



MASSACHUSETTS

Department of Elementary
and Secondary Education

*Release of Spring 2025
MCAS Test Items*

from the

*Grade 3 English Language Arts
Paper-Based Test*

June 2025

**Massachusetts Department of
Elementary and Secondary Education**



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and Secondary Education

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Overview of Grade 3 English Language Arts Test

The spring 2025 grade 3 English Language Arts (ELA) test was administered in two formats: a computer-based version and a paper-based version. Most students took the computer-based test. The paper-based test was offered as an accommodation for eligible students who were unable to use a computer. More information can be found on the MCAS Test Administration Resources page at www.doe.mass.edu/mcas/admin.html.

Most of the operational items on the grade 3 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.onlinehelp.cognia.org/released-items.

Test Sessions and Content Overview

The grade 3 ELA test was made up of two separate test sessions. Each session included reading passages, followed by selected-response questions and constructed-response or 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 3 ELA test was based on Pre-K–5 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 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 authorized bilingual word-to-word dictionaries and glossaries was allowed for students who are currently or were ever reported as English learners. No other reference materials were allowed during any ELA test session.

Grade 3 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 passage about George Loher, a man who rode his bicycle from California to New York City in the 1800s. Then answer the questions that follow.

The Wind in His Mustache

by Teresa Bateman



A drawing of George Loher

- 1 What was that yellow two-wheeled contraption flying down the streets of Oakland, California, in 1895—scaring horses and making pedestrians dodge for safety?
- 2 It was a new-fangled bicycle, also known as a “wheel.” Bicycles with chains had only been around for about ten years, but they were rapidly becoming popular. . . . There were even bicycle clubs where “wheelmen” gathered to talk about their one-speed, two-wheeled marvels.
- 3 They were just a fad,¹ of course, not likely to replace a good horse and buggy. Still, for a young butcher like twenty-nine-year-old George Loher, there was a good deal of pride in the sight of his Stearns Model A Yellow Fellow bicycle.
- 4 It had cost one hundred dollars—a lot of money when most folks earned less than two dollars a day. Still, it was worth the sacrifice. He loved pedaling along—the wind in his mustache and the world flying past. Ah, the romance!

¹fad—something that is popular for only a short period of time

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- 5 Then he decided to ride his wheel all the way from California to New York City.
- 6 "It's been done," folks said.
- 7 True, Thomas Stevens had ridden a bicycle across the country in 1884, but George didn't care about being first.
- 8 "Are you going to try and beat the speed record?" he was asked, but he didn't care about being fast either.
- 9 "Nope. I'm just looking for adventure."
- 10 George imagined pedaling along—the wind in his mustache and the world flying past. Ah, the romance!
- 11 Sweat dripped down his nose on Sunday, August 11, 1895. George's bicycle was piled high. A saddlebag was strapped to the frame, a bedroll adorned the handlebars, and a change of clothes was tied under the seat. Bike and baggage weighed 52½ pounds.

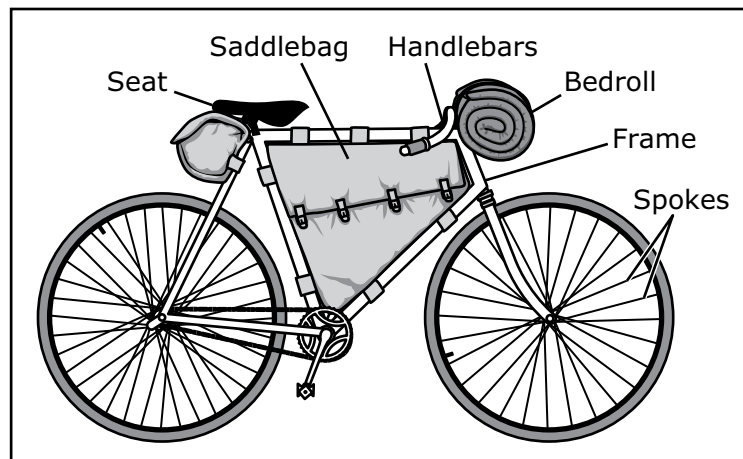


Diagram of George Loher's bicycle

- 12 He had money in his pocket and a companion for the road. Another butcher, Thomas Cornell, had promised to come along. Newspapermen interviewed the pair before they mounted their metal steeds and were escorted out of town by other members of the Acme Cycling Club.
- 13 George didn't bring a map. "We can always ask for directions," he said. "Besides, we know where we're going—east!"

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- 14 That may have been when Thomas began to worry.
- 15 George kept smiling. He loved pedaling along—the wind in his mustache and the world flying past. Ah, the romance!
- 16 Sweat poured down their faces, turning to mud as thick dust rose from the dirt road. They dunked their heads in every stream they passed, but it didn't help.
- 17 Thomas only made it as far as Sacramento² before he gave up. George went on alone, ripe for adventure.
- 18 Once he leaped from his wheel to help folks beating out a stubble fire with wet sacks. By the time he was done his eyes shone white against a soot-covered face. With thanks ringing in his ears, and his mustache smelling of smoke, he was soon off again.
- 19 Some nights he stayed in hotels or people's homes. Sometimes he camped out. He tried sleeping in a haystack but spent the whole next day picking the prickly stuff out of his clothes and hair.
- 20 Every morning George rose with the sun and set off. If the road was level, things usually went well. Usually.
- 21 Once George hit a stake that sent him head over handlebars down an embankment. Luckily some railroad folks threw him a rope, or he might have been stuck there for days.
- 22 Most roads were dirt—not designed for his type of wheel. Sometimes he bumped along the railroad tracks.
- 23 Hills were bad. He had to get off his bike and push it up steep slopes, then walk it down since he had no brakes. Coaster brakes wouldn't be invented for another three years.
- 24 Still, walking downhill didn't make sense. Gravity should be his friend.
- 25 "H'm," he thought.
- 26 At the top of the next hill George gathered some branches, tied them together, and leaped onto his bike. He coasted downhill dragging the brush to slow himself down, raising a cloud of dust that could be seen for miles.

²Sacramento—a city in California

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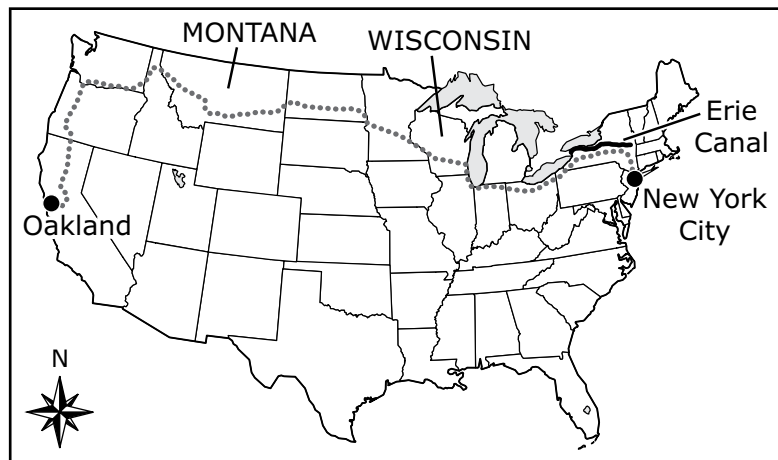
- 27 “Pretty clever,” George bragged until, one day, he found himself sailing downhill and discovered a bend in the road. One hand was on his improvised brake. One clutched the handlebars. He had no way of turning at that speed, and no way of stopping. And, wait, was that a train whistle?
- 28 George dropped his “brakes” and held on for dear life, zipping across the tracks just before the train zoomed by, fluttering his mustache in the breeze of its passing.
- 29 That didn’t keep him from using the brush-broom method again at the next hill, however. Nothing was going to stop him. He loved pedaling along—the wind in his mustache and the world flying past. Ah, the romance!
- 30 If hills were a problem, water was worse. Large rivers had bridges or ferries. Streams were another matter. When a stream was too high to pedal through, he would . . . wade across, holding his bike and supplies overhead. More than once this resulted in a slip and a soaking.
- 31 Children flocked to see him. Bicycles were new and amazing. Once he returned to his bike to find both tires flat. The kids had poked pins in them to see what would happen.
- 32 He never let his wheel out of his sight after that. Still, it was in constant danger from the road.
- 33 If it wasn’t pins, it was rocks. If it wasn’t rocks, it was cactus spines. If it wasn’t cactus spines, it was dried clay that hardened into shards as sharp as glass. He went through tires like chewing gum. George would often ride a few miles, get off to pump the tires full of air again, then ride a few miles more.
- 34 Still, he was happy. He loved pedaling along—the wind in his mustache and the world flying past. Ah, the romance!
- 35 The handlebars broke, then the fork,³ then the chain. He had them all repaired or replaced on the way. A boulder destroyed his front rim. Bits and pieces were falling off everywhere he went. By the end of his journey, he had replaced and repaired so many parts that it could hardly be said he was riding the same bicycle.
- 36 When he hit Montana, newspaper folks gathered and townsfolk formed a crowd. The police had to clear them out, so he could get a meal. The restaurant didn’t charge him—after all, it was good advertising!

³fork—the part of the bicycle that holds the front wheel

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- 37 And the weather—ah, the weather. He started in heat, but rode through high winds, heavy rain that turned clay roads into skating rinks, and even snow.
- 38 Still, he loved pedaling along—the wind in his mustache and the world flying past. Ah, the romance!
- 39 George checked maps at hotels and asked directions along the way. People were happy to help. The country was moving and changing. He encountered huge wagons, packed with kids and household goods, as folks left farms behind for city jobs.
- 40 Riding along the tracks he met . . . railroad workers. . . . All of them were friendly, though they started looking at him funny.
- 41 George glanced down. He looked like he'd been dragged through a sticker bush backward. Most of his bicycle had been repaired or replaced, but there was no repairing what he was wearing. Finally, on October 5 in Wisconsin, he bought new clothes. After all, he was getting closer to his destination.
- 42 This was good since, one by one, he was losing the spokes from his rear wheel.
- 43 Finally, he found himself riding along the Erie Canal, the canal boat drivers yelling at him for frightening the mules.
- 44 He just waved. He loved pedaling along—the wind in his mustache and the world flying past. Ah, the romance!
- 45 Then on October 30, after eighty days on the road and over 4,300 miles, George pedaled into New York City. Tall buildings, crowds of people, and bicycles—yes wheels—were everywhere. Folks in the big city used them to get around where horses and buggies would get stuck in traffic. He fit right in!

Map of George Loher's Route



Key
..... George's route

- 46 "Welcome!" cried the local bicycling clubs.
- 47 They showed him all the tourist sites. . . .
- 48 He especially enjoyed seeing that new Statue of Liberty out in the harbor. It was only nine years old and looked pretty impressive. . . .
- 49 Ah, the romance!

"The Wind in His Mustache" by Teresa Bateman, from *Cricket* Magazine (May 2022). Text copyright © 2022 by Teresa Bateman. Reprinted by permission of Cricket Media, Inc. Picture of George Loher courtesy of the Library of Congress.

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- 1** Based on the passage, what do paragraphs 3 and 4 **mainly** show?
- Ⓐ why the bicycle is important to George
 - Ⓑ how George learns to repair the bicycle
 - Ⓒ why George wants to borrow the bicycle
 - Ⓓ how the bicycle gets its name from George
- 2** Based on the passage, what does paragraph 11 **mainly** help the reader to understand about George's trip?
- Ⓐ how he will sleep
 - Ⓑ what he will bring
 - Ⓒ which hotels he will visit
 - Ⓓ how much time he will need
- 3** Based on paragraph 12, what is the meaning of the word **companion**?
- Ⓐ someone to travel with
 - Ⓑ someone to build things for
 - Ⓒ someone who carries books
 - Ⓓ someone who follows directions

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4 Select **two** words from paragraph 16 that are used as **nouns**.

- Ⓐ poured
- Ⓑ turning
- Ⓒ road
- Ⓓ heads
- Ⓔ passed

5 Read the sentence from paragraph 17 in the box.

George went on alone, ripe for adventure.

What does the phrase “ripe for” **mainly** suggest about George?

- Ⓐ He is often tired.
- Ⓑ He is fully prepared.
- Ⓒ He is very generous.
- Ⓓ He is somewhat nervous.

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- 6** Read the sentences from paragraph 31 in the box.

Once he returned to his bike to find both tires flat. The kids had poked pins in them to see what would happen.

How is the information in these sentences organized?

- Ⓐ as a cause and its effect
 - Ⓑ as a question and its answer
 - Ⓒ as a main idea and its details
 - Ⓓ as a problem and its solutions
- 7** Which word from paragraph 39 is a compound word?
- Ⓐ wagons
 - Ⓑ household
 - Ⓒ folks
 - Ⓓ city

English Language Arts

- 8** Based on the passage, choose the phrases that **best** complete each sentence.

In paragraphs 1 and 2, the author shows how bicycles were

- Ⓐ created rapidly in Oakland.
- Ⓑ thought to be safe in Oakland.
- Ⓒ gathered everywhere in Oakland.
- Ⓓ seen as something new in Oakland.

In paragraph 45, the author shows how bicycles were

- Ⓐ commonly found in New York City.
- Ⓑ invented long ago in New York City.
- Ⓒ parked on the streets in New York City.
- Ⓓ mostly used for deliveries in New York City.

- 9** Based on the passage, what does the map **mainly** help the reader understand?

- Ⓐ the long distance that George travels
- Ⓑ the useful knowledge that George gains
- Ⓒ the pleasant weather that George enjoys
- Ⓓ the large equipment that George purchases

- 10** Read paragraph 46 in the box.

“Welcome!” cried the local bicycling clubs.

What does the exclamation point in the paragraph suggest?

- Ⓐ a question
 - Ⓑ a quotation
 - Ⓒ a new thought
 - Ⓓ a strong feeling
- 11** Why is “The Wind in His Mustache” a good title for the passage?
- Ⓐ It shows how far George rides his bicycle.
 - Ⓑ It shows how often George rides his bicycle.
 - Ⓒ It shows how much George loves riding his bicycle.
 - Ⓓ It shows how much George discovers while riding his bicycle.

For this question, you will write an essay based on the passage(s). Write your essay in the space provided on the next page. 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** Based on “The Wind in His Mustache,” write an essay that explains how George overcomes the challenges he experiences on his journey. Be sure to use information from the passage to develop your essay.

Write your answer on the next page.

[illegible]

Read the passage about a night watchman named Tom who provides security for a truck yard at night. Then answer the questions that follow.

Midnight and the Night Watchman

by John Sullivan

- 1 Snow falls. A thick white blanket covers the city streets. Tom the night watchman clicks open the padlock of the south truck yard. The cold metal stings his fingers. He pushes the long gate wide open for the salt trucks.
- 2 Drivers arrive and start up the engines. The salt trucks roll to a nearby mountain of salt. A loader scoops up bucketfuls and dumps them into the backs of the trucks. They rumble off to plow and salt the streets for the city's busy traffic.
- 3 The night watchman is glad his two children are asleep at home, snuggled in bed. Every hour Tom walks from one end of the truck yard to the other to make sure everything is OK.
- 4 Tom checks the west yard. Graders, sweepers, rollers, and backhoes sit as quiet as sleeping animals. Then he walks through the repair shop. Hoists, jacks, oilcans, air hoses, and tool cabinets fill the huge area.
- 5 Tom turns to walk back to the lobby, but something darts out from under a truck.
- 6 "Aw, a kitten!" he exclaims. The kitten's fur is velvet black except for the white tip of her chin and the white tips of her paws. "What are you doing here at midnight? Come with me . . . Midnight." And just like that, the kitten has a name.



- 7 Midnight sits on the night watchman's desk and on his shoulder. She rolls on his lap as he rubs her stomach. She looks up into his face with her glistening eyes.
- 8 Tom takes a sandwich out of his lunchbox. He offers a piece to Midnight, and she gobbles it down. . . . "A truck yard is no place for a kitten," he tells her.
- 9 "That kitten came in from the cold a few days ago," one of the drivers tells Tom. "She eats whatever scraps we give her."
- 10 "Poor Midnight," Tom says to her. "Do you need a home?"
- 11 Midnight plays with Tom's cap and shoelaces. Tom crumples up a sheet of paper and rolls it on the floor. Midnight slaps and chases it. Tom thinks of his children. "I wish Rachel and Brandon could see this!" he says.
- 12 Together Tom and Midnight watch the loader and the trucks at the salt pile, their headlights burning in the gloom. "They're like giant insects scurrying around an enormous pile of sugar, Midnight. Giant insects with glowing eyes!"
- 13 Every hour Tom must make his rounds. Each time he returns to the lobby, Midnight runs up to him. But at 5:00 A.M., she isn't there. "Midnight," he calls. "Midnight!" He looks under the desk. He looks down the hall. He doesn't see her anywhere.
- 14 A driver swings the lobby door wide open on his way outside. Did Midnight follow a driver? Tom wonders. Can she find her way back through all that snow?

- 15 *Rumble!* A truck hurries by. Is Midnight out in the street with all those dangerous trucks?
- 16 *Whoosh!* The wind blows past the door as another driver walks outside.
- 17 Tom steps out into the cold and looks down to the far end of the building. A tiny dark figure stands out against the snow and slowly moves toward him. Two dots of light glow in front of it. "Midnight!" Her black fur is speckled with snowflakes. Tom picks her up and carries her inside. He pets her cold, wet fur till it's warm and dry. Midnight falls asleep.
- 18 The eastern horizon brightens. Through a clearing in the clouds, the rising sun lights up the whole sky. "Sunrise is beautiful to everyone, Midnight, but especially to a night watchman!" Tom says.
- 19 *Whishhh!* The sound of tires on the wet, salted streets means the snow has been cleared.
- 20 Melvin the day watchman arrives, and Tom's workday ends.
- 21 "Have a good one," Tom says.
- 22 "You, too," Melvin replies.
- 23 Tom picks up the kitten. "Bye, Midnight," he says. "We had a good time together last night. I hope somebody will give you a good home." He puts Midnight down, picks up his lunchbox, and walks toward the door.
- 24 Midnight follows him. Just as he reaches the door, Tom stops and scoops her up in his arms. "Come along with me, Midnight. From now on, you can watch me at home!"

"Midnight and the Night Watchman" by John Sullivan, from *Ladybug Magazine* (November 2021). Text copyright © 2021 by Cricket Media, Inc. Reprinted by permission of Cricket Media, Inc.

- 13 From whose point of view is the passage told?
- Ⓐ Tom's
 - Ⓑ a driver's
 - Ⓒ Midnight's
 - Ⓓ a narrator's
- 14 How does the picture **best** help the reader understand the passage?
- Ⓐ It shows that Tom likes the kitten.
 - Ⓑ It shows where Tom finds the kitten.
 - Ⓒ It shows how the trucks move the salt.
 - Ⓓ It shows who returns the trucks to the shop.

- 15 Read the sentence from paragraph 11 in the box.

Tom crumples up a sheet of paper and rolls it on the floor.

Which statement uses the word **rolls** in the same way it is used in the sentence?

- Ⓐ The teacher rolls up the map of the city.
- Ⓑ The baker rolls the dough out on the table.
- Ⓒ The coach rolls the soccer ball to the players.
- Ⓓ The weekend rolls by faster than the weekdays.

16 Based on paragraphs 15 and 16, what do the words **Rumble** and **Whoosh** help the reader understand?

- Ⓐ how some things sound
- Ⓑ what a character is doing
- Ⓒ how a character is acting
- Ⓓ what some things look like

17 What is the **main** purpose of paragraph 17?

- Ⓐ to explain why Tom feeds Midnight
- Ⓑ to show how Midnight ignores Tom
- Ⓒ to show how Tom feels about Midnight
- Ⓓ to explain why Midnight stays near Tom

18 Part A

Based on the passage, which word **best** describes Midnight?

- Ⓐ shy
- Ⓑ lively
- Ⓒ helpful
- Ⓓ serious

Part B

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

- Ⓐ "Midnight sits on the night watchman's desk and on his shoulder." (paragraph 7)
- Ⓑ "Midnight plays with Tom's cap and shoelaces." (paragraph 11)
- Ⓒ "Together Tom and Midnight watch the loader and the trucks at the salt pile, their headlights burning in the gloom." (paragraph 12)
- Ⓓ "He puts Midnight down, picks up his lunchbox, and walks toward the door." (paragraph 23)

19 Based on the passage, which sentence **best** describes Tom's responsibilities as a night watchman?

- Ⓐ "Every hour Tom walks from one end of the truck yard to the other to make sure everything is OK." (paragraph 3)
- Ⓑ "Tom takes a sandwich out of his lunchbox." (paragraph 8)
- Ⓒ "Tom steps out into the cold and looks down to the far end of the building." (paragraph 17)
- Ⓓ "Just as he reaches the door, Tom stops and scoops her up in his arms." (paragraph 24)

Grade 3 English Language Arts
Spring 2025 Released Operational Items

PBT Item No.	Page No.	Reporting Category	Standard	Item Type*	Item Description	Correct Answer (SR)**
1	9	<i>Reading</i>	RI.3.1	SR	Use details from the passage to demonstrate understanding.	A
2	9	<i>Reading</i>	RI.3.1	SR	Determine the actions of an individual using a specific paragraph from the passage.	B
3	9	<i>Language</i>	L.3.4	SR	Determine the meaning of a word in context.	A
4	10	<i>Language</i>	L.3.1	SR	Identify words used as a specific part of speech in a paragraph.	C,D
5	10	<i>Language</i>	L.3.4	SR	Determine what a phrase indicates about a character in the passage.	B
6	11	<i>Reading</i>	RI.3.5	SR	Determine how sentences from the passage are organized.	A
7	11	<i>Language</i>	L.3.4	SR	Identify a compound word in a specific paragraph from the passage.	B
8	12	<i>Reading</i>	RI.3.8	SR	Determine the purpose of particular sections in the passage.	D;A
9	12	<i>Reading</i>	RI.3.7	SR	Determine how a text feature supports an idea from the passage.	A
10	13	<i>Language</i>	L.3.2	SR	Determine the purpose of punctuation used in the passage.	D
11	13	<i>Reading</i>	RI.3.1	SR	Determine how the title supports the main idea of the passage.	C
12	14	<i>Language, Writing</i>	L.3.1, L.3.2, L.3.3, W.3.2, W.3.4	ES	Write an essay that explains how an individual overcomes challenges; use information from the passage to support the explanation.	
13	19	<i>Reading</i>	RL.3.6	SR	Identify the point of view the passage is told from.	D
14	19	<i>Reading</i>	RL.3.7	SR	Determine how a picture contributes to the overall understanding of the passage.	B
15	19	<i>Language</i>	L.3.4	SR	Determine the correct meaning of a multiple-meaning word in context.	C
16	20	<i>Language</i>	L.3.3	SR	Analyze the effect of words used in the passage.	A
17	20	<i>Reading</i>	RL.3.5	SR	Identify the purpose of a paragraph in the passage.	C
18	21	<i>Reading</i>	RL.3.3	SR	Determine which trait describes a character and choose evidence from the passage that supports the trait.	B;B
19	21	<i>Reading</i>	RL.3.1	SR	Identify evidence that supports an idea from the passage.	A

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

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

Grade 3 English Language Arts
Spring 2025 Unreleased Operational Items

PBT Item No.	Reporting Category	Standard	Item Type*	Item Description
20	<i>Reading</i>	RL.3.5	SR	Identify the purpose of paragraphs in the passage.
21	<i>Reading</i>	RL.3.3	SR	Determine how a character feels based on paragraphs from the passage.
22	<i>Reading</i>	RL.3.3	SR	Determine what specific paragraphs from the passage reveal about a character.
23	<i>Language</i>	L.3.1	SR	Identify a word used as a specific part of speech in a paragraph from the passage.
24	<i>Reading</i>	RL.3.1	SR	Use details from the passage to demonstrate understanding.
25	<i>Reading</i>	RL.3.5	SR	Identify the purpose of a paragraph in the passage.
26	<i>Reading</i>	RL.3.1	SR	Determine what specific paragraphs indicate about characters in the passage.
27	<i>Reading</i>	RL.3.4	SR	Distinguish between literal and figurative language in the passage.
28	<i>Reading</i>	RL.3.7	SR	Analyze how a picture contributes to the overall understanding of the passage.
29	<i>Reading</i>	RL.3.4	SR	Determine the meaning of figurative language used in the passage.
30	<i>Reading</i>	RL.3.2	SR	Determine the sequence of events in the passage.
31	<i>Reading</i>	RL.3.3	CR	Write a paragraph that explains the importance of an event, using important details from the passage as evidence.

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