



MASSACHUSETTS DEPARTMENT OF  
ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY  
**EDUCATION**

*Release of Spring 2022  
MCAS Test Items*

*from the*

*Grade 6 English Language Arts  
Paper-Based Test*

**June 2022**

**Massachusetts Department of  
Elementary and Secondary Education**



This document was prepared by the  
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# Overview of Grade 6 English Language Arts Test

The spring 2022 grade 6 English Language Arts (ELA) 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**, along with associated reading passages. Released items from the computer-based test are available on the MCAS Resource Center website at [mcas.pearsonsupport.com/released-items](https://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](https://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 document 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.

# Grade 6 English Language Arts

This session contains 19 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.

**Read the article and the passage that discuss new ways to look at old things. Then answer the questions that follow.**

This article is about different ways that people can reuse items.

### Ways to Reuse Items to Save Money and Reduce Waste

*by Amy Livingston*

- 1 It has been said that we live in a throwaway society. We clean our hands on paper napkins, and wipe our noses with paper tissues, tossing them in the trash after a single use. We upgrade our computers and replace our cell phones nearly every year. Many of us even change our whole wardrobes every season, discarding old clothes that are in perfectly good shape because they're "so last year."
- 2 All this waste is costly—both for us *and* for the environment. We could all stretch our dollars much further by using the same item many times, rather than just once. And because we'd be buying less, we'd cut down on our use of energy and natural resources as well. So whenever you choose to reuse, you're making your life greener and cheaper at the same time.
- 3 There are many ways to make reuse a part of your life. Some are simple, such as carrying a reusable shopping bag to the supermarket; others take a bit more effort, such as shopping secondhand or using pallets for building material.
- 4 So if you're new to the whole idea of reuse, start with a few baby steps that are easy to handle. Once you become comfortable with those, work your way up to the big stuff. As you become accustomed to the practice, you'll find yourself constantly discovering new ways to trim both household waste and your personal budget through reuse.

#### **Ditching Disposable Items**

- 5 Using disposable items is just a matter of habit for many people—grabbing a disposable bottle of water whenever leaving the house, or purchasing paper napkins at the grocery store.

- 6 In cases such as these, switching to a reusable item can feel awkward and unfamiliar at first. However, if you give it a chance, before long it will become second nature to fill up your water bottle or reach for a cloth napkin instead of a paper one. And once you've watched your trash can become lighter while your wallet stays heavier, you'll never want to go back.
- 7 Here are just several of the disposable items you can get out of your life forever:
- **Water Bottles.** Drinking bottled water is a common and expensive habit. If you go through a \$7 case of bottled water every week, that's \$364 per year for something you could get out of a tap for less than \$1. Invest in a \$17 reusable water bottle instead, and it will pay for itself more than 20 times over in its first year of use. At the same time, you'll keep more than 1,200 disposable plastic bottles out of the waste stream. Lastly, according to a report from the Pacific Institute, you'll save more than 100 kWh of energy.
  - **Shopping Bags.** According to the Natural Resources Defense Council, the average American family takes home close to 1,500 plastic shopping bags each year. Those bags require more than 8,000 barrels of oil to manufacture, and only about 5% of them are recycled. You can avoid all this waste by carrying a reusable bag. There are dozens of kinds to choose from, including canvas, nylon, and string bags—and there are even bags you can fold up and tuck into a pocket, purse, or backpack, so you'll never be caught out shopping without one. . . .
  - **Napkins.** Many people use paper napkins all the time—even at home. A family of four that used one napkin at every meal would utilize and discard 4,300 napkins in a year—roughly \$65 worth. That same family could buy a dozen cloth napkins for \$10 and reuse them over and over. They'd save \$55 just in the first year, produce less trash, and save trees. . . .

### Creative Reuse

- 8 Often when you reuse an item, you're continuing to utilize it for the same purpose—for example, a cloth shopping bag makes yet another trip to the store; an old computer is upgraded; a sweater that's too small is donated to the thrift shop so a smaller person can wear it.

- 9 But sometimes, an item just can't do its original job anymore. When that happens, there are two things you can do: either throw it out, or put it to a new use—an old Macintosh computer that can't handle today's software becomes an aquarium; a sweater with moth-eaten sleeves is cut down to make a vest.
- 10 These are examples of creative reuse, also known as upcycling or repurposing. This can be one of the more complicated ways to reuse items—but for people who love to let their imaginations run free, it's also the most fun.
- 11 There are many ways to repurpose common items, such as:
- **Mesh Bags.** The mesh bags that onions come in at the grocery store can be given a new life: String a shoelace through the top to make a storage bag for bath toys, which allows them to drip dry when bath time is over. You can also use them to corral small kitchen tools, such as cookie cutters, before putting them through the dishwasher. A twisted-up mesh bag, held together with a rubber band, makes a good scouring pad for pots and pans.
  - **Milk Jugs.** An empty milk jug also has lots of uses. You can cut off the top to make a storage bucket with a built-in handle. Cutting off the bottom, at an angle, creates a dust pan or a large scoop for kitty litter. Cutting off just the base makes a miniature greenhouse to protect your tender seedlings in the garden. You can also cut plastic from the sides of the jug to make stencils or toy pinwheels for kids.
  - **Blue Jeans.** A pair of blue jeans that's worn out at the knees still has lots of good, usable fabric. The simplest way to reuse it is to cut off the legs and make shorts. But with a little more sewing skill, you can turn the denim into a sturdy apron, a tote bag, a purse, or a set of pot holders. . . .
- 12 This doesn't mean you have to start saving all your trash from now on so you can reuse it. The point of creative reuse isn't to avoid throwing stuff away—it's to avoid buying new stuff by putting what you have to good use.

- 13 Once you get into the habit of reusing things, the whole world becomes your materials bin. Instead of running out to the store when you need something, you start looking around to see what you already have. So for instance, if you need a hat rack, you might spot a big branch out in the yard and think, “Aha!” An hour later, the branch is stripped of bark and mounted on your wall, and you have a unique hat rack that will be the envy of your friends.

### **Final Word**

- 14 The three R’s of the green lifestyle are “reduce, reuse, and recycle.” Of these three, recycling is the one that tends to get the most attention. These days, we all know how to separate our trash and how to look for the numbered logo on the bottom of a plastic bottle. And it’s easy to think that if we just toss our empty water bottles in the recycling bin rather than the trash, we’re doing our bit to help the planet.
- 15 But the truth is, reusing items is much better than merely recycling. Yes, recycling a soda bottle or a newspaper is better than making a new one from scratch. But turning old bottles into new bottles still takes energy and produces pollution. Plus, it only works if people remember to “close the cycle” by buying recycled products.
- 16 However, when you reuse a bottle you already own, you’re stopping waste dead in its tracks. Any energy that went into making that bottle has already been used; using it again doesn’t take a single watt more. And when that one reusable bottle can take the place of more than 1,200 disposable bottles every year, then you’re saving more energy—and more money—every time you use it.

“5 Ways to Reuse Items to Save Money and Reduce Waste” by Amy Livingston, from the *Money Crashers* website. Copyright © by SparkChargeMedia LLC. Reprinted by permission of SparkChargeMedia LLC.



In the novel *The Junction of Sunshine and Lucky*, Auggie lives with her grandfather, Gus, who is a trash hauler and has a truck named Old Glory. In this passage from the novel, Auggie has an idea about how to save the beautiful glass from the windows of Hopewell, a local church that was damaged.

### from *The Junction of Sunshine and Lucky*

by Holly Schindler

- 1 "What do you want to do with all this glass, Auggie?" Gus asks when I drag him to my wagon, parked under the sweet gum tree out back.
- 2 "Not any old glass, Gus," I say. "Glass from Hopewell."
- 3 Gus leans down and takes a look. Gingerly, he slides a big piece of red out and holds it to the light. The edge looks so jagged and dangerous, it makes me nervous to see it between his fingers.
- 4 "I don't really like the idea of you picking up such sharp things when I'm not around," he says.
- 5 "I didn't—Chuck did," I say.
- 6 "But broken glass?" Gus asks, his face wrinkling.
- 7 "That came from the old stained-glass windows,<sup>1</sup> Gus."
- 8 "Right," Gus says, still not seeing what I'm hinting at.
- 9 "I know that glass has already been used once," I say. "But maybe we could use it, too. The same way Irma Jean sews new outfits out of fabric that's already been worn by somebody else. Maybe that glass might like to find a new home in a new window—nothing as important as Hopewell's. But a nice, cozy little window where it can get plenty of sun, just the same."
- 10 A slow smile spreads across Gus's face. "Got it!" he shouts.
- 11 Of the two windows that face the front porch, we start with the one that's the easiest to get to—the one next to the door, with nothing in its way, not even the old swing. Gus takes off the screen, so he can get closer to the wooden slats that divide the window into eight equal sections. He cuts one of those eight clear panes out, leaving a hole that looks like a spot in a mouth where somebody's wiggled a loose tooth free.

<sup>1</sup>stained-glass windows—windows made with sections of glass that have been colored or painted

- 12 "Sure am glad it's decided to turn cold," Gus says, pointing at the missing pane. "No problems with mosquitoes today."
- 13 Gus measures the hole and cuts a new pane out of a big chunk of scarlet glass. He winks at me when he gets it set in right. "Little Sister," he says, "this is a fantastic idea. Quick—what color do you want the next pane to be?"
- 14 Gus and I become a two-man team. Gus cuts new panes out of glass—panes tinted fuchsia and purple and green and blue. I come along behind him with some old glazing putty that Gus had in the garage, which is white sticky gunk that makes sure the glass stays in place tight and solid.
- 15 "Really pack that stuff in good, Little Sister," Gus says. "We don't want a bunch of cold, drafty air leaking in on us this winter."
- 16 When we get the first window completely done, all eight panes, we rush out into the middle of the front yard to get a good look.
- 17 "It's like—it's like—" I stutter, but I can't find the right words.
- 18 "Come here," Gus says, tugging on my sleeve. When we race inside, Gus steps right in front of our new window. "Watch this," he says.
- 19 He holds both his arms out like a scarecrow. But it only takes a couple of seconds for me to stop thinking *scarecrow*. Instead, I start to think *mistletoe* and *fat holiday stockings* and *candy canes*.
- 20 Because that's exactly how Gus looks. With his arms held out, the colored light dances off the sleeves of his white shirt so that he looks like a lit-up Christmas tree.
- 21 I clap. "This is amazing, Gus!"
- 22 "Told you it was a good idea, Little Sister," Gus says. "Come on now, let's do the other window."
- 23 Together, we rush outside like it really is Christmas. Like carolers are on the lawn and Santa is on the roof, dancing between crisp, clean snowflakes.
- 24 But even when we finish both windows, it's not enough. I glance down into my wagon, at the tiny little shards on the bottom, and say, "Too bad we can't scatter this on the ground—or down the front walk."

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- 25 I've never seen Gus run to Old Glory so fast. I break into a pant to keep up with him and hop in. I'm so excited to find out where we're going that I pet the dash right along with him. "Come on, Old Glory," I chant. "You can do it. Come on."
- 26 Somehow, the whole town looks a little fresher as we drive.
- 27 We wind up at the hardware store, where Gus buys an enormous bag of QUIKRETE concrete mixture—a whole eighty pounds—for a little over three dollars.
- 28 "*This* we can fit in the budget," he announces happily.
- 29 Back home, Gus adds water to the dry mix, turning it into gray mud, and starts spreading it over our cracked front walk. I crouch down low, dragging my wagon behind me. I lay thumbnail-sized pieces of glass on the wet concrete, pushing them deep enough to cover all the sharp edges, but not so deep that the smooth tops won't be able to sparkle in the sun. Once it's dry, it'll be safe to walk on.
- 30 When we're done, we race each other to the end of the front yard.
- 31 "It's like looking straight into a kaleidoscope,"<sup>2</sup> I say. "The way all those brightly colored pieces shimmer in the sunlight."
- 32 Only, it's not a kaleidoscope—it's where we live.

<sup>2</sup>kaleidoscope—a closed tube that contains mirrors and bits of colored glass that display changing patterns

*The Junction of Sunshine and Lucky* by Holly Schindler. Copyright © 2014 by Holly Schindler. Reprinted by permission of Dial Books for Young Readers, an imprint of Penguin Young Readers Group, a division of Penguin Random House LLC.

**1** How does paragraph 2 **mainly** contribute to the development of ideas in “Ways to Reuse Items”?

- Ⓐ by providing reasons for reuse
- Ⓑ by suggesting a process for reusing items
- Ⓒ by giving personal anecdotes about reuse
- Ⓓ by explaining some concerns about reusing items

**2** Read paragraph 5 of “Ways to Reuse Items” in the box.

Using disposable items is just a matter of habit for many people—grabbing a disposable bottle of water whenever leaving the house, or purchasing paper napkins at the grocery store.

Which detail from the article **best** supports the idea that using disposable items is a “matter of habit”?

- Ⓐ “. . . wipe our noses with paper tissues, tossing them in the trash after a single use.” (paragraph 1)
- Ⓑ “All this waste is costly—both for us *and* for the environment.” (paragraph 2)
- Ⓒ “And because we’d be buying less, we’d cut down on our use of energy and natural resources as well.” (paragraph 2)
- Ⓓ “. . . others take a bit more effort, such as shopping secondhand or using pallets for building material.” (paragraph 3)

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- 3 Read the sentence from paragraph 14 of “Ways to Reuse Items” in the box.

The three R’s of the green lifestyle are “reduce, reuse, and recycle.”

What is the purpose of the commas in the sentence?

- Ⓐ to separate items in a series
  - Ⓑ to introduce a direct quotation
  - Ⓒ to set off an introductory phrase
  - Ⓓ to set off contrasting descriptions
- 4 Which pair of words **best** describes the author’s tone in “Ways to Reuse Items”?
- Ⓐ amused and curious
  - Ⓑ critical and frustrated
  - Ⓒ reflective and concerned
  - Ⓓ informative and encouraging

### 5 Part A

What is the meaning of the word *gingerly* as it is used in paragraph 3 of *The Junction*?

- Ⓐ quickly
- Ⓑ eagerly
- Ⓒ cleverly
- Ⓓ carefully

### Part B

Which sentence from *The Junction* **best** supports the answer to Part A?

- Ⓐ ““What do you want to do with all this glass, Auggie?”” (paragraph 1)
- Ⓑ ““Not any old glass, Gus,’ I say.”” (paragraph 2)
- Ⓒ ““I don’t really like the idea of you picking up such sharp things when I’m not around,’ he says.”” (paragraph 4)
- Ⓓ ““Sure am glad it’s decided to turn cold,’ Gus says, pointing at the missing pane.”” (paragraph 12)

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- 6 Read paragraph 26 of *The Junction* in the box.

Somehow, the whole town looks a little fresher as we drive.

What is the **most likely** reason Auggie thinks the town “looks a little fresher”?

- Ⓐ She realizes that the town is larger than she remembers.
- Ⓑ She is pleased about visiting a part of the town that is new to her.
- Ⓒ She is enthusiastic about the project, and her feelings affect how she sees the town.
- Ⓓ She notices that the town has been redesigned, and she thinks it looks more beautiful than before.

- 7 Which sentence from *The Junction* **best** suggests that Auggie is familiar with the idea that old items can be reused?
- Ⓐ “‘I know that glass has already been used once,’ I say. ‘But maybe we could use it, too.’” (paragraph 9)
  - Ⓑ “I come along behind him with some old glazing putty that Gus had in the garage, which is white sticky gunk that makes sure the glass stays in place tight and solid.” (paragraph 14)
  - Ⓒ “We wind up at the hardware store, where Gus buys an enormous bag of QUIKRETE concrete mixture—a whole eighty pounds—for a little over three dollars.” (paragraph 27)
  - Ⓓ “Back home, Gus adds water to the dry mix, turning it into gray mud, and starts spreading it over our cracked front walk.” (paragraph 29)



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- 8 Reread paragraphs 31 and 32 of *The Junction*. Based on the paragraphs, how does Auggie **most likely** feel when she says “it’s where we live”?

- Ⓐ proud
- Ⓑ curious
- Ⓒ puzzled
- Ⓓ regretful

- 9 Read paragraph 6 of *The Junction* in the box.

“But broken glass?” Gus asks, his face wrinkling.

Which detail from “Ways to Reuse Items” describes a **likely** reason why Gus reacted in this way?

- Ⓐ “So whenever you choose to reuse, you’re making your life greener and cheaper at the same time.” (paragraph 2)
- Ⓑ “In cases such as these, switching to a reusable item can feel awkward and unfamiliar at first.” (paragraph 6)
- Ⓒ “Once you get into the habit of reusing things, the whole world becomes your materials bin.” (paragraph 13)
- Ⓓ “But the truth is, reusing items is much better than merely recycling.” (paragraph 15)

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- 10 Which concept from “Ways to Reuse Items” is **most** similar to how Auggie and Gus reuse the glass for the sidewalk in *The Junction*?
- Ⓐ using a cloth napkin
  - Ⓑ refilling a water bottle
  - Ⓒ taking a cloth bag to the store
  - Ⓓ making a bucket from a milk jug

### 11 Part A

With which statement would both the author of “Ways to Reuse Items” and the author of *The Junction* **most likely** agree?

- Ⓐ Reusing items in new ways can be enjoyable.
- Ⓑ It is necessary to persuade others to reuse items.
- Ⓒ Reusing items can teach people to be more productive.
- Ⓓ It is easy to determine which items have the most options for reuse.

### Part B

Which of the following pairs of quotations **best** supports the answer to Part A?

- Ⓐ “There are many ways to make reuse a part of your life.” (paragraph 3 of “Ways to Reuse Items”)  
“The same way Irma Jean sews new outfits out of fabric that’s already been worn by somebody else.” (paragraph 9 of *The Junction*)
- Ⓑ “But sometimes, an item just can’t do its original job anymore.” (paragraph 9 of “Ways to Reuse Items”)  
“He winks at me when he gets it set in right.” (paragraph 13 of *The Junction*)
- Ⓒ “This can be one of the more complicated ways to reuse items—but for people who love to let their imaginations run free, it’s also the most fun.” (paragraph 10 of “Ways to Reuse Items”)  
“A slow smile spreads across Gus’s face.” (paragraph 10 of *The Junction*)
- Ⓓ “This doesn’t mean you have to start saving all your trash from now on so you can reuse it.” (paragraph 12 of “Ways to Reuse Items”)  
“Because that’s exactly how Gus looks.” (paragraph 20 of *The Junction*)

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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.

- 12** Write an essay that explains how “Ways to Reuse Items” and *The Junction* each show that reuse is beneficial. Be sure to use information from **both** the article and the passage to develop your essay.

Write your answer on the next two pages.

*You have a total of two pages on which to write your response.*

12

Lined area for writing response.



Read the article about an unusual animal and then answer the questions that follow.

### The Secret of the Rat Coat

by Sharon Pochron

- 1 Predators that go after the African crested rat immediately regret it. Kenyans report that any hungry animal that bites one of these rats starts foaming at the mouth, can't walk straight, and collapses to the ground. Some would-be predators even die after attacking a crested rat—and the rats themselves walk back into the forest, unharmed.
- 2 But how can crested rats (or *Lophiomys imhausi*) poison their attackers? They have no venom glands, so they can't make poison. They don't even bite their foes.
- 3 Before scientists knew the crested rat was poisonous, they thought the color of the rat's coat held the secret to its survival. African crested rats have a black coat with white stripes down the sides. Their stripes make them look like zorillas. "A zorilla is not a kind of gorilla with a Z, but is just a sort of African skunk," explains Jonathan Kingdon, a biologist at the University of Oxford in England who studies African crested rats.

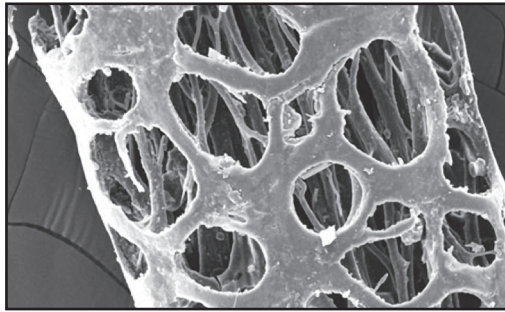


Crested rat

- 4 Zorillas are related to skunks—and, like skunks, they ooze a nasty stink when predators attack. But crested rats don't have a stink (ordinary guinea pigs are a lot more smelly, according to Kingdon), and scientists thought they didn't need it. In fact, they believed African crested rats kept predators away simply by imitating the smelly zorilla.
- 5 A group of scientists headed by Kingdon wasn't too sure about that. Usually, the white hairs of the crested rat lie flat against the black hairs. This means that as the rats amble slowly through the forest, their fur looks gray. "In real life the African crested rat is an extremely cautious, slow-moving animal clothed in long, gray fur. It's as though it wants nobody to notice it as it goes about munching leaves for a living," Kingdon explains. In fact, crested rats only look like zorillas when predators approach.
- 6 "It is only when the poor guy is approached very closely, poked by some nosy photographer, or attacked by some equally nosy carnivore, that it parts its long fur to reveal broad white and black stripes above and below a strip of funny-looking hair on its neck and flanks," Kingdon says. "It stays still and arches its exposed flank toward its tormentor, as if to say, 'Go ahead, bite me!'"
- 7 The gray color of the crested rat's coat doesn't scare away predators, and crested rats don't show their stripes until they're bothered. So the theory that crested rats use their stripes for self-defense doesn't make sense. How do the rats really protect themselves?
- 8 Kingdon and his colleagues investigated the claim that crested rats are poisonous. While observing the rats, they stumbled across a clue: The animals were chewing the bark of the poison-arrow tree. This plant is so deadly that local hunters wipe its sap on arrowheads to take down big animals. "Hunters can kill an elephant in four minutes with an arrow coated in stuff from the poison-arrow tree!" Kingdon explains. "Poor old elephant!"
- 9 But smart old rat. After crested rats chew poison-arrow trees, they lick the white hairs on their sides. By bathing themselves in poison-filled spit, the rats make their fur poisonous. Kingdon says, "When that rat relished the bark of the poison-arrow tree and carefully slathered a mix of poison and saliva right onto those funny-looking white hairs, I just said, 'Bingo! Problem solved!'"



- 10 But why doesn't the poison get wiped off as rats walk through the forest?
- 11 The scientists found the answer to that question using powerful microscopes. The long white hairs on the crested rat's sides have tiny holes, they discovered, that are perfectly shaped for holding poisonous spit. When crested rats lick the hairs, they're filling the holes with poison. The poison remains in place for days.



A microscopic view reveals the poison-holding holes in the African crested rat's special hairs.

- 12 As a crested rat trundles leisurely around the forest, it must look like the perfect bite-sized snack to predators. "Every passing meat-eater should be tempted to gobble up such a slow, apparently fearless rat," Kingdon says. Their gray coat doesn't scare anybody, and they don't have particularly sharp teeth or claws. So eventually, predators do attack—and crested rats need to endure several minutes inside a predator's jaws before their poison kicks in and saves them. How do they survive the first chomps from a predator?
- 13 Kingdon and his colleagues found several answers. First, crested rats have unusually thick skin. Even sharp predator teeth have a hard time puncturing it. The rats also have very thick skulls that predators' teeth can't easily break through. Lastly, crested rats have unusually flexible necks. Even if a predator shakes a rat hard while trying to eat it, its neck can resist injury.
- 14 Thanks to the work of Jonathan Kingdon and his colleagues, the fur coat of the African crested rat holds fewer secrets than it used to. But scientists haven't emptied all its pockets yet. For example, scientists don't know how the crested rat remains unharmed as it chews on the toxic bark and adorns itself with poison.

- 15 Whatever secrets remain, predators who have suffered the pain of the crested rat's poison don't bother the animals a second time. Kingdon watched a dog that had almost died from biting a crested rat meet a second crested rat months later. The dog shook with fear and ran.
- 16 The crested rat has concocted a fantastic predator repellent, and this amazes the scientists. "It's long been known that plants, and many animals, protect themselves with poisons, but this was the first time anyone could prove how a mammal could protect itself with a poison so deadly," Kingdon says.

"The Secret of the Rat Coat" by Sharon Pochron, from *MUSE* magazine (October 2012). Text copyright © 2012 by Sharon Pochron. Reprinted by permission of Carus Publishing Company, d/b/a Cricket Media, and/or various authors and illustrators. Illustration copyright © markku murto/art/Alamy. Photograph copyright © 2011 by The Royal Society.

- 13 Read the statement from paragraph 1 in the box.

Predators that go after the African crested rat immediately regret it.

What type of evidence is presented in paragraph 1 to support the statement?

- Ⓐ complex data
  - Ⓑ personal opinions
  - Ⓒ official documents
  - Ⓓ eyewitness accounts
- 14 How do the questions in paragraphs 7, 10, and 12 **mainly** contribute to the structure of the article?
- Ⓐ They entertain readers with stories about the crested rat while providing additional details.
  - Ⓑ They introduce summaries of information gathered and highlight the most important concepts.
  - Ⓒ They reveal different points of view regarding the crested rat while advancing a specific argument.
  - Ⓓ They act as transitions between ideas and reveal the mysteries that scientists were trying to understand.

**15** Based on paragraph 13, which sentence **best** describes crested rats?

- Ⓐ They are well suited for survival.
- Ⓑ They are calm when under attack.
- Ⓒ They are well prepared for hunting.
- Ⓓ They are fierce when confronting rivals.

**16** Read the sentence from paragraph 14 in the box.

But scientists haven't emptied all its pockets yet.

Based on the article, what does the sentence **most likely** mean?

- Ⓐ The crested rat is no longer a subject of curiosity.
- Ⓑ The crested rat is inspiring new methods of research.
- Ⓒ There are still some things to discover about the crested rat.
- Ⓓ There are no reliable theories about the origin of the crested rat.

- 17** Based on the article and the photograph of the microscopic view, what makes the hairs of the crested rat coat special?
- Ⓐ They soak up liquid like sponges.
  - Ⓑ They spread out like branches.
  - Ⓒ They are sharp like needles.
  - Ⓓ They are shaped like hooks.
- 18** According to the article, which question remains to be answered about the crested rats?
- Ⓐ How do crested rats survive being shaken?
  - Ⓑ How do crested rats keep from being bitten?
  - Ⓒ How do crested rats survive taking in poison?
  - Ⓓ How do crested rats find the poison they use?

- 19** The crested rat has characteristics in common with the zorilla as well as characteristics that are different from those of the zorilla. Based on the article, determine whether each characteristic **best** applies to the zorilla, the crested rat, or both.

hair sometimes appears to be gray

- Ⓐ zorilla
- Ⓑ crested rat
- Ⓒ both

gives off smell

- Ⓐ zorilla
- Ⓑ crested rat
- Ⓒ both

has black and white stripes

- Ⓐ zorilla
- Ⓑ crested rat
- Ⓒ both

hairs contain small openings

- Ⓐ zorilla
- Ⓑ crested rat
- Ⓒ both

**Grade 6 English Language Arts**  
**Spring 2022 Released Operational Items**

<b>PBT Item No.</b>	<b>Page No.</b>	<b>Reporting Category</b>	<b>Standard</b>	<b>Item Type*</b>	<b>Item Description</b>	<b>Correct Answer (SR)**</b>
1	10	<i>Reading</i>	RI.6.5	SR	Analyze how a paragraph contributes to the development of ideas in an article.	A
2	10	<i>Reading</i>	RI.6.4	SR	Identify context to support the meaning of a phrase.	A
3	11	<i>Language</i>	L.6.2	SR	Determine the function of punctuation used in a sentence.	A
4	11	<i>Reading</i>	RI.6.4	SR	Determine the author's tone in an article.	D
5	12	<i>Language</i>	L.6.4	SR	Determine the meaning of a word in context and choose evidence from a passage that supports the meaning.	D;C
6	13	<i>Reading</i>	RL.6.4	SR	Determine how a phrase impacts meaning in a passage.	C
7	14	<i>Reading</i>	RL.6.3	SR	Analyze how an idea about a character is developed in a passage.	A
8	15	<i>Reading</i>	RL.6.3	SR	Analyze a character's feelings in a passage.	A
9	15	<i>Reading</i>	RI.6.8	SR	Determine how a statement made in a fictional passage could be supported by evidence from an informational article.	B
10	16	<i>Reading</i>	RI.6.9	SR	Identify how a concept developed in an article is similar to a concept developed in a passage.	D
11	17	<i>Reading</i>	RI.6.6	SR	Determine a point of view shared by the authors of an article and a passage on the same topic and choose supporting evidence.	A;C
12	18	<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 an idea is developed in an article and a passage; use information from both texts to support the explanation.	
13	25	<i>Reading</i>	RI.6.8	SR	Determine how the author supports a specific claim in an article.	D
14	25	<i>Reading</i>	RI.6.5	SR	Determine the effect of a particular sentence structure in a portion of an article.	D
15	26	<i>Reading</i>	RI.6.2	SR	Identify a detail that supports a central idea in an article.	A
16	26	<i>Language</i>	L.6.5	SR	Analyze figurative language in an article.	C
17	27	<i>Reading</i>	RI.6.7	SR	Analyze a photograph to further understand a key idea presented in an article.	A
18	27	<i>Reading</i>	RI.6.1	SR	Determine a question that is unanswered in an article.	C
19	28	<i>Reading</i>	RI.6.3	SR	Determine unique and shared characteristics of animals described in an article.	B;A;C;B

\* 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 2022 Unreleased Operational Items**

<b>PBT Item No.</b>	<b>Reporting Category</b>	<b>Standard</b>	<b>Item Type*</b>	<b>Item Description</b>
20	<i>Reading</i>	RL.6.5	SR	Analyze how a specific paragraph in a passage contributes to the development of the plot.
21	<i>Reading</i>	RL.6.5	SR	Analyze how a specific paragraph helps develop a passage.
22	<i>Language</i>	L.6.2	SR	Determine the function of punctuation used in a sentence.
23	<i>Language</i>	L.6.5	SR	Analyze the effect of figurative language in a passage and choose a detail in the passage that creates a similar effect.
24	<i>Reading</i>	RL.6.4	SR	Determine the tone of a passage based on a portion of the text.
25	<i>Reading</i>	RL.6.6	SR	Analyze how an author reveals a character's point of view.
26	<i>Reading</i>	RL.6.4	SR	Analyze the impact of word choice in a passage.
27	<i>Reading</i>	RL.6.1	SR	Make an inference about a character in a passage.
28	<i>Reading</i>	RL.6.3	SR	Analyze how a character feels at different points of a passage.
29	<i>Reading</i>	RL.6.6	SR	Analyze how an author uses point of view to develop a character.
30	<i>Reading</i>	RL.6.2	SR	Determine a theme of a passage.
31	<i>Language, Writing</i>	L.6.1, L.6.2, L.6.3, W.6.2, W.6.4	ES	Write an essay explaining the methods used by an author to make a passage interesting; use details from the passage to support your explanation.

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