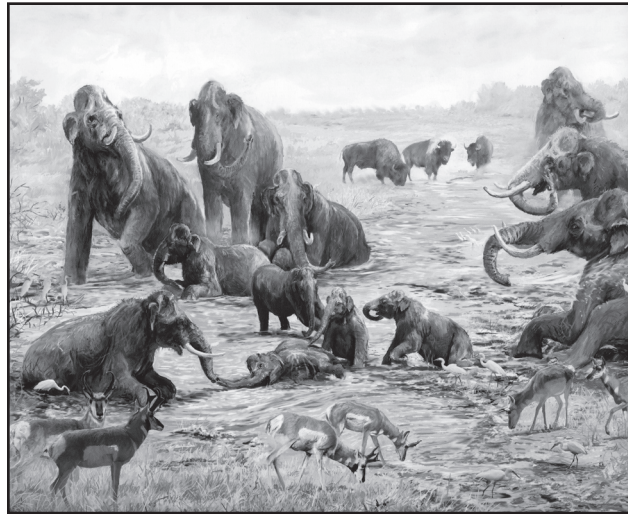
- 5 Scientists have long figured that if a mammoth's skeleton looked like an elephant's, then it probably walked like an elephant. And if a mammoth's teeth looked like an elephant's, then it probably ate like an elephant. And if a mammoth walked and ate like an elephant, then it probably did other things like an elephant, too. Without physical, hold-in-your-hands evidence, however, these theories are just guesses about how mammoths may or may not have acted.



Scientists examine the baby woolly mammoth named Lyuba. If she had not been found, the spring thaw and a flooding river might have washed Lyuba out to sea.

6 “As a paleontologist, my job is to search the fossil record for clues to what mammoths did,” says Dr. Daniel Fisher, a world-renowned mammoth expert and professor at the University of Michigan. For instance, scientists found dung in Lyuba’s intestine. They know baby elephants nibble on poop to get bacteria into their stomachs to help digest leaves. Now they have proof mammoths did, too.

7 Enough clues have piled up to convince scientists that mammoths and their lesser-known cousins the mastodons did act a lot like elephants. Scientists’ guesses were correct—they can study the living creatures to learn about the extinct ones. This is truly amazing because scientists know most long-lost animals only from their bones. Compare mammoths to amphicyonids, mammals that lived about 15 million years ago. Dr. Fisher helped unearth a set of five amphicyonid footprints, which had hardened into siltstone, on a school field trip when he was 14 years old. “This animal was as big as a bear,” Dr. Fisher explains. “But no



More than 10,000 years ago, Columbian mammoths enjoyed water holes in North America. Scientists believe mammoths acted like elephants, in addition to looking like them.

TREASURES FROM PERMAFROST

Near the Arctic Circle, the summer sun’s rays often thaw only the top few inches of soil. A deeper layer of soil, called permafrost, may stay frozen for thousands of years. Massive woolly mammoths were more likely than smaller animals to induce a mudslide or crash through ice into rivers. There they could be blanketed by mud and frozen quickly after death.

animal alive today is anything like it.” As a result, scientists know little about how this animal ate, slept, and reared its young.

8 Having only bones to examine also means that scientists must guess at what most prehistoric creatures looked like alive, in the flesh. Discoveries like Lyuba show us the hulking muscles and shaggy fur that covered mammoth skeletons. They reveal that mammoth trunks worked like elephant trunks and that mammoths (like elephants) had thick, spongy tissue on the soles of their feet to help support their massive weight. Usually the soft parts of an animal’s body rot after death, but a deep freeze puts the brakes on decay.

Because woolly mammoths were enormous and lived in an arctic climate, they were the most likely animals to be preserved as prehistoric popsicles.

9 Scientists also learn about mammoths through clues left by humans. Our ancestors speared mammoths for supper and stacked their bones to build shelters from the wind. They painted mammoth pictures on caves and carved mammoth figurines from ivory (similar to art inspired by elephants).

10 With data from so many sources, scientists know more about mammoths and mastodons than about most other prehistoric creatures. Yet we don't know why these animals died out. Solving this mystery becomes even more urgent as elephants struggle to survive today.

11 Dr. Fisher hopes his research can help save elephants. "This is part of why I do this work," he says. "Part of me looks backward and tries to understand the past. And part of me looks around and tries to understand the animals of the present."

DID DINOSAURS AND MAMMOTHS LIVE AT THE SAME TIME?

Answer: No! Dinosaurs were a group of reptiles that included the largest animals ever to live on land, and they died out 65 million years ago. At that time, mammals—animals covered with fur that give birth to live young—were not much bigger than cats. Mammoths and mastodons were among the largest *mammals* ever to have lived on land. The first mastodons appeared around 25 million years ago, and the first mammoths appeared around 5 million years ago. Elephants appeared at the same time as mammoths. They were all still tromping around when modern humans appeared about 100,000 years ago.

Mammoths and Mastodons: Titans of the Ice Age by Cheryl Bardoe. Text, photographs, and illustration copyright © 2010 by The Field Museum. Reprinted by permission of Abrams Books for Young Readers, an imprint of Harry N. Abrams, Inc.

1 In paragraph 1, why could Kostia “hardly believe his eyes”?

- A. He realized that reindeer can find animal remains.
- B. He observed a significant amount of snow in May.
- C. He saw that firewood was now abundant in Siberia.
- D. He saw the odd characteristics of the animal remains.

2 According to the passage, why did Yuri report what his sons had found?

- A. to bring the family fame
- B. to follow the local law
- C. to help other villagers
- D. to bring good luck

3 How does the picture of Lyuba **best** support the information in the passage?

- A. by showing Lyuba’s excellent condition
- B. by showing the steps for studying Lyuba
- C. by showing the incredible strength of Lyuba
- D. by showing Lyuba’s similarity to other discoveries

4 Based on the passage, what does the heading “Mammoths Are Extinct, but Their Story Isn’t Over” **most likely** mean?

- A. People have found cave paintings of mammoths.
- B. Scientists can still learn more about mammoths.
- C. People want to read books about mammoths.
- D. Mammoths may still exist in remote places.

5 Based on paragraph 7, what is the **main** reason that little is known about the behavior of amphyconids?

- A. Only a few of them have been uncovered on land.
- B. Only some of them have been found in groups.
- C. There are no similar animals that exist today.
- D. There are no scientists who study them now.

6 Based on the passage and the text box titled “Treasures from Permafrost,” how was the climate **most** important to the discovery of Lyuba?

- A. The slippery ice caused her to fall.
- B. The white snow made her easy to see.
- C. The extreme cold preserved her soft tissue.
- D. The harsh winds kept other animals away from her.

7 Based on the passage, the discovery of Lyuba **best** supports the work of paleontologists by showing that

- A. many animal species do not survive.
- B. some animal species live in frigid climates.
- C. modern animals can give clues about the past.
- D. preserved bones of extinct animals are not useful.

8 What is the **main** purpose of the passage?

- A. to describe the challenges of one paleontologist
- B. to show the steps for becoming a paleontologist
- C. to explain why scientists must follow certain procedures
- D. to show how scientists use discoveries to draw conclusions

9 In paragraph 5, what does the phrase “hold-in-your-hands evidence” refer to?

- A. data that can be read easily
- B. actual proof of the ideas presented
- C. details that have been recorded on paper
- D. new information from articles on the topic

10 Based on the meaning of the prefix *pre-*, what does the word *prehistoric* refer to throughout the passage?

- A. periods of time when history was ignored
- B. a period of history that has repeated itself
- C. periods of history that have been forgotten
- D. the period of time that was before recorded history

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 passage, explain why it has been helpful for scientists to study the frozen body of a woolly mammoth. Support your answer with important details from the passage.

Emily Geiger was a young woman during the time of the American Revolution. Read the scenes from the play based on the true story of Emily Geiger and answer the questions that follow.

from **Emily Geiger: Teenage Patriot**

by Tara Wise Montgomery

Characters:

NARRATOR

GENERAL NATHANAEL GREENE

SOLDIER

AIDE

EMILY GEIGER, 18

GENERAL THOMAS SUMTER

SCENE 1

TIME: *June 1781.*

SETTING: *General Greene's headquarters in the fortified village of Ninety-Six, South Carolina. Table and chair are center. Table has papers on it, a metal cup, and any other items that would be appropriate. A stool, rifle leaning against wall, kettle, etc. round out the set. . . .*

5 **AT RISE:** *GENERAL GREENE is seated at table, working on papers. NARRATOR enters, crosses center.*

NARRATOR: The setting is June of 1781 during the American Revolutionary War. Patriot General Nathanael Greene has retreated from Redcoat Lord Rawdon. Greene is anxious to send an order to General Thomas Sumter to join him in attacking Lord Rawdon. However, no man is willing
10 to make the treacherous journey through a South Carolina countryside filled with vengeful Tories. Suddenly, an unlikely candidate approaches. (*NARRATOR exits. SOLDIER enters right, approaches GENERAL GREENE, salutes.*)

SOLDIER: General Greene, there is a young lady named Miss Geiger here to see you.

GENERAL GREENE (*Crossly looking up from his work*): I'm very busy right now. I've no time
15 for visitors! I've got to figure out a strategy to defeat those villainous Redcoats!

SOLDIER (*Apologetically*): I realize that, sir, but she's been waiting to see you for some time and refuses to leave until she speaks with you. She's quite persistent.

GREENE: Refuses, you say? (*Sighing heavily*) Very well, then. Send her in, send her in.

SOLDIER (*Saluting*): As you wish, sir. (*Exits right*)

20 **GREENE** (*Shaking his head; to himself*): Whatever would a woman have to say to me in the middle of a desperate war? (*SOLDIER reenters right, followed by EMILY, who wears a determined expression on her face, her head held high. GREENE stands to greet her.*)

SOLDIER: General Greene, Miss Emily Geiger.

EMILY (*Shaking his hand*): General Greene, I am so pleased to meet you.

- 25 **GREENE:** The pleasure is mine, Miss Geiger. (*Firmly*) However, I would appreciate it if you would state your business quickly. I have much work to do and have very little time to spare you.
- EMILY:** I realize that, General Greene. As a matter of fact, I have come to offer you my services.
- GREENE:** Your services? I don't understand.
- 30 **EMILY:** Well, sir, it is my wish to help in the war effort. Since I am not permitted to fight as a soldier, I had thought I might persuade you to allow me to serve as a messenger.
- GREENE** (*Laughing*): A messenger? You can't be serious!
- EMILY:** I can assure you I am quite serious, General. The fact is I am the best rider in Newberry County. I understand that you have an important dispatch to deliver to General
- 35 Thomas Sumter. I believe that I am the person for the job.
- GREENE** (*Angrily*): How did you get that information?
- EMILY:** That's not important, sir. The fact remains that I know this area very well, and I can deliver the message in no time.
- GREENE:** Miss Geiger, I can't even find a man bold enough to tackle that! The woods are
- 40 crawling with Redcoats.
- EMILY:** I am not a man!
- GREENE:** What you propose is impossible. How old are you?
- EMILY:** I'm eighteen, sir.
- GREENE** (*Shaking head*): Do you realize what a dangerous mission you are talking about? What
- 45 if you were captured and taken prisoner? Have you considered that?
- EMILY:** I'm not afraid, sir. I know I can do it. I'm tired of sitting around at our farmhouse while brave men die. My father is unable to fight because of an infirmity, so it's up to me to do something to help the war effort. Please allow me to do this. I want to serve my country.
- SOLDIER:** We have not considered sending a woman messenger, General. Especially one
- 50 so young. Rawdon would be looking for a man.
- GREENE** (*Sighing*): Well . . . you seem determined, Miss Geiger. Still, I don't know. What would your family think of me, allowing you to take on such a dangerous mission?
- EMILY:** My family understands my desire to help the cause, sir. They also know how stubborn I can be.
- 55 **GREENE** (*Smiling*): You are that. The fact is, Miss Geiger, you're our only hope at this point. My soldier is right—perhaps the Redcoats might not be suspicious of a young lady rider.
- EMILY** (*Happily*): Thank you, General Greene! I won't let you down. If I encounter anyone on my journey, I will tell them I am visiting my Uncle Jacob. He lives several miles away.
- SOLDIER:** Uncle Jacob—clever!
- 60 **GREENE** (*Writing a letter and handing it to EMILY*): Now, it is important that you know the contents of this letter so that you'll remember it if you fall into the wrong hands and must destroy it. . . . (*Curtain*)

[Some time later . . .]

SCENE 3

SETTING: *Thomas Sumter's Camp by Wateree River in South Carolina.*

65 **AT RISE:** *GENERAL SUMTER is sitting at table, reading through papers. AIDE enters left.*

AIDE: General Sumter, there is a woman here to see you.

GENERAL SUMTER (*Looking up from his papers*): A woman? Here!

AIDE: Yes, sir. Her name is Emily Geiger. She insists that she see you. She says she has a
70 message for you.

SUMTER (*Confused*): A message for me? What sort of message?

AIDE: From General Greene, sir.

SUMTER: Great Scott! Has Greene lost his mind sending a woman with a dispatch? Send
her in, Thompson.

75 **AIDE:** Yes, sir. (*Exits left. SUMTER shakes his head in disbelief. After a moment, EMILY enters left.*)

EMILY: General Sumter, at last I have reached you!

SUMTER: What is the meaning of this?

EMILY: Emily Geiger at your service, sir! (*Curtsies*) General Greene sent me to deliver a
80 very important message. You can't imagine what I have been through to get here.

SUMTER (*In disbelief*): You mean you have traveled through enemy lines from General
Greene's camp?

EMILY: Yes, sir. I was captured by Lord Rawdon's men and held prisoner.

SUMTER: What? Incredible! How did you escape?

85 **EMILY:** He let me go.

SUMTER (*Amazed*): Rawdon let you go? I can't believe this!

EMILY: He couldn't find General Greene's message. They weren't able to find any
evidence.

SUMTER: What happened to it?

90 **EMILY** (*In matter-of-fact tone*): I ate it.

SUMTER: You did WHAT?

EMILY: I know it sounds ridiculous, but I had no choice. I couldn't let them find it.

SUMTER: Well, of course that was better than allowing them to get the information. But
how am I to know what General Greene had to say?

95 **EMILY:** That's why I'm here.

SUMTER: I still don't understand how you can deliver the message if you no longer have it on your person.

EMILY: Ah, but you see—I memorized it before I ate it! (*Reciting from memory*) General Greene has just passed Broad River and would like you to join him in attacking Lord Rawdon by sending reinforcements to Orangeburgh.

SUMTER (*Impressed*): This is incredible, Miss Geiger! You have served your country well today! Who would have thought such a young woman would make such an excellent messenger?

EMILY: I consider it my patriotic duty, sir. (*Curtain. NARRATOR enters, before curtain, to address audience.*)

NARRATOR: Thanks to Emily Geiger, General Sumter proceeded to join Greene and together they forced the Redcoats to retreat.

THE END

Emily Geiger: Teenage Patriot by Tara Wise Montgomery, from *PLAYS, The Drama Magazine for Young People* (May 2013). Copyright © 2013 by *PLAYS, The Drama Magazine for Young People*. Reprinted by permission of *PLAYS, The Drama Magazine for Young People*/Sterling Partners, Inc.

12 Based on lines 14–26, which of the following **best** describes General Greene's mood?

- A. tense
- B. lonely
- C. confused
- D. disappointed

13 In line 37, which of the following stage directions could **best** be added?

- A. (*Frowning with concern*)
- B. (*Standing with confidence*)
- C. (*Breathing fast, rubbing her hands*)
- D. (*Smiling gently, smoothing her hair*)

- 14 Read the sentence from lines 39 and 40 in the box below.

The woods are crawling with Redcoats.

Based on the play, what does the sentence **mainly** show about the danger of Emily's journey?

- A. Resources are in low supply.
- B. Enemy troops are numerous.
- C. Traps are located along the ground.
- D. Battles are continuing without a pause.

- 15 What is the **most likely** reason the author chose to write the play?

- A. to describe what caused the Revolutionary War
- B. to describe two important generals of the Revolutionary War
- C. to show the unique role of a young woman during the Revolutionary War
- D. to explain why young women were first allowed to serve in the Revolutionary War

- 16 Based on lines 27 and 28, what does the word *services* mean?

- A. assistance
- B. obedience
- C. skills in making repairs
- D. ideas for important events

Grade 6 English Language Arts
Spring 2016 Released Items:
Reporting Categories, Standards, and Correct Answers*

Item No.	Page No.	Reporting Category	Standard	Correct Answer (MC)*
1	60	<i>Reading</i>	1	D
2	60	<i>Reading</i>	3	D
3	60	<i>Reading</i>	7	A
4	60	<i>Reading</i>	2	B
5	61	<i>Reading</i>	1	C
6	61	<i>Reading</i>	7	C
7	61	<i>Reading</i>	2	C
8	61	<i>Reading</i>	6	D
9	62	<i>Reading</i>	4	B
10	62	<i>Language</i>	4	D
11	63	<i>Reading</i>	8	
12	67	<i>Reading</i>	3	A
13	67	<i>Reading</i>	1	B
14	68	<i>Reading</i>	4	B
15	68	<i>Reading</i>	1	C
16	68	<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 the shaded cells, will be posted to the Department's website later this year.

Grade 6 English Language Arts
Spring 2016 Unreleased Common Items:
Reporting Categories and Standards

Item No.	Reporting Category	Standard
17	<i>Reading</i>	3
18	<i>Reading</i>	1
19	<i>Reading</i>	7
20	<i>Reading</i>	4
21	<i>Language</i>	4
22	<i>Reading</i>	2
23	<i>Reading</i>	3
24	<i>Reading</i>	5
25	<i>Reading</i>	4
26	<i>Reading</i>	1
27	<i>Reading</i>	1
28	<i>Reading</i>	2
29	<i>Reading</i>	3
30	<i>Reading</i>	3
31	<i>Language</i>	4
32	<i>Language</i>	4
33	<i>Reading</i>	3
34	<i>Reading</i>	1
35	<i>Reading</i>	1
36	<i>Reading</i>	6
37	<i>Reading</i>	5
38	<i>Reading</i>	6
39	<i>Language</i>	4
40	<i>Reading</i>	9