VI. English Language Arts, Grade 7

A. Composition
B. Reading Comprehension
**Grade 7 English Language Arts Test**

**Test Structure**

The grade 7 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 *Massachusetts Curriculum Framework for English Language Arts and Literacy*

**A. Composition**

The spring 2014 grade 7 ELA Composition test and Composition Make-Up test were based on learning standards in the grades 6–12 **Writing** strand of the *Massachusetts Curriculum Framework for English Language Arts and Literacy* (March 2011). The learning standards for the grades 6–12 **Writing** strand appear on pages 53–59 of the *Framework*, which is available on the Department website at www.doe.mass.edu/frameworks/current.html.

Each grade 7 ELA writing prompt assesses standard 1, 2, or 3 in the grades 6–12 **Writing** strand in the 2011 *Framework*. All grade 7 writing prompts assess standards 4 and 5 in the grades 6–12 **Writing** strand.

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 page. 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.
Grade 7 Writing Prompt

WRITING PROMPT
There are times when someone sacrifices or gives up something important for a good reason.

In a well-developed composition, describe a time when you decided to give something up for a good reason. Explain what happened, why you made your decision, and how you felt afterward.

Grade 7 Make-Up Writing Prompt

WRITING PROMPT
Everyone dreams of what his or her future will be, but most people have to work hard to make their dreams come true.

In a well-developed composition, write a detailed description of your dreams for your future. Explain how you plan to achieve these dreams.
B. Reading Comprehension

The spring 2014 grade 7 English Language Arts Reading Comprehension test was based on grades 6–12 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 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 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.

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.

Test Sessions and Content Overview

The grade 7 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.
Insects have become very specialized in the ways they avoid being eaten by other animals. Read this article and answer the questions that follow.

Surviving, for Better
and Worse
by Marc Zabludoff

1. Nearly all insects are hunted as food, and not just by other insects. Birds, mammals, lizards, snakes, frogs, toads, and especially spiders all depend on insect meals for their survival.

2. Insects, naturally, have developed a few ways to avoid joining any of these companions for dinner. Their principal response to attack is to try to escape. No matter how well-armed or -legged an insect might be, it is always far better to flee than to fight. The need to escape predators was surely at least one of the pressures behind the development of insect wings. Wings enable insects to accomplish several other important tasks, of course, such as finding food, mates, and new territory. But their value as an escape tool is very high.

3. Certain insect bodies have developed other specialized parts for escaping a hungry predator’s claws and jaws. These include jumping legs in froghoppers, for example, or “ears” in certain night-flying moths that can hear the echolocating calls of bats. (Echolocation is the sound-wave process some animals use to identify and locate objects.) More generalized features include the flattened body of roaches and bugs that allow them to squeeze into impossibly narrow hiding places.

CHEMICAL WEAPONRY

4. A large variety of insects try to avoid predators by making themselves extremely unpleasant to eat. Most children have learned that grasshoppers, for instance, spit “tobacco juice” when threatened. The juice is actually the partly digested food from the insect’s crop, and it is not so much spit as vomited. It is as unappealing to some predators as it sounds (though not to all—some predators have no taste). Other insects have similar defenses. Stinkbugs, for example, simply stink. Certain water beetles fire pellets of waste from their rear ends as they swim away from pursuing fish.
These are all mild forms of chemical warfare. Bombardier beetles go in for a more serious version. These insects get their name from their ability to “bomb” an attacker with a series of gas explosions from their abdomen. A mixture of chemicals inside their body results in the emission of a hot, brownish spray that can burn any predator that gets too near. Other beetles ooze out peppery liquids, some from their legs, others from glands inside their forewings. These substances are often powerful enough to burn human skin.

Many insects make sure they are not just bad tasting but poisonous. Monarch butterflies, when caterpillars, gorge themselves on the leaves of milkweed plants. A chemical in the leaves guarantees that a predator foolish enough to eat a monarch caterpillar will soon vomit up its meal. If it does not, it will die. Adult butterflies continue to carry the milkweed poison they ate as youngsters.

Of course, this method of defense does little for the butterfly that has already been eaten. By the time the predator learns its lesson, the butterfly is history. But it does protect other butterflies in the future. And poisonous insects usually try to get their message across before being eaten. Most of them are brightly colored or marked with bold black-bordered stripes.

**MIMICRY AND CAMOUFLAGE**

The monarch’s poison defense is so effective that another butterfly, the viceroy, uses it also. Unlike the monarch, though, the viceroy cannot eat milkweed. In fact, any predator can munch on a viceroy with no ill effects whatsoever—no vomiting, no dying. However, the viceroy has evolved so that it sports the same orange wings with black lines and white spots that adorn the monarch. Birds that have learned to avoid the poisonous monarch will avoid the non-poisonous viceroy as well.

This kind of defense is called mimicry, and it is not limited to butterflies. Stinging insects, for example, like bees, are often marked by black and yellow stripes that predators quickly grow wary of. The drone fly has taken advantage of this by evolving a striped body similar to that of a bee. Many predators, seeing the drone fly’s black and yellow outfit, simply let it pass. In fact the drone fly is harmless, its weaponry non-existent.

\^ gorge — to eat large amounts
Other insects try not so much to look like something else as to look like nothing at all. They camouflage themselves so that they fade into the background. Stick insects blend in among twigs and bark. Treehoppers look, and often feel, like thorns. Leaf butterflies look convincingly like dead leaves. Some caterpillars look like bird droppings.

No matter what defense an insect relies on, the brutal truth is that very few of them will die of old age. Insects are a vast food source for animals of every kind, including the insects themselves. In addition, despite the exquisite design of the insect body, it is still a small fragile thing when compared with the physical forces of weather. Insects can avoid some of the effects of nature. Most can go into a resting, or hibernating, state as an egg or larva or even as an adult. Ladybugs in California, for example, gather in huge colonies to hibernate in the mountains in winter, then return to the valleys in the spring. While they are resting, each ladybug releases a small amount of a predator-repelling substance. The total volume of it protects them all. Other insects migrate to avoid the cold. Monarch butterflies escape winter by flying south—sometimes as much as 2,000 miles (3,200 km) from Canada to Mexico.

Still, the weather takes its toll, and what the elements do not kill, the predators will. Only a relatively few insect eggs ever hatch. Few of those that do ever make it to adulthood. The odds against an insect egg developing into an insect parent are very, very high. Of course, insects lay a staggering number of eggs. And the world is still populated by a staggering number of insects.

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*exquisite* — finely detailed

“Surviving, for Better and Worse” by Marc Zabludoff, from *The Insect Class*. Copyright © 2006 by Marc Zabludoff. Reprinted by permission of Marshall Cavendish. Photograph copyright © Handout/Reuters/Corbis.
1. Which sentence from paragraphs 1 and 2 best states the main idea of the article?
   A. “Birds, mammals, lizards, snakes, frogs, toads, and especially spiders all depend on insect meals for their survival.”
   B. “Insects, naturally, have developed a few ways to avoid joining any of these companions for dinner.”
   C. “No matter how well-armed or -legged an insect might be, it is always far better to flee than to fight.”
   D. “The need to escape predators was surely at least one of the pressures behind the development of insect wings.”

2. Based on paragraph 7, what function do the bold markings on most poisonous insects serve?
   A. They provide a disguise.
   B. They help to locate food.
   C. They attract possible mates.
   D. They warn enemies of danger.

3. Based on the article, which method of defense involves blending into the environment?
   A. flight
   B. mimicry
   C. camouflage
   D. echolocation

4. Based on paragraph 12, how do insects best defend themselves against extinction?
   A. by adapting to their habitat
   B. by producing many offspring
   C. by remaining carefully hidden
   D. by developing toxic chemicals
Throughout the article, what does the author **mainly** use to support statements about the defense systems of insects?

A. factual examples
B. personal narratives
C. opinions from scientists
D. conclusions from experiments

Read the sentence from paragraph 4 in the box below.

Certain water beetles fire pellets of waste from their rear ends as they swim away from pursuing fish.

In the sentence, what part of speech is the word *fire*?

A. verb
B. noun
C. adverb
D. pronoun

**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.**

Explain how the information in the article supports the title, “Surviving, for Better and Worse.” Support your answer with important and specific details from the article.
In 1793, after the death of her father, Matilda Cook and her mother, Lucille, run a coffeehouse in Philadelphia. In this excerpt, they visit Lucille’s friend Pernilla Ogilvie and her two daughters. During this time, a dangerous disease, yellow fever, is infecting and killing many people. Read the excerpt and answer the questions that follow.

from Fever 1793
by Laurie Halse Anderson

I had to breathe in short puffs as we waited at the front door of the Ogilvie mansion. The stays bit into my stomach and my shift was already sweat-soaked. If this was how the upper class felt all the time, no wonder they were all so cross.

Mother tugged at my bodice to straighten it.

“Try not to look so pained,” she said. “We won’t stay long. Knowing your grandfather, he’ll be giving away the silver on the street corner when we return.”

She licked her thumb and wiped a smudge of dirt off my cheek. “You might turn out to be a beauty after all,” she said. “You’ve grown so quickly. I want the best for you.”

I looked at her closely, unaccustomed to the gentle tone of her voice. Mother bent down suddenly to brush off the bottom of her gown.

“Look at this dust,” she exclaimed. “When I was young, my family had a lovely carriage, and we always rode to tea. We arrived fresh and clean.”

She turned around and swatted the hem of my skirt. The door opened and an Ogilvie maid stared at the backside of my grumbling mother.

“Ma’am?” she asked.

Mother stood up hastily.

“Mrs. William Cook Junior and Miss Matilda Cook are here for tea with Mrs. Ogilvie,” she told the maid. “The invitation arrived this morning.”

The maid showed us into a drawing room as large as the entire first floor of the coffee shop. The long windows were covered with shimmering damask curtains. A crystal chandelier hung over a gleaming mahogany table, around which were clustered a half-dozen Chippendale chairs. Very expensive.

“Lucille, my dear Lucille, how wonderful to see you!” exclaimed Pernilla Ogilvie. She sailed across the room like a man-of-war, showing the brocaded tips of her shoes and layers of lace-trimmed, starched petticoats. Her overpowdered hair left a trail behind her that settled like smoke on the carpet.

Mother’s face sagged as she took in Pernilla’s gown of gunpowder gray silk, striped with white and blue. Her hand strayed to a stubborn coffee stain just over her hip.

“I’m so glad you could come,” Pernilla continued. “I’m about to die from lack of company!”

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1 stays — strips of bone, plastic, or metal used to stiffen a dress
2 shift — a woman’s undergarment
“Good afternoon, Pernilla. It was very kind of you to invite us. Allow me to present my daughter, Matilda.”

I curtsied slightly, conscious of the few threads barely holding me together.

“IT’s a pleasure to meet you, Ma’am,” I said.

“Oh, poor little Matilda. I recall your father well. He was such a handsome man, would have gone far if he had been educated. But it won’t do to think about tiresome things today. I declare this has been the worst summer of my life, and I’m counting on you both to lighten my mood.”

She squeezed Mother’s arm. Mother gritted her teeth.

“I’m parched. Let’s have tea and I’ll tell you all about this wonderful house that Robert built for me.” Mrs. Ogilvie rang a tiny bell on the sideboard. “Girls?”

The Ogilvie daughters, Colette and Jeannine, swept into the room, dressed in matching pink and yellow bombazine gowns, wearing their curled hair piled on top of their heads. I should have let Eliza curl my hair. Dash it all.

Colette was the oldest. Her skin was as pale as clean ice, and dark circles ringed her eyes. Jeannine’s head only came up to my shoulder, but she looked sixteen, at least. Her cheeks shone pink and chubby as a baby pig’s. Jeannine whispered something into Colette’s ear. Colette closed her eyes briefly, then snapped them open again. I wondered why she was so tired. No doubt exhausted from being waited on hand and foot.

The mothers sat down first, then Colette and Jeannine flopped carelessly onto the Chippendale chairs. I sat carefully so as not to pop any stitches. After two servants brought in silver trays of rolls and bite-sized frosted cakes, Mrs. Ogilvie poured the tea.

“Colette and Jeannine have just finished lessons with their French tutor,” Mrs. Ogilvie said. “Are you studying French, Matilda?”

Mother jumped in before I could open my mouth. “You know how old-fashioned my father-in-law is, Pernilla. He prohibits French, no matter how much I implore him. You are so fortunate to have an understanding husband. Do your sons study French as well?”

“Of course. We’ve had the French ambassador here to dine any number of times.”

While Mrs. Ogilvie recounted what she thought was a hilarious story about “Monsieur L’Ambassadeur,” I tried to reach the cake plate. My fingers fell just short. If I stretched all the way across the table, the seam under my arm would split open. Jeannine saw my dilemma, picked up the plate, and passed it in the opposite direction to her mother.

“Why, thank you, dear, how kind,” said Mrs. Ogilvie. She chose three cakes and handed the plate to Mother, who took two. As Mother handed the plate to Colette, it tilted and the cakes slid to the floor. A tiny dog with a red ribbon between its ears rushed in and gobbled the fallen cakes. My stomach rumbled.

“So tell me, Lucille, what have you been doing for company this tedious August?” Pernilla asked. “Everyone, simply everyone, has rushed out to their country retreats. It is most annoying.”

I struggled to keep a straight face as I pictured Mother amidst the weeds, horseflies, and dead mice in our garden.

Mrs. Ogilvie prattled on.
“President Washington and Martha will soon leave for Virginia, of course, the Nortons and Hepstrudels are in Germantown, and my own sister took her family to New York. Did you know that I planned a gala ball and only two families responded? The rest of society has vanished!”

Jeannine unfolded a silk fan and waved it, blowing a cloud of curls off her forehead. Shielding her mouth from her mother with the fan, she stuck her tongue out at me. Her wretched dog nipped at my shoe under the table.

“The only people left in Philadelphia seem to be shopkeepers and wharf rats. Robert has an appointment with the mayor this very day to insist that he put an end to the rumors of yellow fever.”

“I heard a man died of the fever in the middle of the street, and three black crows flew out of his mouth,” said Jeannine.

“Don’t be vile, Jeannine,” snapped her mother. “Those filthy refugees and creatures who live in the crowded hovels by the river, they’re always sick with something. But it is a gross injustice that my gala should suffer because the lower class falls ill. Don’t you agree, Lucille?”

Mother struggled to keep the smile on her face as she changed the subject.

“Are your sons still in town, Pernilla?” she asked.

Jeannine’s eyebrows went up and her mouth opened. Why did Mother have to be so obvious in her intent? Why not just hang a signboard around my neck: AVAILABLE—FOUL-MOUTHERED DAUGHTER?

“All of my brothers are away at school, Mrs. Cook,” Jeannine answered quickly. “It’s a shame they aren’t here to meet you, Matilda. I’m sure you would amuse one of them.”

I flinched.

“Colette has recently become engaged to Lord Garthing’s son,” Jeannine continued. “The gala was to have celebrated the engagement. Have you been courted yet, Matilda?”

“Matilda is a bit young for suitors,” interjected Mother. “But I must congratulate you on your good fortune, Colette. When is the wedding to be held?”

Colette dabbed her napkin on her forehead. “Mama, it is rather warm in here.”

“Colette always flushes when we discuss the wedding. She is such a delicate creature. Sensitive nerves.” Mrs. Ogilvie had icing on the end of her nose.

“Colette tried to avoid our lesson this morning by complaining of a mysterious illness,” tattled Jeannine. “She just wants to lie about and read dreadful novels.”

“Has any of your sons found a bride?” asked Mother, determined not to let her subject slip away.

Mrs. Ogilvie poured out another cup of tea. “We have many discussions, as you might imagine. My children are a blessing, to be sure, but it requires a great effort to secure the future of each one.”

Jeannine picked up the last cake on her plate, slowly bit into it, and licked the icing off her fingers.

“Mother,” I said through my teeth. We did not belong here. I did not belong here. Mother may have grown up with carriages and gowns, but I had not. I had to clasp my hands in my lap to keep from slapping Jeannine or shaking the life out of her mangy dog.

Mother ignored me and plowed ahead.

“Has any of your sons shown an interest in business?”
Colette brought her tea cup to her lips, but spilled the tea into her lap. Mrs. Ogilvie didn’t notice.

“Trade?” she replied. “Robert thinks that our sons should go into law or banking. Trade is hardly suitable for someone of our background.”

Jeannine threw her fan down on the table. “Oh, Mama, must you be so thick-headed? Mrs. Cook is asking if you might consider Miss Cook as a wife for one of our brothers. And I imagine their filthy little tavern is part of the deal.”

I stood so quickly that the seams under my arms ripped open with a snarl. The dog barked shrilly.

“It’s not a tavern, it’s a coffeehouse!” I said.

“Grog shop,” taunted Jeannine.

At that insult my mother rose. A grog shop was where criminals and the other dregs of society gathered to drink whiskey and fight.

“A coffeehouse,” Mother explained. “With respectable customers who mind their manners far better than you.”

“Oh, girls, ladies,” fluttered Mrs. Ogilvie.

Colette grasped the edge of the table and pulled herself to her feet, knocking over the cream pitcher.

“I fear,” she said, panting heavily.

We all turned to stare at her.

“Sit down, Colette,” said Jeannine.

“I fear,” Colette tried again.

“Pernilla, that girl does not look well,” said Mother.

“I’m burning,” whispered Colette. She crumpled to the flowered carpet in a faint.

While Mrs. Ogilvie shrieked, Mother knelt down and laid the back of her hand against Colette’s forehead. “The fever!”

**ELA Reading Comprehension**

8. What do paragraphs 1–4 *mainly* show about Matilda?
   A. She is tall for her age.
   B. She is angry at her mother.
   C. She is worried about her grandfather.
   D. She is uncomfortable in the situation.

9. In paragraphs 5–7, what does the reader discover about Lucille?
   A. She is annoyed by the hot weather.
   B. She is frustrated by how her life has changed.
   C. She is nervous about leaving the coffeehouse.
   D. She is shocked at the attitude of her daughter.

10. What does the description in paragraph 11 *mainly* emphasize?
    A. the Ogilvies’ wealth
    B. the simplicity of the house
    C. the peacefulness of the house
    D. the Ogilvies’ dislike of strangers

11. Read the sentence from paragraph 12 in the box below.

   She sailed across the room like a man-of-war, showing the brocaded tips of her shoes and layers of lace-trimmed, starched petticoats.

   What does the simile in the sentence show about Pernilla?
   A. She is sloppy.
   B. She is unsteady.
   C. She has a warm personality.
   D. She has a powerful presence.
12 In paragraph 13, why does Lucille’s face sag?
A. She is upset by Pernilla’s comments.
B. She is sympathetic to Pernilla’s troubles.
C. She worries her daughter will fight with Pernilla’s daughters.
D. She feels her clothing is shabby compared with Pernilla’s clothing.

13 Read the sentences from paragraph 22 in the box below.

I wondered why she was so tired. No doubt exhausted from being waited on hand and foot.

What does the sarcasm in the sentences show about Matilda?
A. She resents how the sisters are spoiled.
B. She is curious about Colette’s hobbies.
C. She is anxious about Colette’s health.
D. She fears catching the fever.

14 In paragraph 25, what is the most likely reason Lucille jumps in before Matilda can answer the question?
A. Lucille wants to steer the conversation toward Colette’s lessons.
B. Lucille wants to brag about her father-in-law’s traditional values.
C. Lucille wants to respond in a way that saves the family embarrassment.
D. Lucille wants to offer her opinion about the advantages of studying French.

15 Which of the following examples from the excerpt best reveals Jeannine’s character?
A. “Jeannine’s head only came up to my shoulder, but she looked sixteen, at least.” (paragraph 22)
B. “Jeannine whispered something into Colette’s ear.” (paragraph 22)
C. “Jeannine saw my dilemma, picked up the plate, and passed it in the opposite direction to her mother.” (paragraph 27)
D. “Jeannine unfolded a silk fan and waved it, blowing a cloud of curls off her forehead.” (paragraph 33)
16 Which of the following events is the climax of the excerpt?
A. Jeannine tells the story about the black crows. (paragraph 35)
B. Jeannine asks about Matilda’s suitors. (paragraph 42)
C. Colette spills her tea. (paragraph 53)
D. Colette faints. (paragraph 68)

17 What is the meaning of the word *implore* as it is used in paragraph 25?
A. beg
B. trick
C. flatter
D. punish
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 Explain how the author builds tension in the excerpt. Support your answer with important and specific information from the excerpt.
# Grade 7 English Language Arts
## Reading Comprehension
### Spring 2014 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 open-response items, which are indicated by the shaded cells, will be posted to the Department's website later this year.
Grade 7 English Language Arts  
Reading Comprehension  
Spring 2014 Unreleased Common Items:  
Reporting Categories and Standards

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