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Department of Elementary
and Secondary Education

*Release of Spring 2025
MCAS Test Items*

from the

*Grade 7 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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Interim Commissioner

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Overview of Grade 7 English Language Arts Test

The spring 2025 grade 7 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 7 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 7 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 7 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 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 7 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 passages about students working to protect birds. Then answer the questions that follow.

Read the passage about a student working to stop a construction project that threatens endangered owls.

from *Hoot*

by Carl Hiaasen



- 1 Roy's father had worked late, so Roy hadn't had a chance to tell him what he'd learned about the owls on the Internet, and that one of the pancake-house files had been removed from the building department. It seemed very suspicious, and Roy wanted to hear his father's theory about what might have happened.
- 2 But Roy went speechless the moment he sat down at breakfast. There, smiling kindly at him from the back page of his father's newspaper, was Mother Paula herself!

- 3 It was a half-page advertisement under a banner of bold, patriotic-style lettering:



- 4 Roy dropped his spoon, launching a soggy wad of Froot Loops across the kitchen.
- 5 "What's wrong, honey?" his mother asked.
- 6 Roy felt sick to his stomach. "Nothing, Mom."
- 7 Then Mrs. Eberhardt spotted the advertisement, too. "I'm sorry, Roy. It's hard to think about those poor helpless birds, I know."
- 8 Mr. Eberhardt flipped the newspaper over to see what his wife and son were staring at. He frowned and said, "Guess they're moving along pretty quickly with that project."
- 9 Roy stood up in a dull fog. "I better go. Don't wanna miss the bus."
- 10 "Oh, there's plenty of time. Sit down and finish your breakfast," his mother said.
- 11 Roy shook his head numbly. He grabbed his backpack off the chair. "Bye, Mom. Bye, Dad."

English Language Arts

- 12 "Roy, wait. You want to talk?"
- 13 "Not really, Dad."
- 14 His father folded the newspaper and handed it to him. "Don't you have current events today?"
- 15 "Oh yeah," said Roy. "I forgot."
- 16 Every Tuesday, Mr. Ryan's history students were supposed to bring a topic for a current events discussion. On those days Roy's father always gave him the newspaper so that he could read it on the bus and pick out a timely article.
- 17 "How about if I take you to school today?" his mother offered.
- 18 Roy could tell she felt sorry for him because of the news about the pancake house. She thought the owls were doomed, but Roy wasn't ready to give up hope.
- 19 "That's okay." He stuffed the newspaper into his backpack. . . .

* * *

- 20 The newspaper contained several items that would have been excellent for current events.
- 21 A missing Green Beret soldier had been rescued in the mountains of Pakistan. A doctor in Boston had invented a new drug to treat leukemia. And in Naples, Florida, a county commissioner had been arrested for taking a \$5,000 bribe from the developer of a . . . golf course.
- 22 When Roy's turn came to address Mr. Ryan's class, he didn't use any of those articles for his topic. Instead he held up the newspaper and pointed to the torn page where the Mother Paula's advertisement had been.
- 23 "Most everybody here likes pancakes," Roy began. "I know I sure do. And when I first heard that a new Mother Paula's was going to open here in Coconut Cove, I thought that was pretty cool."
- 24 Several kids nodded and smiled. One girl pretended to rub her tummy hungrily.

- 25 "Even when I found out where they're going to build it—that big empty lot at the corner of Woodbury and East Oriole—I didn't see anything wrong with the idea," Roy said. "Then one day a friend of mine took me out there and showed me something that changed my mind totally."
- 26 Now the other students stopped talking among themselves and paid attention. They'd never heard the new kid say so much.
- 27 "It was an owl," Roy went on, "about this tall."
- 28 He held up two fingers, one eight or nine inches above the other, to show them. "When my family lived out West we saw plenty of owls, but never one this small. And he wasn't a baby, either, he was full grown! He was so straight and serious, he looked like a little toy professor."
- 29 The class laughed.
- 30 "They're called 'burrowing' owls because they actually live underground," Roy continued, "in old holes made by tortoises and armadillos. Turns out that a couple of owl families hang out on that land at Woodbury and East Oriole. They made their nests in the dens and that's where they raise their babies."
- 31 Some of the kids shifted uneasily. A few began whispering in worried tones and some looked at Mr. Ryan, who sat thoughtfully at his desk, chin propped in his hands.
- 32 "Roy," he said gently, "this is an excellent subject for biology or social studies, but perhaps not for current events."
- 33 "Oh, it's definitely a current event," Roy countered. "It's happening tomorrow at noon, Mr. Ryan."
- 34 "What is?"
- 35 "They're going to start bulldozing to make way for the pancake house. It's like a big party or something," Roy said. "The lady who plays Mother Paula on TV is going to be there. The mayor, too. That's what the paper said."
- 36 A red-haired girl in the front row raised her hand. "Didn't the paper say anything about the owls?"
- 37 "No. Not a word," Roy said.
- 38 "So what's gonna happen to 'em?" called a freckle-faced boy from the back of the classroom.

English Language Arts

- 39 "I'll tell you what's going to happen." Roy looked at Mr. Ryan. "The machines are going to bury all those burrows, and everything inside."
- 40 "No way!" the red-haired girl cried, and the class erupted in agitated conversation until Mr. Ryan asked everyone to please be quiet and let Roy finish.
- 41 "The grown-up owls might try to fly away," Roy said, "or they might just stay in the dens to protect their babies."
- 42 "But they'll die!" the freckle-faced kid shouted.
- 43 "How can the pancake people get away with this?" demanded another.
- 44 "I don't know," Roy said, "but it's not legal, and it's not right."
- 45 Here Mr. Ryan interrupted firmly. "Hold on, Roy, what do you mean it's 'not legal'? You need to be careful when you're making those kinds of serious allegations."
- 46 Excitedly Roy explained that the burrowing owls were protected by state and federal laws, and that it was illegal to harm the birds or disturb active burrows without getting special government permits.
- 47 "All right. Fine," said Mr. Ryan, "but what does the pancake company have to say about this? I'm sure they got the proper permission—"
- 48 "The file is missing," Roy cut in, "and the foreman tried to tell me there weren't any owls on the property, not a single one. Which is a lie."
- 49 The class started buzzing again.
- 50 "So tomorrow at lunch," Roy continued, "I'm going out there to . . . well, just because I want the Mother Paula's people to know that somebody in Coconut Cove cares about those birds."
- 51 Mr. Ryan cleared his throat. "This is a sticky situation, Roy. I know how upset and frustrated you must feel, but I've got to remind you that students aren't supposed to leave school property."
- 52 "Then I'll get a note from my parents," Roy said.
- 53 The teacher smiled. "That would be the way to do it." The class was expecting him to say more, but he didn't.

English Language Arts

- 54 "Look," said Roy, "every day we've been reading about regular people, ordinary Americans who made history 'cause they got up and fought for something they believed in. Okay, I know we're just talking about a few puny little owls, and I know everybody is crazy about Mother Paula's pancakes, but what's happening out there is just plain wrong. So wrong."
- 55 Roy's throat was as dry as prairie dust, and his neck felt hot.
- 56 "Anyway," he muttered, "it's tomorrow at noon."
- 57 Then he sat down.
- 58 The classroom fell quiet, a long heavy silence that roared in Roy's ears like a train.

Hoot by Carl Hiaassen. Text copyright © 2002 by Carl Hiaassen. Reprinted by permission of Alfred A. Knopf, an imprint of Random House Children's Books, a division of Penguin Random House LLC. Photograph copyright © Troy Harrison via Getty Images.

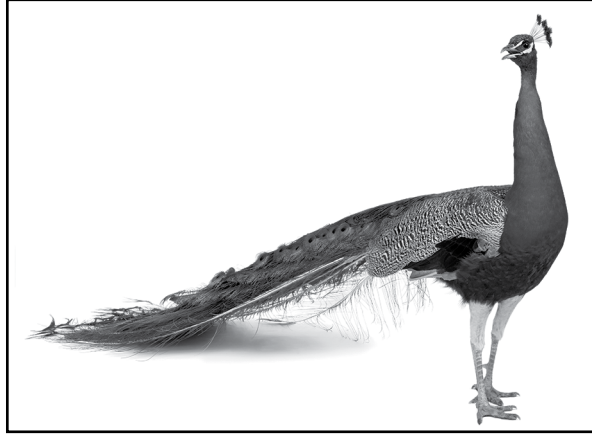
Read the passage about four girls (Lane, Ofelia, Cat, and Aster) who team up to stop a local social group, the Floras, from using hats decorated with real peacock feathers. When the girls meet, they are accompanied by a peacock named Eunice, who is their mascot.

from *Strange Birds*

by Celia C. Pérez

- 1 "I can start if you don't want to be first," Lane offered. She opened the book to read the oath Ofelia had written.
- 2 "We, the Ostentation of Others and Outsiders, swear to seek truth and justice, demonstrate kindness, and create community." . . .
- 3 "Oath sworn and space protected," Lane announced. "We are officially a troop."
- 4 "An ostentation," Ofelia corrected.
- 5 "I think this calls for a cookie *and* a cream puff," Cat said, helping herself to one of each.
- 6 "Wait," Lane said. "I have a few more things for you."
- 7 She unwrapped the white tissue paper that sat among the items in the circle and handed each girl a small round badge made of gray craft felt. On each badge was an embroidered peacock eye in green and blue thread. On the back of each was a small safety pin.
- 8 "You made badges?" Ofelia asked, pinning hers to her backpack. "This feels so official."
- 9 "Since the Floras have bandannas, I thought we could have our own too," Lane continued, distributing black squares of fabric in the middle of the circle.
- 10 Cat tied hers around her neck, replacing her Floras bandanna.
- 11 "And we can't forget to sign the membership page," Ofelia said, holding up the book.
- 12 After each girl signed, Ofelia finished writing down the details of their ceremony. Lane only saw her take a break from writing to shoo Eunice away from the cream puffs.
- 13 "One last thing," Lane said.

- 14 She walked to where the afghan¹ hung and carefully lifted the ends from the nails on which she'd hooked it. She removed it to reveal the wall of the tree house. The three girls gasped. Even Eunice seemed excited, fluttering down from the windowsill. Lane had worked hard on the peacock illustration affixed to the wall, and this was exactly the reaction she had wanted.



A peacock

- 15 "It's perfect," Cat said.
- 16 "How did you make it?" Ofelia asked, touching the bird.
- 17 Lane explained how she drew and painted the peacock across a few newspaper spreads, cut out the image, then made wheat paste to stick the bird to the wall. It was her first time wheatpasting, and she felt proud of her work.
- 18 As they stood together, Lane felt a spark of excitement, as if the tree house was charged with electricity. But something was still missing. . . .
- 19 "Like in that old movie where the four boys go on an adventure, . . . " Lane said. "We need a mission too. A goal." . . .
- 20 Aster said an oath didn't make a group, and maybe she was right, Lane thought. The oath was just a beginning. . . .
- 21 "Have you decided what you're doing about the Floras?" Ofelia asked Cat.
- 22 "I don't know," Cat said. . . . "The Miss Floras contest is getting close. I should probably just tell my mom already and get it over with."

¹afghan—a knit blanket

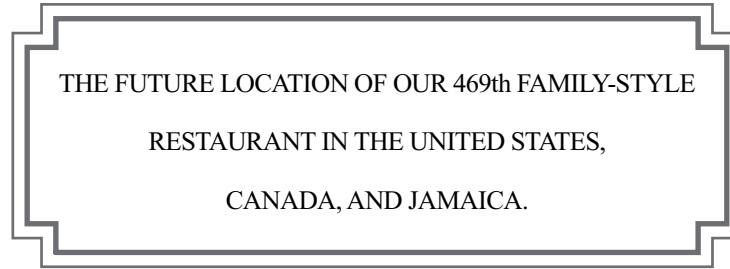
- 23 "But what about the hat?" Lane asked.
- 24 "What about it?" Cat said. "It's not like Mrs. McAllister cares what I think. No one does."
- 25 "We care," Aster said, looking at the other girls. "Right?"
- 26 "Let's do something," Lane agreed.
- 27 "Well, yeah, but—" Cat started.
- 28 "But what?" Aster said. "My grandpa says that to bring about social change you need a two-pronged attack."
- 29 "What are the two prongs?" Cat asked.
- 30 "Actually, it's three prongs. First, you have to get off your butt," Aster said, counting off on her fingers. "You need to change policies. Which isn't happening, right? And you need action because that's what will get people to pay attention and think about changing policies."
- 31 "Like Harriet Hemenway and Minna Hall," Cat said, thoughtfully.
- 32 "Who?" Lane asked.
- 33 "They organized boycotts and sent out flyers and are really the reason why the Migratory Bird Treaty Act even exists," Cat said, standing up.
- 34 Ofelia could see Cat was excited. She talked with her hands, and her eyes widened as she explained how the women worked to protect birds. Ofelia could feel herself getting excited too. Here was an unfolding story about truth and justice right in their own backyard.
- 35 "Yes," Ofelia said. . . . "Like *that*."
- 36 "So, let's figure out a way to convince people that it's wrong to keep using the hat," Lane said.
- 37 "But I can't get into trouble," Cat said quickly. . . .
- 38 "Who said anything about trouble?" Aster asked, looking at the other girls.
- 39 "Not me." Ofelia grinned.
- 40 "We can make stickers," Lane said. "Like street artists do. No one would have to know who made them."
- 41 "Street artists?" Cat asked. "You mean like graffiti?"

- 42 "Isn't graffiti illegal?" Ofelia said, swatting a biting fly.
- 43 "What would we do with stickers?" Aster added.
- 44 "We put a message on them and stick them up everywhere," Lane said. "To raise awareness about the feathered hat and the mistreatment of birds."
- 45 "I don't know about this," Cat said, picking at a scab on her elbow. . . .
- 46 "What else could we do?" Aster asked.
- 47 "What about writing a letter to the editor of the *Sabal Palms Sun*?" Ofelia offered, thinking back to Ms. Niggli's unit on the anatomy of a newspaper. This was the section of the paper where they printed letters people sent in.
- 48 Cat nodded. "I vote for writing a letter to the editor."
- 49 "Why don't we do both?" Lane said. "Stickers and a letter to the editor. Different audiences. And there's no guarantee a letter to the editor will be published, right?"
- 50 "Can you write the letter, Ofelia?" Cat asked. "Please?"
- 51 "I can, but I'll need more information," Ofelia said, sitting down on her beach towel. "I don't know anything about the hat or the Floras."
- 52 "I'll tell you everything, and you write it, okay?" Cat said.
- 53 "Sure, okay."
- 54 Ofelia tried hard to listen, but she was already thinking ahead. She remembered reading about Nellie Bly, a journalist who was famous for going undercover to investigate and expose abuses of mentally ill patients in 1887. If she did the same, pretending to be someone interested in the Floras and sitting in on a meeting, she could get a real insider view not just for her letter to the editor, but maybe also for a story about the feathered hat.
- 55 "Hey, Cat," Ofelia said. "When do the Floras meet?"
- 56 "Thursdays at two," Cat said. "Why?"
- 57 "Because I'm going undercover," Ofelia declared. She wrote the day and time in her notebook.
- 58 "You really don't have to," Cat said, shaking her head.

- 59 "I'm a muckraker,² and if there's anything to uncover that can help, I'm on it," Ofelia said.
- 60 "Be careful, Ofelia," Lane warned. "I've heard those Floras meetings can get wild."
- 61 "Well, there was this one time a raccoon climbed in through a window," Cat said. "Mrs. McAllister pulled a cushion off the couch and was swinging it wildly trying to make contact with the raccoon, but she ended up hitting Nia instead. And the raccoon ran off with the pound cake Mrs. McAllister had baked for our meeting."
- 62 Ofelia's sides hurt from laughing as she pictured the raccoon going for a touchdown like a football player.
- 63 "What about the stickers?" Aster said, wiping tears from her eyes.
- 64 "Where can we use a scanner and a printer?" Lane asked. "We don't really need them, but it'll be easier to make a lot of stickers at once."
- 65 "The library has both," Aster suggested.
- 66 "Then we'll make stickers in the library," Lane said, looking at Aster, Cat, and Ofelia. "Everyone in?"

²muckraker—a person who tries to expose wrongdoing

- 1 Read the lines from the advertisement in paragraph 3 of *Hoot*.



What is the **most likely** reason the author includes the lines in the advertisement?

- Ⓐ to emphasize that Mother Paula's cares little about competition from other restaurants
 - Ⓑ to show that Mother Paula's is still deciding where to build the new restaurant
 - Ⓒ to suggest that Mother Paula's is a powerful international company
 - Ⓓ to prove that Mother Paula's makes the best food in the world
- 2 In paragraphs 23–31 of *Hoot*, what is the **most likely** reason the mood of the class changes?
- Ⓐ The students are unsure Roy's topic is actually a current event.
 - Ⓑ The students are becoming bored with Roy's presentation on the habits of owls.
 - Ⓒ The students are anxious that Roy will act to stop the construction of the restaurant.
 - Ⓓ The students are realizing that the owls Roy has been telling them about are in danger.

English Language Arts

- 3** Read the sentences from paragraph 45 of *Hoot* in the box.

“Hold on, Roy, what do you mean it’s ‘not legal’? You need to be careful when you’re making those kinds of serious allegations.”

Based on the passage, what does the word *allegations* mean?

- Ⓐ efforts to hide
 - Ⓑ moral decisions
 - Ⓒ claims of wrongdoing
 - Ⓓ passionate speeches
- 4** Based on paragraphs 50–53 of *Hoot*, what is the **most likely** reason Mr. Ryan smiles?
- Ⓐ He wants the class to think more carefully about Roy’s argument.
 - Ⓑ He believes that the pancake company will be persuaded by Roy’s ideas.
 - Ⓒ He supports Roy’s desire to protest at the groundbreaking ceremony.
 - Ⓓ He fears that Roy’s parents will refuse to give him permission to leave school.

- 5 Read the quotation from paragraph 54 of *Hoot* in the box.

“Okay, I know we’re just talking about a few puny little owls. . . .”

What does the quotation **most likely** suggest about Roy?

- Ⓐ He wants others to better understand the habitat of the birds.
- Ⓑ He is aware that some people may see the issue as unimportant.
- Ⓒ He feels angry about the lack of interest his peers show in the birds.
- Ⓓ He is frustrated that some people refuse to listen while he is speaking.

- 6 Which of the following **best** summarizes *Hoot*?

- Ⓐ Mother Paula’s is opening a new restaurant in a town called Coconut Grove. Although the builders are supposed to get special permission to build on the property, Roy finds out that they never received permission to build.
- Ⓑ A boy named Roy moves to a new town and eats breakfast with his parents. While reading the newspaper, he decides to use an advertisement as his current events topic for class, even though there are other topics he could use.
- Ⓒ When Roy finds out that a pancake restaurant is going to be built on an empty lot that is home to burrowing owls, he is unsure how to help the birds. As he explains the situation to his class on current events day, he reveals a plan to voice his concerns at the building ceremony.
- Ⓓ During a current events discussion at school, a new student named Roy argues that the opening of Mother Paula’s counts as a current event. His teacher states that this would be a better topic for another class, but Roy stands his ground, explaining that building the restaurant will harm the owls.

English Language Arts

- 7 In paragraph 10 of *Strange Birds*, what is the **main** reason Cat replaces her Floras bandanna with a new one?
- Ⓐ She wants to please everyone in the group.
 - Ⓑ She wants to signal that her loyalty has shifted.
 - Ⓒ She believes the old bandanna is less valuable.
 - Ⓓ She prefers the appearance of the redesigned bandanna.
- 8 Based on *Strange Birds*, what does the phrase “charged with electricity” in paragraph 18 **mainly** suggest about Lane?
- Ⓐ She wonders if others agree with her ideas.
 - Ⓑ She feels ready to recruit new members to her cause.
 - Ⓒ She realizes the benefits of including others at the meetings.
 - Ⓓ She feels the group is close to accomplishing something important.
- 9 Read the sentence from paragraph 47 of *Strange Birds* in the box.

“What about writing a letter to the editor of the *Sabal Palms Sun*?” Ofelia offered, thinking back to Ms. Niggli’s unit on the anatomy of a newspaper.

Based on the paragraph, what is the **most likely** meaning of the word *anatomy* as it is used in the sentence?

- Ⓐ style
- Ⓑ parts
- Ⓒ function
- Ⓓ qualities

10 Part A

In *Hoot*, what is the **main** purpose of paragraph 50?

- Ⓐ to describe the setting
- Ⓑ to introduce the conflict
- Ⓒ to show another point of view
- Ⓓ to show a turning point in the plot

Part B

Which quotation from *Strange Birds* is **most clearly** used for the same purpose as the answer to Part A?

- Ⓐ "'Oath sworn and space protected,' Lane announced. 'We are officially a troop.'" (paragraph 3)
- Ⓑ "'Like in that old movie where the four boys go on an adventure, . . . ' Lane said. 'We need a mission too.'" (paragraph 19)
- Ⓒ "'Why don't we do both?' Lane said. 'Stickers and a letter to the editor. Different audiences.'" (paragraph 49)
- Ⓓ "'Be careful, Ofelia,' Lane warned. 'I've heard those Floras meetings can get wild.'" (paragraph 60)

11 Part A

Based on *Strange Birds*, what do paragraphs 31–34 **mainly** reveal about Cat’s character?

- Ⓐ She is inspired by individuals who made a difference in the past.
- Ⓑ She is grateful when friends contribute to a solution.
- Ⓒ She enjoys being the center of attention.
- Ⓓ She overreacts in certain situations.

Part B

Which detail from *Hoot* **best** shows that Roy has a characteristic similar to the answer to Part A?

- Ⓐ “Instead he held up the newspaper and pointed to the torn page where the Mother Paula’s advertisement had been.” (paragraph 22)
- Ⓑ “Excitedly Roy explained that the burrowing owls were protected by state and federal laws, and that it was illegal to harm the birds or disturb active burrows without getting special government permits.” (paragraph 46)
- Ⓒ “‘Then I’ll get a note from my parents,’ Roy said.” (paragraph 52)
- Ⓓ “‘Look,’ said Roy, ‘every day we’ve been reading about regular people, ordinary Americans who made history ‘cause they got up and fought for something they believed in.’” (paragraph 54)

English Language Arts

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 Based on the passages, write an essay that explains how Roy in *Hoot* **and** the girls in *Strange Birds* show determination. Be sure to use details from **both** passages 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

Handwriting practice lines for response writing.

Read the article about Cecilia Payne-Gaposchkin, an astronomer who, in 1925, made the groundbreaking discovery that stars are composed mainly of hydrogen and helium. Then answer the questions that follow.

The Girl Who Changed the Universe

by Rachel Bithell



Space observatory

- 1 Cecilia clutched her best gloves, adjusted her earmuffs, and rushed to meet the other girls in the foyer of her dormitory. She did not want to risk being late and having to walk past the male students seated in the dining hall. She feared that the boys who stomped in time to her steps each time she attended physics class would do the same at tonight's lecture. It would be a price worth paying to hear Arthur Eddington recount the details of his recent eclipse expedition, a scientific triumph that would surely make 1919 a turning point in the history of astronomy. But if she didn't have to endure that humiliation, all the better.
- 2 She was lucky to be going at all. Of the 500 tickets available, women received only four. Even those had come at the last minute, and not to her. But one of the recipients fell ill. She thoughtfully gave her ticket to Cecilia, who only just obtained permission to be out past curfew. With relief, she found her companions, cocooned in coats and scarves and ready to brave the December weather in Cambridge, England.

A Complete Transformation

- 3 The girls found seats together, almost unnoticed amid the excited chatter in the hall. When Eddington approached the podium, the crowd fell silent.
- 4 From Eddington's first sentence, Cecilia was entranced. He elegantly explained Einstein's new theory of relativity. He recounted the expedition to an island off the west coast of Africa and their struggles with thieving monkeys, voracious mosquitoes, and stormy weather. When he presented evidence that confirmed Einstein's theory, Cecilia felt as if she had summited a mountain.
- 5 Back in her room, Cecilia didn't bother to shed her coat before setting pen to paper to record the lecture, word for word. She would want her coat anyway. She had used her day's allowance of coal. There would be no fire.
- 6 Seeing light beneath Cecilia's door, her best friend, Betty Leaf, knocked. Cecilia, intent on astronomy, didn't hear. Betty knocked again, then finally let herself in.
- 7 "Well," Betty asked, "What did you think of our Mr. Eddington and his stars?"
- 8 "Oh, Betty," Cecilia said, "It was like a thunderclap but so acute and so personal. A complete transformation of my world view. I am done with botany. I am going to be an astronomer."
- 9 "As good as that?" Betty asked with a laugh.
- 10 "And better."
- 11 Seeing that Cecilia was entirely serious, Betty grew concerned.
- 12 "But Cecilia, you can't change your shop¹ to astronomy. You're a science student. Astronomy is part of mathematics. It's not allowed."
- 13 "You are perfectly right," Cecilia conceded. "But I can take all the physics Cambridge has to teach, which is the next best thing. And they can't stop me from attending the astronomy lectures and reading as much astronomy as I can pick up on the side."

¹shop—field of study

- 14 Over the next few months, Cecilia ransacked the libraries at Cambridge University, reading everything she could find about astronomy. Her presence at astronomy lectures sometimes invited stares, but she was undeterred. She was learning so much, but she longed to get her hands on a telescope.

Access to the Observatory

- 15 The opportunity came a few months later when the Cambridge observatory held a public viewing. Propping her bicycle against the stone wall and ascending the narrow stairs, Cecilia joined the small crowd circling the telescope. A rather stodgy young man introduced himself as Mr. Green, the observatory's second assistant, and invited them to view a binary star system.
- 16 As Cecilia put her eye to the telescope, Mr. Green pointed out what Cecilia could readily see. The two stars were different colors.
- 17 "How can that be," she asked, "If they are of the same age?"
- 18 Mr. Green looked alarmed. He cleared his throat. "You might consult Mr. Eddington's book on stellar movements."
- 19 "But I have read it," Cecilia replied, "and it does not address . . ."
- 20 "Um, as tonight is a public viewing," Mr. Green interrupted, "perhaps we should leave that discussion for another time. Let's turn our attention to the Andromeda Spiral."
- 21 Mr. Green pulled the iron weights that drove the telescope and began to adjust the focus.
- 22 "Mr. Green," Cecilia said, "are you familiar with estimates of the distance to the Andromeda Spiral?"
- 23 Mr. Green stared at Cecilia, panic in his eyes.
- 24 "I leave you in charge. I will return in a moment." He fled down the stairs.
- 25 Not wanting to waste a moment of their time with the telescope, Cecilia focused the image, then boosted a young girl to the eyepiece. Presently she heard a chuckle behind her. Turning, she found Eddington himself looking on from the top of the stairs. Mr. Green had fetched him from his study to deal with the girl asking questions.
- 26 For a heartbeat, Cecilia was too stunned to speak, but just as quickly realized she had an opportunity that might never come again.

- 27 “Mr. Eddington,” she blurted, “I should like [to] be an astronomer.”
- 28 Eddington raised one eyebrow, silently considering. Finally, he spoke.
- 29 “I can see no insuperable objection.”
- 30 Over the next three years, Cecilia followed her ambitions at Cambridge. Eddington suggested readings, answered questions, helped her learn necessary mathematics, and gave her access to the observatory. She finished her course of study in 1923 but was not awarded an official degree. Cambridge did not grant degrees to women until 1948. Finding no astronomy jobs open to women in England, Cecilia pursued an opportunity in the United States. For decades, the Harvard College Observatory (HCO) had employed women as “computers.”² Cecilia asked the director of the HCO, Harlow Shapley, to accept her on a fellowship. He agreed.

A Wider Horizon

- 31 Cecilia became the first student to earn a doctorate degree in astronomy at Harvard, but her degree read “Radcliffe College” because Harvard did not grant degrees to women. Almost 40 years later, her paper describing her research would be called “the most brilliant PhD thesis ever written in astronomy.” Cecilia found that spectral classes of stars had different temperatures and pressures, not different compositions as astronomers then thought. More importantly, she showed that stars, and by extension, the visible universe, were made primarily of hydrogen. Her discovery fundamentally changed scientists’ understanding of the universe.
- 32 Even after such a brilliant start, Cecilia faced many difficulties making a career in astronomy. For years, she did the work of a professor but was called a “technical assistant.” Her small salary came from the HCO’s equipment budget. She taught many classes, but her name wasn’t included in the course catalogs. Harvard’s president had declared that, as a woman, Cecilia “should never have a position in the University.” . . . Finally, at age 56, she became the first woman promoted to full professor and then the first woman to become a department chair at Harvard.

²computers—a name for a group of people that cataloged data about stars for the Harvard Observatory

- 33 When Cecilia died at age 79, her obituary called her “probably the most eminent woman astronomer of all time,” though she had received comparatively little recognition during her life. But she hadn’t chosen astronomy to become famous. As she told aspiring scientists, “Your reward will be the widening of the horizon as you climb. And if you achieve that reward you will ask no other.”

“The Girl Who Changed the Universe” by Rachel Bithell, from *Muse* Magazine (March 2021, Volume 25, Number 3). Text copyright © 2021 by Rachel Bithell. Reprinted by permission of Cricket Media. Photograph copyright © iStockphoto/Rain Ungert.

- 13** Read the sentence from paragraph 4 in the box.

He recounted the expedition to an island off the west coast of Africa and their struggles with thieving monkeys, voracious mosquitoes, and stormy weather.

What is the **main** purpose of the commas in the sentence?

- Ⓐ to separate items in a series
- Ⓑ to set off introductory phrases
- Ⓒ to separate independent clauses
- Ⓓ to introduce new words to be defined

- 14** Read the sentences from paragraph 8 in the box.

"Oh, Betty," Cecilia said, "It was like a thunderclap but so acute and so personal. A complete transformation of my world view."

Based on the article, what does the phrase "like a thunderclap" **most likely** suggest about Eddington's lecture?

- Ⓐ It created a sense of fear.
- Ⓑ It inspired surprise and awe.
- Ⓒ It created a feeling of security.
- Ⓓ It seemed sudden and distracting.

- 15** Based on the article, what question does Cecilia **most** want answered at the Cambridge Observatory's public viewing?
- Ⓐ Can telescopes be easily adjusted?
 - Ⓑ Can mathematics explain the weather?
 - Ⓒ How are distances in space measured?
 - Ⓓ Why do stars appear as different colors?
- 16** How does paragraph 28 **mainly** contribute to the development of the article?
- Ⓐ It provides context by hinting at Eddington's annoyance with Cecilia.
 - Ⓑ It builds suspense by showing Eddington's delayed response to Cecilia's statement.
 - Ⓒ It identifies a problem by showing Eddington's confusion about what Cecilia was thinking.
 - Ⓓ It introduces a conflict by suggesting Eddington's emotional reaction to Cecilia's announcement.

- 17** How does the author **mainly** develop the idea that colleges treated women unfairly in the early 1900s?
- Ⓐ by describing how Cecilia’s closest friends felt about attending Eddington’s lecture at Cambridge
 - Ⓑ by explaining how challenging it was for Eddington to give Cecilia access to the Cambridge observatory
 - Ⓒ by contrasting Cecilia’s early work in botany at Cambridge with her later work in astronomy at Harvard
 - Ⓓ by revealing that neither Cambridge nor Harvard offered degrees to women during the time Cecilia attended

- 18** Read Cecilia’s quotation from paragraph 33 in the box.

“Your reward will be the widening of the horizon as you climb.”

Based on the article, what does the phrase “the widening of the horizon” **most likely** mean?

- Ⓐ increased understanding
- Ⓑ unlimited freedom
- Ⓒ continued peace
- Ⓓ expanded pride

English Language Arts

- 19 Based on the article, determine whether **each** detail **mainly** suggests an attitude of doubt, hope, or persistence.

. . . the boys who stomped in time to her steps each time she attended physics class would do the same at tonight's lecture. It would be a price worth paying to hear Arthur Eddington. . . . (paragraph 1)

- Ⓐ doubt
- Ⓑ hope
- Ⓒ persistence

"But Cecilia, you can't change your shop to astronomy. You're a science student. Astronomy is part of mathematics. It's not allowed." (paragraph 12)

- Ⓐ doubt
- Ⓑ hope
- Ⓒ persistence

"And they can't stop me from attending the astronomy lectures. . . ." (paragraph 13)

- Ⓐ doubt
- Ⓑ hope
- Ⓒ persistence

For a heartbeat, Cecilia was too stunned to speak, but just as quickly realized she had an opportunity that might never come again. (paragraph 26)

- Ⓐ doubt
- Ⓑ hope
- Ⓒ persistence

Grade 7 English Language Arts
Spring 2025 Released Operational Items

PBT Item No.	Page No.	Reporting Category	Standard	Item Type*	Item Description	Correct Answer (SR)**
1	14	<i>Reading</i>	RL.7.1	SR	Determine the reason the author includes specific details in a passage.	C
2	14	<i>Reading</i>	RL.7.3	SR	Make an inference about why the mood changes in a section of a passage.	D
3	15	<i>Language</i>	L.7.4	SR	Determine the meaning of a word in context.	C
4	15	<i>Reading</i>	RL.7.1	SR	Make an inference about a character based on paragraphs from a passage.	C
5	16	<i>Reading</i>	RL.7.4	SR	Determine what a specific quotation from a passage suggests about a character.	B
6	16	<i>Reading</i>	RL.7.2	SR	Identify the paragraph that provides a summary of a passage.	C
7	17	<i>Reading</i>	RL.7.3	SR	Make an inference based on the actions of a character in a passage.	B
8	17	<i>Reading</i>	RL.7.4	SR	Determine what a phrase suggests about a character in a passage.	D
9	17	<i>Language</i>	L.7.4	SR	Determine the meaning of a word in context.	B
10	18	<i>Reading</i>	RL.7.5	SR	Determine the purpose of a specific paragraph from a passage and select a quotation from another passage that is used for the same purpose.	D;C
11	19	<i>Reading</i>	RL.7.3	SR	Determine what specific paragraphs from a passage reveal about a character and select a detail from another passage that reveals a similar trait in a character.	A;D
12	20	<i>Language, Writing</i>	L.7.1, L.7.2, L.7.3, W.7.2, W.7.4	ES	Write an essay that explains how the main characters in two passages demonstrate the same character trait; use information from both passages to develop the essay.	
13	28	<i>Language</i>	L.7.2	SR	Identify the purpose of punctuation in a sentence from an article.	A
14	28	<i>Reading</i>	RI.7.4	SR	Determine the meaning of figurative language in an article.	B
15	29	<i>Reading</i>	RI.7.3	SR	Make an inference about an individual based on information in an article.	D
16	29	<i>Reading</i>	RI.7.5	SR	Analyze how a paragraph contributes to the development of an article.	B
17	30	<i>Reading</i>	RI.7.6	SR	Determine how an author develops an idea in an article.	D
18	30	<i>Language</i>	L.7.5	SR	Determine the meaning of figurative language in an article.	A
19	31	<i>Reading</i>	RI.7.1	SR	Identify details that suggest specific character traits in an article.	C;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 constructed-response and essay items will be posted to the Department's website later this year.

Grade 7 English Language Arts
Spring 2025 Unreleased Operational Items

PBT Item No.	Reporting Category	Standard	Item Type*	Item Description
20	<i>Reading</i>	RI.7.6	SR	Analyze the purpose of specific paragraphs in an article.
21	<i>Reading</i>	RI.7.5	SR	Identify the structure of a specific section of an article.
22	<i>Reading</i>	RI.7.8	SR	Identify a claim developed in a paragraph in an article.
23	<i>Language</i>	L.7.2	SR	Identify the purpose of specific punctuation in a sentence.
24	<i>Reading</i>	RI.7.3	SR	Analyze the position on a certain issue of individuals in an article; identify a quotation from the article that supports that analysis.
25	<i>Language</i>	L.7.4	SR	Use context to determine the meaning of a word.
26	<i>Reading</i>	RI.7.7	SR	Analyze how a graphic in an article contributes to the reader's understanding.
27	<i>Reading</i>	RI.7.8	SR	Analyze the purpose of a paragraph in an article.
28	<i>Reading</i>	RI.7.6	SR	Identify the shared point of view of individuals quoted in two articles.
29	<i>Reading</i>	RI.7.6	SR	Determine the shared purpose of the authors of two articles on similar topics.
30	<i>Reading</i>	RI.7.9	SR	Contrast how two articles on similar topics support their claims.
31	<i>Language, Writing</i>	L.7.1, L.7.2, L.7.3, W.7.1, W.7.4	ES	Write an argument supporting a claim; use information from two articles to support the argument.

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