

Practice Test

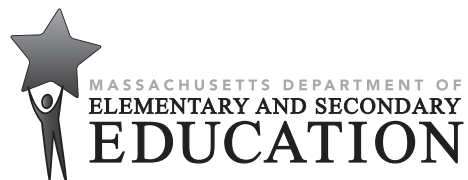
English Language Arts Reading Comprehension

GRADE 8

Student Name

School Name

District Name



This is a practice test. Your responses to practice test questions must be recorded on your Practice Test Answer Document.

Mark only one answer for each multiple-choice question. If you are not sure of the answer, choose the answer you think is best.

HOW TO ANSWER OPEN-RESPONSE QUESTIONS

- **Make sure that your response is CLEAR, COMPLETE, and ACCURATE.**
- **Provide enough IMPORTANT DETAILS from the selection to completely support your response.**

Reading Comprehension

DIRECTIONS

This practice test contains one reading selection with two multiple-choice questions and one open-response question. Mark your answers to these questions in the spaces provided on page 5 of your Practice Test Answer Document.

This article discusses some facts and misunderstandings about the porcupine. Read the article and answer the questions that follow.

Advice for Living in Porcupine Country

by Leigh Gillette

1 The porcupine is a controversial, yet important, forest creature. Our more prickly encounters with “quill pigs” may be remedied with a little knowledge about their biology.

2 As North America’s second-largest rodent—the beaver is largest—adult porcupines range from 2½ to 3 feet long and can weigh 35 pounds. Porcupines are nocturnal, and strictly vegetarian. Throughout winter, they survive on the cambium (living tissue) layer of trees—pines, aspen and cottonwood being preferred. Occasionally a porcupine will continually feed in a single tree, partially or completely girdling its trunk and causing tree deformation or death. From spring through fall, porcupines supplement their diet with leaves, soft plants, mushrooms, vegetables and fruits.

3 October is mating season, and a single “porcupette” is born to each mother in May or June. The young are born with soft quills that harden soon after birth. Porcupettes eat vegetation within two weeks of birth, but stay with their mothers until fall.

4 The word porcupine stems from the Latin “porcus,” for pig, and the French “epine,” for thorn or quill, explaining the “quill pig” nickname. The porcupine’s quill count is impressive, with roughly 30,000 quills per animal. The quill itself is a modified hollow hair tipped with microscopic barbs.

5 Porcupines cannot shoot their quills. A threatened porcupine tenses muscles under its skin to erect the quills, faces away from the attacker, and swings its quilled tail. Upon contact, quills detach from the porcupine. Embedded in the attacker’s flesh, quills expand with body heat, preventing easy removal. Muscle movements draw the quills further in at the rate of an inch per day. Interestingly, porcupine quills are antiseptic, keeping the porcupine infection-free should it suffer a self-inflicted quilling.

6 Keeping dogs contained in porcupine country prevents quillings. Should your dog be quilled, the sole solution is removing all embedded quills. To remove a quill, “deflate it” by cutting the end off, then pull it out with pliers. Clean the injured area, and allow your dog to lick its wounds. If you have any difficulty finding or removing all quills, visit your vet.



Reading Comprehension

- 7 If a porcupine takes up residence in your favorite landscape tree, try harassing it into leaving with spray from a hose (no direct hits, please!). After eviction, loosely wrap the trunk with three vertical feet of sheet metal, preventing revisitation.
- 8 Trying to cure their insatiable appetite for salt, porcupines will gnaw on your hand tools, saddles, boots, etc. Protect your gear through careful storage. This salt craving also draws porcupines to the edges of salted highways, where vehicles often strike them.
- 9 Despite humans' many conflicts with them, porcupines are ecologically important. The twigs they drop while feeding are winter food for deer, rabbits and elk. Damaged trees become habitat for insects, which in turn feed woodpeckers. A girdled tree's death frees up resources for understory plants that are habitat for numerous animals. Porcupines even eat some "harmful" plants, namely mistletoe, a pine tree parasite.

"Advice For Living in Porcupine Country" by Leigh Gillette as it appeared in *The Durango Herald*, March 2004. Copyright © 2004 by Leigh Gillette. Published by The Durango Herald.

- 1 Based on the article, why does the author **most likely** consider the porcupine a "controversial" animal?
- A. because some people disagree on whether porcupines shoot their quills
 - B. because most people do not want porcupines to hurt their dogs
 - C. because some people see porcupines as pests while others do not
 - D. because most people are sick of porcupines "girdling" their trees

- 2 According to the article, why is it important to remove porcupine quills promptly?
- A. They are quite poisonous.
 - B. They can be very painful.
 - C. They can cause serious infection.
 - D. They move quickly into the flesh.

Reading Comprehension

Question 3 is an open-response question.

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

Write your answer to question 3 in the space provided on page 5 of your Practice Test Answer Document.

- 3 Suppose that a dog finds a porcupine in the woods and attacks it. Using information from the article, describe what will happen to the dog from the moment it goes after the porcupine until the quills are removed from the dog's body. Use relevant and specific information from the article to support your answer.

MASSACHUSETTS COMPREHENSIVE ASSESSMENT SYSTEM
Grade 8 English Language Arts
Practice Test Answer Document

<p>School Name: _____</p> <p>District Name: _____</p> <p>Last Name of Student: _____</p> <p>First Name of Student: _____</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Marking Instructions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Use a No. 2 pencil only.• Do not use ink, ballpoint, or felt tip pens.• Make solid marks that fill the circles completely.• Erase cleanly any marks you wish to change.• Make no stray marks on this form.• Do not fold, tear, or mutilate this form.
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