

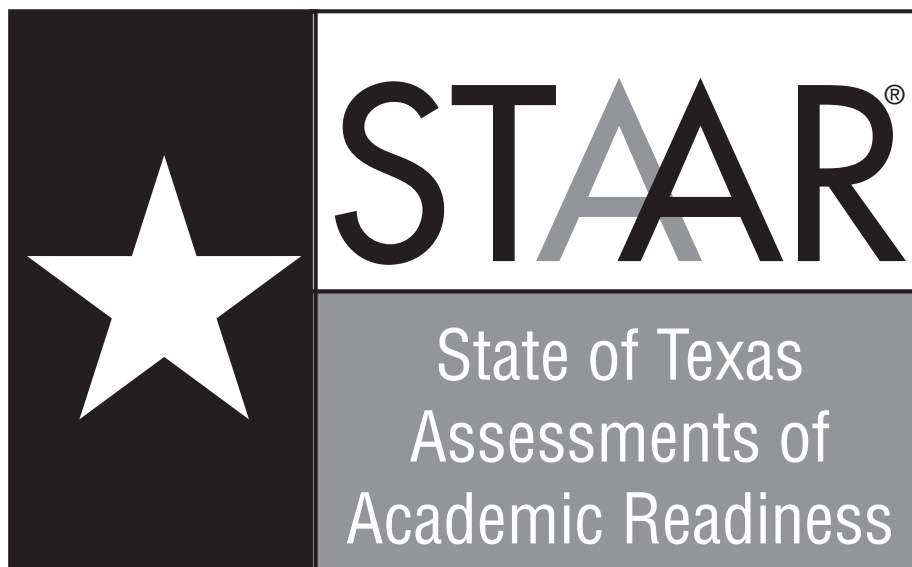
Texas STAAR 2021 Grade 8 Reading

Exam Materials

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Answer Key Materials

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GRADE 8

Reading

Administered May 2021

RELEASED

Read the selection and choose the best answer to each question. Then fill in the answer on your answer document.

A Lasting Impression

- 1 The first-day jitters were impossible to ignore as Lucy Falls walked through the tall glass doors of her new school. Though she was excited for the opportunity to study cinema at the School of the ARTS, she now wondered if she had made a terrible mistake by transferring in the middle of the year. Trying to shake off the early morning's frustration, she wiped her clammy hands on her navy sundress and focused her attention on finding her first-period class.
- 2 Finishing her paperwork had taken forever. The office aide had instructed her to go back through the foyer and take the staircase on the right down to the basement. Just as Lucy started walking, the bell for first period rang, sounding to her like a signal of doom.
- 3 *Great, she thought. Now not only am I new, I'll be late too.*
- 4 She marched quickly through the foyer and made it to the stairwell. Distracted by a group of tardy students who had congregated at the top to take selfies, Lucy tripped over her first step. She stumbled, fell, and then skidded all the way to the bottom, purse and bag sliding down behind her.
- 5 "Smooth feet, newbie!"
- 6 "That's gotta hurt!"
- 7 As she picked herself up, Lucy couldn't decide what hurt more—her body or her pride. She took a few deep breaths and realized she was now standing in front of her first-period class. She worried that the longer she waited to get to class, the worse this day would go. She needed a second chance to make a good first impression.
- 8 *Only like four people saw me fall, she told herself. No big deal.*
- 9 First period went by uneventfully, and Lucy even introduced herself to a couple of the girls who sat behind her. By the time she was headed to second period, she had relegated the fall to the back of her mind.
- 10 She pushed open the door to Intro to Cinema, the class she was most looking forward to at this new school. Students looked her way, and whispers snaked from group to group. Lucy felt her face get hot, and she decided that maybe this day actually *could* get worse. A couple of kids were huddled in the back around one of the classroom laptops, and she assumed they were talking about her.
- 11 *How in the world had word gotten around so fast?* As she stood awkwardly facing the class, the mantra her mother had repeated since she was a little girl came to mind. "Remember, honey. Lucy never falls," her mother would say when things didn't go Lucy's way.

- 12 *I bet Mom never imagined this scenario*, Lucy mused, rolling her eyes.
- 13 “Settle down, class,” the teacher said sternly to the students, who quieted. She directed her attention toward Lucy and gave her a welcoming smile. “You must be Lucy Falls. Today we are discussing our 30-second film project. I believe the details were in the outline you received before you transferred. You can join group four. I’m sure whatever is so distracting on that laptop will be gone by the time I make it over there,” she said, directing a pointed look to the group at the back of the classroom.
- 14 Fearing the worst, Lucy approached the group.
- 15 “That fall was epic!” An enthusiastic redhead beamed at Lucy as she sat down. Grinning widely he stuck his hand out and shook Lucy’s.
- 16 “I’m Rodney!”
- 17 The other group members, one looking intently at the laptop and the other quickly jotting notes into a journal, ignored Lucy.
- 18 Lucy sighed. “I don’t know if that’s necessarily the right word to describe it.” Rodney chuckled and shrugged his shoulders. “Someone was recording a video of my friend, and it’s impossible to miss your wipeout in the background!”
- 19 The girl who was huddled over the laptop giggled. For the millionth time that day, Lucy’s face got hot, and again she began to doubt the wisdom of transferring to the magnet school altogether.
- 20 Rodney continued. “Hey, I hope you don’t think I’m making fun of you! Actually, I think you’re going to save our 30-second film project! Your name has perfect potential for a star character—Lucy Falls!” He gestured as if her name were shining in lights. “The fact that you also *fell*, quite gracefully I might add, makes it the perfect play on words! You’re going to be the inspiration for our project!”
- 21 Lucy allowed herself a small smile. It hadn’t been a good start, but Rodney was definitely making her first day less terrible.
- 22 “I’ve been working on some edits from this clip that we have,” the girl on the laptop said suddenly, turning the computer toward Lucy and showing her what she’d been working on so intently. “I’m Alicia—sorry—I wanted to capture my thoughts before I forgot. We’ve been struggling to come up with a concept, but this is sheer genius!”
- 23 As Alicia and Rodney talked excitedly, Lucy’s embarrassment began to dissipate. She listened for a few moments, watching Alicia’s film clip transform her stairway disaster into drama; then, she pulled up a chair and joined in as the group brainstormed ideas for *Lucy Falls*.
- 24 Her mother’s mantra came to mind, and Lucy smiled to herself. *Well, Mom, sometimes Lucy DOES fall . . . but at least she makes a lasting impression!*

- 1** How is Lucy's behavior in paragraph 23 important to the resolution of her conflict?
- A** It shows Lucy's shift in focus from herself to the project.
 - B** It signals a change in the other students' treatment of Lucy.
 - C** It suggests that Lucy will become close friends with members of her group.
 - D** It shows that the other students have more experience than Lucy in creating a film.
-

- 2** In paragraph 20, what does the word potential mean?
- F** A specific plan
 - G** An unexpected outcome
 - H** An existing possibility
 - J** A strange situation
-

- 3** Read paragraph 21.

Lucy allowed herself a small smile. It hadn't been a good start, but Rodney was definitely making her first day less terrible.

What does this paragraph reveal about Lucy at this point in the selection?

- A** She is unsure about Rodney's motivation for speaking to her.
- B** She knows she is more critical of herself than anyone else is.
- C** She is beginning to feel accepted at her new school.
- D** She thinks Rodney will introduce her to new people.

4 Why are the events in paragraphs 1 and 2 important to the plot?

- F** The events reveal Lucy's regrets about registering at a new school.
 - G** The events explain Lucy's reasons for not liking her new school.
 - H** The events hint at Lucy's confusion as she walks to her first-period class.
 - J** The events set the conditions for Lucy's attitude as the school day begins.
-

5 What does the use of the third-person limited point of view allow the author to emphasize?

- A** Lucy's feelings about what takes place when she transfers to a new school
 - B** The other students' reactions when Lucy falls down the stairs
 - C** Rodney's initial impression of Lucy when he watches the video of her fall
 - D** The cinema teacher's thoughts about Lucy's midyear transfer
-

6 What is the best summary of this selection?

- F** Lucy tries to forget the bad start to her first day at a new school by telling herself only a few people saw her fall down the stairs. However, when students begin whispering in Lucy's cinema class, she fears the worst. Lucy is assigned to a group and is welcomed by one of the members, but the other members of the group do not acknowledge her.
- G** Lucy is reminded of her mother's encouraging words after her first day at ARTS Magnet School. Already late to class, Lucy falls down the stairs but is not hurt. In second period students stare at Lucy when she enters the room. Then a member of Lucy's group tells her that a student has recorded video of her fall and that he thinks she fell gracefully.
- H** Lucy has trouble finding her first-period class after the office staff takes a long time completing her new-student paperwork, but she meets some girls who sit behind her in class. In her cinema class, Lucy is welcomed into a group working on a 30-second film project and shares some ideas she has with her group.
- J** Lucy falls down the stairs on the first day at her new school. Her cinema class begins awkwardly, but one member of Lucy's assigned group welcomes her. He explains that the group will use the video of her fall in its class film project. Lucy becomes more at ease as members of her group encourage her involvement in its class project.

7 A major turning point occurs in the selection when Lucy —

- A** wonders if she should have stayed at her old school
 - B** enters her first-period class for the first time
 - C** is greeted by a classmate during second period
 - D** is ignored by a classmate in her group
-

8 Based on Lucy's interactions with her classmates, which statement best expresses the major theme explored in this selection?

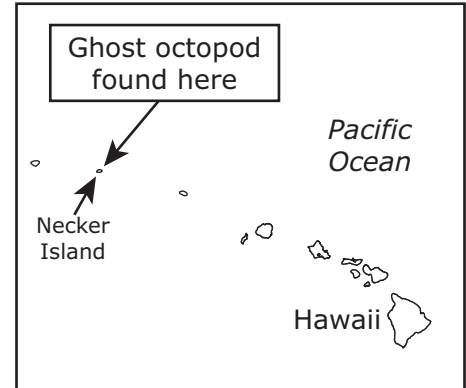
- F** Achieving academic success requires hard work and commitment.
- G** Goals are easier to achieve when working with others.
- H** Adjusting to new situations may take a long period of time.
- J** Negative experiences can sometimes have positive outcomes.

Read the next two selections. Then choose the best answer to each question.

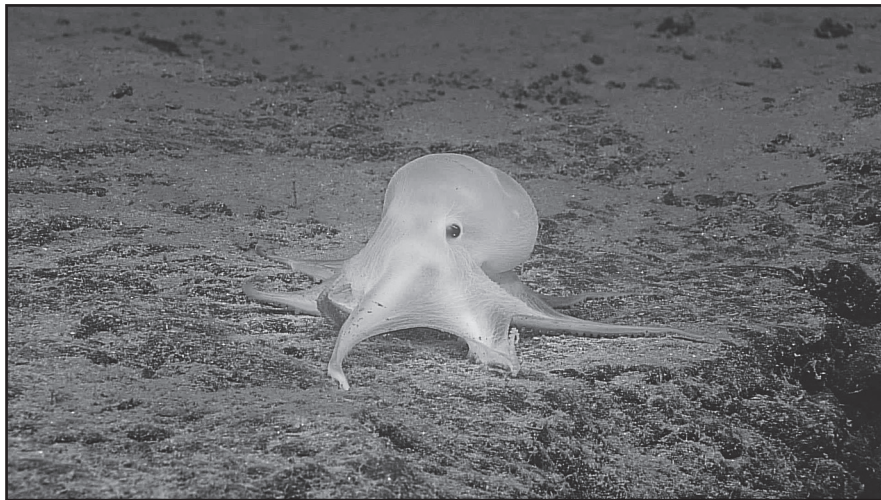
A Ghostly New Creature

by Jennifer Marino Walters

- 1 In February, scientists exploring the Pacific Ocean near Hawaii made an amazing discovery. They had sent a remotely operated vehicle thousands of feet below the waves to take video of the deep sea. Dozens of team members were watching the live video feed from a ship on the ocean's surface and from offices on land. Suddenly, a mysterious creature appeared on their screens. It was a white, ghostlike octopod. That's a category of eight-armed ocean animals that includes the common octopus. But it did not look like any octopod the scientists had seen before.



- 2 "I was really excited because I recognized it was something unusual," says zoologist Michael Vecchione.
- 3 Vecchione and the other scientists work for the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). The government agency was working on a project to map the ocean floor near Hawaii and study the ocean life there. The new octopod was an exciting—and unexpected—find.



The Rare Octopod, a Cousin to the Common Octopus

Public Domain

A Unique Species

- 4 The newly discovered octopod has tiny eyes and a jelly-like body. It has very few muscles. That's because there is little food in the deep sea, and a lot of food is needed to build muscle. The creature also has some unusual characteristics that set it apart from other octopods. "The first thing that makes it really unusual is that it doesn't have any chromatophores, or pigment cells," Vecchione

told Scholastic Online. Pigment is what gives animals color. Because this creature has no pigment, it is very pale. It also has fewer rows of suckers on its arms than other octopods do. Suckers are body parts that octopods use to grasp objects. Those two characteristics lead scientists to believe that it is a completely new octopod species.

- 5 The creature is also a record setter. It was spotted at about 14,000 feet—or 2.6 miles—beneath the waves. Some other types of octopods are known to live that deep in the ocean, but they all have fins on the sides of their bodies. The new creature belongs to a category of octopods that do not have fins. Until this discovery, no finless octopod had been found below about 13,000 feet.

More to Discover

- 6 Because of the octopod's ghostlike appearance, it has been given the nickname Casper. (Casper the Friendly Ghost was a popular character in an old cartoon.) But it cannot be officially named until scientists get a specimen to examine more closely. Unfortunately, that's not likely to happen anytime soon.
- 7 "The likelihood of encountering another one of these octopods is very small," Vecchione says. "So it wouldn't be a very productive use of our time and resources to try to look for one."
- 8 Still, the octopod's discovery is exciting because it suggests that many more undiscovered species could live in the deep sea and other places on Earth. "It illustrates how little we know about life on our planet—and how much more we can find," Vecchione says.

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Tiptoeing Scientists

- 1 Peering through the thick, white mist, Marcio Pie crouches among the gnarled vines. The shuffles, calls, and chirps of countless animals, birds, and insects fill the cool evening air. Pie is listening hard for the singing of tiny frogs. He and his team have tiptoed to the location where they last heard them singing. The scientists quietly begin picking up handfuls of leaves and screening them. If the scientists are lucky, they will find one of the frogs. But they must look very carefully because these frogs are smaller than a fingernail.
- 2 Pie is one of a handful of scientists who has discovered a new tiny frog species. These little creatures make their home in the cloud forests high in the mountains of Brazil. They are brightly colored with poisonous skin that protects them, and they live in "leaf litter," or piles of dead leaves.



A Newly Discovered Frog

Used with permission.

- 3 Locating the frogs is extremely difficult. "Sometimes it's very frustrating," says Pie. "You can hear them singing, and there's probably hundreds of them, but you simply can't catch them!" The frogs detect the vibrations that occur when people walk. Suddenly they become silent, staying that way for about half an hour, forcing scientists to forage through the leaves.



This tiny frog measures approximately 7 millimeters.

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- 4 In Papua, New Guinea, scientist C. I. Moore also recently discovered a miniature frog. At only about 6.858 millimeters, it may be even smaller than the ones Pie found. This frog's brownish-green hue provides excellent camouflage. Moore first discovered the frog by its unique call. His team began picking up leaf litter and putting it in plastic bags until they caught sight of the new frogs. The tiny amphibians were incredibly difficult to catch because they jump like crickets.
- 5 In spite of the countless challenges, new tiny frogs are being found among the planet's habitats that have previously been understudied. "That's what's exciting about this field," declares Moore. "You know that new species such as these are going to continue to be discovered."

Use “A Ghostly New Creature” (pp. 9–10) to answer questions 9–13. Then fill in the answers on your answer document.

- 9** Based on paragraphs 4 and 5 of the selection “A Ghostly New Creature,” what can be concluded about the study of newly discovered animals?
- A** Identifying a new species requires careful analysis of an animal.
 - B** Scientists are searching constantly for unknown types of animals.
 - C** Studying ocean animals is easier than studying land animals.
 - D** Most animal research is conducted by government agencies.
-
- 10** In the selection “A Ghostly New Creature,” the author includes the photograph of the octopod most likely to help the reader better understand —
- F** why the octopod lives so deep in the ocean
 - G** how far the octopod can move without having fins
 - H** why scientists named the octopod after a cartoon character
 - J** how the octopod uses its suckers to grasp objects

11 What is the best summary of the selection "A Ghostly New Creature"?

- A** Government scientists were sent to Hawaii to study animal life in the Pacific Ocean. They watched video that was taken by an underwater vehicle. Watching the video from a ship and from land, they saw a ghostlike octopod. The scientists named the mysterious new specimen Casper after Casper the Friendly Ghost, an old cartoon character.
 - B** Near Hawaii a research team studied the Pacific Ocean thousands of feet below the surface. The team members became excited when they saw a white octopod appear on their video. They had not expected to see this finless animal as it was found below 13,000 feet where there is little food to support its existence.
 - C** Scientists made an exciting find in the waters near Hawaii. While mapping the ocean floor to study ocean life, scientists saw a mysterious octopod. It was so unusual that scientists decided they had discovered a new species. The octopod that scientists found was unique, suggesting there are still undiscovered species located in other parts of the world.
 - D** Dozens of researchers observed a white octopod in the ocean near Hawaii. Octopods are a category of eight-armed animals that include the octopus. The researchers used an underwater vehicle as part of their studies and were surprised to see the unusual creature. Scientists doubt that they will be able to examine a specimen of this new type of octopod.
-

12 In the selection "A Ghostly New Creature," which idea about the octopod best explains why the author includes the map?

- F** Octopods are found in many oceans throughout the world.
 - G** The ghostly octopod is common only to the ocean area around Hawaii.
 - H** Octopods are most commonly found near islands.
 - J** The ghostly octopod was found near the Hawaiian Islands.
-

13 What can the reader conclude from Michael Vecchione's comments throughout the selection "A Ghostly New Creature"?

- A** Vecchione is not interested in learning more about the new octopod.
- B** Vecchione is fascinated by the discovery of new species.
- C** Vecchione was the coordinator of the project that discovered the unknown creature.
- D** Vecchione was first to understand the significance of finding the new octopod.

Use “Tiptoeing Scientists” (pp. 11–12) to answer questions 14–17. Then fill in the answers on your answer document.

- 14 Read the dictionary entry for the word screen.

screen \ˈskrēn\ v
1. to give shelter to 2. to guard from injury 3. to examine for a particular purpose 4. to shield from view

Which definition best matches the way the word screening is used in paragraph 1 of the selection “Tiptoeing Scientists”?

- F Definition 1
- G Definition 2
- H Definition 3
- J Definition 4

-
- 15 Throughout the selection “Tiptoeing Scientists,” which idea about tiny frogs does the author highlight?

- A Scientists are finding tiny frogs throughout the mountain ranges of the world.
- B Researchers locate tiny frogs by their bold and unique coloring.
- C Tiny frogs can be very difficult for scientists to capture.
- D Tiny frogs have poisonous skin that helps to protect them.

- 16** Based on information in the selection "Tiptoeing Scientists," what can the reader conclude about the Brazilian frogs?
- F** They make their homes in the treetops.
 - G** Their bright color makes them easy to locate among the leaves.
 - H** Most of their diet consists of dead leaves.
 - J** They have adaptations that help keep them from danger.
-

- 17** For what reason does the author include the photograph after paragraph 3 of the selection "Tiptoeing Scientists"?
- A** To prove that this species is the smallest of all frogs ever discovered
 - B** To highlight the effectiveness of the frog's natural camouflage
 - C** To emphasize how small the frog is by comparing it to a familiar object
 - D** To demonstrate that the frog has a unique call

Use “A Ghostly New Creature” and “Tiptoeing Scientists” to answer questions 18–22. Then fill in the answers on your answer document.

18 In the selections “A Ghostly New Creature” and “Tiptoeing Scientists,” how are Michael Vecchione’s work and Marcio Pie’s work **different**?

- F** Vecchione uses high-tech equipment to observe animals, but Pie does not.
 - G** Vecchione studies animals that can be difficult to find, but Pie does not.
 - H** Pie is employed by a government agency, but Vecchione is self-employed.
 - J** Pie conducts research about many kinds of animals, but Vecchione studies only octopods.
-

19 One **similarity** between the scientists in the selections “A Ghostly New Creature” and “Tiptoeing Scientists” is that they both —

- A** study animals that live in the oceans
 - B** learn about animals from the sounds they make
 - C** perform their work in isolated areas
 - D** capture the animal they each study
-

20 In what way is scientist C. I. Moore from the selection “Tiptoeing Scientists” **unlike** Michael Vecchione from the selection “A Ghostly New Creature”?

- F** Moore studies animals in their natural habitats.
- G** Moore will likely have an opportunity to observe a newly discovered animal more than once.
- H** Moore is dedicated to finding new animal species in new locations.
- J** Moore researches animals that are commonly found throughout the world.

21 Read this sentence from paragraph 8 of the selection “A Ghostly New Creature.”

Still, the octopod’s discovery is exciting because it suggests that many more undiscovered species could live in the deep sea and other places on Earth.

Which sentence from the selection “Tiptoeing Scientists” is related to this idea?

- A** *He and his team have tiptoed to the location where they last heard them singing.*
(paragraph 1)
 - B** *But they must look very carefully because these frogs are smaller than a fingernail.*
(paragraph 1)
 - C** *The tiny amphibians were incredibly difficult to catch because they jump like crickets.*
(paragraph 4)
 - D** *In spite of the countless challenges, new tiny frogs are being found among the planet’s habitats that have previously been understudied.* (paragraph 5)
-

22 How do the frogs in the selection “Tiptoeing Scientists” **differ** from the octopod in the selection “A Ghostly New Creature”?

- F** The frogs’ bodies have coloration that protects the frogs.
The octopod’s body does not have coloration for protection.
- G** The frogs are found on islands in the Pacific Ocean near Hawaii.
The octopod was sighted off the coast of Brazil in South America.
- H** The frogs’ size is typical for its species.
The octopod’s size is smaller than normal.
- J** The frogs are well adapted to their environment.
The octopod has not adapted to its environment.

Read the selection and choose the best answer to each question. Then fill in the answer on your answer document.

In this poem, Margarita Engle writes about her experience growing up in Los Angeles, California. She prefers the summers that she spent on the island of Cuba, her mother's homeland.

Escape

by Margarita Engle

Living in between two ways
of speaking
and hearing
makes me feel as divided
5 as the gaps between
languages.

At least we're finally
on our way to the farm,
where there will be more animals
10 than people, and I won't have to struggle
to understand
old folks.

As we bump along a muddy track
in Tío¹ Darío's battered jeep, I inhale
15 the scent of roadside flowers
that grow tall and weedy,
rooted in mud
the color of blood.

Red soil.
20 Green hills.
White cows.
Horses of so many shades
that the colors can't be
counted.

25 Everything looks just as wild and free
as I've half-remembered
and half-imagined.

¹Tío means uncle.

It's as if my other self has been here
all along—
30 the invisible twin
who never left this island
and never
will.

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- 23** In stanza 2 (lines 7–12), the reader can tell that the speaker feels —
- A** irritated that she does not have better communication skills for the experiences she has
 - B** concerned that she must continue to talk with people who speak different languages
 - C** confident that she will not feel separated from those in her family who speak a different language
 - D** relieved that she is going to a familiar place where there will be less conflict
-

- 24** The simile in stanza 1 (lines 1–6) helps show that the speaker —
- F** wants to learn different languages in order to communicate with others
 - G** feels torn between two different worlds that have little in common
 - H** wants to go home again and not have to speak or listen to anyone
 - J** feels annoyed by having to spend so much time listening to others
-

- 25** What message does the poet hope to convey in the poem?
- A** A person's memories become more significant as one grows older.
 - B** Moving to a new place offers a person important and unique opportunities.
 - C** The best way to remember a person is to visit the place where that person was born.
 - D** A person's sense of identity is often linked to a meaningful location in one's past.
-

- 26** Which lines from the poem best identify the source of the speaker's conflict?
- F** Living in between two ways/of speaking/and hearing (lines 1–3)
 - G** At least we're finally/on our way to the farm, (lines 7–8)
 - H** Horses of so many shades/that the colors can't be/counted. (lines 22–24)
 - J** Everything looks just as wild and free/as I've half-remembered (lines 25–26)

27 What is the effect of the two-word sentences in lines 19 through 21?

- A** The sentences emphasize the distinct contrasts found on the farm.
 - B** The sentences highlight the speaker's memories of the farm from previous visits.
 - C** The sentences detail how spacious the farm actually is.
 - D** The sentences reveal the types of animals the speaker sees on the farm.
-

28 Read stanza 6 (lines 28–33).

It's as if my other self has been here
all along—
the invisible twin
who never left this island
and never
will.

What is the poet suggesting by referring to the speaker's "invisible twin"?

- F** The speaker has a sister living on the island whom she is looking forward to seeing.
- G** The speaker feels a bond with the land, and she believes it will always be her homeland.
- H** The speaker feels lonely on the island, and she wishes her family were there to share the experience with her.
- J** The speaker looks forward to spending time with close friends while she visits her homeland.

Read the selection and choose the best answer to each question. Then fill in the answer on your answer document.

Edible Forests Are Sprouting Up Across America

by Jodi Helmer

- 1 Carol LeResche got the phone call she'd been waiting for. She lives in Sheridan, Wyoming, and was told a resident was picking zucchini at Thorne-Rider Park.
- 2 "It's exactly what we hoped would happen when we put in the food forest," explained LeResche. She is the park's food forest coordinator.
- 3 In May, the Powder River Basin Resource Council in Sheridan received a \$3,500 grant from the Wyoming Department of Agriculture. The money was used to help turn a former BMX park into an edible landscape. It's a place where all of the fruits, vegetables and nuts are free for the taking.
- 4 Unlike some parks with strict "no picking" policies, or parks where foraging is permitted but plantings emphasize aesthetics over edibles and just a fraction of the species can be consumed, food forests are designed to provide bountiful crops. Residents are encouraged to harvest them. And although there are no solid statistics on the number of food forests, the concept appears to be taking root.
- 5 At Thorne-Rider Park, zucchini was the first vegetable to ripen in the brand new food forest. As the other edibles mature, LeResche hopes residents will dig up potatoes for supper. They can gather raspberries to make jam or snack on ripe figs plucked straight from the trees.
- 6 "We think it's important to put public food in public spaces," she said.
- 7 Food forests may seem like a spin-off of community gardens. But there are distinct differences. Residents often have to pay to rent plots in community gardens. They must invest in the seeds. They also must devote the labor required to maintain their plots. In contrast, food forests are funded through grants. Until the forests are self-sustaining, volunteers handle the labor. All that residents have to do is show up and pick their fill.
- 8 Food forests also provide different kinds of fresh produce than community gardens. The food forests emphasize perennials like fruit and nut trees and berry bushes over annual vegetables.
- 9 They also provide essential forest canopy that is lacking in urban areas. The canopy helps to minimize the heat island effect. It also provides community gathering spaces. Residents can participate in tours and classes. Or they can just relax among the fruit trees.

- 10 "Our desire to be more connected to where our food comes from is one of the reasons there is a real trend toward integrating agriculture into neighborhoods and communities," explained Daron "Farmer D" Joffe. He is the founding director of Coastal Roots Farm. The farm is a nonprofit. It manages an eight-acre food forest. It is in Encinitas, California.
- 11 Asheville, North Carolina, is believed to be home to the first food forest. Forty varieties of fruit and nut trees are found in the city's George Washington Carver Edible Park. It was founded in 1997. More than a decade later, similar projects began to sprout up. They can be found in cities like Portland, Oregon, San Francisco and Seattle.
- 12 Most food forests are similar in approach. They bring together parks and recreation districts (which provide land), nonprofit groups and volunteers who handle the labor and maintenance. The designs are similar, too.
- 13 Food forests are based on permaculture design. It's a model that emphasizes sustainable and mostly self-sufficient agricultural production. To achieve this, most food forests incorporate stacked layers of edible plants from root crops, ground cover, vines and herbs to shrubs and trees. From the ground up, the edibles might include beets, strawberries, grapes, basil, blueberries, fruit and nut trees.
- 14 The food forest model is less labor intensive than conventional agriculture. An edible forest is similar to a hardwood forest. There is no rotating of crops, weeding or mowing.
- 15 Coastal Roots Farm has built food access into its mission for the food forest. The eight-acre forest was planted this spring. When the harvest is ready, a portion will be donated to food-insecure communities through food banks. The rest will be available for public harvesting.



- 16 But critics warn that these edible landscapes could be problematic. The concept is relatively new. And it takes at least three years for fruit and nut trees and berry bushes to start producing meaningful amounts of fresh food. This makes it difficult to know whether food forests will have an impact on food deserts.
- 17 Volunteer-driven projects can fall apart if the group lacks cohesion or loses interest. Lack of funding can also be problematic. In Sheridan, the original \$3,500 grant helped start the project. LeResche estimated it will take \$50,000 to complete the food forest plan.

- 18 Pests are an oft-cited concern, too.
- 19 "All trees need maintenance and fruit trees are no different," Joffe admitted. "If a food forest is well managed, there is no issue."
- 20 After all, LeResche explained, food forests are about a lot more than food. "We also want to provide a community gathering space that is productive and beautiful where people can cultivate a relationship with the land. And get connected to delicious, healthy produce."

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- 29** What is the most likely reason the author includes the information in paragraphs 16 through 19?
- A** To show that the majority of food forests are unsuccessful due to damage from pests
 - B** To highlight that food forest projects are often fully funded with grants from the government
 - C** To emphasize that even though they are self-sustaining, food forests must be managed well to be successful
 - D** To suggest that because it takes so long for crops to grow, food forests are not a realistic option for most communities
-

- 30** What is the most likely reason the author includes paragraphs 12 through 14?
- F** To explain the food forest concept and design model
 - G** To encourage nonprofit groups to seek assistance from volunteers
 - H** To highlight existing food forests that have been successful
 - J** To describe how to maximize sustainable agricultural production
-

- 31** What is the best summary of the selection?
- A** Food forests are self-sustaining gardens that produce various fruits and vegetables. These public areas, which can be found in several cities across the country, are similar to community gardens but offer additional benefits to local residents. Two such food forests are Thorne-Rider Park in Wyoming and Coastal Roots Farm in California.
 - B** Food forests are not a new concept, and many cities have taken advantage of these edible landscapes. However, critics warn that there are many drawbacks that should be considered, such as issues with funding, labor, and pests.
 - C** The first food forest was founded in Asheville, North Carolina, in 1997. Since then, organizations across the country have taken note of the permaculture design and have implemented it into similar projects such as Coastal Roots Farm in Encinitas, California, and Thorne-Rider Park in Sheridan, Wyoming.
 - D** Carol LeResche is a food forest coordinator who enjoys creating edible gardens so that local residents can have access to free vegetables such as zucchini and potatoes. She received a grant to begin a food forest at Thorne-Rider Park in Sheridan, Wyoming.

32 Based on paragraphs 7 through 9, why might people assume that food forests are a “spin-off” of community gardens?

- F** They both feature crops that do not need much maintenance over time.
 - G** They both provide crops that are shared with local food banks.
 - H** They both offer residents public areas to harvest food.
 - J** They both require residents to make a monetary investment.
-

33 Which idea does the author highlight throughout the selection?

- A** People prefer food forests over community gardens.
 - B** Food forests are a valuable asset to communities around the country.
 - C** Some food forests emphasize the plants’ beauty over their practical use.
 - D** Residents are required to maintain food forests in order to gather food from them.
-

34 What is the most likely reason the author wrote this selection?

- F** To describe a unique way that people can get involved in their communities
- G** To convince community leaders to establish food forests
- H** To detail an alternative agricultural practice that is becoming more popular
- J** To expose flaws in the implementation of food forests

35 Read this sentence from paragraph 6.

"We think it's important to put public food in public spaces," she said.

What does this sentence help the reader to understand?

- A** The main reason the food forest in Thorne-Rider Park was started
 - B** The high level of interest communities have in starting food forests
 - C** The concerns raised by critics about starting a food forest at Thorne-Rider Park
 - D** The motivation behind the rules that govern community gardens
-

36 In paragraphs 7 and 8, what is the most likely reason the author contrasts food forests with community gardens?

- F** To reveal problems caused by the amount of time it takes for community gardens to produce crops
 - G** To give reasons why food forests include more perennials than community gardens
 - H** To note objections to charging residents for use of plots in community gardens
 - J** To highlight distinctions in costs, labor, and plants between food forests and community gardens
-

37 The author develops the thesis of the selection mainly by —

- A** alternating both descriptions and specific examples of food forests with more general information about the reasons behind creating edible forests
- B** describing a typical day of the food forest coordinator and then explaining how edible forests are primarily funded
- C** providing a general overview of where edible forests are located and then describing why it is important to have volunteers who are knowledgeable about the care of plants
- D** listing the requirements residents must meet before foraging in the edible forests and then offering specific examples as to where most edible forests are located

Read the selection and choose the best answer to each question. Then fill in the answer on your answer document.

Playing Second Fiddle

Characters

ALYSSA: *An eighth grader*

SAMANTHA: *An eighth grader*

SAMANTHA'S MOM

EIGHTH-GRADE STUDENT

SCENE 1

- 1 *[Alyssa's bedroom. Sheet music is strewn across the bed and a violin case rests in the corner.]*
- 2 **ALYSSA:** *[Excitedly.]* It's almost time for the first day of school, and you know what that means . . . ORCHESTRA! I can't wait. We're going to be so good this year; we'll probably win all the competitions. *[Looking puzzled.]* Why aren't you saying anything, Sam?
- 3 **SAMANTHA:** *[Looking down.]* I don't know, Alyssa. . . .
- 4 **ALYSSA:** What's there to know? You're first violin—you're the king of the hill! You'll be great as usual. What don't you know?
- 5 **SAMANTHA:** *[Avoiding her gaze.]* I just don't know, Alyssa. I might try something new this year.
- 6 **ALYSSA:** *[Perplexed.]* Something new? What? You're first violin. Orchestra for life—that's our motto!
- 7 **SAMANTHA:** *[Sheepishly.]* Maybe it's time for you to be first violin.
- 8 **ALYSSA:** No way; I'm second violin, and I'm OK with that. I'll never be as good as you are.
- 9 **SAMANTHA:** *[Quietly.]* If you say so.
- 10 **ALYSSA:** I do say so. Come on, let's look at our new music.
- 11 *[Curtain closes.]*

SCENE 2

- 12 *[Curtain opens to a living room. Samantha's Mom sits on a couch. Sound of a door opening and closing. Samantha enters from stage right.]*
- 13 **SAMANTHA'S MOM:** *[Standing up to greet Samantha.]* Hey, Sam, how's everything? Did you tell Alyssa that you plan on taking a break from orchestra? Is she OK? Are you OK?

- 14 **SAMANTHA:** [*Flustered.*] Mom, I really tried, but Alyssa just wouldn't listen. She's convinced that I'll still be in orchestra with her. Orchestra is everything to her, but I just want to try something different. I mean . . . this is our last year of middle school, and I want to explore other classes I could take.
- 15 **SAMANTHA'S MOM:** It's not going to be easy for either one of you, Sam. Alyssa has always been a good friend to you. But you can't let her make your decisions for you. This is what growing up is about—making your own decisions and living with the consequences. Just follow your heart, and Alyssa will come around.
- 16 **SAMANTHA:** [*Unconvinced.*] I suppose you're right. But what if . . .
- 17 **SAMANTHA'S MOM:** Will you be happy if you wait until later to wonder, "What if?" Honey, this is all you've talked about all summer. It seems to me that this is what you want. I support you, Sam, but ultimately it's your choice. No one can or should make it for you.
- 18 **SAMANTHA:** [*Taking a deep breath.*] It's my choice. And I've made my decision.
- 19 [*Curtain closes.*]

SCENE 3

- 20 [*Curtain opens to a hallway outside a noisy classroom where students sit at desks, typing and writing. Copies of the school newspaper are displayed on the bulletin boards. Samantha is in the hallway talking to another student. Alyssa enters from stage right carrying her violin. Samantha sees her and runs up to her.*]
- 21 **SAMANTHA:** Alyssa, wait up!
- 22 **ALYSSA:** [*Sarcastically.*] Wow, Sam, I'm surprised you have time to leave your desk. The school newspaper seems to be consuming all your time.
- 23 **SAMANTHA:** Come on, Alyssa. Don't be mad. Orchestra is a year-round commitment, and I really wanted to try writing for the newspaper. Besides, don't you like being first violin?
- 24 **ALYSSA:** You think that I'm first violin? Well, I'm not. I'm still second violin. Newspaper is first violin.
- 25 **SAMANTHA:** [*Baffled.*] What do you mean?
- 26 **ALYSSA:** [*Sighing.*] Yes, I'm first violin in orchestra, but I'm not first violin to you. I'm still playing second fiddle, while you're busy working on the newspaper.
- 27 **SAMANTHA:** Alyssa, you're my best friend and always will be, but I had to do this for me. Listen, I've got a mandatory deadline to make, but check out the newspaper tomorrow. I think you might like what you see!
- 28 [*Alyssa and Samantha walk offstage in different directions. Curtain closes.*]

SCENE 4

- 29 *[The next day after school. The curtain opens to a science lab. Alyssa is sitting on a stool reading the school paper and smiling.]*
- 30 **EIGHTH-GRADE STUDENT:** *[To Alyssa.]* Congrats on first violin, Alyssa! Way to move up in the world!
- 31 **ALYSSA:** Thanks!
- 32 **SAMANTHA:** *[Enters the science lab and approaches Alyssa timidly.]* Well . . . what do you think?
- 33 **ALYSSA:** I don't know what to say, Sam. I can't believe that I'm the topic of your first feature article! I'm sorry for being such a jerk. You're a really good writer.
- 34 **SAMANTHA:** *[Smiles and hugs Alyssa.]* No worries. By the way, I've been looking everywhere for you. Why are you in here instead of in the orchestra room?
- 35 **ALYSSA:** *[Stepping back and smiling.]* I needed to find something to do to keep my mind off of missing you too much, so I decided to give robotics a try. I know what you're thinking: Me? Robotics? But, yeah, I really like it, and I have you to thank. You let me know that it's OK to try new things.
- 36 **SAMANTHA:** Awesome! I was looking for my next topic, and now I have it: robots!
- 37 *[Curtain closes.]*

38 What does the word ultimately mean in line 17?

- F** All of a sudden
 - G** With care
 - H** For the most part
 - J** In the end
-

39 Read line 26.

ALYSSA: [*Sighing.*] Yes, I'm first violin in orchestra, but I'm not first violin to you. I'm still playing second fiddle, while you're busy working on the newspaper.

The playwright uses figurative language in these sentences to show that Alyssa —

- A** wants Samantha to realize that Samantha is abandoning the orchestra
 - B** believes that Samantha has chosen the newspaper over their friendship
 - C** worries that Samantha is writing for the newspaper because she doubts her musical talents
 - D** thinks Samantha will miss playing the violin while writing for the newspaper
-

40 Scene 2 is important to the play because it foreshadows that Samantha —

- F** has never truly enjoyed being in orchestra with Alyssa
- G** wants to write a newspaper article about Alyssa
- H** wants to have friends other than Alyssa
- J** is determined to be honest with Alyssa

41 What is the best summary of scene 2?

- A** Samantha's mom is in the living room when Samantha enters, and she immediately asks Samantha if she has told Alyssa about her decision to join the newspaper.
 - B** Samantha comes home from school and begins to tell her mom about her decision to quit orchestra, and Samantha's mom tells her daughter she must live with the results of her decision.
 - C** Samantha and her mother discuss Samantha's conversation with Alyssa, and then Samantha makes a decision to take a break from orchestra.
 - D** Samantha's mom is waiting when Samantha returns home from seeing Alyssa, and Samantha says she wants to explore new options in middle school.
-

42 The playwright shows that Alyssa has matured by revealing Alyssa's —

- F** decision to try robotics
- G** reluctance to talk to Samantha in the hallway
- H** excitement about continuing with orchestra
- J** acceptance that Samantha is a talented violinist

43 What inference can the reader make based on the events that take place in scene 4?

- A** Both girls will try to participate in each other's new interests.
 - B** Alyssa will eventually quit the orchestra to pursue her interest in robotics.
 - C** Both girls will enjoy their own activities while still remaining friends.
 - D** Samantha will ask to participate in the orchestra's upcoming competitions.
-

44 Read Alyssa's dialogue from line 4.

You're first violin—you're the king of the hill!

What does the playwright suggest about Samantha through the metaphor in this dialogue?

- F** Samantha has played with the orchestra longer than any other student has.
- G** Samantha has proved herself to be the most talented violinist in the orchestra.
- H** Samantha practices more than the other violinists in the orchestra.
- J** Samantha is envied by many of the other orchestra players.



Item Number	Reporting Category	Readiness or Supporting	Content Student Expectation	Correct Answer
1	2	Readiness	8.7(B)	A
2	1	Readiness	8.2(B)	H
3	2	Readiness	8.7(B)	C
4	2	Readiness	8.7(C)	J
5	2	Supporting	8.9(E)	A
6	2	Readiness	8.6(D)	J
7	2	Readiness	8.7(C)	C
8	2	Readiness	8.5(F)	J
9	3	Readiness	8.5(F)	A
10	3	Supporting	8.9(C)	H
11	3	Readiness	8.6(D)	C
12	3	Supporting	8.9(C)	J
13	3	Readiness	8.5(F)	B
14	1	Readiness	8.2(A)	H
15	3	Readiness	8.5(H)	C
16	3	Readiness	8.5(H)	J
17	3	Supporting	8.9(C)	C
18	1	Readiness	8.5(E)	F
19	1	Readiness	8.5(E)	C
20	1	Readiness	8.5(E)	G
21	1	Readiness	8.5(E)	D
22	1	Readiness	8.5(E)	F
23	2	Supporting	8.5(F)	D
24	2	Supporting	8.9(D)	G
25	2	Supporting	8.5(F)	D
26	2	Supporting	8.6(C)	F
27	2	Supporting	8.5(F)	A
28	2	Supporting	8.5(F)	G
29	3	Readiness	8.9(A)	C
30	3	Readiness	8.9(A)	F
31	3	Readiness	8.6(D)	A
32	3	Readiness	8.5(F)	H
33	3	Readiness	8.5(H)	B
34	3	Readiness	8.9(A)	H
35	3	Readiness	8.5(F)	A
36	3	Readiness	8.8(D)(iii)	J
37	3	Readiness	8.8(D)(iii)	A
38	1	Readiness	8.2(B)	J
39	2	Supporting	8.9(D)	B
40	2	Readiness	8.7(C)	J
41	2	Supporting	8.6(D)	C
42	2	Supporting	8.5(F)	F
43	2	Supporting	8.5(F)	C
44	2	Supporting	8.9(D)	G

2021 STAAR Grade 8 Reading Rationales

Item#	Rationale	
1	Option A is correct	In paragraph 23, Lucy shifts her focus away from herself to the project, which helps to resolve her conflict. Her “embarrassment [begins] to dissipate” as she listens to what the other students are discussing and realizes that the footage of her fall is useful.
	Option B is incorrect	Lucy watches “Alicia’s film clip transform her stairway disaster into drama,” but this reveals a change in Lucy’s perception of her fall, rather than a change in how the students treat her.
	Option C is incorrect	Lucy does get physically closer to join the group, but this is to brainstorm ideas and does not necessarily imply that she will become close friends with the group members.
	Option D is incorrect	There is no indication of Lucy’s level of experience in film creation as compared to that of the other group members. The resolution of the conflict is also not influenced by her ability to create a film.
2	Option H is correct	The meaning of the word <u>potential</u> as is used in paragraph 20 is “an existing possibility.” Rodney tells Lucy that her name, Lucy Falls, provides possibility for the main character in their film because of the play on words that it provides.
	Option F is incorrect	Although Rodney is excited about the possibility of using the name Lucy Falls, he does not have a “specific plan” yet, so this is not the meaning of the word <u>potential</u> .
	Option G is incorrect	Rodney wants to use the name Lucy Falls because it offers a possibility for a play on words, not because it is “unexpected.”
	Option J is incorrect	Lucy’s last name may be unusual, but the characters are not in a “strange situation” in this paragraph, so this is not the meaning of the word <u>potential</u> .

2021 STAAR Grade 8 Reading Rationales

Item#	Rationale	
3	Option C is correct	In paragraph 21, Lucy smiles as she reacts to Rodney and his encouraging words in paragraph 20, which “definitely [make] her first day less terrible.” She begins to feel accepted at her new school even though she has had a rough start to her first day.
	Option A is incorrect	In paragraph 20, Rodney tells Lucy why he is happy to have her in his group, so in paragraph 21, Lucy is not “unsure about Rodney’s motivation for speaking to her.”
	Option B is incorrect	Lucy is not “critical of herself” in this paragraph; she is instead expressing optimism that the day is not so bad.
	Option D is incorrect	Lucy’s feelings in the current moment are the focus of this paragraph; Lucy is not thinking about what Rodney might do in the future.
4	Option J is correct	The events in paragraphs 1 and 2 are important to the plot because they affect Lucy’s attitude at the beginning of the day. Lucy is frustrated, frazzled, and nervous, which influences her perception of how others are responding to her throughout the morning.
	Option F is incorrect	Lucy does not regret registering at the new school; she only questions the midyear timing.
	Option G is incorrect	The problems described in the first two paragraphs are included to establish a reason for Lucy’s negative attitude, not to suggest that she dislikes the school in general.
	Option H is incorrect	Lucy is frustrated by the early morning events, but she is not confused.
5	Option A is correct	Point of view refers to the perspective from which the events in the story are told. In this selection, the narrator’s third-person point of view is limited to the thoughts and feelings of Lucy. This allows the author to emphasize Lucy’s feelings about what happens when she transfers to a new school.
	Option B is incorrect	The narrator is only able to describe the other students’ reactions as Lucy sees them. The thoughts and feelings behind these reactions are not revealed by the narrator’s limited point of view.
	Option C is incorrect	The narrator’s point of view is limited to Lucy, so the author is not able to convey Rodney’s initial impression of Lucy based on the video.
	Option D is incorrect	The narrator’s point of view is limited to Lucy, so the cinema teacher’s thoughts are not emphasized.

2021 STAAR Grade 8 Reading Rationales

Item#	Rationale	
6	Option J is correct	The best summary of the selection is presented in these sentences. The conflict and resolution are described, key events are included, and minor details are omitted.
	Option F is incorrect	The resolution of the conflict is not included in this summary, making it incomplete.
	Option G is incorrect	Irrelevant details are included in this summary, and the resolution is omitted, so this is not the best summary of the selection.
	Option H is incorrect	Neither Lucy's main conflict nor the resolution are mentioned in this summary, making it incomplete.
7	Option C is correct	A turning point is the point of highest tension in a story; also known as the climax. When Lucy first enters her second period class in paragraph 10, her face is hot with embarrassment. After Rodney talks to her in paragraph 15, her discomfort begins to disappear, and she becomes more optimistic.
	Option A is incorrect	Lucy does question her choice to transfer schools in paragraph 1 and again in paragraph 19, but her doubt does not signal a turning point in the selection.
	Option B is incorrect	Although first period is uneventful, and Lucy tries to forget about her fall, this is not a turning point because her embarrassment returns as soon as she enters her second period class.
	Option D is incorrect	In paragraph 17, Lucy's embarrassment continues as a result of being ignored, so this is not a turning point in the selection.
8	Option J is correct	Lucy's negative experience of falling down the stairs provides an opportunity for the positive outcome of her being welcomed and included by new classmates.
	Option F is incorrect	There is no mention of Lucy's academic grades and/or success, so this is not the theme explored in this selection.
	Option G is incorrect	Although the group works together to achieve a goal, the theme of the selection is focused on Lucy's negative experience as the cause of a positive outcome.
	Option H is incorrect	Lucy must adjust to her new school, but this selection does not take place over "a long period of time," so this is not the theme explored in this selection.

2021 STAAR Grade 8 Reading Rationales

Item#	Rationale	
9	Option A is correct	Based on these paragraphs, the reader can conclude that identifying a new species requires careful analysis of an animal, because the scientists analyze the “characteristics that set [this octopod] apart from other octopods.”
	Option B is incorrect	The scientists are analyzing an animal found by accident, not searching for an unknown animal.
	Option C is incorrect	Land animals are not mentioned in these paragraphs.
	Option D is incorrect	The scientists work for a government agency, but this is detailed in paragraph 3. There is nothing to suggest government agencies conduct most animal research.
10	Option H is correct	The photograph of the octopod is included most likely to help the reader better understand why scientists named the octopod after a cartoon character. In paragraph 6, the author explains that the octopod was named Casper “because of [its] ghostlike appearance.” In the photograph, the stark contrast between the dark ocean and the ghostly white octopod is shown.
	Option F is incorrect	The octopod is shown on the ocean floor in the photograph, but this does not explain why it lives there.
	Option G is incorrect	The octopod may or may not have been moving when the image was taken, but a still photograph cannot show movement.
	Option J is incorrect	The octopod is not grasping any objects in this photograph, so this is not the reason for its inclusion.

2021 STAAR Grade 8 Reading Rationales

Item#	Rationale	
11	Option C is correct	The best summary of the selection is presented in these sentences. The introduction is restated and key details are explained, including when and where the octopod was discovered, why it is considered a new species, and why its discovery is important.
	Option A is incorrect	These sentences are focused only on the video of the “ghostlike” octopod and what the scientists named it. The importance of the discovery of a new species is omitted, making the summary incomplete.
	Option B is incorrect	This summary includes minor details from the selection and omits key ideas, such as the discovery of a brand new species of octopod. These omissions make this summary incomplete.
	Option D is incorrect	Although the discovery of the octopod is mentioned in this summary, there is no explanation that the octopod is a new species, which is a key point in the selection. Additionally, the last two sentences of this option are details rather than key ideas.
12	Option J is correct	The idea that the octopod was found near the Hawaiian Islands best explains why this map is included. The map is of the Hawaiian Islands with an arrow pointing to the island near where the octopod was found.
	Option F is incorrect	Only a small part of the Pacific Ocean is shown on the map, so the map is not included to show that octopods are found in oceans worldwide.
	Option G is incorrect	It is not known whether the new species is common only near Hawaii, nor does the map include this information.
	Option H is incorrect	This particular octopod was found near an island, but there is nothing in the map to indicate where most octopods are found.

2021 STAAR Grade 8 Reading Rationales

Item#	Rationale	
13	Option B is correct	From Michael Vecchione’s comments, the reader can conclude that Vecchione is fascinated by the discovery of a new species. In paragraph 2 he states “I was really excited . . .” in reference to discovering the ghostly octopod, and in other paragraphs he talks about how unique and unusual the discovery is.
	Option A is incorrect	Vecchione says that it would not be a “productive” use of time to look for another specimen but does not say he is not interested.
	Option C is incorrect	Vecchione is the scientist who was interviewed about the discovery, but this does not mean he was the coordinator for the project.
	Option D is incorrect	Vecchione appears to understand the significance of this discovery, as noted in paragraph 8, but he does not claim to be the first to do so.
14	Option H is correct	Definition 3 best matches the meaning of the word <u>screening</u> as used in paragraph 1. The scientists are examining the leaves carefully for the purpose of finding tiny frogs.
	Option F is incorrect	The scientists want to find the frogs within the leaves; they are not trying to shelter them.
	Option G is incorrect	Although the scientists are being careful because the frogs are tiny, they are trying to examine the frogs, not guard them.
	Option J is incorrect	The scientists are trying to uncover the frogs, not shield them from view.

2021 STAAR Grade 8 Reading Rationales

Item#	Rationale	
15	Option C is correct	In paragraph 1 the author explains that the frogs are very tiny, so scientists must look carefully to find them. In paragraph 3 the author explains why “locating the frogs is extremely difficult” and begins paragraph 5 with “countless challenges . . .” in reference to finding the frogs.
	Option A is incorrect	Only the mountains of Brazil are mentioned in paragraph 2; there is nothing to suggest tiny frogs are being found worldwide.
	Option B is incorrect	The tiny frogs in Brazil are brightly colored, but the frogs in New Guinea are brownish green, making them hard to find.
	Option D is incorrect	Only the Brazilian tiny frogs’ poisonous skin is mentioned, and only in paragraph 2, so this idea is not highlighted throughout the selection.
16	Option J is correct	The reader can conclude that the Brazilian frogs have adaptations that protect them from danger. The frogs’ poisonous skin, described in paragraph 2, and their ability to detect vibrations, explained in paragraph 3, are adaptations that keep the frogs safe.
	Option F is incorrect	In paragraph 2, the author states that the Brazilian frogs “live in ‘leaf litter,’ or piles of dead leaves,” so they do not “make their homes in treetops.”
	Option G is incorrect	Even with their bright colors, it is difficult for the scientists to find the frogs hidden among the leaves.
	Option H is incorrect	The frogs live in the leaves, but there is no suggestion that they eat the leaves.
17	Option C is correct	The author includes the photograph after paragraph 3 to “emphasize how small the frog is by comparing it to a familiar object.” The reader can see how small the frog is compared to a coin.
	Option A is incorrect	The frog is being compared to coins, not to other frogs, so the photograph is not included to prove the frogs are the smallest ever discovered.
	Option B is incorrect	The frog is pictured with coins, which would not be present in its habitat, so the photograph is not included to demonstrate the frog’s natural camouflage.
	Option D is incorrect	The sound of the frog’s call cannot be expressed in a photograph.

2021 STAAR Grade 8 Reading Rationales

Item#	Rationale	
18	Option F is correct	The difference between the two scientists' work is that Vecchione uses high-tech equipment (a remotely operated vehicle that takes live videos) to observe animals, but Pie does not. Pie searches on foot and by sorting through leaves with his hands.
	Option G is incorrect	The ghostly octopod and the tiny frogs are both difficult to find, so this is a similarity between the selections, not a difference.
	Option H is incorrect	Pie's employer is not described, and Vecchione works for a government agency, so this is incorrect.
	Option J is incorrect	In paragraph 2 of "A Ghostly New Creature," Vecchione is described as a zoologist, a kind of scientist who studies many animals, and the extent of Pie's research is not mentioned, so this is not a difference between the men's work.
19	Option C is correct	Both scientists conduct their work in remote areas. The scientists in "A Ghostly New Creature" map the ocean from a ship (paragraph 1) and the scientists in "Tiptoeing Scientists" search for frogs in the "mountains of Brazil" (paragraph 2).
	Option A is incorrect	Only the scientists in "A Ghostly New Creature" study animals that live in the ocean, so this is not a similarity.
	Option B is incorrect	Scientists in "Tiptoeing Scientists" find frogs in Brazil by listening for their singing, but scientists in "A Ghostly New Creature" do not indicate that octopods make sounds.
	Option D is incorrect	Scientists in "Tiptoeing Scientists" capture the tiny frogs, but in "A Ghostly New Creature," scientists only have a video of the octopod; they have not been able to capture one.

2021 STAAR Grade 8 Reading Rationales

Item#	Rationale	
20	Option G is correct	Moore is unlike Vecchione because Moore knows he will likely observe the frog species more than once. Vecchione expresses doubts that he will ever see another ghostly octopod: “The likelihood of encountering another one of these octopods is very small.”
	Option F is incorrect	Both Moore and Vecchione studied the animals in their natural habitats, so this is not how Moore is unlike Vecchione.
	Option H is incorrect	Moore found a new species of frog in Papua, New Guinea, but there is nothing to suggest he is searching in other places.
	Option J is incorrect	Moore found a brand-new species, not one “commonly found throughout the world,” and the same is true of Vecchione.
21	Option D is correct	These sentences are both used to explain the significance of discovering a new species and are used to convey a similar idea that there are more species to discover.
	Option A is incorrect	This sentence is used to describe how scientists find tiny frogs, which is unrelated to the idea that there are more species to be discovered.
	Option B is incorrect	This sentence is used to describe how small the frogs are, which is unrelated to the possibility of finding other new species.
	Option C is incorrect	This sentence is used to describe the difficulty of catching tiny, jumping frogs, not to express excitement about undiscovered species.

2021 STAAR Grade 8 Reading Rationales

Item#	Rationale	
22	Option F is correct	Moore's frogs in "Tiptoeing Scientists" differ from the octopod in that the frogs' bodies have coloration that protects the frogs by camouflaging them within the leaves (paragraph 4), while the octopod in "A Ghostly New Creature," does not have coloration for protection (paragraph 4).
	Option G is incorrect	The frogs are found in Brazil and Papua, New Guinea, and the octopod was sighted near an island in Hawaii.
	Option H is incorrect	The frog's size is smaller than frogs typically seen, and the ghostly octopod's size relative to other octopi is not mentioned.
	Option J is incorrect	The octopod also has adaptations, which are described in paragraphs 4 and 5 of "A Ghostly New Creature," so this is not how they differ.
23	Option D is correct	In stanza 2, the reader can tell that the speaker feels relieved that she is going to a familiar place where there will be less conflict. "At least we're finally/on our way" (lines 7 and 8) expresses relief, and "I won't have to struggle" (line 10) indicates there will be less conflict.
	Option A is incorrect	The speaker expresses relief that the conflict regarding communication will soon be over, rather than irritation that it exists.
	Option B is incorrect	The speaker says in this stanza she will be around animals more than people, so she is no longer concerned about talking to people who speak different languages.
	Option C is incorrect	The speaker is expressing relief, not confidence, about the change in her situation.
24	Option G is correct	A simile is a figure of speech in which two objects are compared using the word "like" or "as." The speaker uses the simile "as divided/as the gaps between/languages" in stanza 1 to show she feels torn between two different worlds that have little in common because they speak different languages.
	Option F is incorrect	There is nothing in this simile that suggests the speaker's desire to learn a new language.
	Option H is incorrect	There is nothing in this simile that suggests the speaker wants to go home again.
	Option J is incorrect	The feeling of being torn between two worlds, and not annoyance at having to listen to others, is expressed in the simile.

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Item#	Rationale	
25	Option D is correct	The poet hopes to convey the message that one's "sense of identity is often linked to a meaningful location in one's past." The speaker feels that her "other self has been here/all along" (lines 28–29), and she expresses that a part of her has "never left this island."
	Option A is incorrect	The speaker does not mention growing older, so the message that memories become more meaningful with age is not conveyed.
	Option B is incorrect	The speaker is visiting the island for the summer, not "[m]oving to a new place."
	Option C is incorrect	The speaker is focused on her connection with a place rather than a person.
26	Option F is correct	The speaker's conflict is best identified in lines 1 through 3 of the poem. She lives in California but feels a closer connection with Cuba. She is caught between two worlds where people speak two different languages, which makes her feel "divided."
	Option G is incorrect	In these lines the speaker suggests a relief from the conflict, but the lines do not identify the conflict's source.
	Option H is incorrect	The speaker is simply making observations in these lines. The source of her conflict is not identified.
	Option J is incorrect	In these lines the speaker is describing how the island looks, not discussing her conflict.
27	Option A is correct	The two-word sentences in lines 19–21 ("Red soil./Green hills./White cows.") are used to emphasize the distinct contrast in colors found on the farm. The color of a different element is described in each line.
	Option B is incorrect	The speaker is observing the farm in the present time while they "bump along a muddy track" (line 13). It is not a memory that is being described.
	Option C is incorrect	The size of the farm is not detailed in these lines.
	Option D is incorrect	Only cows are mentioned in these lines, so "types" of farm animals are not revealed.

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Item#	Rationale	
28	Option G is correct	By referring to the speaker's "invisible twin," the poet is suggesting the speaker feels a strong bond with the land of Cuba and believes it will always be home. The speaker does not live in Cuba but feels more connected to this island than to California.
	Option F is incorrect	The speaker does not literally mean she has a twin sister; she is talking about a part of herself that feels connected to the island.
	Option H is incorrect	The speaker feels at home on the island, not lonely. Her family is there to share the experience with her, as evidenced by the reference to riding in her uncle's jeep in line 14.
	Option J is incorrect	The speaker does not mention her friends in the poem; she is referring to herself in these lines.
29	Option C is correct	The author most likely includes the information in these paragraphs to emphasize that "forests must be managed well to be successful." It takes time, money, and effort to manage and protect food forests so that they produce enough food to make them worthwhile.
	Option A is incorrect	Pests are briefly mentioned, but the focus of these paragraphs is on what a successful food forest needs, not that most food forests are unsuccessful.
	Option B is incorrect	Grants are only mentioned in paragraph 17, and the emphasis there is on the lack of funding rather than where the funding comes from.
	Option D is incorrect	The time it takes for crops to grow is mentioned in paragraph 17 only to support the idea that food forests must be managed properly in order to be successful.

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Item#	Rationale	
30	Option F is correct	The author most likely includes paragraphs 12 through 14 to explain the food forest concept and design model. The land and labor for food forests is discussed in paragraph 12 and the ideal design for food forests is discussed in paragraph 13. Reasons for this approach are presented in paragraph 14.
	Option G is incorrect	Volunteers are mentioned to explain who does the work in a food forest, not to encourage nonprofit groups to look for help from volunteers.
	Option H is incorrect	The information in these paragraphs is about the concept of food forests in general, not about existing food forests.
	Option J is incorrect	Maximizing sustainable agricultural production is only part of the food forest concept and design discussed in these paragraphs.
31	Option A is correct	The best summary of the selection is presented in these sentences. The main idea, including the concept and purpose of food forests, is restated, and examples of food forests are provided.
	Option B is incorrect	The focus of this summary is the challenges pertaining to food forests. The concept and purpose of food forests are missing, making this summary incomplete.
	Option C is incorrect	The concept and purpose of a food forest is omitted from this summary, and minor details are included, so it is not the best summary.
	Option D is incorrect	The focus of this summary is Carol LeResche rather than the concept and purpose of food forests, so it is not the best summary.

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Item#	Rationale	
32	Option H is correct	People might assume food forests are a “spin-off” of community gardens because, despite their differences, which are explained in these paragraphs, they both offer residents public areas to harvest food in a community setting.
	Option F is incorrect	In paragraph 7 the author states that residents “must devote the labor required to maintain their plots,” so the crops in community gardens do need maintenance.
	Option G is incorrect	Food banks are only mentioned in paragraph 15, not paragraphs 7 through 9, and only in reference to food forests.
	Option J is incorrect	Food forests are funded by grants; they do not “require residents to make a monetary investment.”
33	Option B is correct	The author highlights the idea that food forests are an “asset to communities around the country” by explaining the benefits of successful food forests and giving examples of those in Wyoming, California, North Carolina, Oregon, and Washington.
	Option A is incorrect	The author presents some of the benefits of food forests over community gardens but does not say that “people prefer food forests.”
	Option C is incorrect	The author emphasizes that the purpose of food forests is practical because they provide fresh produce to the community.
	Option D is incorrect	Volunteers maintain food forests, and this detail is included only in paragraph 7, so it is not highlighted throughout the selection.

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Item#	Rationale	
34	Option H is correct	The author most likely wrote this selection to detail the growing popularity of an alternative agricultural practice. The author teaches the reader about food forests by explaining their purpose, citing real examples of them, and explaining the requirements for food forests to succeed.
	Option F is incorrect	Food forests do involve the community, but this is a detail, not the author's overall purpose in writing the selection.
	Option G is incorrect	The purpose of the selection is to provide information about food forests; the author does not urge leaders to establish food forests.
	Option J is incorrect	Although some problems with food forests are briefly discussed, the author focuses more on their benefits and growing popularity.
35	Option A is correct	This sentence explains why the food forest in Thorne-Rider Park was planted. In this quotation, the food forest coordinator at Thorne-Rider Park, Carol LeResche, explains that public space should be used to provide a food resource for the public.
	Option B is incorrect	LeResche describes the reason her community started a food forest; she does not describe a general level of interest in food forests.
	Option C is incorrect	LeResche is not reflecting critics' doubts about the effectiveness of food forests; she is expressing an opinion about the use of public space.
	Option D is incorrect	This quotation is about a food forest called Thorne-Rider Park, not a community garden.

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Item#	Rationale	
36	Option J is correct	The author most likely contrasts food forests with community gardens to highlight distinctions between the two in costs, labor, and featured plants. The author explains that funding for forests comes from grants and the labor comes from volunteers, not from residents, and the forests' plants are perennials rather than annuals.
	Option F is incorrect	The "amount of time it takes for community gardens to produce crops" is not mentioned in these paragraphs.
	Option G is incorrect	The author does not explain why food forests contain more perennial plants than community gardens do; the reader must infer that it is because perennial plants require less work over time.
	Option H is incorrect	The author notes that food forests are free but does not object to the fees residents must pay for the use of community garden plots.
37	Option A is correct	The author develops the thesis of the selection mainly by alternating descriptions and specific examples of food forests (paragraphs 1–6, 11–13, 15) with more general information about the reasons for creating them (paragraphs 7–10, 14, 16–20).
	Option B is incorrect	The author does not describe LeResche's day, and funding is only a detail the author uses to develop the thesis.
	Option C is incorrect	The author mentions some locations, but the importance of having knowledgeable volunteers is not key to the development of the thesis.
	Option D is incorrect	A few food forest locations are given, but there is no list of requirements, so this does not represent the overall development of the thesis.

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Item#	Rationale	
38	Option J is correct	In line 17, the word <u>ultimately</u> means “in the end.” Samantha’s mother is telling her that, in the end, it is her choice to continue orchestra or to try something new.
	Option F is incorrect	Samantha has been wanting to try something new all summer, so “all of a sudden” is not the meaning of <u>ultimately</u> .
	Option G is incorrect	Samantha has thought carefully about her decision, but her mother is telling her that, in the end, Samantha can’t let someone else make the decision for her.
	Option H is incorrect	Choosing to leave orchestra is not just “for the most part” Samantha’s decision; it is entirely her own decision.
39	Option B is correct	Figurative language is language that uses words that mean something different than their literal interpretation. The playwright uses figurative language in these sentences to show that Alyssa believes Samantha has chosen the newspaper over their friendship. When Alyssa says, “I’m still playing second fiddle,” she feels she’s not as important to Samantha as the newspaper.
	Option A is incorrect	Alyssa is expressing her own feelings of abandonment; she is not talking about “Samantha abandoning the orchestra.”
	Option C is incorrect	Alyssa is expressing doubts about her importance to Samantha in these lines; she is not referring to doubts Samantha might have.
	Option D is incorrect	Alyssa misses Samantha because Samantha is writing for the newspaper; Alyssa is not thinking about her friend missing the violin.

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Item#	Rationale	
40	Option J is correct	Foreshadowing is a literary element that offers a warning or indication of future events. In scene 2, the author foreshadows Samantha's determination to be honest with Alyssa. Samantha is discouraged because Alyssa won't listen to her, but after a talk with her mother about making her own choice, she says she's made her decision.
	Option F is incorrect	Alyssa indicates that she and Samantha shared a motto "orchestra for life," which suggests that Samantha has enjoyed orchestra class.
	Option G is incorrect	There is no indication in scene 2 that Samantha may want to write for the newspaper, only that she wants to try something different.
	Option H is incorrect	Samantha appears concerned about preserving her friendship with Alyssa, which does not suggest she wants other friends.
41	Option C is correct	The best summary of scene 2 is presented in this sentence because the conflict (Samantha's conversation with Alyssa) and its resolution (Samantha deciding she is sure of her choice) are restated.
	Option A is incorrect	Samantha's admission that she did not tell Alyssa the news and her final decision to do so are missing, so this summary is incomplete.
	Option B is incorrect	The summary does not include any mention of Alyssa, who is the source of Samantha's conflict, so this summary is incomplete.
	Option D is incorrect	This summary is incomplete. The conflict stemming from Samantha's conversation with Alyssa is not mentioned in this summary, nor is Samantha's decision to stick to her plan.

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Item#	Rationale	
42	Option F is correct	In scene 4 the playwright shows that Alyssa has matured by revealing her “decision to try robotics.” In line 35 Alyssa says that she is coping in a positive way with missing Samantha by focusing on something new.
	Option G is incorrect	Alyssa is not reluctant to complain about her hurt feelings to Samantha, so Alyssa is still overreacting to Samantha’s decision, which reveals her immaturity.
	Option H is incorrect	Alyssa’s excitement about orchestra comes before the conflict with Samantha arises, so she has not yet had a need to mature.
	Option J is incorrect	In scene 1, Alyssa says that Samantha’s playing is “great as usual,” so she has always accepted Samantha’s talent.
43	Option C is correct	In scene 4, though the girls pursue different activities, they smile and hug, supporting the inference that they are still friends.
	Option A is incorrect	The girls have realized that they do not need to share an interest in order to be friends.
	Option B is incorrect	Although she does enjoy robotics, there is no indication that Alyssa will “quit the orchestra.”
	Option D is incorrect	Samantha is happy with what she is doing and does not suggest she wants to participate in future orchestra competitions.
44	Option G is correct	A metaphor is a figure of speech that makes a comparison between two things that are unrelated but share common characteristics. With the metaphor “king of the hill,” the playwright suggests that Samantha has proved herself to be a leading violinist in the orchestra.
	Option F is incorrect	The playwright uses this metaphor to describe Samantha’s position in the orchestra rather than the length of her time with the orchestra.
	Option H is incorrect	The playwright uses this metaphor to describe Samantha’s position in the orchestra rather than the amount of time she spends practicing.
	Option J is incorrect	Samantha’s talent may be envied by other players, but in this line, Alyssa praises her for her position as first violin.