

**VIRGINIA  
STANDARDS OF LEARNING ASSESSMENTS**

**Spring 2002 Released Items**

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**GRADE 8  
ENGLISH:  
Reading/Literature and Research**

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DIRECTIONS

Read each passage. Then read each question about the passage. Decide which is the best answer to each question. Mark the space in your answer booklet for the answer you have chosen.

SAMPLE

Crow

Shadow on the shiny snow.  
Feathers sleek,  
Darting eye searching.  
Call echoing across  
5 Desolate corn fields.  
A ghost figure  
In leafless trees,  
He shifts his head,  
Deciphering the breeze.  
10 He shifts his eyes  
To look my way.  
I sympathize.  
He flies away.

A The figure in line 6 refers to —

- A the crow
- B the poet
- C a shadow
- D a tree

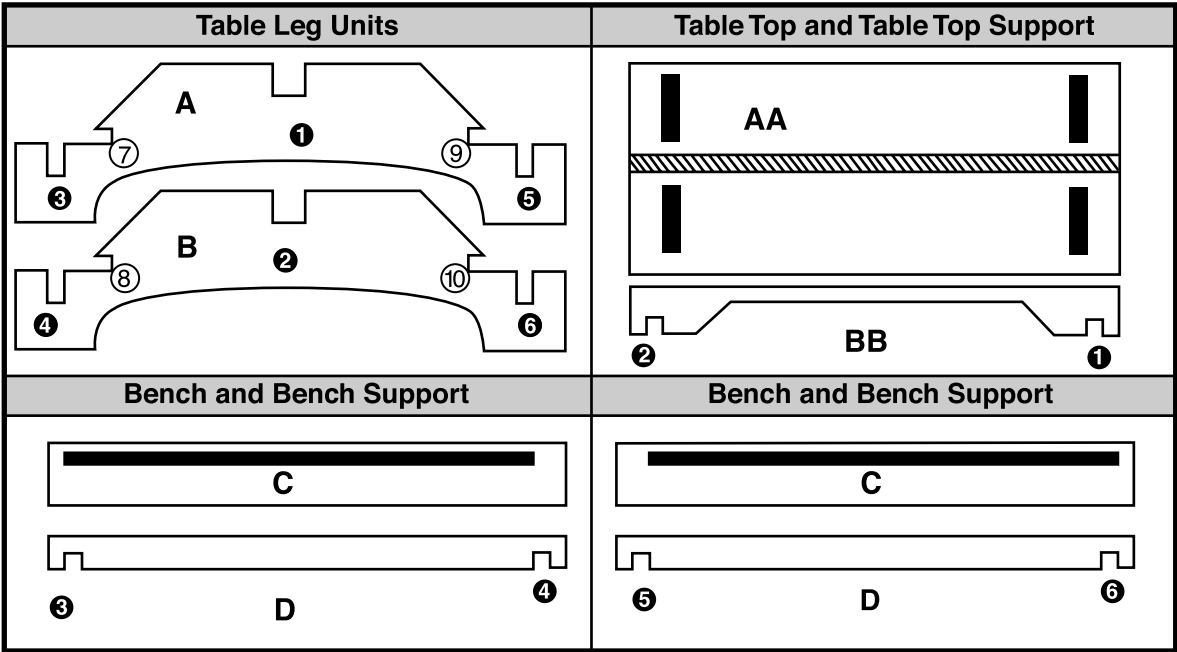
B The imagery in this poem creates a mood of —

- F playfulness
- G loneliness
- H danger
- J dreaminess

Directions: Read the directions and answer the questions that follow.

# Backyard Pride Plastic Picnic Table

## Parts to Assemble



Your **Backyard Pride Plastic Picnic Table** is cleverly designed to be put together by joining the components by means of a series of grooves and notches. No tools are required for assembly. Just follow these simple instructions. It's as easy as 1, 2, 3.

1. Lay the table top [AA] upside down on a work table or flat surface. Using the waterproof glue provided in the kit, securely glue the four short strips of rubber trim (*shown in black*) across each end of the table top 3" from the edge. (These rubber strips keep the table from sliding out of place.)
2. Lay the two benches [C] upside down on the work surface. Glue a long rubber strip lengthwise on each, 3" from the edge. (This rubber strip should rest on top of the bench support in order to prevent the bench seat from sliding.)
3. You will need two people to hold the two leg units [A & B] while you drop the bench supports into each side. (Insert bench support [D] notches 3 and 4 into the corresponding leg support notches. Then insert bench support notches 5 and 6 into the corresponding leg support notches on the opposite side of the table.)
4. The two bench seats [C] can now be placed on top of the bench supports. Stability is achieved by pushing the seats forward, locking them securely into the notches on the leg pieces.
5. Slide the notches 1 and 2 of the top support [BB] down into the corresponding notches on the table leg units.
6. Rest the table top [AA] on the top support [BB] so that the groove in the underside of the table top fits over the table top support and the rubber strip on the underside of the table top rests on the top edge of the leg supports. (For more permanent uses, you can use screws to fasten the table top to the table legs and table top support.)
7. Paint your table or coat it with a clear finish, if desired.

**1 Which question is answered in the introduction to the assembly instructions?**

- A Is a clear finish included in the kit?
- B Are tools needed to assemble the table?
- C How many pieces are included in the kit?
- D What are the dimensions of the finished table?

**2 In Step 4 of the instructions, the word Stability means —**

- F steadiness
- G height
- H durability
- J attractiveness

**3 Where should the rubber strips be glued to the table top?**

- A Crosswise under the center
- B Lengthwise under the center
- C Under both long sides
- D Under both short ends

**4 From the assembly instructions, the reader could conclude that —**

- F the table is not intended to be taken apart and reconstructed
- G a painted finish will last longer than a clear finish
- H the table can not be assembled by one person
- J a warranty is provided in the package

**5 Which statement *best* summarizes this passage?**

- A The Backyard Pride Plastic Picnic Table provides a roomy place to have an outdoor lunch on a hot summer day.
- B The material used in the Backyard Pride Plastic Picnic Table has been molded and hardened to retain its shape under varying weather conditions.
- C The design for the Backyard Pride Plastic Picnic Table was based on several prize-winning designs submitted as part of a drafting contest.
- D The Backyard Pride Plastic Picnic Table can be built by following simple instructions that involve gluing and assembling pre-cut pieces.

**6 What is meant by “It’s as easy as 1, 2, 3” in the introduction?**

- F There are three major pieces: table top, legs, and benches.
- G The last four steps are as simple as the first three.
- H The instructions have numbered steps.
- J Assembling the table is as simple as counting to three.

**7 Which statement below expresses an opinion found in the introduction to the assembly instructions?**

- A The table design is very clever.
- B Assembly requires no additional tools.
- C Waterproof glue is provided in the kit.
- D The table can be put together with a series of grooves.

Directions: Read the poems and answer the questions that follow.

## It Couldn't Be Done

*Edgar A. Guest*

- Somebody said that it couldn't be done,  
But he with a chuckle replied  
That "maybe it couldn't," but he would be one  
Who wouldn't say so till he'd tried.  
5 So he buckled right in with the trace of a grin  
On his face. If he worried he hid it.  
He started to sing as he tackled the thing  
That couldn't be done, and he did it.

- Somebody scoffed: "Oh, you'll never do that;  
10 At least no one ever has done it";  
But he took off his coat and he took off his hat,  
And the first thing we knew he'd begun it.  
With a lift of his chin and a bit of a grin,  
Without any doubting or quiddit,  
15 He started to sing as he tackled the thing  
That couldn't be done, and he did it.

- There are thousands to tell you it cannot be done,  
There are thousands to prophesy failure;  
There are thousands to point out to you, one  
by one,  
20 The dangers that wait to assail you.  
But just buckle in with a bit of a grin,  
Just take off your coat and go to it;  
Just start to sing as you tackle the thing  
That "cannot be done," and you'll do it.

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## Be the Best of Whatever You Are

*Douglas Malloch*

- If you can't be a pine on the top of the hill,  
Be a scrub in the valley — but be  
The best little scrub by the side of the rill;  
Be a bush if you can't be a tree.  
5 If you can't be a bush be a bit of the grass,  
And some highway happier make;  
If you can't be a muskie then just be a bass—  
Be the liveliest bass in the lake!  
We can't all be captains, we've got to be crew,  
10 There's something for all of us here,  
There's big work to do, and there's lesser to do,  
And the task you must do is the near.  
If you can't be a highway then just be a trail,  
If you can't be the sun be a star;  
15 It isn't by size that you win or fail—  
Be the best of whatever you are!

[Public Domain]

- 8 Which words from Guest's poem show his attitude toward the phrase "it couldn't be done"?

F Chuckle, grin, sing  
G Scoffed, couldn't, cannot  
H Doubting, failure, dangers  
J Replied, worried, started

- 9 The simple, straightforward style of "It Couldn't Be Done" is *probably* meant to reflect the —

A values of an earlier historical period  
B author's natural speaking voice  
C ease of a task once it is attempted  
D skill needed to write a poem

10 The last two lines in each stanza of “It Couldn’t Be Done” give the reader a sense of —

- F failure
- G happiness
- H confusion
- J accomplishment

11 What is one way the author of “Be the Best of Whatever You Are” emphasizes the theme in his poem?

- A The use of action words throughout the poem
- B Employment of an *abab* rhyme scheme
- C Repetition of the phrase “If you can’t”
- D Punctuating with dashes and semicolons

12 The rhythm in both of these poems contributes to a mood that is —

- F shocking
- G upbeat
- H gloomy
- J foolish

13 The speakers in both poems would *probably* disagree with which of the following statements?

- A Work hard at whatever task you take on and be proud of it.
- B You’ll never know what you can accomplish until you give it your best effort.
- C You shouldn’t accept the role you are given — keep waiting for something better.
- D If you don’t succeed at something, keep trying until you do.

14 How does the author’s style in “It Couldn’t Be Done” compare to the author’s style in “Be the Best of Whatever You Are”?

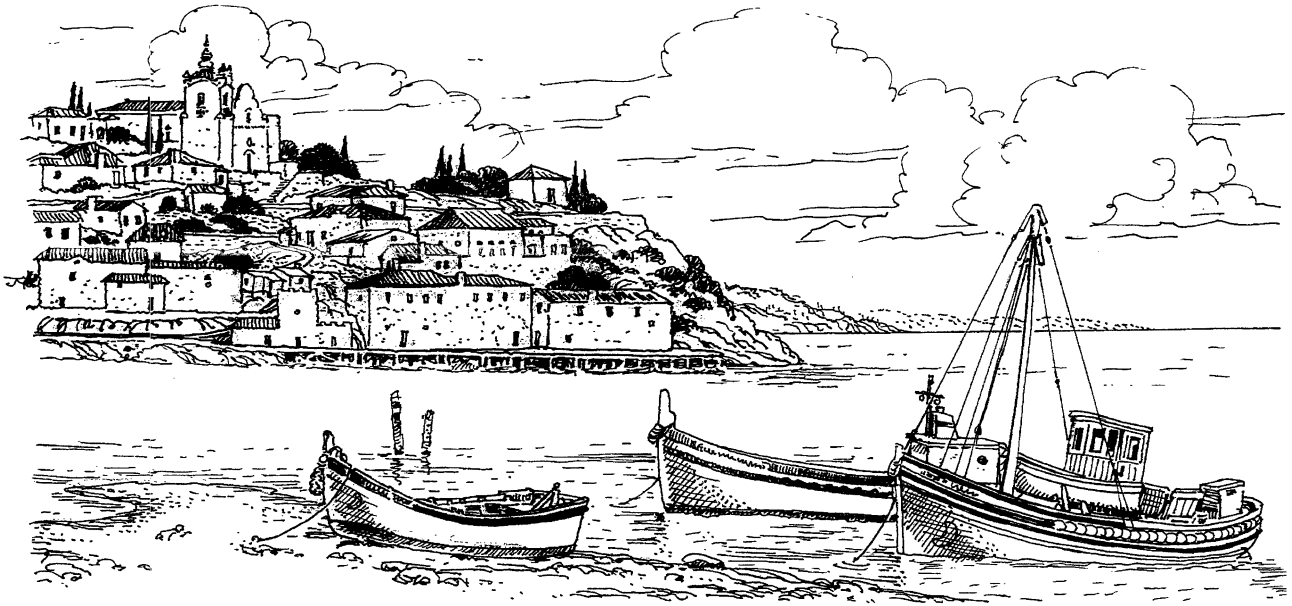
- F Both authors enthusiastically offer advice to the reader.
- G The author of “Be the Best of Whatever You Are” speaks directly to the reader.
- H Both authors use a four-line stanza.
- J The author of “It Couldn’t Be Done” is more optimistic.

15 In which collection might these poems be found?

- A *Rousing Poems for Every Day*
- B *Poetry for Quiet Moments*
- C *Travel Poems from Many Lands*
- D *Fishing Poems for the Angler*

Directions: Read the passage and answer the questions that follow.

## Vasco's Choice



- 1 I am Vasco Salazar, and I live in a coastal town in Portugal. Many people who live here make their living from fishing. My father Paulo is a fisherman, as was his father before him and his father's father long ago. Fishing is part of my heritage.
- 2 I'm thirteen. I think about the future and wonder if I will become a fisherman some day. I want to study at the university; but at the same time, I long to go out to sea with my father. I already help bring in the fish and mend the nets. My cousin Alfonso, who is nineteen and a fisherman, tells me of his adventures on the ocean. My parents say that Alfonso embellishes his tales to make them sound more interesting so they will impress and encourage me to become a fisherman like him. Fishing is really hard work, they say, and can be quite dangerous. You spend much of your life wet, salty, and smelling of fish.
- 3 "You should explore many areas before deciding what to do with your life," says my father. "You were named after Vasco da Gama, the explorer who made Portugal an important sea-trading nation. Explore, and then decide what is best for you."
- 4 The weather was calm and clear one day last week as we stood onshore and awaited the return of the fishing boats. They'd been at sea for a week because of rough weather. When my father's boat arrived, my cousin and I reached for the ropes attached to the nets. We had to use all our strength to pull in the nets, for they were overflowing with fish after seven days. Later that day, I helped my mother make fish stew for our dinner.
- 5 The next day, Father told me to ask the lighthouse keeper, Carlos, what weather was coming. Carlos can see much from his post high above things, so he has a good understanding of weather and other aspects of life.
- 6 I reached the top of the hill and walked to the lighthouse, once a fortress. Carlos greeted me with enthusiasm. He spends much of his time alone. Part of the week, another lighthouse keeper takes over, and then Carlos goes home to his family.



- 7 “I would like to be a fisherman,” I told Carlos, “but I also like learning. I might be good at teaching or something else.”
- 8 “Look,” says Carlos, stretching his arms wide. I see the long crescent of sand to the south, the islands to the west, and the forest to the north. “It’s a big world with many opportunities. If you choose fishing now, you will be limiting yourself and will not benefit as you should from your education. Explore your options. You can always return to fishing.”
- 9 We were quiet for a while; then I asked about the weather.  
“See those islands farthest west?” he said. “When you can see them from here, rain is coming toward us.” As he had predicted, fat raindrops soon began to fall.
- 10 After the storm, people gathered on the beach. In the seaweed, we found things that had washed up on shore. It was mostly junk, like bottles, cans, and old boots. Sometimes we were lucky and found something more valuable. I untangled a chain from the seaweed and found a compass attached.
- 11 “Look!” Alfonso exclaimed. “A compass! Now Vasco can explore the world.” In that moment, I knew Carlos was right. I can always come back to fishing.

**16 Which is a primary theme in this selection?**

- F Know your place and keep it.
- G Don’t believe everything you hear.
- H Think twice before you decide.
- J You can’t please everybody.

**17 Which organizational pattern is used in the passage?**

- A Compare/contrast
- B Cause/effect
- C Time order
- D Order of importance

**18 Which question is *not* answered in the selection?**

- F Why doesn’t Vasco want to be a lighthouse keeper?
- G How old is Vasco?
- H What was the former use of the lighthouse?
- J What is the name of the country where Vasco lives?

**19 Whose point of view does the author use in this selection?**

- A Carlos’s
- B Alfonso’s
- C Vasco’s
- D Paulo’s

**20** Vasco's father tells him that he was named after Vasco da Gama in order to —

- F** teach him a lesson in the history of Portugal
- G** help him feel more important than Alfonso
- H** persuade him to explore his own future
- J** tease him about his first name

**21** Which sentence from the selection expresses an idea that helped Vasco make his decision?

- A** "They'd been at sea for a week because of rough weather."
- B** "Many people who live here make their living from fishing."
- C** "He spends much of his time alone."
- D** " 'You can always return to fishing.' "

**22** Which of these is the main conflict in this story?

- F** Good versus evil
- G** Old versus young
- H** Man versus nature
- J** Familiar versus unfamiliar

**23** After Vasco finds the compass, he decides —

- A** that being a fisherman is what he really wants
- B** to learn more about the world before making a final choice
- C** that he will seek a teaching career
- D** to forget about fishing and be an explorer instead

**24** Which is *most* likely to happen in the future?

- F** Carlos will warn Vasco about the dangers of the sea.
- G** Alfonso will quit fishing and become a lighthouse keeper.
- H** Vasco's family will leave Portugal.
- J** Vasco will go to the university.

Directions: Read the passage and answer the questions that follow.

## The Real Popeye

Rebecca A. Schwartz

- 1 On January 17, 1929, Ham Gravy and Castor Oyl were scouring the seedy shipyards for a sailor to “drive” them and their lucky Whiffle Bird to Dice Island.
- 2 “Hey there! Are you a sailor?” Castor Oyl asked. He was pointing to a scowling seaman.
- 3 “Ja think I’m a cowboy?” snapped the sailor. With that, Popeye stomped into the *Thimble Theater* comic strip and never left. That one-eyed, spinach chomping salty dog took Castor and Ham to the gambling casinos on Dice Island, where they won big — but not big enough to stay in the limelight. Soon Popeye was the star of the show, bringing fame and riches to his creator, Elzie Crisler Segar.
- 4 How did Segar create this lovable, muscular, perennial pipe-smoker? Was there a real Popeye? If so, who was he?
- 5 Well, blow me down! Segar did have a model for Popeye. Popeye was none other than Rocky Feigle from Segar’s hometown of Chester, Illinois.
- 6 Segar began drawing *Thimble Theater* in 1920 for King Features in New York City. The cartoon carried the adventures of the Oyl family — Cole, Dana, Castor, and Olive — and Olive’s first boyfriend, Ham Gravy.
- 7 When Segar needed characters for the strip, he recalled people he knew from Chester. Olive Oyl was rumored to be Mrs. Pascal, the wife of a Chester businessman. J. Wellington Wimpy, America’s most popular hamburger lover, was modeled after Bill Schuchert, the owner of the Chester Opera House, where Segar had worked as a motion picture operator. Schuchert had an affection for hamburgers and often sent Segar to fetch them for him. Schuchert had also encouraged Segar to draw and even bought him a correspondence course in cartooning.
- 8 Segar had been drawing *Thimble Theater* for eight years when he discovered he needed a sailor. The person who captured his imagination was the tall wiry Rocky Feigle of Chester. Rocky had earned a reputation as a fighter and a winner. The local people said he never lost a fight.
- 9 Rocky worked at Gozney’s Saloon near the Chester Opera House. On warm days, after he cleaned the saloon and drank a couple of beers, he would stroll onto the porch and plop down in a rickety chair, tilting it back against the wall. He would then light his pipe, clench it between his teeth, and nap in the sun.
- 10 As a boy, Elzie Segar loved stirring up Rocky. He and his friends would often go out of their way to pass Gozney’s Saloon and awaken Rocky from his nap. They would scream and holler at him, then run away. Rocky would get up from his chair, flailing his arms and punching the air. By the time he came to his senses, the boys would be gone. Even with all this commotion, Rocky never lost his pipe!
- 11 Rocky’s skills as a fighter were widely known. One day, five bullies decided to gang up and rob him. Together, they thought, they could whip him, so they lured him into the woods. After a few minutes, Rocky sauntered back into town, untouched. It seems two of the bullies had run away before the fight ever began. The other three hobbled back into town trailing Rocky at a safe distance and nursing their wounds.

- 12 Popeye was born from these memories of Rocky. The crusty sailor, spouting, “I yam what I yam,” quickly gained wide popularity for *Thimble Theater* and for Segar. King Features sold the comic strip to more than five hundred newspapers, and Segar became rich overnight.
- 13 When news leaked out that Rocky was the real Popeye, promoters tried to persuade him to make personal appearances across the country. But Rocky, feisty as ever, declined, saying that he didn’t want fame. Segar was so grateful to Rocky, however, that he often sent him money in appreciation for Rocky’s role in his own fame.
- 14 Popeye lives today in his own comic strip. He is drawn by Bud Sagendorf, a cartoonist trained by Elzie Segar. You can also see Popeye on television and in the movies, guzzling spinach and tooting his pipe like a train whistle.
- 15 Segar’s hometown of Chester, Illinois, has not forgotten its favorite sons either. Every fall, Chesterites put on the Popeye Festival, where Popeye, Olive Oyl, and Sweetpea look-alikes gather. Recently, the citizens of Chester dedicated Segar Memorial Park on a bluff overlooking the Mississippi River. A six-foot bronze statue of Popeye atop a marble pedestal stands there as a memorial to Segar and to the real Popeye, Rocky Feigle.

From Cobblestone’s August, 1985 issue: Cartoons, Comics, and the Funnies, © 1985, Cobblestone Publishing Company, 30 Grove St., Suite C, Peterborough, NH 03458. All rights reserved. Reprinted by permission of the publisher.

**25 Which is the *best* summary of this article?**

- A Popeye, Olive Oyl, and other characters were based on real people.
- B Rocky Feigle was a tough fighter and a funny guy.
- C Segar started drawing *Thimble Theater* in 1920.
- D *Thimble Theater* was a cartoon about the Oyl family.

**26 The author of this article wants readers to know about —**

- F what happened in Popeye cartoons
- G how cartoons are drawn
- H how a cartoonist created his characters
- J the members of the Oyl family

**27 Which question is answered in the first three paragraphs?**

- A Was there a real Popeye?
- B What happened in Popeye’s first comic appearance?
- C Who was Rocky Feigle?
- D Who was the model for J. Wellington Wimpy?

**28 The word “Ja” at the beginning of paragraph 3 means —**

- F Yes
- G Ha
- H Do you
- J Did he

- 29 Which of these is *not* a fact stated in the article?
- A Rocky worked at Gozney’s Saloon.
  - B Bill Schuchert was fond of hamburgers.
  - C Segar’s hometown was Chester, Illinois.
  - D Rocky was modest and shy.

- 30 The reader can conclude that Rocky Feigle —
- F was well educated
  - G had sailed all over the world
  - H enjoyed the attention he got
  - J was a memorable character

- 31 Look at this chart of information from the article.

Olive Oyl	↔	_____
Wimpy	↔	Bill Schuchert
Popeye	↔	Rocky Feigle

- Which information belongs in the blank?
- A Sweetpea
  - B Castor Oil
  - C Ham Gravy
  - D Mrs. Pascal

- 32 In paragraph 10, flailing means —
- F covering
  - G swinging
  - H crossing
  - J hanging

- 33 You would *probably* find the most information about Segar in a book about —
- A town histories
  - B cartoonists
  - C sailors
  - D cartoon techniques

Directions: Read the passage and answer the questions that follow.

## Mr. Banvard's Panorama

October 17, 1847

Dear Owen,

- 1 Last night, Father took me to see Mr. Banvard's panorama. What an amazing experience it was!
- 2 When we arrived at Amory Hall, a noisy crowd was already assembled. For months, the Boston newspapers have been full of descriptions of the panorama. All of Boston is buzzing over the spectacle. The railroad has even scheduled special express trains from outlying villages. Like everyone else, we were curious to see what the *Boston Herald* is calling a "revolutionary form of entertainment."
- 3 When we arrived, the piano inside the hall played softly in the shadows as people settled quickly into rows of chairs facing the stage. In front of us sat a huge wooden structure, like a giant picture frame at least twelve feet square, covered with a red velvet drape.
- 4 When the house lights dimmed and the stage lights flared, a stocky, bearded man in a dark suit stepped onto the stage. "I am John Banvard," he said in a clear, melodious voice. "I have floated hundreds of miles down the Missouri River and down 'The Father of Waters,' the mighty Mississippi. On my journey I have seen many wonderful things and experienced many wonders. I made thousands of sketches during my adventure. When I returned, I labored for over a year to make a record of my odyssey in paint. Tonight you will see what I have created — a picture three miles long. Ladies and gentlemen, the world's largest painting!"
- 5 Mr. Banvard stepped aside with a sweeping motion of his hand. Two assistants appeared and slipped the velvet cover from the wooden frame, revealing a beautiful painting that was bigger than any I have ever seen. Owen, I wish you could have seen it. It was a wild river scene. Rapids foamed over gray rocks, sparkling wet in the morning sunshine. My dazzled eyes could hardly take it all in. In the flicker of the gas lamps, the painting seemed to dance and glitter. We were all entranced. Murmurs filled the theater.
- 6 Then, the painting began to move! Slowly, the giant canvas slid silently and smoothly sideways inside the wooden frame. Yet another river scene, even more breathtaking than the one before, came into view. I felt as if we were actually on the deck of a steamboat drifting along the river.
- 7 "Come along with me, my friends, on a voyage down the Missouri and the Mississippi." Mr. Banvard's warm and wonderful presence seemed all around us in the darkness.
- 8 Father says that the canvas is rolled on two huge cylinders, or drums, like a great scroll. Assistants backstage turn cranks that pull the canvas slowly and smoothly through the wooden frame. An ingenious system of ropes and pulleys keeps the immense painting on track. None of the extraordinary mechanism was visible. Indeed I became so lost in the experience, I forgot that I was even in a theater, looking at a picture. Actually, it was a succession of more than forty paintings that were skillfully and seamlessly woven together.
- 9 For the next two hours, we traveled with our jovial guide, past some of the most beautiful scenery in the world. Or, rather, the canvas moved before us, giving us the sensation of movement. The whole time, Mr. Banvard's witty, intelligent narration propelled us pleasantly along. He pointed out towns and sights of interest, gave fascinating facts about everything, and reeled off a seemingly never-ending supply of thrilling and amusing stories.

- 10 At one point, for example, the scene darkened. The musical accompaniment grew shrill and harsh. “This is Plumb Point by moonlight,” Mr. Banvard said in a low dramatic tone. Then he began to tell us how he had tied up for the night and had been attacked by bandits. Only a desperate cutting of the lines saved him and his boat. During the tale, a little girl next to me actually gripped my arm anxiously. “It’s only a story, remember,” I whispered. In a moment the dark scene was gone, replaced by a stunning, rosy sunrise over a bend in the river. A doe and her fawn drank knee-deep in golden water. The child released my arm, giggling with embarrassment.
- 11 All too soon, we reached New Orleans—your hometown—and the end of our journey. “The Crescent City” glowed like a jewel in the southern sunshine. I felt as if I had come there to visit you. Then the house lights brightened again, and the show was over.
- 12 For a moment, everyone sat in silence, staring at the now-dim, static painting. Suddenly, the spell broke, and as if it were one person, the crowd leaped to its feet. Applause thundered in the theater. Mr. Banvard appeared again on stage, bowing and smiling, while the crowd cheered on and on for nearly half an hour.
- 13 Father says the word *panorama* means “to see everything.” I’m not sure that truly describes Mr. Banvard’s panorama, but it certainly comes close. If he brings his show to New Orleans, you and Aunt Sophie absolutely must see it. It’s well worth the admission price of fifty cents, so start saving your pennies for your journey down the Missouri and Mississippi.

Your fond cousin,  
Julianna Preston

**34 In paragraph 5, the word entranced means —**

- F proud
- G bored
- H frightened
- J fascinated

**35 When Mr. Banvard says, “Come along with me, my friends, on a voyage down the Missouri and the Mississippi,” what kind of language is he using?**

- A Formal
- B Technical
- C Literal
- D Figurative

**36 In paragraph 10, Julianna says, “During the tale, a little girl next to me actually gripped my arm anxiously.” The purpose of this detail is to —**

- F show how realistic Mr. Banvard’s panorama was
- G create sympathy for the little girl
- H illustrate the theme of Mr. Banvard’s story
- J set the tone for the conclusion of her letter

**37 To find out more about Mr. Banvard’s panorama, which source would be *most* helpful?**

- A *Sightseeing: A Space Panorama*
- B *American Landscape Artists of the 1800s*
- C *Sights and Sounds of the Present-Day Missouri River*
- D *Entertainment in the American Colonies*



**38 The main idea of Julianna’s letter is to express that —**

- F** her cousin, Owen, should save his money
- G** Mr. Banvard’s panorama depicts a once-in-a-lifetime experience
- H** her father is very knowledgeable about New Orleans
- J** Boston is a cultural and entertainment center

**39 Julianna’s father is in the story to provide —**

- A** a less serious tone
- B** an opposing point of view
- C** detailed technical information
- D** the clever commentary

**40 The author relates Julianna’s sense of awe toward what she sees through —**

- F** dialogue
- G** description
- H** character
- J** setting

**This is a thesaurus entry for the word spell. Use it to answer questions 41 and 42.**

**spell** *v.* **1.** to name in order the letters of a word. **2.** signify, mean. *n.* **3.** a short, indefinite period of time. **4.** period of illness, attack. **5.** a charm or fascination.

**41 According to the thesaurus entry, which synonym could *best* be used in place of spell in paragraph 12?**

- A** attack
- B** time
- C** fascination
- D** signify

**42 Read this sentence.**

**When the bandits approached Mr. Banvard’s boat, it almost certainly spelled disaster.**

**The word spelled in this sentence means the same as the words in which part of the thesaurus entry?**

- F** 1
- G** 2
- H** 4
- J** 5