
V. English Language Arts, Grade 6

Grade 6 English Language Arts Test

The spring 2017 grade 6 English Language Arts test was a next-generation assessment, featuring a new test design and new item types. The test was administered in two formats: a computer-based version and a paper-based version. The test included both operational items, which count toward a student’s score, and matrix items. The matrix portion of the test consisted of field-test questions that do not count toward a student’s score.

In general, all students were administered the same operational items, regardless of whether they took the computer-based test or the paper-based test. In some instances, the wording or content of a paper item differed slightly from the computer-based version. More information about the differences between the computer-based and paper-based tests will be posted to the MCAS website at www.doe.mass.edu/mcas/.

This document displays the **paper-based versions** of the 2017 operational items that have been released. The **computer-based versions** of the released items are available on the MCAS Resource Center website at mcas.pearsonsupport.com.

Test Sessions and Content Overview

The grade 6 ELA test was made up of two separate test sessions. Each session included reading passages, followed by selected-response and essay questions. On the paper-based test, the selected-response questions were multiple-choice items and multiple-select items, in which students select the correct answer(s) from among several answer options.

Standards and Reporting Categories

The grade 6 ELA test was based on grades 6–12 learning standards in three 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 47–52)
- Writing (*Framework*, pages 53–59)
- 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 three MCAS reporting categories, which are identical to the three framework content strands listed above.

The tables at the conclusion of this chapter provide the following information about each released and unreleased operational item: reporting category, standard(s) covered, item type, and item description. The correct answers for released selected-response questions are also displayed in the released item table.

Reference Materials

During both 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

This session contains 10 questions.

Directions

Read each passage and question carefully. Then answer each question as well as you can. You must record all answers in your Student Answer Booklet.

For most questions, you will mark your answers by filling in the circles in your Student Answer Booklet. Make sure you darken the circles completely. Do not make any marks outside of the circles. If you need to change an answer, be sure to erase your first answer completely.

One question will ask you to write an essay. Write your essay in the space provided in your Student Answer Booklet. Only essays written within the provided space will be scored.

English Language Arts

Life in colonial America was often challenging, especially in winter. Read the article and the passage about inventions that colonists used to stay warm. Then answer the questions that follow.

Read the article “Keeping Warm in the Winter.”

Keeping Warm in the Winter

by Tom Kernan

- 1 During colonial times, one of the most daunting tasks people faced was trying to stay warm during the cold winter months. Although cast iron wood stoves existed in colonial America, they were generally rare in many households. Settlers in upstate New York typically heated their rooms with fireplaces that, during the coldest winter months, at times would not even bring the room temperature above freezing. Warren Johnson, while visiting his brother Sir William Johnson at Johnson Hall in Johnstown, NY, wrote in his journal:

“December the 28th, 1760. It was so cold as to freeze almost anything even by the fire’s side: The frost is soe intense, that if you walk in leather shoes & gloves, you are frostbitten.”

“January 11, 1761. That strong Punch in 20 Minutes, is covered with a Scum of Ice, & Ink on a Table is frozen, before the fire.”

“January 24–25, 1761. The weather soe cold that handling Brass, or Iron leaves A Blister on the fingers & in Bed People are cold even with ten blankets on.”

- 2 Therefore, it was important to have certain implements in the house to help [people] stay warm during winter. One of those items was a bed warmer. A bed warmer is a brass pan and lid attached to a long wooden handle. By filling the pan with hot embers¹ and running the pan under the covers, colonials could warm up their beds before getting in. Another similar item was the foot warmer. A small box made of either brass, wood and tin or just wood with a tin pan inside, it too was filled with hot embers and placed at the feet to keep one’s toes warm. To keep your food warm while eating, hot plates were used. These are deep hollow plates usually made of pewter or ceramic filled with steaming hot water. To keep the body warm, people dressed in layers of thick wool clothing starting with long underwear, which stayed on the body until the weather warmed up in the spring. The following quote from the *Farmer’s Almanac*, 1784, gives advice on how to keep warm during winter:

¹hot embers—pieces of hot coal or wood from a fire

English Language Arts

"RECIPE TO KEEP ONE'S SELF WARM A WHOLE WINTER WITH ONE PIECE OF WOOD."

"Take a piece of wood, fling it out the window into the Yard; then run downstairs as hard as you ever can; when you have got it, run up again with the same measure of speed; keep throwing and fetching up until the Exercise shall sufficiently heated you. Renew as often as the occasion shall require!"



a colonial foot warmer

"Keeping Warm in the Winter" by Tom Kernan, from Senate House State Historic Site Web site. Copyright © 2013 by Senate House State Historic Site. Reprinted by permission of the author. Photograph courtesy of the Filson Historical Society, Louisville, KY.

English Language Arts

Read the passage about a type of woodburning stove invented by Benjamin Franklin.

from “How to Keep Warm”

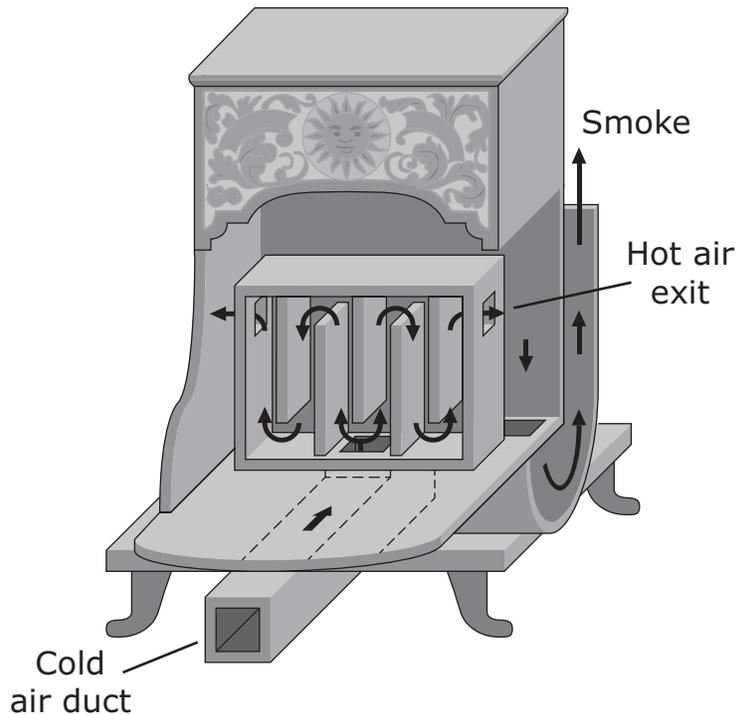
by Kathleen Krull

- 1 Ben Franklin was not a scientist in the sense of a person coming up with a hypothesis and trying to prove it. Rather, he started with a practical problem and tried to find a solution, and in the process he observed scientific principles at work. And the problem most on Franklin’s mind was health. Everyone, not just the Franklin family, suffered from the brutal winters in the Colonies.
- 2 The way homes were heated at the time was terribly inefficient. Huddling near traditional open fireplaces meant burning your feet while your rear end remained numb with cold and drafts blew elsewhere around the room. In addition, everyone was breathing smoky, sooty air, which produced coughs, itchy eyes, colds, and diseases.
- 3 What would help? Ben started tinkering with home-heating designs around 1740. Others were working on this same problem, but not with the same scientific understanding that Ben possessed. Franklin was keenly interested in how the human body regulated heat. He carried out experiments with a machine he built, verifying for himself William Harvey’s finding that the circulation of blood distributed heat within the body. A room was like a body, needing its temperature to be properly regulated.
- 4 Without a lab of his own, using his own house instead, Franklin investigated the flow of air, seeing if there was a way to control it. He held a lit candle up to a keyhole to observe the candle flame bending toward the keyhole, showing that the warmth was escaping. He did experiments heating empty bottles, then inverting them in water, observing that as the temperature of the air in the bottle decreased, the air contracted and created space so that water was drawn into the bottle. This demonstrated that warm air took up more space than cold air.
- 5 When wood was burned in an ordinary open fireplace, the heat radiated out. Since heated air rises, most of the heat went directly up and out the chimney and was quickly lost. Meanwhile, if there were any chinks in the walls or windows, the fire actually pulled *cold* air into the room, because as hot air went out the chimney, *cold* air rushed in to replace it. According to Franklin, this makes “a continual whistling or howling; and it is very uncomfortable as well as dangerous,” causing “colds in the head, rheums, and defluctions¹ which fall into [the] jaws and gums.”

¹rheums and defluctions—symptoms of a cold, such as a runny nose

English Language Arts

- 6 Franklin's idea was a new kind of woodburning stove. He would move the fire from an open hearth into a metal box that was inside the fireplace and connected to the chimney. Behind the metal box, he added a "winding passage" of small metal chambers that made hot air travel a longer path and kept it from escaping so quickly. Metal is a good conductor of heat, so the heat in the metal box was captured and radiated into the room, while the smoke was directed into the chimney.



a diagram of Franklin's stove

- 7 Now instead of crowding near the fireplace, people could move around a room. They could see the fire, which was comforting psychologically—something other enclosed stoves such as the Dutch oven did not afford.
- 8 Franklin's stove represented an improvement in comfort, and it was also energy efficient. Franklin worried that the clearing of so many forests in the New World might result in such a terrible shortage of wood that coal for heating would have to be imported from Europe—much too expensive. Franklin's iron stove used one-quarter the amount of wood that a typical fireplace used, he claimed, even though it gave off more heat.
- 9 The Franklin stove was a perfect example of how science could improve everyday life. It was useful. It was practical. It was wonderful!

"How to Keep Warm" by Kathleen Krull, from *Benjamin Franklin: Giants of Science*. Text copyright © 2013 by Kathleen Krull. Reprinted by permission of Viking Children's Books, an imprint of Penguin Young Readers Group, a division of Penguin Random House LLC.

English Language Arts

- 1 According to paragraph 1 of “Keeping Warm in the Winter,” what was one of the **main** problems the colonists had?
- A. heating their homes
 - B. traveling in the cold
 - C. chopping their firewood
 - D. measuring the temperature
- 2 In paragraph 1 of “Keeping Warm in the Winter,” what is the **most likely** reason the author included the journal entries?
- A. to prove that Warren Johnson was a real person
 - B. to describe the health problems of Warren Johnson
 - C. to compare the cold weather on different days in winter
 - D. to support the idea that winters were very cold in the colonies
- 3 Read the sentence from paragraph 2 of “Keeping Warm in the Winter” in the box.

Therefore, it was important to have certain implements in the house to help [people] stay warm during winter.

Based on paragraph 2, what does the word *implements* refer to?

- A. tools
- B. areas
- C. actions
- D. experts

English Language Arts

- 4 Read the sentences from paragraph 1 of “How to Keep Warm” in the box.

Ben Franklin was not a scientist in the sense of a person coming up with a hypothesis and trying to prove it. Rather, he started with a practical problem and tried to find a solution. . . .

In the sentences, the author **most likely** means that Ben Franklin

- A. had no actual experience in science.
 - B. approached science in a unique way.
 - C. did not read the work of other researchers.
 - D. was interested in conducting research alone.
- 5 According to the text and diagram in “How to Keep Warm,” what feature of Franklin’s stove **mainly** helped colonists stay warmer?
- A. a visible fire
 - B. a winding passage
 - C. a compartment for wood
 - D. a connection to a chimney
- 6 Based on paragraph 6 of “How to Keep Warm,” why did Franklin choose a metal box for his stove?
- A. Metal was easy to move around a room.
 - B. Metal was easy to find and manufacture.
 - C. Metal can efficiently hold and transfer heat.
 - D. Metal can endure high temperatures without melting.

English Language Arts

- 7 In "How to Keep Warm," what is the main idea of paragraph 8?
- A. Franklin's stove was just as hot as traditional fireplaces.
 - B. Franklin wanted the colonies to rely less on other countries.
 - C. Franklin's stove made the colonists' lives better and helped save resources.
 - D. Franklin tried to increase the amount of coal available for cooking and heating.

- 8 Read the sentence from paragraph 3 of "How to Keep Warm" in the box.

He carried out experiments with a machine he built, verifying for himself William Harvey's finding that the circulation of blood distributed heat within the body.

- How do the *Farmer's Almanac* quotations in paragraph 2 of "Keeping Warm in the Winter" **mainly** support Harvey's finding?
- A. They prove that the colonists found unique ways to stay warm.
 - B. They give evidence that the colonists needed to work hard to stay warm.
 - C. They show that chopping wood strengthens the body when a person works to stay warm.
 - D. They suggest that increasing blood flow through movement can help a person stay warm.

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- 9 Which of the following claims is **best** supported in both “Keeping Warm in the Winter” and “How to Keep Warm”?
- A. Colonists were fascinated by new inventions.
 - B. Regular contact with cold air caused breathing problems.
 - C. Heating devices had negative effects on the environment.
 - D. Colonial homes were difficult to heat with traditional fireplaces.

English Language Arts

This question is a text-based essay question. Write your essay in the space provided in your Student Answer Booklet. Your essay should:

- Present and develop a central idea.
- Provide evidence/details from the passage(s).
- Include correct grammar, spelling, and punctuation.

- 10 Write an essay explaining how “Keeping Warm in the Winter” and “How to Keep Warm” **each** help the reader to understand the colonists’ challenge of living in a cold climate. Be sure to use information from **both** the article and the passage to develop your essay.

Grade 6 English Language Arts
Spring 2017 Released Operational Items:
Reporting Categories, Standards, Item Descriptions, and Correct Answers

Item No.	Page No.	Reporting Category	Standard	Item Type*	Description	Correct Answer (SR)**
1	52	<i>Reading</i>	RI.6.1	SR	Make an inference based on a section of the article.	A
2	52	<i>Reading</i>	RI.6.5	SR	Analyze why an author included a section of the article.	D
3	52	<i>Language</i>	L.6.4	SR	Determine the meaning of a word in context.	A
4	53	<i>Reading</i>	RI.6.3	SR	Analyze the meaning of a passage.	B
5	53	<i>Reading</i>	RI.6.7	SR	Integrate the text and a diagram to develop an understanding of a topic.	B
6	53	<i>Reading</i>	RI.6.3	SR	Analyze a passage to determine why an individual made a choice.	C
7	54	<i>Reading</i>	RI.6.2	SR	Determine the central idea of a passage.	C
8	54	<i>Reading</i>	RI.6.8	SR	Evaluate how evidence from an article supports a claim in a passage.	D
9	55	<i>Reading</i>	RI.6.8	SR	Identify which claim is supported by both an article and passage.	D
10	56	<i>Writing Language</i>	W.6.2, W.6.4, L.6.1, L.6.2, L.6.3	ES	Write an essay that explains how two texts help the reader to understand a theme common to both; use information from both texts to support your explanation.	

* ELA item types are: selected-response (SR), constructed-response (CR), and essay (ES).

**Answers are provided here for selected-response items only. Sample responses and scoring guidelines for any constructed-response and essay items will be posted to the Department's website later this year.

Grade 6 English Language Arts
Spring 2017 Unreleased Operational Items:
Reporting Categories, Standards, and Item Descriptions

Item No.	Reporting Category	Standard	Item Type*	Description
11	<i>Reading</i>	RL.6.6	SR	Identify an author's point of view in a text and choose supporting details.
12	<i>Reading</i>	RL.6.2	SR	Identify the central idea of a text and choose supporting details.
13	<i>Reading</i>	RL.6.5	SR	Analyze how a scene contributes to the theme of a text and choose supporting evidence.
14	<i>Reading</i>	RL.6.2	SR	Identify the theme of a text and choose supporting evidence.
15	<i>Writing Language</i>	W.6.3, W.6.4, L.6.1, L.6.2, L.6.3	ES	Write a narrative from another character's point of view.
16	<i>Reading</i>	RL.6.5	SR	Analyze why an author includes a sentence in a passage.
17	<i>Reading</i>	RL.6.3	SR	Analyze how a character responds to a situation as the plot moves toward resolution.
18	<i>Reading</i>	RL.6.3	SR	Analyze how paragraphs in a passage help a reader to better understand a character's circumstances.
19	<i>Reading</i>	RL.6.2	SR	Determine the central idea of a passage.
20	<i>Reading</i>	RL.6.2	SR	Determine how an important idea in a passage is communicated through vivid details.
21	<i>Reading</i>	RL.6.3	SR	Analyze how a character responds to a situation.
22	<i>Reading</i>	RL.6.9	SR	Compare two passages to identify a common attitude between two characters.
23	<i>Language</i>	L.6.2	SR	Demonstrate understanding of the purpose of punctuation in a sentence.
24	<i>Reading</i>	RL.6.4	SR	Analyze the impact of an author's word choice on meaning of a passage.
25	<i>Writing Language</i>	W.6.2, W.6.4, L.6.1, L.6.2, L.6.3	ES	Write an essay that analyzes how an author communicates elements of plot in texts; use information from the passages to support your explanation.

* ELA item types are: selected-response (SR), constructed-response (CR), and essay (ES).