



MASSACHUSETTS

Department of Elementary  
and Secondary Education

*Release of Spring 2023*

*MCAS Test Items*

*from the*

*Grade 3 English Language Arts  
Paper-Based Test*

**June 2023**

**Massachusetts Department of  
Elementary and Secondary Education**

# Grade 3 English Language Arts

This session contains 20 questions.

## Directions

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

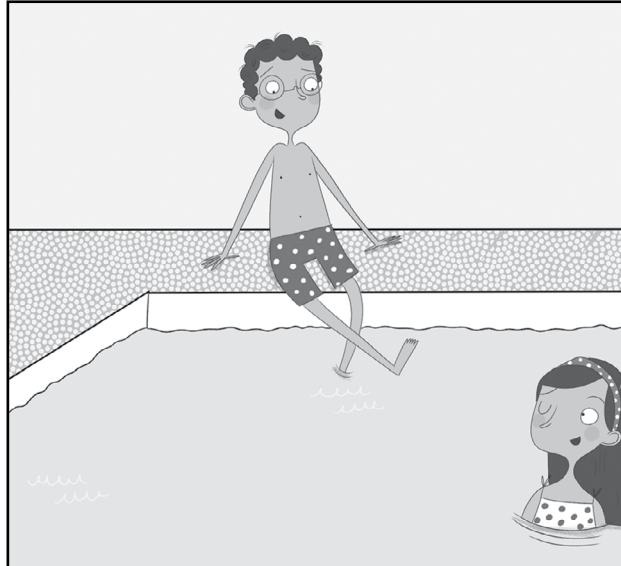
For most questions, you will mark your answers by filling in the circles in your Test & Answer Booklet. Make sure you darken the circles completely. Do not make any marks outside of the circles. If you need to change an answer, be sure to erase your first answer completely.

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

Read the passage about Tomas and Marisol's experience going whale watching during a trip to Mexico with their parents. Then answer the questions that follow.

### from *A Vacation in Ruins*

by Precious McKenzie



- 1 Mom and Dad went to the hotel's front desk to see about planning a whale watching trip. That's when Tomas and I decided we'd head to the pool.
- 2 "Are you excited about a whale watching trip?" I asked Tomas.
- 3 "Sure." He shrugged his shoulders. "It sounds like fun. Something different, you know?"
- 4 "What if we go all the way out on the bay, spend hours on the water, and we don't see anything?"
- 5 Tomas thought for a second.
- 6 "I guess it's just a plain old boat ride then."
- 7 I chuckled a little bit.
- 8 "I thought it would be more fun to go mountain biking."

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- 9 Tomas agreed with me. We knew the whale watching trip was Mom's idea. Our mother is a bird biologist but she loves to experience anything remotely scientific.
- 10 "Going whale watching will make Mom happy," Tomas decided.
- 11 I knew he was right.
- 12 "It won't kill us to make her happy," I said sarcastically. Tomas knew I was playing and gave me a crooked grin.
- 13 "*Hola, niños!*" Mom waved to us as she walked across the pool deck. "We're all set for whale watching!"
- 14 Dad followed behind Mom with travel brochures and maps spilling out of his arms. Boy, did he look like the typical clueless tourist.
- 15 "We leave in an hour. Better head back to the hotel room and clean up," Mom said.
- 16 Tomas grabbed his towel. I hopped out of the pool and dried off too.
- 17 As we walked back to the hotel room, Mom rattled off instructions.
- 18 "You'll need a hat, sunscreen, a bottle of water, and a snack," Mom said. "Don't forget the camera, Marisol."
- 19 "Got it, Mom," I answered. She knew that Tomas and I never forgot the camera, but she always felt the need to remind one of us.
- 20 When we met our boat captain later that afternoon, Mom and Dad told us that we'd remember this trip for the rest of our lives.
- 21 "Marisol, Tomas, our captain has been tracking whales for 20 years. He knows exactly where to find them." Dad smiled proudly at us. "We're sure to spot them!"
- 22 "Or, it will be just a really long, really boring boat ride," Tomas muttered in my ear. I tried not to burst out laughing. Tomas did have a point. Mountain biking would have been much more fun.
- 23 The boat chugged out to Banderas Bay. Gulls screeched overhead as they dipped closer to us, looking for scraps of food. The water was rough and choppy as we moved further from the shore. Dad looked a little funny.
- 24 "Excuse me, excuse me," Dad grumbled as he elbowed through the crowd of tourists. He shoved harder and practically ran to the side of the ship.

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- 25 Dad folded himself over the railing. "UUUHHHBLEKKK."
- 26 After a minute or two, he pulled himself upright carefully. He looked pale and clammy. Mom rushed to his side. Some of the other passengers stared at Dad.
- 27 "Honey, honey," Mom said delicately. "Did you get seasick?"
- 28 Dad nodded and let Mom lead him over to a bench.
- 29 "That's embarrassing. Can you believe he did that? In front of everyone?" I said to Tomas.
- 30 "Nope. There's no end to our embarrassment," Tomas replied.
- 31 Mom wiped Dad's face with a cool, wet handkerchief.
- 32 "You'll get your sea legs yet, sweetie. Don't worry," she told him. Dad didn't usually travel by boat and the ship's rocking motion made him sick.
- 33 The captain walked by Dad. He stopped and stared at our sad, seasick father.
- 34 "*Señor*, you look like you need help," he said.
- 35 Dad nodded weakly.
- 36 "Try these. Suck on these candies all day. Your sea sickness will go away. I promise," he said.
- 37 Dad took the handful of candies from the captain. He leaned against the ship's wall and closed his eyes. Mom came over to talk to me and Tomas.
- 38 "Kids, this might be a rough day for your father. Try to be good. Take it easy on him," Mom patted my shoulder and smiled tenderly over at Dad. He still looked horrible—like a sick, miserable dog in a shelter cage.



- 39 "Whale on the starboard side,"\* the captain said, signaling to the passengers. Everyone on the ship shifted to the starboard side.
- 40 I had the camera, ready to capture the whale. The ship rocked harder. Dad moaned louder and gripped his stomach. A long, gray snout came out of the water. I clicked the camera. Sea water sprayed my face. I heard Tomas shouting excitedly, "The blow hole, the blow hole! There it is!" I changed position and tried to focus the camera on the whale's blow hole.
- 41 Another long, gray snout emerged. "Two whales, Marisol! Two!" Tomas jumped up and down. . . .
- 42 The giant humpback whales seemed curious. They studied us just as we studied them.
- 43 Tomas reached over the side of the ship. His fingers inched closer to the whale's snout. The whale opened his mouth. Tomas flipped over the ship's railing. Splash!
- 44 "*Dios mio*," a woman screamed.
- 45 Mom rushed to the railing, "Tomas, Tomas!" She was frantic.

\*starboard side—the right-hand side of a ship

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- 46 I started climbing over the railing to rescue Tomas. A firm tug jerked me back. It was the captain.
- 47 “No, *señorita!*” The captain shook his finger at me. Quick as a fox, the captain grabbed a life preserver and leaned over the railing.
- 48 “Young man, young man! Where are you?” the captain shouted.
- 49 The two humpback whales submerged and reappeared. Where was Tomas?
- 50 Mom screamed out to the sea, calling for Tomas. Where was he? Was he gone?
- 51 A moment later, a dark, round head popped above the waves. Thankfully, Tomas had a life jacket on. The life jacket helped him keep his head above the waves.
- 52 “There he is! There he is!” I yelled to the captain. Tomas had floated about thirty feet away from the boat.
- 53 The whales noticed that someone had joined them in the water. They swam toward Tomas.
- 54 “They’re going to eat him! Help!” I screamed. With one gulp, a humpback whale could swallow Tomas whole.
- 55 Everyone on board the ship grew quiet. No one could save the little boy from being eaten by a giant whale. We were terrified.
- 56 Tomas saw the whales coming toward him. They circled him. Tomas reached his arms out to pet the whales. Are you crazy? I wanted to scream at Tomas but I was too afraid to move a muscle, let alone open my mouth.
- 57 Tomas stroked the whales’ sides. I could see Tomas smiling. He was having fun. Now? At a time like this? I thought.
- 58 Tomas paddled his arms to position himself in front of one of the whales. “Perfect! It will open its mouth and gobble you for sure,” I yelled. My father fainted.
- 59 Tomas bobbed up and down in the water. The whale submerged. With the force of the water, the waves around the whale bounced Tomas closer to our boat. The passengers cheered.
- 60 The captain wasted no time. He waved a rope over his head and lassoed Tomas’s life preserver with the rope.

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- 61 "Swim to me," the captain shouted. As Tomas swam, the captain pulled.  
And pulled. And pulled.
- 62 Dropping an emergency ladder down the side of the ship, the captain  
leaned toward Tomas.
- 63 "Climb, boy!"
- 64 Tomas heaved himself to the ladder and dragged himself up to the  
railing. I grabbed his arms and pulled him on deck.
- 65 Mom rushed to Tomas, covering him in kisses. I wrapped my arms  
around him and squeezed him tight. . . . "I haven't lost a passenger yet.  
I wasn't about to let you be the first." Tomas stepped toward the captain  
and gave him a huge hug.
- 66 "Thanks, Captain," he whispered.

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**1** Where does the passage **mainly** take place?

- Ⓐ in a pool
- Ⓑ in a hotel
- Ⓒ on a boat
- Ⓓ on a beach

**2** Based on the passage, who is the narrator?

- Ⓐ Dad
- Ⓑ Mom
- Ⓒ Tomas
- Ⓓ Marisol

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- 3** Read the dictionary entry in the box.

**head:** v. **1.** to lead something **2.** to go in a certain direction **3.** to give a title to **4.** to place at the beginning of

Based on the passage, which meaning of the word **head** is used in paragraph 1?

- Ⓐ meaning 1
  - Ⓑ meaning 2
  - Ⓒ meaning 3
  - Ⓓ meaning 4
- 4** Based on the passage, what is the **most likely** reason the family goes whale watching?
- Ⓐ Mom likes to do things related to science.
  - Ⓑ Mom knows everyone likes to be near the water.
  - Ⓒ Tomas and Marisol want to make Mom feel better.
  - Ⓓ Tomas and Marisol want to take Mom on an adventure.

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- 5 Read paragraph 21 in the box.

“Marisol, Tomas, our captain has been tracking whales for 20 years. He knows exactly where to find them.” Dad smiled proudly at us. “We’re sure to spot them!”

Which sentence uses the word **tracking** in the same way it is used in the paragraph?

- Ⓐ The wheels of the cart were tracking on the rails the workers laid down.
  - Ⓑ The dogs came in tracking snow and mud all over the carpet.
  - Ⓒ The star was tracking across the sky in a flash of white light.
  - Ⓓ The park ranger was tracking the footprints of a bird.
- 6 What does paragraph 26 **mostly** show about Dad?
- Ⓐ He is feeling hot.
  - Ⓑ He is not feeling well.
  - Ⓒ He is wearing a lot of sunscreen.
  - Ⓓ He is not comfortable seeing the whales.

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- 7** Read the sentence from paragraph 39 in the box.

“Whale on the starboard side,” the captain said, signaling to the passengers.

What do the quotation marks show?

- Ⓐ The words are from another author.
  - Ⓑ The words are spoken by a character.
  - Ⓒ The words are from a different language.
  - Ⓓ The words are what the character is thinking.
- 8** Based on the passage, what causes Tomas to fall off the boat?
- Ⓐ A whale knocks Tomas out of the boat.
  - Ⓑ The boat rocks too hard and makes Tomas fall.
  - Ⓒ Tomas leans too far over the side of the boat to touch the whale.
  - Ⓓ Dad accidentally shoves Tomas while running to the side of the boat.

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- 9** Read the sentence from paragraph 43 in the box.

His fingers inched closer to the whale's snout.

What does the word "inched" show about Tomas?

- Ⓐ that his fingers are not large
  - Ⓑ that he is moving away from the whale
  - Ⓒ that his fingers are moving by small amounts
  - Ⓓ that he does not want the whale to move away
- 10** Which of the following events from the passage happens first?
- Ⓐ The captain saves Tomas.
  - Ⓑ Tomas and Marisol swim in a pool.
  - Ⓒ Marisol takes pictures of the whales.
  - Ⓓ Mom checks to see how Dad is feeling.

- 11** Read the description of a problem in the passage.

Dad folded himself over the railing. "UUUHHHBLEKKK." (paragraph 25)

Select **one** solution used in the passage for the problem.

- Ⓐ throwing a rope
- Ⓑ sucking on candies
- Ⓒ going mountain biking
- Ⓓ doing something to make someone happy
- Ⓔ jumping in the water to save someone else

Read the description of a problem in the passage.

Tomas had floated about thirty feet away from the boat. (paragraph 52)

Select **one** solution used in the passage for the problem.

- Ⓐ throwing a rope
- Ⓑ sucking on candies
- Ⓒ going mountain biking
- Ⓓ doing something to make someone happy
- Ⓔ jumping in the water to save someone else

- 12** What is the central message of the passage?
- Ⓐ It is important to always be prepared.
  - Ⓑ People learn best by trying new things.
  - Ⓒ Making a family member happy has its rewards.
  - Ⓓ Things can sometimes turn out differently than we expect.

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

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

- 13** Based on *A Vacation in Ruins*, write an essay that explains how Marisol's feelings change throughout the passage. Be sure to use information from the passage to develop your essay.

**Write your answer on the next page.**



*You have a total of one page on which to write your response.*

**13**

Lined area for writing response.

Read the passage about a scientist and the work he does with insects. Then answer the questions that follow.

### The Bug Wrangler

by Gail V. Goodwin

- 1 Steven Kutcher can make a fly scratch its head. He can get a wasp to fly into someone's mouth and a tarantula to stand still. Kutcher is Hollywood's go-to bug wrangler. He trains the bugs and other insects that star in movies.
- 2 Kutcher has worked on more than 100 films and dozens of commercials. If a grasshopper, beetle, or locust needs to be trained, Kutcher is usually the guy who does it. He also handles crickets, butterflies, ants, dragonflies, roaches, houseflies, caterpillars, praying mantises, and mealworms. He herds mosquitoes and bees that bite and sting. In *Spider-Man*, he wrangled a spider to "bite" Peter Parker. He made bees swarm a zookeeper in *We Bought a Zoo*.
- 3 Kutcher loved bugs as a child. Today, bugs are his business. He has a master's degree in biology, focusing on entomology, insect behavior, and ecology. He spends a lot of time observing insects and spiders. He understands what makes them act in certain ways. A dog trainer might give a dog a biscuit when the dog sits up or rolls over on command. Kutcher uses his knowledge of how arthropods respond to heat, light, wind, and texture to make them do what he wants.

#### Photograph 1



### Cockroaches and Cheetos

- 4 To get a mosquito to stay still, he puts it in a cool place. To make a tarantula stop moving, he covers its eyes. He uses certain chemicals to attract bees and ants. He knows that given a choice between light and dark, flies will go to light.
- 5 One time, Kutcher needed to make a fly clean itself on cue. Knowing that flies taste with their feet, he put honey on the fly's feet and head. He set the fly down. Sure enough, it rubbed its head!
- 6 For one movie, Kutcher needed a cockroach to crawl from a shoe to a bag of Cheetos to a magazine and stop on a picture. To make that happen, he thought like a cockroach. "Cockroaches like to run along edges of things. What I did was guide it by creasing the bag of Cheetos and placing things in such a manner that the odds were that the cockroach would go in that direction."
- 7 Wrangling bugs is difficult work. "There is so much involved," Kutcher explains. "Anyone could put a bucket of cockroaches on a table. But it takes somebody knowledgeable to make them act for a camera. And I have to make sure that we can collect the insects after filming, that none of them are hurt, that the lighting is right, and that the filmmakers are not using too much heat. Then I say, 'Action, bug.'"

### The Human Factor

- 8 In one movie, Kutcher needed to keep an actor from stepping on spiders. "We cut out the bottoms of his shoes and taught him how to step on spiders by putting the holes over the spiders."
- 9 For another movie, Kutcher and others took care of 500 spiders. To choose the best spiders for use in the movie, he and the other handlers held a kind of spider Olympics among three different species. Which spiders won? "Two tarantulas played the king and queen spiders, but the *Delena* huntsman spiders were in the most scenes."
- 10 To make one of the *Delena* walk four feet along a path and climb into a slipper, Kutcher created two fences from monofilament—thread thinner than human hair and invisible on film. He designed motors to make the filament move to keep the spiders on the right path. "It's all about connecting science with art," he says.

- 11 How does Kutcher find his tiny film stars? "I raise some, collect some, and get some from other people. I may go out with a net or set a trap. I use fly traps baited with smelly stuff to trap live flies." To collect insects, he must know where they live and what kind of habitat they have. "I'm very good at using a net. I try to swing only once to catch the insect."



### **Awesome Arthropods!**

Arthropods have bodies made up of more than one part. Their skeletons are on the outside of their bodies. And they are cold-blooded. Some arthropods fly, some crawl, and some creep. They live on land, in ponds, or in the oceans. Ants are arthropods. So are crabs and bees.

### **Home Sweet Home?**

- 12 Many of Kutcher's bugs live in his home. He has 2,000 large darkling beetles crawling around in containers in his living room and a refrigerator full of caterpillars. One time, he took care of 3,000 African grasshoppers for six months. When he was a child, he kept tarantulas under his bed. Today, he keeps 40 to 60 containers of arthropods in an insect zoo!
- 13 "I feed spiders with flies caught in my fly traps and I give crickets to the tarantulas. I feed the monarch butterflies milkweed and the Gulf fritillaries passion vine. I grow the plants in my butterfly garden. I try to keep things simple. Beetles get grain, plants, oranges, and lettuce."
- 14 When not wrangling bugs for films, Kutcher enjoys working with bugs in other creative ways. He invents bug-related things like bug collectors made from cardboard tubes. He makes art by putting paint on the feet of bugs, one foot at a time, and having the bugs walk on wet paper.

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- 15 Kutcher also presents programs about arthropods. He teaches about insect habitats and the relationship between insects and humans.
- 16 He knows that insects and biodiversity are important for a healthy planet and is concerned by the loss of animal habitat. “To study the earth,” he says, “one must be close to it and cherish the value of life—and that includes insects.”

“The Bug Wrangler” by Gail V. Goodwin, from *Highlights for Children* (September 2015). Text copyright © 2015 by Highlights for Children. Republished by permission of Highlights for Children, Inc. Photograph 1 copyright © Steven Kutcher. Photograph 2 copyright © iStockphoto/ithinksky.

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- 14** Based on the passage, which heading would be **best** for paragraphs 1–3?
- Ⓐ Bug Tricks
  - Ⓑ Bug Movies
  - Ⓒ Bug Trainer
  - Ⓓ Bug Behavior
- 15** In the passage, what is the **main** purpose of paragraph 2?
- Ⓐ to show why Kutcher enjoys working on films
  - Ⓑ to explain Kutcher’s history of starring in movies
  - Ⓒ to describe Kutcher’s experience in training insects
  - Ⓓ to establish how long Kutcher has been handling insects
- 16** Which phrase from paragraph 10 **best** helps the reader understand the word **invisible** as it is used in the paragraph?
- Ⓐ “. . . four feet along a path . . .”
  - Ⓑ “. . . thinner than human hair . . .”
  - Ⓒ “. . . make the filament move . . .”
  - Ⓓ “. . . connecting science with art’ . . .”

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- 17** Read the sentence from paragraph 11 in the box.

To collect insects, he must know where they live and what kind of habitat they have.

What is the meaning of the word **habitat** as it is used in the sentence?

- Ⓐ diet
  - Ⓑ home
  - Ⓒ behavior
  - Ⓓ protection
- 18** Based on the passage, how does Kutcher get insects to perform?
- Ⓐ He uses tricks the insect already knows.
  - Ⓑ He uses his understanding of insect behavior.
  - Ⓒ He chooses easy tricks for insects to complete.
  - Ⓓ He waits for insects to show the behavior he wants.

- 19** Based on the passage, what is the **main** purpose of the **Awesome Arthropods!** text box?
- Ⓐ to describe the features of arthropods
  - Ⓑ to compare arthropods to other animals
  - Ⓒ to explain why arthropods are so popular
  - Ⓓ to explain why arthropods are hard to locate
- 20** Select **two** sentences from the passage that are in the present tense.
- Ⓐ "He herds mosquitoes and bees that bite and sting." (paragraph 2)
  - Ⓑ "Kutcher loved bugs as a child." (paragraph 3)
  - Ⓒ "Today, bugs are his business." (paragraph 3)
  - Ⓓ "When he was a child, he kept tarantulas under his bed." (paragraph 12)

Select **two** sentences from the passage that are in the past tense.

- Ⓐ "He herds mosquitoes and bees that bite and sting." (paragraph 2)
- Ⓑ "Kutcher loved bugs as a child." (paragraph 3)
- Ⓒ "Today, bugs are his business." (paragraph 3)
- Ⓓ "When he was a child, he kept tarantulas under his bed." (paragraph 12)



**Grade 3 English Language Arts**  
**Spring 2023 Released Operational Items**

<b>PBT Item No.</b>	<b>Page No.</b>	<b>Reporting Category</b>	<b>Standard</b>	<b>Item Type*</b>	<b>Item Description</b>	<b>Correct Answer (SR)**</b>
1	9	<i>Reading</i>	RL.3.5	SR	Determine the setting of the passage.	C
2	9	<i>Reading</i>	RL.3.1	SR	Identify the narrator of the passage.	D
3	10	<i>Language</i>	L.3.5	SR	Determine the meaning of a multiple-meaning word in context.	B
4	10	<i>Reading</i>	RL.3.1	SR	Determine the reason for a characters' actions based on details from the passage.	A
5	11	<i>Language</i>	L.3.4	SR	Identify a sentence that uses a multiple-meaning word in the same way that the word is used in the passage.	D
6	11	<i>Reading</i>	RL.3.3	SR	Determine what a specific paragraph shows about a character.	B
7	12	<i>Language</i>	L.3.2	SR	Determine the purpose of punctuation used in the passage.	B
8	12	<i>Reading</i>	RL.3.3	SR	Determine the cause of an event from the passage.	C
9	13	<i>Reading</i>	RL.3.4	SR	Interpret what a word suggests about a character in the passage.	C
10	13	<i>Reading</i>	RL.3.1	SR	Determine which event occurred first in the passage.	B
11	14	<i>Reading</i>	RL.3.5	SR	Identify solutions to the problems described in the passage.	B;A
12	15	<i>Reading</i>	RL.3.2	SR	Determine the central message of the passage.	D
13	16	<i>Language, Writing</i>	L.3.1, L.3.2, L.3.3, W.3.2, W.3.4	ES	Write an essay explaining how a character's feelings change throughout the passage. Use information from the passage as evidence.	
14	22	<i>Reading</i>	RI.3.7	SR	Determine which heading would best support a section of the passage.	C
15	22	<i>Reading</i>	RI.3.5	SR	Identify the purpose of a paragraph from the passage.	C
16	22	<i>Reading</i>	RI.3.4	SR	Identify the phrase that best helps to determine the meaning of a word in context.	B
17	23	<i>Reading</i>	RI.3.4	SR	Determine the meaning of a word in context.	B
18	23	<i>Reading</i>	RI.3.1	SR	Determine how an individual from the passage accomplishes a task.	B
19	24	<i>Reading</i>	RI.3.7	SR	Determine the purpose of a text feature in the passage.	A
20	24	<i>Language</i>	L.3.1	SR	Identify the tenses used in sentences from the passage.	A,C;B,D

\* ELA item types are: selected-response (SR) and essay (ES).

\*\* Answers are provided here for selected-response items only. Sample responses and scoring guidelines for any constructed-response and essay items will be posted to the Department's website later this year.

**Grade 3 English Language Arts**  
**Spring 2023 Unreleased Operational Items**

<b>PBT Item No.</b>	<b>Reporting Category</b>	<b>Standard</b>	<b>Item Type*</b>	<b>Item Description</b>
21	<i>Language</i>	L.3.4	SR	Determine the meaning of a multiple-meaning word in context.
22	<i>Reading</i>	RI.3.4	SR	Determine the meaning of a word in context.
23	<i>Reading</i>	RI.3.1	SR	Use information from the passage to demonstrate understanding.
24	<i>Reading</i>	RI.3.7	SR	Identify how a photograph supports information from a section in the passage.
25	<i>Reading</i>	RI.3.3	SR	Determine what a paragraph suggests about an individual based on information from the passage.
26	<i>Reading</i>	RI.3.1	SR	Determine the reason for an individual's action in the passage.
27	<i>Reading</i>	RI.3.3	SR	Identify traits that describe objects from the passage.
28	<i>Language</i>	L.3.4	SR	Determine the meaning of a phrase from the poem and choose another word that suggests the same meaning.
29	<i>Language</i>	L.3.4	SR	Identify the meaning of a prefix as used in a word from the poem.
30	<i>Reading</i>	RL.3.3	SR	Identify a word that describes the main character in the poem.
31	<i>Reading</i>	RI.3.9	SR	Identify an idea shared by the passage and the poem.
32	<i>Reading</i>	RI.3.2	CR	Write a paragraph that explains an individual's idea, using important details from the passage.

\* ELA item types are: selected-response (SR) and constructed-response (CR).