

VIRGINIA STANDARDS OF LEARNING ASSESSMENTS

Spring 2003 Released Test

GRADE 8 ENGLISH: WRITING

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DIRECTIONS

Read the passage in each box. Read each question after the passage. Choose the best answer.

SAMPLE A

A Special Person

In English class, Sarah has been asked to write a description of someone special to her. Sarah wants to write about her older brother.

Which of these would *best* help Sarah write her description of her older brother?

- A Calling his friends and telling them about him
- B Thinking about all the things she likes about him
- C Making a list of things she wants him to do for her
- D Asking him to take her to the library

SAMPLE B

Here is the first part of Sarah's rough draft.

(1)A special person in my life is my big brother. (2)His name is Ben. (3)He is tall and thin.

How are sentences 1 and 2 *best* combined?

- F A special person in my life is Ben, my big brother.
- G A special person in my life is Ben, he is my big brother.
- H In my life a special person is my big brother, his name is Ben.
- J My big brother Ben, he is a special person in my life.

SAMPLE C

Here is the next part of Sarah's rough draft.

(4)He helps me with my homework.
(5)He is a good student.

In sentence 4, He helps should be written —

- A He were helping
- B He have helped
- C He help
- D as it is

Astronomy Lesson

Betsy's English teacher has asked the class to write a personal narrative.

1 Betsy doesn't know what to write about. Which of these would *best* help her?

- A Brainstorming for ideas
- B Reading her best friend's story
- C Going to the library to do research
- D Making an outline

Betsy made these notes. Use them to answer question 2.

1. My twin sister Maya got a telescope for her birthday.
2. She liked it so much that she had no time to play basketball with me.
3. In desperation I decided to see what Maya found so exciting about looking at the sky.
4. Maya showed me Saturn, star clusters, and other things through her telescope.
5. In spite of myself, I found it interesting!

2 Based on Betsy's notes, which of these would be the *best* title for her story?

- F Why I Like Basketball
- G What It's Like Being a Twin
- H The Moons of Saturn
- J Astronomy's Not So Boring After All

Here is the first part of Betsy’s rough draft. Use it to answer questions 3–5.

(1)Shivering in the cool night air, Betsy waited impatiently. (2)She was waiting as her twin sister Maya adjusted the telescope lens. (3)She and Maya usually did everything together and were rarely apart. (4)They were both into basketball and loved to go one-on-one in the driveway of their house. (5)But Maya had gotten the telescope for her birthday two months ago, ever since she wasn’t interested in anything else. (6)All she wanted to do was drag it outside every night. (7)She would spend hours gazing up at the starry sky. (8)Betsy had decided that even though she had no interest in astronomy, she was going to have to learn something about Maya’s new hobby if she ever wanted to spend time with her sister again.

(9)“I’m glad you came out, Betsy,” Maya said. (10)“It’s so fascinating! (11)Just think, the light from those stars is coming to us from thousands of light years away.”

(12)“Whatever,” Betsy murmured. (13)“What’s that big star up there?”

(14)“That’s not a star! (15)That’s Saturn,” Maya explained with exaggerated patience. (16)Maya wants to be a famous movie star when she grows up. (17)She moved away from the telescope. (18)“Here, take a look at it.”

3 How can sentences 1 and 2 *best* be joined?

- A** Shivering in the cool night air, Betsy waited impatiently, she was waiting as her twin sister Maya adjusted the telescope lens.
- B** Betsy, shivering in the cool night air, waited impatiently, waiting as her twin sister Maya adjusted the telescope lens.
- C** Waiting impatiently, Betsy shivered in the cool night air, Betsy was waiting as her twin sister Maya adjusted the telescope lens.
- D** Shivering in the cool night air, Betsy waited impatiently as her twin sister Maya adjusted the telescope lens.

4 How is sentence 5 *best* written?

- F** But ever since two months ago Maya had gotten the telescope for her birthday, not interested in anything else.
- G** But Maya had gotten the telescope for her birthday two months ago, she wasn't interested in anything else ever since.
- H** But ever since Maya had gotten the telescope for her birthday two months ago, she wasn't interested in anything else.
- J** But Maya had gotten the telescope ever since her birthday two months ago and wasn't interested in anything else.

5 Which of these does *not* belong in Betsy's draft?

- A** Sentence 6
- B** Sentence 8
- C** Sentence 13
- D** Sentence 16

Read this next section of Betsy’s rough draft and use it to answer questions 6–10. This section has groups of underlined words. The questions ask about these groups of underlined words.

(19)Betsy looked through the eyepiece. (20)There, she saw a small, white sphere in the midst of a set of rings against a dark background. (21)It was the amazingest thing Betsy had ever seen.

(22)“Why is it moving?” she asked. (23)“I can hardly keep it in site.”

(24)“That’s because both Saturn and Earth is spinning,” Maya said. (25)“Next we’ll look at the moon. (26)Then I want to show you the Horsehead Nebula.” (27)For the next half hour, Betsy watched with increasing interest as Maya expertly located objects in the sky and then let Betsy examine them through the telescope lens.

(28)“What did you think of your astronomy lesson, Sis?” Maya asked as they lugged the heavy telescope back inside.

(29)“Even though I liked it a lot,” Betsy began, “I hope you and me can still play basketball sometimes.”

(30)“It’s a deal!” Maya answered.

6 In sentence 21, how is the amazingest thing correctly written?

- F the most amazing thing
- G the most amazingest thing
- H the more amazing thing
- J As it is

7 In sentence 23, how is can hardly keep it in site correctly written?

- A can't hardly keep it in site
- B can't not hardly keep it in sight
- C can hardly keep it in sight
- D As it is

8 In sentence 24, how is both Saturn and Earth is spinning correctly written?

- F both Saturn and Earth are spinning
- G both Saturn, and Earth are spinning
- H both Saturn, and Earth is spinning
- J As it is

9 In sentence 27, how is increasing interest correctly written?

- A increasing intrest
- B increaseing intrest
- C increaseing interest
- D As it is

10 In sentence 29, how is I hope you and me can correctly written?

- F I had hoped you and me can
- G I hope you and I can
- H I hope me and you can
- J As it is

The Lighthouse Keeper's Daughter

Leslie's English teacher has asked the students in her class to do research and to write a story about how someone their own age might have lived in the past.

- 11 Leslie decides to write about what it was like to be the daughter of a lighthouse keeper. Which of these would *best* help her gather information to write her story?
- A Rereading essays she has written recently for her English class
 - B Thinking of a title for her story
 - C Looking up the word "lighthouse" in the dictionary
 - D Searching the Internet or online catalog at her school library
- 12 While writing her story, Leslie would want to include all of these EXCEPT —
- F details about the tasks of a lighthouse keeper
 - G facts about the world's largest lighthouses
 - H what it was like to live in a lighthouse
 - J how the lighthouse keeper made sure that the lighthouse lamp stayed lit

To complete the assignment, Leslie has decided to put her information in the form of one cousin writing a letter to another cousin.

Here are two drafts of the first part of that letter. Use both rough drafts to answer questions 13–15.

DRAFT A

June 1, 1884

Dearest Margaret,

In my last letter, I told you the exciting news that Papa was chosen to be the new lighthouse keeper on Tern Island. I'm so proud of him! We've been so busy with the moving that I haven't had time to write, but now we are settled. The island is small and rocky, but with two little brothers and a baby sister to help Mama watch, I hardly have time to notice. Also, Papa is teaching me to help him tend the light. I'm so pleased that he trusts me to help him with this task, for if the light went out for even one night, a boat could be wrecked on the sharp rocks.

Tending a lighthouse is more work than I thought it would be. Every morning Papa and I climb the stairs to the lantern room. Once there, we blow out the lamps that have been burning all night and refill them with oil. I polish the reflectors that make it possible for faraway ships to see the light from miles away. Then, we have a break until early evening, when we hurry up the stairs to light the lamps again. Sometimes I stay up with Papa at night to watch the lamps and make sure they're burning steadily. When I hear the bells of passing ships, I imagine they're thanking us as they sail safely through the dark waters.

DRAFT B

June 1, 1884

Dearest Margaret,

As you may recall from my last correspondence, Papa was selected as the new lighthouse keeper for Tern Island. The moving process has taken up much of my time lately, but now we are settled. The island is small and rocky, but I have many things to help Mama and Papa with, so I do not have much time to dwell on my surroundings.

You may be interested in learning what is involved in tending the light, so I will describe the process for you. Every morning the lighthouse keeper must climb the stairs to the lantern room. Then he blows out the lamps that have been burning all night and refills them with oil. It is vital that he polish the reflectors. Making it possible for faraway ships to see the light from miles away. When evening falls, he goes up the stairs once again to light the lamps. It is the lighthouse keeper's responsibility to make sure the lamps burn steadily through the night.

13 What is the main difference between paragraph 2 of Draft A and paragraph 2 of Draft B?

- A** The ideas in paragraph 2 of Draft A are expressed more concisely.
- B** Paragraph 2 of Draft A does not focus on a central idea.
- C** Paragraph 2 of Draft B has much more sentence variety.
- D** Paragraph 2 of Draft A has a more personal approach.

14 In Draft B, which of these is *not* a complete sentence?

- F** The moving process has taken up much of my time lately, but now we are settled.
- G** Every morning the lighthouse keeper must climb the stairs to the lantern room.
- H** Making it possible for faraway ships to see the light from miles away.
- J** When evening falls, he goes up the stairs once again to light the lamps.

15 Which of these could *best* be added to the end of paragraph 1 in Draft B?

- A** Otherwise, I am sure I would miss our old house very much.
- B** Do you remember the fun we had together last summer?
- C** I think I would like to travel by ship someday.
- D** Papa will be well paid for performing the lighthouse keeper's duties.

Read this next section of Leslie's rough draft and use it to answer questions 16–20. This section has groups of underlined words. The questions ask about these groups of underlined words.

Mama is determined that Jacob, Daniel, and I do not fall behind in our schooling. So, she gives us lessons every day. I've read all the books I own, but when Mr. Johnson and his supply boat come to bring flour, bacon, apples, and other things we need, Mama says he will also have a new book for me. The last time he visited, he brought me The Adventures of Robin Hood and His Merry Men. Also, Mr. Johnson always has interesting stories to share with us. I'm looking forward to his visit.

When I'm not studying or helping Mama or Papa, my favorite place to spend my leisure time is at the top of the lighthouse tower. From up there, the sea looks as if it stretches on forever. Gulls squawk as they fly by, the salty breeze tangles my hair, and the puffy clouds pass slow overhead. At night it's even better, as the fiery sun sinks into the water and the stars shine in the distance. Life is very different on Tern Island, but I've come to love the sound of the sea and the welcoming, yellow light of our lighthouse.

Yours Truly,

Sarah Elizabeth
Sarah Elizabeth

16 How is Jacob, Daniel, and I best written?

- F me, Jacob, and Daniel
- G Jacob and me and Daniel
- H Jacob, Daniel, and myself
- J As it is

17 How is The Adventures of Robin Hood and His Merry Men best written?

- A *The adventures of Robin Hood and his merry men*
- B *The Adventures Of Robin Hood And His Merry Men*
- C *The adventures of Robin Hood and his Merry Men*
- D As it is

18 How is pass slow overhead best written?

- F passes slowly over head
- G pass slowly overhead
- H passes slow overhead
- J As it is

19 How is shine in the distance best written?

- A shown in the distance
- B shined in the distance
- C shone in the distants
- D As it is

20 How is Yours Truly, best written?

- F Yours truly;
- G yours truly,
- H Yours truly,
- J As it is