
III. English Language Arts, Grade 4

A. Composition

B. Reading Comprehension

Grade 4 English Language Arts Test

Test Structure

The grade 4 English Language Arts test was presented in the following two parts:

- the ELA Composition test, which used a writing prompt to assess learning standards from the **Writing** strand in the *Massachusetts Curriculum Framework for English Language Arts and Literacy* (March 2011)
- the ELA Reading Comprehension test, which used multiple-choice and open-response questions (items) to assess learning standards from the **Reading** and **Language** strands in the *Massachusetts Curriculum Framework for English Language Arts and Literacy*

A. Composition

The spring 2015 grade 4 ELA Composition test was based on learning standards in the Pre-K–5 **Writing** strand of the *Massachusetts Curriculum Framework for English Language Arts and Literacy* (March 2011). The learning standards for the Pre-K–5 **Writing** strand appear on pages 23–28 of the *Framework*, which is available on the Department website at www.doe.mass.edu/frameworks/current.html.

Each grade 4 ELA writing prompt assesses standard 1, 2, or 3 in the Pre-K–5 **Writing** strand in the 2011 *Framework*. All grade 4 writing prompts also assess standards 4 and 5 in the Pre-K–5 **Writing** strand.

ELA Composition test results are reported under the reporting categories **Composition: Topic Development** and **Composition: Standard English Conventions**.

Test Sessions and Content Overview

The ELA Composition test included two separate test sessions, administered on the same day with a short break between sessions. During the first session, each student wrote an initial draft of a composition in response to the appropriate writing prompt on the next two pages. During the second session, each student revised his or her draft and submitted a final composition, which was scored in the areas of Topic Development and Standard English Conventions. The Scoring Guides for the MCAS English Language Arts Composition are available at www.doe.mass.edu/mcas/student/elacomp_scoreguide.html.

In spring 2015, in response to extended weather-related closures, the Department allowed districts to choose an alternate, later schedule for the administration of the Composition test. See the next two pages for the dates of administration for each of the prompts.

Reference Materials

At least one English-language dictionary per classroom was provided for student use during ELA Composition test sessions. The use of bilingual word-to-word dictionaries was allowed for current and former English language learner students only. No other reference materials were allowed during either ELA Composition test session.

English Language Arts Test

Grade 4 Writing Prompt

(Administered on April 2)

WRITING PROMPT

While you are going for a walk on a breezy day, the wind lifts you up and you begin flying through the air. Soon, you find yourself traveling through the air to a different land. What happens when you get there? How will you return home?

Write a story about your adventure flying to a new land. Give enough details in your story to show readers what happens.

You may use the space below to plan what you are going to write (notes, outlines, other pre-writing activities).

English Language Arts Test

Grade 4 Writing Prompt

(Administered on March 24 and April 8)

WRITING PROMPT

While taking a walk, you discover a time travel machine! Without thinking, you step inside and the door closes behind you. With a rattle and a bang, you feel yourself starting to lift slowly off the ground. Before you know it, you find yourself standing in the middle of a different time!

Write a story about your experience traveling through time. Whom do you meet? What problems do you face along the way? What happens to you during your travels? Give enough details to help readers understand your experience traveling through time.

You may use the space below to plan what you are going to write (notes, outlines, other pre-writing activities).

B. Reading Comprehension

The spring 2015 grade 4 English Language Arts Reading Comprehension test was based on Pre-K–5 learning standards in two content strands of the *Massachusetts Curriculum Framework for English Language Arts and Literacy* (March 2011) listed below. Page numbers for the learning standards appear in parentheses.

■ Reading (*Framework*, pages 13–19)

■ Language (*Framework*, pages 33–40)

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 Reading Comprehension test results are reported under two MCAS reporting categories, **Reading** and **Language**, which are identical to the two framework content strands listed above.

The tables at the conclusion of this chapter indicate each released and unreleased common item’s reporting category and the standard it assesses. The correct answers for released multiple-choice questions are also displayed in the released item table.

Test Sessions and Content Overview

The grade 4 ELA Reading Comprehension test included two separate test sessions. Each session included reading passages, followed by multiple-choice and open-response questions. Selected common reading passages and approximately half of the common test items are shown on the following pages as they appeared in test booklets.

Reference Materials

During both ELA Reading Comprehension test sessions, the use of bilingual word-to-word dictionaries was allowed for current and former English language learner students only. No other reference materials were allowed during any ELA Reading Comprehension test session.

Grade 4 English Language Arts

READING COMPREHENSION

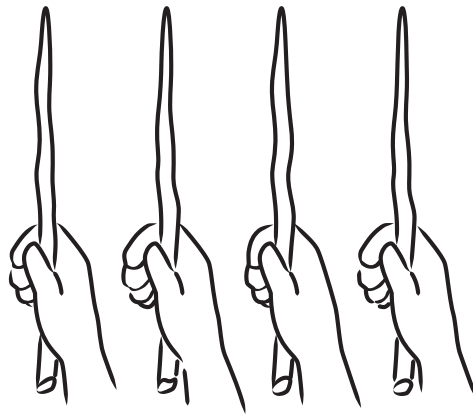
DIRECTIONS

This session contains two reading selections with fifteen multiple-choice questions and two open-response questions. Mark your answers to these questions in the spaces provided in your Student Answer Booklet.

Read the folktale about an unusual way people could find out who is telling the truth. Then answer the questions that follow.

THE STICK OF TRUTH

by Sam McBratney



- 1 IN THE CENTRAL square of a great city, there stood the statue of a famous general. This bronze soldier was mounted on a horse with two silver stirrups. Early one morning, a boy climbed up and stole the left stirrup, an act that offended and enraged the public. However, the crime was seen by a street cleaner and some others, and before long four boys had been brought before the governor.
- 2 Now, the governor had no idea which boy was the guilty one, for the thief didn't own up. So he sent for a well-known judge, admitting that he was not sure what to do. "I cannot let them go, for one is the thief. Yet I am unwilling to punish them all, for three of them are innocent. What would you advise in this situation?"
- 3 It was a dilemma the judge understood well: should one punish them all, including the innocent? Or free them all, including the guilty? Experience had taught him a way to proceed. It sometimes worked. He turned to his assistant and said, "Bring me my red bag, the one with the stick of truth in it. I don't think we have a great problem here."
- 4 When the bag arrived, the judge drew out four sticks, all sharpened at one end, and each exactly the same length as the others. The judge

gave one stick to each boy, telling him to bring it back the following morning. “One of you is the thief who stole the stirrup,” he said, “and the thief has the stick of truth. It will show him up.”

5 The governor was puzzled. “But how does this work?” he asked.

6 The judge addressed the boys in front of him. “One of you four has the stick of truth. When you bring back the sticks in the morning, the stick of truth will be just a little longer than the others—about a thumbnail longer. That’s how we’ll know the thief.” The judge waved a hand at the boys. “So off you go until the morning.”

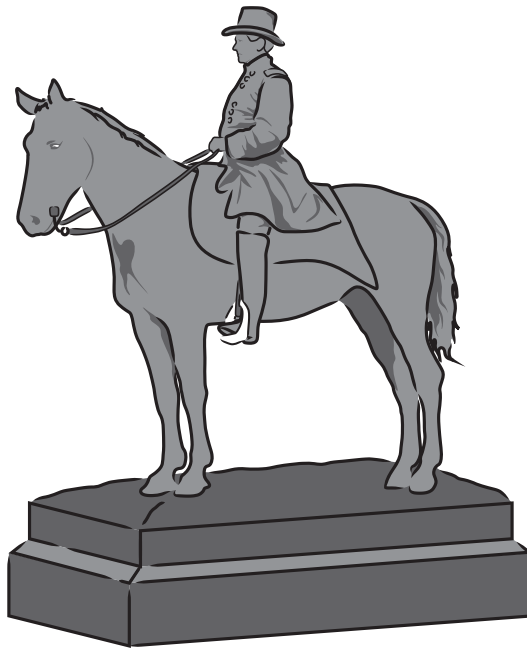
7 When the morning came, they assembled once more, and in the midst of a great silence, the boys presented their sticks to the judge. Holding up the sticks, he measured them against one another and found that one was shorter than its fellows by about a thumbnail.

8 “This boy here, who presented the shorter stick, is the guilty one,” said the judge.

9 “But you said it would be longer,” the governor pointed out.

10 “So I did. And our thief decided to whittle away a bit of his stick, just in case. Now that his own conscience has betrayed him, I trust he will lead us to the missing stirrup.”

11 Then the boy confessed, fetched the stirrup from its hiding place down a drain, and agreed on his punishment: that he should keep the statue of the general clean of dust and pigeon droppings for the rest of that year.



- 1 What is the governor trying to figure out at the beginning of the folktale?
 - A. what is gone
 - B. who the thief is
 - C. why the thief steals
 - D. where to ask for help
- 2 Reread paragraph 3. Based on the paragraph, what is **most likely** true about the judge?
 - A. He has a way to find another stirrup.
 - B. He does not believe the stirrup is gone.
 - C. He has a way to show who has the stirrup.
 - D. He does not believe the stirrup is important.
- 3 Based on the folktale, what is the **most likely** reason the governor does not punish all the boys?
 - A. He believes that only one boy is responsible.
 - B. He believes what one boy took is unimportant.
 - C. He believes that the boys will unite against him.
 - D. He believes only the boys should decide who is guilty.

4 According to the folktale, what is the guilty boy's punishment?

- A. to fix the stirrup
- B. to buy the stirrup
- C. to clean the statue
- D. to guard the statue

5 Read the sentence from paragraph 2 in the box below.

Now, the governor had no idea which boy was the guilty one, for the thief didn't own up.

In the sentence, what does the phrase "own up" mean?

- A. to give to someone
- B. to admit something
- C. to return something
- D. to belong to someone

ELA Reading Comprehension

Question 6 is an open-response question.

- **Read the question carefully.**
- **Explain your answer.**
- **Add supporting details.**
- **Double-check your work.**

Write your answer to question 6 in the space provided in your Student Answer Booklet.

- 6** Based on the folktale, explain an important lesson that can be learned. Support your answer with important details from the folktale.

Guide dogs are used to help people, but before they can help they have to be trained. Read the article to learn what it is like to raise a guide dog and answer the questions that follow.

Raising Her Sights

by Jessica Arce

Puppy Steps

- 1 The first step in getting a puppy to raise was educating myself. I attended three guide dog meetings and dog obedience classes. I received a puppy application that I filled out and sent to the Guide Dogs for the Blind School in San Rafael, California. A couple of months later, I received a letter from the school saying that my application had been approved and that I would receive a puppy at the next Fun Day.
- 2 Fun Day is a day when guide dog raisers and their dogs meet in one place and listen to talks and demonstrations from guide dog instructors. They go through an obstacle course so the instructors can help with any problems the dog might have.

Meeting Adriana

- 3 Finally, the day came to meet my puppy. Her name was Adriana. She was a tiny ball of dark red fluff. I had no idea how much work she'd be! For the next few months, I taught Adriana that she had to go potty outside instead of all over the house, and that the furniture was not her place to take a nap.
- 4 After Adriana had all her shots, I started taking her out with me to get used to different sights, smells, and sounds. She especially needed to get used to such distractions as food on the floor, loud noises, and people. We went to restaurants, schools, shopping, out of town trips, and the Fair. I also took her on stairs, elevators, boats, cars, buses, and trains. When she went outside, Adriana had to wear a green jacket that said, "Guide Dog Puppy in Training." Socializing gets a puppy ready for anything a blind person might encounter.



Is a Guide Dog Puppy for You?

As Jessica points out, raising a guide dog puppy can be fun and frustrating. It's hard work but puppy love is a great reward! Think you can give a puppy what it needs and say goodbye when it's time for her to move on?

The Next Step

- 5 Before I knew it, a year flew by, and my time with Adriana was up. She had grown to be a polite, well-behaved dog. Another letter came telling me it was time to return Adriana to the Guide Dog School, so she could begin her training.
- 6 Returning guide dogs are put in a group with three to four instructors. Some of the first things that Adriana and the dogs in her group learned were to stop for curbs and stairs and to avoid obstacles and distractions.
- 7 One day, a lady from the school called and said that Adriana had been pulled out of training because they wanted to use her for breeding, and that I was invited to her graduation. I was so excited that I started bouncing off the walls. After three long months of waiting, we set out for San Rafael.
- 8 Adriana lives with "Breeder Keepers." Breeder Keepers live within a 50-mile radius of the school and agree to keep a breeder dog in their home. The puppies that breeder dogs have hopefully become guide dogs.

Adriana is a Mommy!

- 9 A few months after I got back, Adriana's family wrote and said that Adriana had her first litter of puppies. I was excited, because I was going to raise one of Adriana's babies. The new puppy, Sahara, made me so happy. But the year with Sahara sped by, and soon it was time to return Sahara to the school for training as a working guide dog.



- 10 It isn't easy to say goodbye to these lovable dogs, but it feels great to know that I have played a part in helping train a dog who can help someone who needs assistance. A working dog can help them live an independent life.
- 11 And I know that there will always be another guide dog puppy in my future!

Did you know . . .

About half of guide dog puppies don't graduate as guide dogs.

But that doesn't mean they can't have a career! Some dogs trained as guide dogs become therapy dogs, search and rescue dogs, or breeder dogs. Others become wonderful family pets!

There are three kinds of "assistance dogs." Along with guide dogs for the blind (and visually impaired), there are also hearing dogs for the deaf (and hard of hearing) and service dogs for people with other special needs.

The average wait for an assistance dog is about two years. Dogs are matched to their new owners' needs. It takes anywhere from six months to five years to be matched with the right dog.

Not all guide dogs are raised from puppies. Sometimes the right dog comes from an animal shelter! These dogs are usually full grown, but less than three years old.

There are several breeds that make the best guide dogs. They are: Golden Retrievers, Labrador Retrievers, Golden/Labrador crosses and German Shepherds. Less common but sometimes used breeds are Flat or Curly coated Retrievers, Vizslas, Boxers, Standard Poodles, Smooth Collies, Australian Shepherds and Dobermans.

Hearing dogs are often rescue dogs. Friendly, small to medium-sized dogs from shelters often make great hearing dogs! Just about any dog can be trained to do this work, and mixed breeds are very common.

Assistance dog breeds vary. There are many types of assistance dogs. Some help physically challenged people with mobility. Others assist people with challenges such as autism, seizures, and psychiatric disorders.

7 What is true about the author of “Raising Her Sights”?

- A. She uses a guide dog to help her.
- B. She has trained a guide dog puppy.
- C. She has run a school that finds guide dogs.
- D. She thinks that guide dog puppies make good pets.

8 According to the article, what did the author do **first**?

- A. She brought Adriana to the vet to get her shots.
- B. She decided what breed of dog she wanted to raise.
- C. She let Adriana get used to different sights and sounds.
- D. She attended meetings and classes to learn about guide dogs.

9 What is the **main** idea of the information in the box titled “Is a Guide Dog Puppy for You?”

- A. People cannot keep guide dog puppies as pets.
- B. Guide dog puppies cannot be raised in a home.
- C. Schools and trainers for guide dog puppies are in many different places.
- D. Raising guide dog puppies can be both a satisfying and a challenging experience.

10 Which sentence from the article supports the idea that not all dogs can be guide dogs?

- A. Returning guide dogs are put in a group with three to four instructors.
- B. The puppies that breeder dogs have hopefully become guide dogs.
- C. About half of guide dog puppies don’t graduate as guide dogs.
- D. Not all guide dogs are raised from puppies.

- 11 Based on the information in the section titled “Did you know . . .,” which statement is true?

A. Dogs can help people in many different ways.

B. Only large dogs are used as assistance dogs for people.

C. Only a few kinds of dogs can be trained to assist others.

D. Dogs must be trained as puppies to be good helper dogs.

- 12 Read the headings from the article in the box below.

- **Puppy Steps**
- **Meeting Adriana**
- **The Next Step**
- **Adriana is a Mommy!**

Based on the headings, how is the article organized?

A. in order of importance

B. in the order that events happened

C. by asking and answering questions

D. by describing a problem and solution

- 13 Read the phrases from the article in the box below.

- A couple of months later, . . .
- Finally, the day came . . .
- Before I knew it, . . .
- A few months after I got back, . . .

The phrases are used to

A. show a change in setting.

B. show the passing of time.

C. introduce a change in topic.

D. compare two different things.

- 14 Read the sentence from paragraph 5 in the box below.

She had grown to be a polite, well-behaved dog.

In the sentence, what part of speech is *well-behaved*?

A. verb

B. noun

C. adverb

D. adjective

ELA Reading Comprehension

- 15** Read the sentence from paragraph 2 in the box below.

Fun Day is a day when guide dog raisers and their dogs meet in one place and listen to talks and demonstrations from guide dog instructors.

Based on the sentence, *demonstrations* are **most** like

- A. parties.
- B. movies.
- C. lessons.
- D. parades.

- 16** Read the sentence from paragraph 4 in the box below.

She especially needed to get used to such distractions as food on the floor, loud noises, and people.

Based on the sentence, *distractions* are things that

- A. might cause fear.
- B. could be necessary.
- C. could be played with.
- D. might interrupt concentration.

Question 17 is an open-response question.

- **Read the question carefully.**
- **Explain your answer.**
- **Add supporting details.**
- **Double-check your work.**

Write your answer to question 17 in the space provided in your Student Answer Booklet.

- 17** Based on the article, explain how raising a guide dog can be difficult. Support your answer with important details from the article.

Grade 4 English Language Arts
Reading Comprehension
Spring 2015 Released Items:
Reporting Categories, Standards, and Correct Answers*

Item No.	Page No.	Reporting Category	Standard	Correct Answer (MC)*
1	31	<i>Reading</i>	3	B
2	31	<i>Reading</i>	1	C
3	31	<i>Reading</i>	3	A
4	32	<i>Reading</i>	1	C
5	32	<i>Language</i>	5	B
6	33	<i>Reading</i>	2	
7	37	<i>Reading</i>	1	B
8	37	<i>Reading</i>	3	D
9	37	<i>Reading</i>	7	D
10	37	<i>Reading</i>	2	C
11	38	<i>Reading</i>	7	A
12	38	<i>Reading</i>	5	B
13	38	<i>Reading</i>	4	B
14	38	<i>Language</i>	1	D
15	39	<i>Language</i>	4	C
16	39	<i>Language</i>	4	D
17	39	<i>Reading</i>	2	

* Answers are provided here for multiple-choice items only. Sample responses and scoring guidelines for the open-response items, which are indicated by the shaded cells, will be posted to the Department's website later this year.

Grade 4 English Language Arts
Reading Comprehension
Spring 2015 Unreleased Common Items:
Reporting Categories and Standards

Item No.	Reporting Category	Standard
18	<i>Reading</i>	2
19	<i>Reading</i>	1
20	<i>Reading</i>	1
21	<i>Language</i>	3
22	<i>Language</i>	1
23	<i>Language</i>	5
24	<i>Reading</i>	2
25	<i>Reading</i>	3
26	<i>Reading</i>	1
27	<i>Reading</i>	3
28	<i>Reading</i>	2
29	<i>Reading</i>	1
30	<i>Reading</i>	1
31	<i>Reading</i>	3
32	<i>Reading</i>	3
33	<i>Language</i>	5
34	<i>Language</i>	2
35	<i>Reading</i>	2
36	<i>Reading</i>	1
37	<i>Reading</i>	3
38	<i>Reading</i>	8.a
39	<i>Reading</i>	2
40	<i>Language</i>	1