
V. English Language Arts, Grade 6

Grade 6 English Language Arts Test

The spring 2019 grade 6 English Language Arts test was a next-generation assessment that was administered in two primary formats: a computer-based version and a paper-based version. The vast majority of students took the computer-based test. The paper-based test was offered as an accommodation for students with disabilities who are unable to use a computer, as well as for English learners who are new to the country and are unfamiliar with technology.

Most of the operational items on the grade 6 ELA test were the same, regardless of whether a student took the computer-based version or the paper-based version. In places where a technology-enhanced item was used on the computer-based test, an adapted version of the item was created for use on the paper test. These adapted paper items were multiple-choice or multiple-select items that tested the same ELA content and assessed the same standard as the technology-enhanced item.

This document displays released items from the paper-based test. Released items from the computer-based test are available on the MCAS Resource Center website at mcas.pearsonsupport.com/released-items.

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 questions 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* (2017), listed below.

- Reading
- Writing
- Language

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 learner students only. No other reference materials were allowed during any ELA test session.

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This session contains 8 questions.

Directions

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

For most questions, you will mark your answers by filling in the circles in your Test & 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.

Some questions will ask you to write a response. Write your response in the space provided. Only responses written within the provided space will be scored.

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Read the article and the memoir about an Antarctic expedition. Then answer the questions that follow.

This article describes how Ernest Shackleton's second attempt to explore the Antarctic ended in near disaster.

Shipwrecked!



Explorer Ernest Shackleton's ship *S.S. Endurance* is trapped by ice in the Weddell Sea during his second expedition to the Antarctic, in this photo from 1915.

- 1 When Ernest Shackleton packed for his trip to Antarctica in July 1914, he seemed ready for anything. Among the items he and his crew stowed in his ship were cans of meat, a miniature pool table, a banjo, lanterns, a bicycle, and soccer balls. Shackleton hoped to become the first person to travel across the frozen continent at the bottom of the world.
- 2 But nothing could have prepared Shackleton or his crew for what did happen. Instead of crossing Antarctica, they made history in one of the most incredible survival stories ever.

Stuck in Miles of Ice

- 3 Shackleton was already famous when he prepared for the 1914 trip. In 1908 he had come within 100 miles of the South Pole but had turned back because of bad weather.
- 4 By 1914, he was eager for another adventure. Nearly 5,000 people volunteered to go with him. Shackleton chose a crew of 26 sailors and scientists, plus a photographer, Frank Hurley. On the way to Antarctica, Shackleton picked up at least 69 sled dogs to pull the explorers on the long trek across land.
- 5 Shackleton's last stop before heading for Antarctica was a whaling station on South Georgia Island. Norwegian whalers told the crew that it was "a bad year for ice."
- 6 They were right. Upon entering the Weddell Sea, Shackleton was forced to zigzag through dangerous ice sheets, sometimes passing more than 400 icebergs a day. On January 18, 1915, the ice closed around the ship. It was stuck, as one sailor put it, "like an almond in the middle of a chocolate bar."
- 7 Although he was less than 100 miles from Antarctica, Shackleton soon realized he could not possibly cross the continent that winter. The crew would just have to wait.

Fighting Boredom and Cold

- 8 As the ship slowly drifted with the ice, the sailors played cards, listened to records, held singing contests, or got silly haircuts. On the snow outside, the men built fancy "dogloos" with porches and domes. Some even slept with the dogs for warmth. Meanwhile Hurley kept busy taking photos. He often braved the cold while others stayed inside.



Photographer Frank Hurley (left) and Ernest Shackleton sit in front of a tent on the ice floe after leaving their ship in the Weddell Sea.

- 9 The ship was locked in ice for 10 months. By October 1915, the ice was crushing its thick wooden walls. "It was a sickening sensation," Shackleton wrote in his diary. He ordered the crew to leave. They grabbed what they could, including 150 of Hurley's precious photos.

A Heroic Rescue

- 10 The sailors struggled to reach land on three lifeboats they dragged across ice and rowed through frigid waters. They shivered in their thin coats, which often froze solid. At times they had to crawl through slush to avoid sinking. While killer whales swam around them, Shackleton and his men ate penguin and burned seal blubber for fuel. . . .
- 11 Eventually, the crew landed on Elephant Island. But it was deserted. So Shackleton bravely set out again with five of his strongest men. They sailed and rowed 800 miles in a tiny boat, battling high waves, winds, and severe thirst. Finally they landed at South Georgia Island,

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where they almost died climbing jagged peaks for three days before reaching the whaling station. "The thought of those fellows on Elephant Island kept us going," said Shackleton.

- 12 Four months after Shackleton sailed away, one of the men on Elephant Island spotted a ship offshore. When it came closer, the crew recognized Shackleton. They began to laugh and hug. They were rescued!
- 13 To the world's amazement, all 28 members of the Endurance expedition arrived home safely. How? Many say it is because Shackleton was a true hero. As the explorer said, "If you're a leader, you've got to keep going."

"Shipwrecked!" by *TIME For Kids* Staff, from the *TIME For Kids* Web site (January 6, 2014). Text copyright © 1998 by Time Inc. Photograph 1 copyright © Popperfoto/Getty Images. Photograph 2 copyright © Scott Polar Research Institute, University of Cambridge/Getty Images.

In this excerpt from Sir Ernest Shackleton's memoir, Shackleton is making his fourth attempt to save the remainder of his crew, which is stranded on Elephant Island. Accompanying him are members of his crew, including Captain Frank Worsley, Second Officer Tom Crean, and some Chilean sailors. When they arrive, they are greeted by Frank Wild, second in command, who had remained behind with the rest of the crew.

A Memoir of the Endurance Voyage

by Ernest Shackleton

- 1 The weather was showing some signs of improvement, and I begged the Chilian¹ Government to let me have the *Yelcho* for a last attempt to reach the island. She was a small steel-built steamer,² quite unsuitable for work in the pack,³ but I promised that I would not touch the ice. The Government was willing to give me another chance, and on August 25 I started south on the fourth attempt at relief.
- 2 This time Providence⁴ favoured us. The little steamer made a quick run down in comparatively fine weather, and I found as we neared Elephant Island that the ice was open. A southerly gale had sent it northward temporarily, and the *Yelcho* had her chance to slip through. We approached the island in a thick fog. I did not dare to wait for this to clear, and at 10 a.m. on August 30 we passed some stranded bergs. Then we saw the sea breaking on a reef, and I knew that we were just outside the island.
- 3 It was an anxious moment, for we had still to locate the camp and the pack could not be trusted to allow time for a prolonged search in thick weather; but presently the fog lifted and revealed the cliffs and glaciers of Elephant Island. I proceeded to the east, and at 11.40 a.m. Worsley's keen eyes detected the camp, almost invisible under its covering of snow. The men ashore saw us at the same time, and we saw tiny black figures hurry to the beach and wave signals to us. We were about a mile and a half away from the camp. I turned the *Yelcho* in, and within half an hour reached the beach with Crean and some of the Chilian sailors. I saw a little figure on a surf-beaten rock and recognized Wild.

¹Chilian—an early 20th-century spelling, later revised to today's "Chilean"

²steamer—a ship powered by steam

³pack—short for "pack ice," which refers to many individual pieces of ice floating together almost as one

⁴Providence—a reference to God or other power offering protection

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- 4 As I came nearer I called out, "Are you all well?" and he answered, "We are all well, boss," and then I heard three cheers. . . . Some of the hands were in a rather bad way, but he had held the party together and kept hope alive in their hearts. There was no time to exchange news or congratulations. I did not even go up the beach to see the camp, which Wild assured me had been much improved. A heavy sea was running and a change of wind might bring the ice back at any time. I hurried the party aboard with all possible speed, taking also the records of the Expedition and essential portions of equipment. Everybody was aboard the *Yelcho* within an hour, and we steamed north at the little steamer's best speed.

South: A Memoir of the Endurance Voyage by Ernest Shackleton. In the public domain.

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- 1 Which sentence from "Shipwrecked!" **best** shows that there was great interest in Shackleton's voyage to the Antarctic?
- Ⓐ "When Ernest Shackleton packed for his trip to Antarctica in July 1914, he seemed ready for anything." (paragraph 1)
 - Ⓑ "Shackleton was already famous when he prepared for the 1914 trip." (paragraph 3)
 - Ⓒ "In 1908 he had come within 100 miles of the South Pole but had turned back because of bad weather." (paragraph 3)
 - Ⓓ "Nearly 5,000 people volunteered to go with him." (paragraph 4)

2 Part A

Which of the following **best** states a central idea of “Shipwrecked!”?

- Ⓐ Great leaders listen to the advice of others.
- Ⓑ People are at the mercy of the power of nature.
- Ⓒ Taking necessary precautions ensures the safety of an expedition.
- Ⓓ Long journeys require a lot of preparation to make them successful.

Part B

Which evidence from “Shipwrecked!” **best** supports the answer to Part A?

- Ⓐ “The ship was locked in ice for 10 months. By October 1915, the ice was crushing its thick wooden walls.” (paragraph 9)
- Ⓑ “So Shackleton bravely set out again with five of his strongest men.” (paragraph 11)
- Ⓒ “They sailed and rowed 800 miles in a tiny boat. . . .” (paragraph 11)
- Ⓓ “When it came closer, the crew recognized Shackleton.” (paragraph 12)

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- 3 What is the **most likely** reason the author included the headings in “Shipwrecked!”?
- Ⓐ to clearly state main ideas
 - Ⓑ to focus attention on a forgotten event
 - Ⓒ to offer solutions for difficult challenges
 - Ⓓ to briefly summarize key information about an individual
- 4 Reread paragraphs 2 and 3 of *A Memoir of the Endurance Voyage*. The phrase “thick weather” in paragraph 3 **mainly** suggests that the weather was
- Ⓐ constantly changing.
 - Ⓑ powerful and impressive.
 - Ⓒ unpleasant and frightening.
 - Ⓓ difficult to navigate through.

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- 5 Which of the following **best** summarizes *A Memoir of the Endurance Voyage*?
- Ⓐ Favorable weather conditions allowed Shackleton to launch a rescue mission to find his crew. The weather on the journey to Elephant Island was mostly clear, but fog near the island made the trip stressful. The crew was detected by Worsley, and the rescue party quickly approached the island to rescue the men there.
 - Ⓑ Favorable weather conditions allowed Shackleton to launch a rescue mission to find his crew. The crew was detected by Worsley, and the rescue party quickly approached the island to rescue the men there. While rescuing the men, Shackleton gathered some important documents and necessary equipment.
 - Ⓒ The crew was detected by Worsley, and the rescue party quickly approached the island to rescue the men there. While rescuing the men, Shackleton gathered some important documents and necessary equipment. The weather on the journey to Elephant Island was mostly clear, but fog near the island made the trip stressful.
 - Ⓓ While rescuing the men, Shackleton gathered some important documents and necessary equipment. The crew was detected by Worsley, and the rescue party quickly approached the island to rescue the men there. The weather on the journey to Elephant Island was mostly clear, but fog near the island made the trip stressful.
 - Ⓔ The weather on the journey to Elephant Island was mostly clear, but fog near the island made the trip stressful. Favorable weather conditions allowed Shackleton to launch a rescue mission to find his crew. While rescuing the men, Shackleton gathered some important documents and necessary equipment.

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- 6 Which sentence **best** states a difference between the article and the memoir?
- Ⓐ The article presents only the feelings of the crew members, while the memoir also explains the feelings of Shackleton.
 - Ⓑ The article provides a positive interpretation of the expedition, while the memoir provides a more critical interpretation.
 - Ⓒ The article presents only a factual account of the expedition, while the memoir also shares a personal account of the rescue.
 - Ⓓ The article provides the recollections of the Chilean sailors, while the memoir provides the recollections of the men on the island.
- 7 How is the information in **both** the article and the memoir mainly organized?
- Ⓐ in chronological order
 - Ⓑ in order of importance
 - Ⓒ by comparison and contrast
 - Ⓓ through a series of examples

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For this question, you will write an essay based on the passage(s). Write your essay in the space provided on the next two pages. Your writing should:

- Present and develop a central idea.
 - Provide evidence and/or details from the passage(s).
 - Use correct grammar, spelling, and punctuation.
- 8 Based on “Shipwrecked!” and *A Memoir of the Endurance Voyage*, write an essay explaining whether Ernest Shackleton was a hero. Be sure to use information from **both** the article and the memoir to develop your essay.

Write your answer on the next two pages.

Lined writing area with 25 horizontal lines.

**Grade 6 English Language Arts
Spring 2019 Released Operational Items**

PBT Item No.	Page No.	Reporting Category	Standard	Item Type*	Item Description	Correct Answer (SR)**
1	74	<i>Reading</i>	RI.6.1	SR	Cite textual evidence to support an inference based on a passage.	D
2	75	<i>Reading</i>	RI.6.2	SR	Identify a central idea of a passage and choose supporting evidence.	B;A
3	76	<i>Reading</i>	RI.6.5	SR	Determine the reason for including a text feature in a passage.	A
4	76	<i>Language</i>	L.6.5	SR	Analyze how figurative language contributes to an understanding of a passage.	D
5	77	<i>Reading</i>	RI.6.2	SR	Determine the appropriate order of events for a passage summary.	A
6	78	<i>Reading</i>	RI.6.9	SR	Contrast two authors' presentations of the same event.	C
7	78	<i>Reading</i>	RI.6.5	SR	Compare the text structures of two passages.	A
8	79	<i>Language, Writing</i>	L.6.1, L.6.2, L.6.3, W.6.2, W.6.4	ES	Write an essay that explains whether an individual discussed in a pair of passages would be considered heroic; use information from the passages to support the explanation.	

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

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

**Grade 6 English Language Arts
Spring 2019 Unreleased Operational Items**

PBT Item No.	Reporting Category	Standard	Item Type*	Item Description
9	<i>Reading</i>	RL.6.4	SR	Determine how the tone of a passage changes based on a portion of the text.
10	<i>Reading</i>	RL.6.5	SR	Analyze how a specific section from a passage contributes to the development of the plot.
11	<i>Reading</i>	RL.6.2	SR	Identify a central idea in a passage.
12	<i>Reading</i>	RL.6.3	SR	Analyze a passage to determine traits of a character and choose supporting evidence from the passage.
13	<i>Reading</i>	RL.6.4	SR	Analyze the effect of figurative language in a passage.
14	<i>Reading</i>	RL.6.6	SR	Explain how the author develops the point of view of a character in a passage.
15	<i>Reading</i>	RL.6.5	SR	Identify the events that contribute to the structure of a passage's plot.
16	<i>Language, Writing</i>	L.6.1, L.6.2, L.6.3, W.6.2, W.6.4	ES	Write an essay that explains how a particular theme is developed in a passage; use information from the passage to support the explanation.
17	<i>Reading</i>	RL.6.5	SR	Analyze how a section of a passage contributes to the development of characterization and plot.
18	<i>Reading</i>	RL.6.3	SR	Analyze the feelings of a character and choose supporting evidence from the passage.
19	<i>Language</i>	L.6.4	SR	Determine the meaning of a word in context.
20	<i>Reading</i>	RL.6.2	SR	Identify how the interactions of characters help to develop a central idea of a passage; choose supporting evidence from the passage.
21	<i>Language</i>	L.6.5	SR	Determine the meaning of figurative language in a passage.
22	<i>Reading</i>	RL.6.4	SR	Determine how a phrase reveals aspects of a character in a passage.
23	<i>Reading</i>	RL.6.3	SR	Analyze how a character responds to an event in a passage.
24	<i>Language, Writing</i>	L.6.1, L.6.2, L.6.3, W.6.3, W.6.4	ES	Based on a passage, write a narrative from a secondary character's point of view, telling what happens next in the story.

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