III. English Language Arts, Grade 4

A. Composition
B. Reading Comprehension
Grade 4 English Language Arts Test

Test Structure

The grade 4 English Language Arts test was presented in the following two parts:

■ the ELA Composition test, which used a writing prompt to assess learning standards from the Writing strand in the Massachusetts Curriculum Framework for English Language Arts and Literacy (March 2011)

■ the ELA Reading Comprehension test, which used multiple-choice and open-response questions (items) to assess learning standards from the Reading and Language strands in the Curriculum Framework for English Language Arts and Literacy

A. Composition

The spring 2013 grade 4 English Language Arts (ELA) Composition test and Composition Make-Up test were based on learning standards in the Pre-K–5 Writing strand of the Massachusetts Curriculum Framework for English Language Arts and Literacy (March 2011). The learning standards for the Pre-K–5 Writing strand appear on pages 23–28 of the Framework, which is available on the Department website at www.doe.mass.edu/frameworks/current.html.

ELA Composition test results are reported under the reporting categories Composition: Topic Development and Composition: Standard English Conventions.

Test Sessions and Content Overview

The ELA Composition test included two separate test sessions, administered on the same day with a short break between sessions. During the first session, each student wrote an initial draft of a composition in response to the appropriate writing prompt on the next two pages. During the second session, each student revised his or her draft and submitted a final composition, which was scored in the areas of Topic Development and Standard English Conventions. The Scoring Guides for the MCAS English Language Arts Composition are available at www.doe.mass.edu/mcas/student/elacomp_scoreguide.html.

Reference Materials

At least one English-language dictionary per classroom was provided for student use during ELA Composition 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 either ELA Composition test session.

Cross-Reference Information

Each grade 4 ELA writing prompt assesses standard 1, 2, or 3 in the Pre-K Writing strand in the 2011 Framework. All grade 4 writing prompts assess standards 4 and 5 in the Pre-K Writing strand.
WRITING PROMPT

Imagine that you are digging in your yard or in your neighborhood and you find an old trunk. When you open the trunk, you discover something very different than what you expected.

Write a story about finding the old trunk. Be sure to describe what you find inside the trunk and what happens after you open it.

You may use the space below to plan what you are going to write (notes, outlines, other pre-writing activities).
WRITING PROMPT

Imagine you are sitting in your room on a rainy day. All of a sudden, the toy box begins to shake, and out pop your favorite toys—the toys have come to life!

Write a story about how you spend the day with your toys.

You may use the space below to plan what you are going to write (notes, outlines, other pre-writing activities).
B. Reading Comprehension

The spring 2013 grade 4 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 4 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 test 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.
YOU ROCK!

by Elizabeth L. Ward

1. You're high up in the air, facing a rock cliff. One chalky hand grips a piece of the cliff; the other slips into a crack. You wear climbing shoes and brace both feet against the surface.

2. Too busy to look down at the ground, you call, "Slack!"

3. Your partner feeds you more rope and calls back, "Climb on!"

4. "Climbing!" you shout, and pull yourself up the final few inches to the top. Now it's time to look down and enjoy the goose bumps. You're a rock jock.

5. An indoor rock jock, that is. You've just climbed a wall of mock rocks at an indoor climbing gym. It's one of many where kids like you hang on and hang out after school and on weekends. Brenna, 11 years old, first climbed at Prairie Walls Climbing Gym in Rochester, Minnesota, when she was 10. "I have gained lots of courage and self-confidence through this sport," she says.

   Andrew, 10, also climbs at Prairie Walls. He started climbing when he was 8, and likes it because "I get to have some time with my dad and friends."

BOULDERING

Bouldering, or ropeless climbing, is done close to the ground, always within 15 feet. It's all about you and the rock, and overcoming a challenging route. Bouldering makes you strong and gives you confidence.
The rock walls at a climbing gym are made of material that looks like real rock cliffs. They are usually from 30 to 50 feet high and peppered with large and small bumps and cracks where fingers and toes can grasp and fit. Colored tape and dots show various routes. Some are more difficult than others. Andrew says, “I like to do the different routes because some are challenging, and some have harder areas with not very big holds.”

At most climbing gyms, you can rent equipment. A safety harness, shoes, and a chalk bag are standard. Show up in comfortable clothes that aren’t too baggy, and you’re set.

As for experience, don’t worry; none needed. Friendly, trained instructors are there to teach you the basics in safe surroundings. You’ll probably be surprised at how fast you learn the ropes. Andrew’s indoor rock climbing experience has helped him climb outdoors in the Black Hills, too. “It helps me with my finger muscles, balance, and tying knots,” he says.

What if you feel like you’re not that athletic? No worries there, either. Brenna remembers, “When I was first starting out, I would look at some of the very advanced rock climbers and think, Wow, I’m never going to be able to do that. As I have matured in climbing, I have noticed that I can do a lot more than I think I can.”

Then there’s the height. Would you freak out? Maybe, but like any new thing you’ve tried before, it gets easier. Brenna thinks every new climber has to overcome the fear of falling. But she says, “You just need to trust your belayer.”

So consider morphing into a wall-rat. Get a grip, go vertical, and climb those rockin’ walls!

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1 Black Hills — a small mountain range in South Dakota
2 belayer — a person who holds the safety rope for a climber

1. What does paragraph 4 mostly show about climbing?
   A. You need to practice before using the rock wall.
   B. You can be nervous and excited at the same time.
   C. You need to watch and listen for danger at all times.
   D. You should always have a partner when on the wall.

2. According to the article, why are colored tape and dots used on rock walls?
   A. to decorate the area
   B. to mark the distances
   C. to warn of loose holds
   D. to show different paths

3. Based on the article, what do kids gain by climbing?
   A. energy
   B. courage
   C. patience
   D. curiosity

4. What is the main purpose of paragraphs 1–4?
   A. to tell readers why they should climb
   B. to show readers what climbing is like
   C. to describe why it is difficult to climb
   D. to explain how to stay safe while climbing
5. What is the purpose of the quotation marks used throughout the article?
   A. to highlight facts in the article
   B. to highlight main ideas in the article
   C. to show that the words are part of a title
   D. to show that the words are spoken by a person

6. Reread paragraphs 5 and 6. Based on the paragraphs, a *mock* rock is a rock that is
   A. old.
   B. fake.
   C. dark.
   D. smooth.
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.

Based on the article, explain what climbers can learn from practicing at indoor gyms. Support your answer with important information from the article.
Yeshi’s Luck
by Naomi C. Rose

Nestled among the tallest mountains of the world is the land of Tibet. In the foothills of those mountains lies a village. And in that village lived Yeshi with his father and their horse.

One morning Yeshi dashed into the stone cottage. “Pa, Pa, our horse is gone!”

Yeshi’s father pulled on his dusty boots, tightened his sash and stepped into the cool air. Squinting at the snowy peaks, he breathed deeply.

Yeshi scowled. “Come on, Pa! We must find our horse.”

Yeshi and his father trampled through the tall grasses, peering behind boulders and over thick brush.

“Om Mani Padmé Hung,” chanted* Yeshi’s father.

“How can you chant now?” asked Yeshi. “That won’t help us find our horse.”

“Chanting helps me have a peaceful mind,” replied his father.

Yeshi kicked into the dirt.

Several villagers happened by. “What are you looking for?”

“Our horse!” cried Yeshi.

“We’ll help.” The villagers searched all day with Yeshi and his father.

At nightfall, Yeshi wept. “What bad luck! We’ve lost our only horse.”

“What terrible fortune,” chimed the villagers.

“Who can say what’s good fortune or bad?” asked Yeshi’s father. “Give thanks for everything.”

* chanted — repeated a phrase or verse, usually as a type of song
Yeshi and the villagers exchanged puzzled looks.

“Om Mani Padmé Hung,” chanted Yeshi’s father.

After several days, some villagers arrived at Yeshi’s house. “Your horse is in the meadow. He brought a surprise. Come quick!”

Yeshi raced out the door. His father and the villagers hurried behind. When Yeshi reached the meadow, he blinked hard. A new horse was grazing alongside Yeshi’s.

“This is good fortune!” said Yeshi.

“Now we have two horses.”

“Your horse running away was good luck after all,” chimed the villagers.

Yeshi’s father smiled. “I’m grateful. But who can say if this is good fortune or bad?”

Yeshi and the villagers exchanged puzzled looks.

“Om Mani Padmé Hung,” chanted Yeshi’s father.

Yeshi and his father swiftly trained their new horse. One day as Yeshi galloped through the meadow, the new horse bucked him off and high into the air.

“Owww!” screamed Yeshi. He crumbled to the ground. “Help! My leg!”

Some villagers rushed to Yeshi. A man lifted Yeshi into his arms and headed up the hill. The others followed.

Yeshi’s father met them at the door. “Pa,” moaned Yeshi, “our new horse was bad luck after all.”

“Such terrible fortune!” chimed the villagers.

Yeshi’s father placed the boy onto the straw bed. “I’m sorry to see my son hurt. But who can say what is good fortune or bad?”

Yeshi and the villagers exchanged puzzled looks.

“Om Mani Padmé Hung,” chanted Yeshi’s father.
Yeshi grimaced while his father wrapped his leg in clean rags. Finally bandaged, his leg throbbed in pain. Yeshi gazed at his father in the glow of the butter lamp. And he listened to his soft chanting. “Om Mani Padmé Hung, Om Mani Padmé Hung.”

“I’ve heard Pa chant a lot,” thought Yeshi, “but it never sounded so beautiful!” Warmth filled his heart. Tears slipped down his cheeks. “That’s odd,” he thought, “my leg has stopped hurting. Maybe there is something to the chant. Could it be my pa is wise after all?”

He listened to his father chant as the moon rose high in the sky.

Yeshi awoke to a villager knocking at the door. “Have you heard? Military officers are here. They’re taking our boys away to fight in a battle. But you don’t have to go because of your hurt leg.”

“My!” Yeshi said. “Falling off the horse was good luck after all.” He glanced at his father. “But, I, I — guess no one really knows what’s good fortune or bad.” Yeshi thought he saw his father smile.

More villagers came. “Such good fortune for Yeshi, but such bad fortune for our boys.”

“I’m scared for my friends, too,” replied Yeshi. “But, who can say what’s good fortune or bad?”

The villagers exchanged puzzled looks.

“Om Mani Padmé Hung,” chanted Yeshi with his father.

It took many weeks for Yeshi’s leg to mend. Soon after, a villager ran up to Yeshi. “Our boys are back. They’re safe. They even brought new friends to join the village!” Yeshi grinned.

At the homecoming celebration, Yeshi sang:

*Life is like a potter’s clay*
*changing shape from day to day.*
*As stars sparkle in the sky*
*light and dark go quickly by.*
*What’s the future, no one knows.*
*Be at peace with how life goes.*


Based on the story, how does Yeshi’s father act when there is a problem?
A. calm
B. angry
C. playful
D. disappointed

In paragraph 43, why is life compared to a potter’s clay?
A. Both are shaped by hand.
B. Both are often celebrated.
C. Both are always changing.
D. Both are peaceful to watch.

Based on the story, what is Yeshi’s father trying to teach Yeshi?
A. Try your hardest until you succeed.
B. Be careful what you wish for.
C. Accept what life brings you.
D. Be kind to other people.

In paragraph 10, what does “happened by” mean?
A. sat near
B. came over
C. walked alone
D. looked closely

Read paragraphs 13 and 14 in the box below.

At nightfall, Yeshi wept. “What bad luck! We’ve lost our only horse.”
“What terrible fortune,” chimed the villagers.

Which two words from the paragraphs have the same meaning?
A. “wept” and “terrible”
B. “luck” and “fortune”
C. “only” and “chimed”
D. “horse” and “villagers”
Question 13 is an open-response question.

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

Write your answer to question 13 in the space provided in your Student Answer Booklet.

13 Describe how Yeshi changes from the beginning to the end of the story. Support your answer with important details from the story.
Read the poems and answer the questions that follow.

ICE CAN SCREAM

Ice can scream,
Ice can shout:  
Winter in  
And autumn out.

Ice can shout,  
Ice can call,  
Signaling  
The end of fall.

Ice can call,  
Ice can yell  
Secrets no one  
Else can tell.

Ice can yell,  
Ice can howl,  
Naming winter's  
Weather foul.

Ice can howl,  
Ice can wail,  
Counting up  
Each storm and gale.

Ice can wail,  
Ice can shriek  
Till the land  
Is winter-bleak.

Ice can shriek,  
Ice can scream  
Straight across  
The autumn dream.

Ice can wail,  
Ice can howl,  
Counting up  
Each storm and gale.

Ice can shriek,  
Ice can scream  
Straight across  
The autumn dream.

ICE CAN SCREAM

—Jane Yolen

WINTER SONGS

The winter sings a windy song  
That hustles rusty leaves along.

The winter sings a song of hail  
That pings and pangs like falling nails.

The winter sings a song of sleet  
As sloshing cars slip down the street.

The winter sings a song of snow,  
A whispering as  
whiteness  
grows.

—Douglas Florian

14 Based on “Ice Can Scream,” the speaker sees ice as a sign of the
   A. beauty of water.
   B. change of season.
   C. speed of passing time.
   D. dangers of the outdoors.

15 Read lines 9–12 from “Ice Can Scream” in the box below.
   Ice can call,
   Ice can yell
   Secrets no one
   Else can tell.

   In the lines, what does the poet make the ice seem like?
   A. an echo
   B. a person
   C. a picture
   D. an animal

16 In “Winter Songs,” the speaker compares hail to
   A. cars.
   B. nails.
   C. leaves.
   D. streets.

17 Which of the following best shows that both “Ice Can Scream” and “Winter Songs” are poems?
   A. They have rhythm and rhyme.
   B. They describe wind and snow.
   C. They teach an important lesson.
   D. They teach facts about the climate.

18 Read lines 1 and 2 from “Winter Songs” in the box below.
   The winter sings a windy song
   That hustles rusty leaves along.

   What does the word hustles mean as it is used in the lines?
   A. hides
   B. hangs
   C. harms
   D. hurries
### Grade 4 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.
## Grade 4 English Language Arts
### Reading Comprehension
#### Spring 2013 Unreleased Common Items:
##### Reporting Categories and Standards

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