

Massachusetts MCAS Grade 8 English Language Arts Practice

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PRACTICE TEST

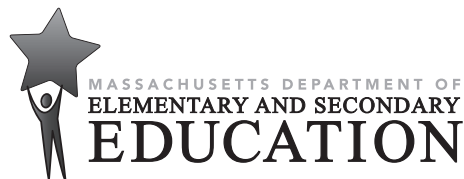
English Language Arts

Grade 8

Student Name

School Name

District Name



Grade 8 English Language Arts

PRACTICE TEST

This practice test contains 14 questions.

Directions

Read each passage and question carefully. Then answer each question as well as you can. You must record all answers in this Practice Test Booklet.

For most questions, you will mark your answers by filling in the circles in your Practice Test Booklet. Make sure you darken the circles completely. Do not make any marks outside of the circles. If you need to change an answer, be sure to erase your first answer completely.

Some questions will ask you to write a response. Write each response in the space provided. Only responses written within the provided space will be scored.

Read “Drive-Ins: The Last Great Picture Show,” an article about drive-in movie theaters, places where people go to watch movies in their cars. Then answer the questions that follow.

Drive-Ins: The Last Great Picture Show

by Melissa Shaw-Smith

- 1 Richard M. Hollingshead, Jr., sat in his car in the driveway of his New Jersey home, peering hopefully through the drops of water that his garden sprinkler rained down on the windshield. Yes! He could still make out the grainy image coming from the movie projector perched on the hood of his car and flickering across the white sheet he'd stretched between two trees. Even with the windows up, the sound of the radio behind his homemade screen came through clearly. Hollingshead rubbed his hands together. This could definitely work!
- 2 The year was 1932 and Hollingshead was experimenting with ideas to expand his family's business, the Whiz Auto Products Company. Although the Great Depression made money scarce, Hollingshead had noticed that people continued to attend the movies regularly and that, despite hard times, Americans weren't about to give up their love affair with the car. He hoped to satisfy both passions with an entertainment that would appeal to the whole family.
- 3 On June 6, 1933, Hollingshead opened the first drive-in, the Automobile Movie Theatre, in Pennsauken Township, New Jersey. Terraced parking ramps provided an unobstructed view of the screen for more than 300 cars while three large speakers blared out the movie's soundtrack, much to the annoyance of the neighbors. There were two showings a night at a cost of a quarter per car and a quarter per person, and patrons could buy a beer or a light meal from a concession stand. The movie, *Wife Beware*, wasn't a new release. Distributors didn't want the drive-in competing with indoor movie theaters.



a typical drive-in theater of the time

- 4 Hollingshead spoke enthusiastically of the convenience of his drive-in compared to regular movie theaters: "The mother says she's not dressed; the husband doesn't want to put on his shoes; the question is what to do with the kids; then how to find a baby-sitter; parking the car is difficult or maybe they have to pay for parking. . . ." Hollingshead's invention solved these problems for moviegoers. "The drive-in theater idea virtually transforms an ordinary motor car into a private theater box," he proudly told a local newspaper. "In the drive-in theater one may smoke without offending others. People may chat or even partake of refreshments brought in their cars without disturbing those who prefer silence. . . . Here the whole family is welcome, regardless of how noisy the children are apt to be . . . The aged and infirm will find the drive-in a boon."
- 5 Americans agreed, and by the early 1940s there were about 100 drive-ins spread throughout the country. Most were set up in cow pastures on the outskirts of towns by young entrepreneurs with big dreams. Despite the heat and the bugs in summer and the cold during winter months—usually only the southern theaters stayed open all year—people were flocking to drive-ins. The beginning of World War II brought growth to a standstill, but between 1946 and 1953, when the "baby boom" was in full swing and more and more people owned cars, close to 3,000 theaters were built, ushering in the drive-in's golden age.
- 6 Theater owners soon realized that people were coming not for the second-run movies but for a family outing under the stars. Since children under twelve got in free, drive-in operators dreamed up entertainments to entice families to come early and spend more than just the price of admission.

- 7 Upon arriving at the drive-in, kids would run to the playground, where uniformed attendants kept an eye on them. Children might visit the petting zoo or ride on a miniature train, a pedal boat, or a pony. Saturday nights sometimes featured a beautiful-baby pageant or a raffle giveaway. Drive-ins booked circus acts and big bands. Mom and Dad could take a turn on the dance floor before the show, or play a round of miniature golf.
- 8 Some drive-ins had bottle warmers so Mom wouldn't have to stay home with the baby. Others provided household services. Mom could drop off her grocery list and laundry when she arrived and pick up the shopping and clean clothes after the show. Dad could get an oil change or have a flat tire fixed. The family might place a dinner order with an attendant and have it delivered to their car, or take a trip to the concession stand for fried chicken, burgers, or even pizza pie. This was long before there was a pizzeria on every street corner. Some people came to the drive-in just to pick up a pizza and didn't stay for the show!
- 9 When the movie was about to start, Dad would hook a speaker with individual volume control to the car window. If the kids whispered too loudly in the backseat, no one could hear what was being said on the screen; and the music sound quality was so bad, it didn't matter if Grandma sang along. The air was filled with the smell of popcorn and bug spray. Mom might stretch specially designed bug nets over the windows. If it rained too hard, Dad could buy a rain shield at the ticket booth to keep their view of the screen clear.
- 10 Just before intermission, a dancing hot dog would appear on the screen to entice kids to the concession stand or vending machines. After the show, Dad would drive home with the children asleep in the backseat. They might not remember the movie, but recollections of a happy time would bring the family back again and again.
- 11 As the 1950s rolled on, audiences began to change. More families owned televisions, and Mom and Dad often opted to watch a show in the comfort of their own home. But teenagers didn't want to watch their parents' movies. This was the age of Elvis Presley and rock-and-roll. With money to spend from part-time jobs, teenagers went to the drive-in eager to socialize and show off their cars, "crazy" new clothes, and cool hairstyles. They wanted their own exciting, rebellious heroes on screen. Hollywood took note.
- 12 James Dean became a teen idol after *Rebel Without a Cause* came out in 1955. In 1956 *Rock Around the Clock* was playing at the drive-in, the first film entirely dedicated to rock-and-roll. In following years *I Was a Teenage Werewolf* and *High School Confidential* were big hits.

- 13 By the 1970s, drive-ins were able to broadcast movie soundtracks over car radios, greatly improving audio quality. However, drive-ins couldn't compete with the high-tech facilities of indoor theaters and the convenience of televisions and VCRs.* Added to that, the land around once rural drive-ins was being gobbled up for development. The number of drive-ins dropped steadily throughout the last decades of the twentieth century. Today, there are only about 400 left.
- 14 But a funny thing happened on the way to the dinosaur graveyard. Those little kids who fell asleep in the back of the station wagon recalled their fond memories of family outings to the drive-in. If you are lucky enough to live near one of the remaining drive-ins, you know that on a warm summer night under the stars, every row is packed. Little kids play tag beneath the big, white screen before the movie starts, then snuggle up in blankets in the back of pickups and SUVs while Mom and Dad get comfortable in their lawn chairs. As the first ghostlike images begin to flicker over the screen, the air fills once again with the scent of popcorn and bug spray.
- 15 It's still the last great picture show.

*VCR—a device that plays videotapes; a predecessor to the DVD player

"Drive-Ins: The Last Great Picture Show" by Melissa Shaw-Smith, from *Cricket* Magazine (March 2009). Text copyright © 2009 by Carus Publishing Company d/b/a Cricket Media. Reprinted by permission of Cricket Media, Inc. Photograph © Hulton-Deutsch Collection/Getty Images.

- 1 What is the **main** purpose of the article?
- Ⓐ to persuade readers to go to a drive-in movie theater
 - Ⓑ to inform readers about the history of the drive-in movie theater
 - Ⓒ to explain the many activities available at drive-in movie theaters
 - Ⓓ to compare the entertainment offered at different drive-in movie theaters
- 2 What is the **most likely** reason the photograph is included in the article?
- Ⓐ to show readers how crowded drive-ins usually were
 - Ⓑ to help readers understand how drive-ins were set up
 - Ⓒ to illustrate the poor picture quality of drive-in movies
 - Ⓓ to show the added options for amusement at drive-in movies

- 3 Read the sentence from paragraph 4 in the box.

"The mother says she's not dressed; the husband doesn't want to put on his shoes; the question is what to do with the kids; then how to find a baby-sitter; parking the car is difficult or maybe they have to pay for parking. . . ."

What does the length of the sentence **mainly** emphasize about going to an indoor movie theater?

- Ⓐ the number of challenges
 - Ⓑ the irritation of distractions
 - Ⓒ the concern about childcare
 - Ⓓ the high cost for transportation
- 4 In paragraphs 7–10, the words "might," "could," "would," and "if" **mainly** suggest
- Ⓐ doubt.
 - Ⓑ curiosity.
 - Ⓒ confusion.
 - Ⓓ possibility.

- 5 Which sentence from the article best indicates how the author **most likely** feels about drive-ins?
- Ⓐ "Even with the windows up, the sound of the radio behind his homemade screen came through clearly." (paragraph 1)
 - Ⓑ "They might not remember the movie, but recollections of a happy time would bring the family back again and again." (paragraph 10)
 - Ⓒ "As the 1950s rolled on, audiences began to change." (paragraph 11)
 - Ⓓ "Today, there are only about 400 left." (paragraph 13)
- 6 Based on paragraph 5, a "golden age" is a time of
- Ⓐ success.
 - Ⓑ maturity.
 - Ⓒ invention.
 - Ⓓ inspiration.

7 Part A

Based on the article, which statement **best** describes why drive-in movie theaters still exist?

- Ⓐ Moviegoers are tired of indoor theaters.
- Ⓑ People have positive feelings about the past.
- Ⓒ Drivers want entertainment that can be enjoyed inside a car.
- Ⓓ The public is educated about the value of preserving history.

Part B

Which detail from the article **best** supports the answer to Part A?

- Ⓐ "Hollingshead's invention solved these problems for moviegoers." (paragraph 4)
- Ⓑ "Americans agreed, and by the early 1940s there were about 100 drive-ins spread throughout the country." (paragraph 5)
- Ⓒ "Theater owners soon realized that people were coming not for the second-run movies but for a family outing under the stars." (paragraph 6)
- Ⓓ "Those little kids who fell asleep in the back of the station wagon recalled their fond memories of family outings to the drive-in." (paragraph 14)

- 8 Based on the article, complete the sentences that explain what happened to drive-in theaters during the 1950s and the 1970s. Select **one** phrase to complete **each** sentence.

In the 1950s, drive-in theaters began to

- Ⓐ show movies that interested older people.
- Ⓑ compete with television sets in people's homes.
- Ⓒ improve the quality of food available during movies.
- Ⓓ become too expensive for parents to bring their children.

In the 1970s, drive-in theaters became rarer, even though

- Ⓐ the age of the audiences decreased.
- Ⓑ the technology of sound improved.
- Ⓒ the theaters were very crowded.
- Ⓓ the people moved from rural areas.

For this question, you will write an essay based on the passage(s). Write your essay in the space provided on the next two pages. Your writing should:

- Present and develop a central idea.
- Provide evidence and/or details from the passage(s).
- Use correct grammar, spelling, and punctuation.

- 9 Based on “Drive-Ins: The Last Great Picture Show,” write an essay explaining why drive-in movie theaters appealed to families. Be sure to use information from the article to develop your essay.

Write your answer on the next two pages.

You have a total of two pages on which to write your response.

9

Lined area for writing response.



Lined writing area for student response.

Read the two passages about the experiences of a boy and a girl in school. Then answer the questions that follow.

The following passage from “Celeste’s Heart” is about a young girl attending school in Argentina.

from “Celeste’s Heart”

by Aida Bortnik

- 1 Celeste went to a school that had two yards. In the front yard they held official ceremonies. In the back yard the Teacher made them stand in line, one behind the other at arm’s distance, keeping the arm stretched out straight in front, the body’s weight on both legs, and in silence. One whole hour. Once for two whole hours. All right, not hours. But two breaks passed, and the bell rang four times before they were allowed back into the classroom. And the girls from the other classes, who played and laughed during the first break as if nothing had happened, stopped playing during the second break. They stood with their backs to the wall and watched them. They watched the straight line, one behind the other at arm’s length, in the middle of the school yard. And no one laughed. And when the Teacher clapped her hands to indicate that the punishment was over, Celeste was the only one who didn’t stretch, who didn’t complain, who didn’t rub her arm, who didn’t march smartly back into the classroom. When they sat down, she stared quietly at the Teacher. She stared at her in the same way she used to stare at the new words on the blackboard, the ones whose meaning she didn’t know, whose exact purpose she ignored.
- 2 That evening, as she was putting her younger brother to bed, he asked once again: “When am I going to go to school?” But that evening she didn’t laugh, and she didn’t think up an answer. She sat down and hugged him for a while, as she used to do every time she realized how little he was, how little he knew. And she hugged him harder because she suddenly imagined him in the middle of the school yard, with his arm stretched out measuring the distance, the body tense, feeling cold and angry and afraid, in a line in which all the others were as small as he was.
- 3 And the next time the Teacher got mad at the class, Celeste knew what she had to do.
- 4 She didn’t lift her arm.
- 5 The Teacher repeated the order, looking at her somewhat surprised. But Celeste wouldn’t lift her arm. The Teacher came up to her and asked her, almost with concern, what was the matter. And Celeste told her. She told

her that afterward the arm hurt. And that they were all cold and afraid. And that one didn't go to school to be hurt, cold, and afraid.

- 6 Celeste couldn't hear herself, but she could see her Teacher's face as she spoke. And it seemed like a strange face, a terribly strange face. And her friends told her afterwards that she had spoken in a very loud voice, not shouting, just a very loud voice. Like when one recited a poem full of big words, standing on a platform, in the school's front yard. Like when one knows one is taking part in a solemn ceremony and important things are spoken of, things that happened a long time ago, but things one remembers because they made the world a better place to live than it was before.
- 7 And almost every girl in the class put down her arm. And they walked back into the classroom. And the Teacher wrote a note in red ink in Celeste's exercise book. And when her father asked her what she had done, and she told him, her father stood there staring at her for a long while, but as if he couldn't see her, as if he were staring at something inside her or beyond her. And then he smiled and signed the book without saying anything. And while she blotted his signature with blotting paper, he patted her head, very gently, as if Celeste's head were something very very fragile that a heavy hand could break.
- 8 That night Celeste couldn't sleep because of an odd feeling inside her. A feeling that had started when she had refused to lift her arm, standing with the others in the line, a feeling of something growing inside her breast. It burned a bit, but it wasn't painful. And she thought that if one's arms and legs and other parts of one's body grew, the things inside had to grow too. And yet legs and arms grow without one being aware, evenly and bit by bit. But the heart probably grows like this: by jumps. And she thought it seemed like a logical thing: the heart grows when one does something one hasn't done before, when one learns something one didn't know before, when one feels something different and better for the first time. And the odd sensation felt good. And she promised herself that her heart would keep growing. And growing. And growing.

"Celeste's Heart" by Aida Bortnik (translated by Alberto Manguel), from *Sudden Fiction Latino: Short-Short Stories from the United States and Latin America*. Copyright © by Alberto Manguel. Reprinted by permission of Schavelzon Graham Agencia Literaria, S.L.

In “Principals and Principles,” writer Daniel Handler recalls a time when he was a young boy in school.

Principals and Principles

by Daniel Handler

- 1 In San Francisco the weather never gets hot, and when it does it lasts only three days. On the first day, the hot weather is a surprise, and everyone wanders around carrying their sweaters. On the second day, everyone enjoys the heat. And on the third day, the cold weather returns and is just as surprising, and everyone wanders around shivering.
- 2 One of these three-day heat waves arrived when I was in seventh grade, and on the first day everyone was grumpy because we had all dressed for fog and gloom and now had to drag our sweaters all over the school. We all agreed that the next day we’d dress for warm weather, but just as the day ended, the principal made an announcement over the loudspeaker. “Students at Herbert Hoover Middle School are not allowed to wear shorts,” she said, in the tone of voice she always used—a tone of voice that sounded friendly but was actually unbearably wicked.
- 3 Everyone groaned—everyone but me. “She can’t do that,” I said, and reached into the back of my binder. On the first day of school, we’d all received a pamphlet: “Student Rights and Responsibilities.” For some reason I’d saved it, and I read one of our rights out loud: “Students have the right to free dress.” I convinced everyone to wear shorts the next day in order to protest the wicked principal’s unfair cancellation of one of our rights.
- 4 The next day was wonderful because we were all dressed for the heat and nobody had to drag their sweaters around, but of course, I was sent to the principal’s office—someone had ratted on me. (To this day, I suspect Nancy Cutler, but I can’t prove it.) She asked me if I had told everyone to wear shorts. I said yes. She said shorts were distracting to some of the teachers. I said that free dress was one of our rights. She said that shorts led students to have water fights. I said that free dress was one of our rights. She said that she was the principal and she was in charge. I said that free dress was one of our rights. She kept pointing at me. I kept pointing at the pamphlet. The principal was one of those people who yelled at you until you cried, but I forced myself not to cry, biting my lip and blinking very, very fast, until at last she gave up and I was allowed to return to my classmates, who applauded me. In celebration, we all wore shorts the next

day, too, even though we knew the cold weather would return, and it did, and we were shivering and miserable.

- 5 In eighth grade we got a new version of the pamphlet. Instead of “Students have the right to free dress,” it read, “Students have the responsibility to dress appropriately.” I threw it away.
- 6 If you stand up for your rights, you can count on the fact that the wicked people will find sneaky ways to change the rules. But you should stand up for your rights anyway, because there aren’t enough sunny days in the world, and everyone should enjoy them.

“Principals and Principles” by Daniel Handler, from *Guys Write for Guys Read*. Copyright © 2005 by Daniel Handler. Reprinted by permission of Charlotte Sheedy Literary Agency on behalf of the author.

- 10 Based on paragraphs 6 and 7 of “Celeste’s Heart,” how do Celeste’s classmates **most likely** feel after her speech?

Ⓐ fearful
Ⓑ amused
Ⓒ confused
Ⓓ appreciative

- 11 Read the description from paragraph 7 of “Celeste’s Heart” in the box.

And then he smiled and signed the book without saying anything.

What do the father’s actions in the description **mainly** represent?

Ⓐ his loyalty
Ⓑ his strength
Ⓒ his approval
Ⓓ his gratitude

- 12 In paragraph 5 of “Principals and Principles,” what is the **main** reason the author is upset by the new version of the pamphlet?
- Ⓐ He must remember the new dress code.
 - Ⓑ He will be unable to dress how he wants.
 - Ⓒ He thinks the principal is being impatient.
 - Ⓓ He believes the principal used her authority unfairly.

- 13 Based on "Principals and Principles," which of the following sentences **best** describes the author both as a student and as an adult?
- Ⓐ He treats others with care.
 - Ⓑ He avoids conflict in his life.
 - Ⓒ He takes the advice of others.
 - Ⓓ He is motivated by his values.

For this question, you will write an essay based on the passage(s). Write your essay in the space provided on the next two pages. Your writing should:

- Present and develop a central idea.
- Provide evidence and/or details from the passage(s).
- Use correct grammar, spelling, and punctuation.

- 14** Write an essay explaining how the themes in “Celeste’s Heart” and “Principals and Principles” are similar. Be sure to use information from **both** passages to develop your essay.

Write your answer on the next two pages.

You have a total of two pages on which to write your response.

14

Handwriting practice lines for item 14.



Blank writing area with horizontal lines.

Grade 8 English Language Arts Paper-Based Practice Test Answer Key

The following pages include the answer key for all machine-scored items, followed by the rubrics for the hand-scored items.

Item Number	Answer Key	Total Points	Reporting Category	Standard
1	B	1	Reading	6
2	B	1	Reading	7
3	A	1	Reading	5
4	D	1	Reading	4
5	B	1	Reading	2
6	A	1	Reading	4
7	Part A: B Part B: D	2*	Reading	1
8	B, B	2*	Reading	1
9	<i>See Rubric</i>	8	Writing Language	2,4 1,2,3
10	D	1	Reading	1
11	C	1	Reading	4
12	D	1	Reading	3
13	D	1	Reading	6
14	<i>See Rubric</i>	8	Writing Language	2,4 1,2,3

*For two-point items, partial credit may be given.

Scoring rubric for Grade 8 Practice Test Items #9 and #14: Essay

Idea Development	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • QUALITY AND DEVELOPMENT OF CENTRAL IDEA * • SELECTION AND EXPLANATION OF EVIDENCE AND/OR DETAILS * • ORGANIZATION • EXPRESSION OF IDEAS • AWARENESS OF TASK AND MODE 	
5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Central idea is insightful and fully developed • Skillful selection and explanation of evidence and/or details • Skillful and/or subtle organization • Rich expression of ideas • Full awareness of the task and mode
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Central idea is clear and well-developed • Effective selection and explanation of evidence and/or details • Effective organization • Clear expression of ideas • Full awareness of the task and mode
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Central idea is general and moderately developed • Appropriate selection and explanation of evidence and/or details • Moderate organization • Adequate expression of ideas • Sufficient awareness of the task and mode
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Central idea may be present and is somewhat developed • Limited selection and explanation of evidence and/or details • Limited organization • Basic expression of ideas • Partial awareness of the task and mode
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Central idea is not developed • Insufficient evidence and/or details • Minimal organization • Poor expression of ideas • Minimal awareness of the task and mode
0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The response shows evidence the student has read the text, but does not address the question or incorrectly responds to the question.

*For narrative writing (Standard 3), the quality and development of narrative elements will be assessed in place of a central idea. Narrative elements should include, but are not limited to: plot, character, setting, dialogue, action, and/or description. Students should use evidence/details to demonstrate understanding of text.

Standard English Conventions	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SENTENCE STRUCTURE • GRAMMAR, USAGE, AND MECHANICS 	
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consistent control of a variety of sentence structures relative to length of essay • Consistent control of grammar, usage, and mechanics relative to complexity and/or length of essay
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mostly consistent control of sentence structures relative to length of essay • Mostly consistent control of grammar, usage, and mechanics relative to complexity and/or length of essay
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Little control and/or no variety in sentence structure and/or • Little control of grammar, usage, and mechanics relative to complexity and/or insufficient length
0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sentences are formed incorrectly with no control of grammar, usage, and mechanics and/or insufficient length.