

## Grade Eleven Sample Test Item—Reading

### Achievement Level: Standard Met

Read the text and answer the questions.

#### **The Great Restorer** by Duane Damon

Today among the ruins of Babylon, thousands of bricks can be found that bear the inscription: "I am Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, rebuilder of Esagila and Etemenanki, elder son of Nabopolassar." These dusty fragments offer tantalizing hints about the man who did much to turn his city into the world-renowned gem of ancient Mesopotamia.

Nebuchadnezzar II was not the first Chaldean monarch to restore Babylon. His father, Nabopolassar, began that task after rebelling against the Assyrians and gaining control of all Babylonia in 626 B.C. His reign marked the start of the New Babylonian Empire.

When Nabopolassar died in 605 B.C., Nebuchadnezzar was decisively defeating the Egyptians in his bid for control of Syria. To ensure his ascension to the throne, Nebuchadnezzar hastened home to Babylon. Within three weeks of his father's death, he was crowned king. Soon he was on the march again, first to Syria and then a few years later to Judah and Phoenicia to crush an uprising of their kings. In 589 B.C., Nebuchadnezzar returned to quell a second revolt. This time, he destroyed Jerusalem and exiled more than 3,000 captive Jews to Babylon.

In the meantime, Nebuchadnezzar continued the work his father had begun in Babylon. He fortified the great outer walls and the 21-foot-thick inner walls, which were so wide that it was said two chariots could be driven abreast along the top. Beyond this defense system, he constructed a deep moat and, for further protection, a second set of protecting walls, one of which is believed to have reached a height of 100 feet. Eight massive bronze gates provided entry into the city. The greatest of these was the famed Ishtar Gate, dedicated to the queen of the gods. Made up of two portals, one behind the other, and flanked by two imposing towers, the Ishtar Gate was constructed of a brick-and-pitch mixture and protected by a rocklike outer layer of glazed bricks. Colorful images of lions, bulls, and dragons decorated the walls.

Leading to the Ishtar Gate was a paved avenue called the Processional Way. During religious ceremonies held each new year, participants carried statues of the gods along the street in honor of Marduk, the patron god of Babylon. Nebuchadnezzar liked to call himself "the great

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**Achievement Level: Standard Met (continued)**

restorer and builder of holy places.” The name was appropriate, for he rebuilt temples all over Babylonia. The largest of these was Babylon’s temple complex, the Esagila. Gold and silver embellished its beams, which were made from tall cedars from the mountains of Lebanon. Nebuchadnezzar also reconstructed Etemenanki, a 7-story, almost 300-foot-high temple (also known as a ziggurat) in honor of Marduk. Biblical scholars believe that this temple may be the Tower of Babel mentioned in the Bible.

The ornate palace of Nebuchadnezzar covered about 35 acres. It was joined to a castle fortified with turrets and alabaster battlements. Near the palace and next to the Euphrates River stood the Hanging Gardens, one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World. This unusual structure consisted of a series of terraces rising up in stages from the river’s edge. Pumps inside the terrace walls moistened the soil with river water. It was said that Nebuchadnezzar built the gardens for his wife, who disliked the barren Chaldean plain. The king hoped the lush greenery would remind her of the forests of her homeland, Media.

The city was divided into equal squares. These were marked off by 25 streets running parallel to the Euphrates River and 25 streets running at right angles to the river. Each street led to one of 100 bronze doors in the outer walls. Gardens and wheat fields covered much of the remaining space.

The king paid special attention to Babylon’s waterways. He repaired the old royal canal and ordered irrigation canals dug, as well as channels for navigating between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers. Thousands of merchant ships crossing the Persian Gulf sailed up the Euphrates from India and Arabia, bringing spices, perfumes, ivory, ebony, and precious stones. As a result, Babylon became the largest trade center in the Middle East. In the words of the fifth-century B.C. Greek historian Herodotus, “No other city approaches the magnificence of Babylon.”

Nebuchadnezzar died in 562 B.C. Internal disputes following his death created a sense of weakness and uncertainty in Babylon. Beyond Babylon, the Persians were gaining in military strength, and the rich lands of Mesopotamia seemed ripe for conquest.

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Why did the author choose to end the text with a description of the events that followed Nebuchadnezzar’s death?

- A. to emphasize the critical role Nebuchadnezzar played in Babylon’s success
- B. to suggest that Nebuchadnezzar failed to provide adequate defenses for Babylon
- C. to emphasize the lasting nature of the changes Nebuchadnezzar made during his reign
- D. to suggest that Nebuchadnezzar had made alliances with the Persians during his reign

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| Area        | Reading<br>Demonstrating understanding of literary and nonfiction texts.   |
| Standard(s) | Analyze and evaluate the effectiveness of the structure an author uses in his or her exposition or argument, including whether the structure makes points clear, convincing, and engaging. |
| Answer      | A  |