


Minnesota MCA Grade 10 Reading Practice

Exam Materials
Pages 2 - 21

Name _____

Minnesota Comprehensive Assessments-Series III

Reading Item Sampler
Grade 10



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Reading Test — Segment 1

Read this poem. Then answer the questions. Some questions may ask you about certain lines. The lines are numbered on the left side.

Uncoiling

by Pat Mora

- 1 With thorns, she scratches
on my window, tosses her hair dark with rain,
snares lightning, cholla,¹ hawks, butterfly
swarms in the tangles.
- 5 She sighs clouds,
head thrown back, eyes closed, roars
and rivers leap,
boulders retreat like crabs
into themselves.
- 10 She spews gusts and thunder,
spooks pale women who scurry to
lock doors, windows
when her tumbleweed skirt starts its spin.
- They sing lace lullabies
15 so their children won't hear
her uncoiling
through her lips, howling
leaves off trees, flesh
off bones, until she becomes
- 20 sound, spins herself
to sleep, sand stinging her ankles,
whirring into her raw skin like stars.

¹cholla—varieties of cacti with needlelike spines found mainly in the southwestern United States and Mexico

1. What do the events described in the poem represent?

- A. A release of energy
 - B. An attack on an enemy
 - C. An expression of sorrow
 - D. An act of self-defense
-

2. What does snares mean in line 3?

- A. Rises
 - B. Catches
 - C. Notices
 - D. Pushes
-

3. What is the most likely reason the poet compares boulders to crabs in lines 8–9?

- A. To explain how boulders erode in nature
- B. To suggest that even boulders are no match for the storm
- C. To emphasize the differences between rocks and living things
- D. To show what can be found near a river after a storm

4. How is the speaker different from the pale women described in the poem?
- A. The speaker remains locked indoors during the storm, but the pale women venture outside.
 - B. The speaker is saddened by the storm, but the pale women admire its capability.
 - C. The speaker appreciates the storm's power, but the pale women fear it.
 - D. The speaker ignores the storm, but the pale women observe its path.
-
5. What aspect of the storm is revealed in lines 5–9?
- A. The appearance of its rain
 - B. Its impact on wildlife
 - C. The extent of its power
 - D. Its control over the children
-
6. Why do the pale women sing to their children?
- A. To bring them joy
 - B. To teach them
 - C. To help them sleep
 - D. To distract them

7. Which words indicate the climax of the poem?

- A. "she scratches / on my window"
 - B. "She sighs clouds"
 - C. "She spews gusts and thunder"
 - D. "she becomes / sound"
-

8. How does the storm affect the speaker of the poem?

- A. The speaker is worried about the damage the storm will cause.
 - B. The speaker enjoys the sounds of the storm.
 - C. The speaker is fascinated by the force of the storm.
 - D. The speaker fears that the storm will intensify.
-

9. What is the most likely reason the poet chooses to give her subject human characteristics?

- A. To offer a new perspective on a familiar occurrence
- B. To explain the cause of lightning strikes
- C. To illustrate that nature has feelings
- D. To warn people to take cover during severe weather

Reading Test — Segment 2

Read this article from 2004 about efforts to save the vaquita, the world’s smallest porpoise, from extinction. Then answer the questions. Some questions may ask you about certain paragraphs. The paragraphs are numbered on the left side.

Rescuing the World’s Rarest Porpoise

by Tim Vanderpool

- 2
- 1 Flanked by harsh desert, the Gulf of California stretches northward along the Mexican coast like an azure ribbon of life, its teeming waters home to gray whales and sea lions, octopuses and turtles. But it wasn’t until 1958, when three unusual skulls were discovered on a Baja California beach, that the outside world learned of the gulf’s most mysterious inhabitant: a diminutive porpoise called the vaquita.
 - 2 Distinguished by black, bandit-like patches encircling each eye, the vaquita—Spanish for “little cow”—is the world’s smallest porpoise, reaching a maximum length of just five feet. It’s also the least understood: The vaquita is so rare that not a single individual lives in captivity, nor do any photos of the animal exist. And unlike dolphins—another group of toothed whales with more pronounced snouts and a reputation for following boats—vaquitas are shy and elusive creatures; spotting one of these cetaceans alive is virtually impossible. Most of what little is known about vaquitas has come from examining dead animals washed up on shorelines or retrieved from fishing nets.
 - 3 What scientists do know is that the vaquita, or Gulf of California porpoise, is an imperiled species. Restricted to the gulf’s northernmost reaches, the animal has the smallest distribution of any porpoise, and fewer than 600 are thought to exist. Listed as endangered by the U.S. government in 1985, the vaquita’s numbers kept dropping precipitously, primarily because the animals were drowning in gill nets used to catch sharks and other commercial species in the gulf. Suspended vertically in the water, gill nets allow a large animal’s head to pass through, but entangle the victim as it struggles to break free. In 1988, researchers estimated that 30 vaquitas were dying in gill nets each year. “At that point, we realized that gill net activity had to be reduced or these guys were in danger of extinction,” recalls Peggy Turk Boyer, director of the Intercultural Center for the Study of Deserts and Oceans (CEDO) in Puerto Peñasco, Mexico.
 - 4 Fortunately, CEDO and other organizations rallied to protect the porpoise, along with other endangered species of the upper gulf. Their efforts paid off in 1993, when Mexico created the Upper Gulf of California and Colorado River Delta Biosphere Reserve, a 2.3-million-acre protected area that includes about 60 percent of the vaquita’s habitat. The reserve was designed to limit fishing in a core area and encourage better fisheries management in outlying buffer zones.

- 5 But fishing continued as usual until September 2002, when the Mexican government imposed emergency prohibitions on most gill netting and all trawling in the reserve. (Trawlers, by scraping the sea floor bare of plants and animals, affect vaquita prey such as croakers, squid and grunts.) After fishermen protested, officials eased the restrictions temporarily. As the dust cleared, an important lesson emerged: Fishing communities needed to play a part in vaquita recovery discussions, and they were in fact eager to do so. "Many fishermen want better management of the gulf," says Turk Boyer. "They can see that fisheries have been depleted one by one."
- 6 With a number of fishermen on board, stringent regulations were enacted in late 2002, limiting bycatch¹ in the northern gulf to 50 percent of the total catch. In addition, trawling was prohibited when damage to the sea floor could be proved. With some legal protections in place, vaquita advocates are now working to raise public awareness of the marine mammal's plight through television, radio and newspaper advertisements. In Mexico City, for example, leading environmental activist and photographer Patricio Robles Gil, founder and president of Agrupación Sierra Madre and Unidos para la Conservación, recently spearheaded the installation of sculptures of the porpoises in the Mexico City Zoo and a famous children's museum, El Papalote, Museo del Niño.
- 7 Meanwhile, the vaquita is emerging as a flagship species for the entire Gulf of California ecosystem, helping draw attention to threats facing all marine life, including sea lions, tuna, marlin and sailfish. "They are beautiful to look at," Turk Boyer says of the planet's most enigmatic porpoise. "People are incredibly attracted to them."

¹bycatch—marine creatures caught unintentionally in fishing gear

10. What is the author attempting to do in paragraph 1?

- A.** Compare vaquitas to other forms of marine life
 - B.** Argue that vaquitas live in an inhospitable environment
 - C.** Engage readers' interest in learning more about vaquitas
 - D.** Persuade readers to help solve a problem related to vaquitas
-

11. Which words in paragraph 2 are an example of figurative language?

- A.** "toothed whales" to show a comparison to dolphins
 - B.** "shy" to demonstrate why vaquitas are "elusive creatures"
 - C.** "bandit-like" to describe a vaquita's eyes
 - D.** "rare" to show why vaquitas are the "least understood"
-

12. "As the dust cleared" (paragraph 5) refers to a time when

- A.** the fisheries of the protected area became depleted.
- B.** emergency prohibitions placed on gill netting expired.
- C.** sand and dirt scraped from the gulf floor settled back to the bottom.
- D.** the conflict between the fishermen and the government subsided.

13. What does stringent mean in paragraph 6?

- A.** Firm
 - B.** Biased
 - C.** Honest
 - D.** Previous
-

14. Which question raised by the article needs further explanation?

- A.** Why did fishing continue as usual from 1993 to September 2002?
 - B.** What threat does trawling pose to the vaquita population?
 - C.** What was the main purpose of the regulations enacted in late 2002?
 - D.** Why is it important to raise public awareness about vaquitas?
-

15. Which idea from the article best describes the fishermen's willingness to help save vaquitas?

- A.** "The reserve was designed to limit fishing in a core area and encourage better fisheries management in outlying buffer zones"
(paragraph 4)
- B.** "the Mexican government imposed emergency prohibitions on most gill netting and all trawling in the reserve"
(paragraph 5)
- C.** "After fishermen protested, officials eased the restrictions temporarily"
(paragraph 5)
- D.** "Fishing communities needed to play a part in vaquita recovery discussions, and they were in fact eager to do so"
(paragraph 5)

16. What does the word spearheaded mean in paragraph 6?

- A.** Caught
 - B.** Demanded
 - C.** Honored
 - D.** Organized
-

17. What is the main idea of paragraph 7?

- A.** Many people consider vaquitas beautiful.
- B.** Scientists want to learn more about vaquitas.
- C.** Shyness makes vaquitas some of the most mysterious creatures in the world.
- D.** The vaquitas' situation has helped raise awareness about other marine life.

Reading Test — Segment 3

Read the following article and diary entries about the creation of the Eiffel Tower. Then answer the questions. Some questions may ask you about certain paragraphs. The paragraphs are numbered on the left side.

Selection 1

The Eiffel Tower

written for the
Minnesota Department of Education

- 3
- 1 The soaring arcs and delicate latticework patterns of the Eiffel Tower are known throughout the world. When the tower was completed in 1889, it was the tallest structure on the planet. It enjoyed this distinction until 1929, when the Chrysler Building in New York supplanted it. Yet this tower, a celebrated icon, was initially designed as a temporary structure and received a decidedly chilly reception from many of the most influential artists in Paris at the time of its construction. If its fate had been determined by this confederation of celebrities, the Eiffel Tower would not exist today.
 - 2 The Eiffel Tower was built for the 1889 *Exposition Universelle*, a world's fair held in Paris to showcase French technological progress and to celebrate the one hundredth anniversary of the French Revolution. The fair required an architectural centerpiece, so Expo officials held a contest that encouraged people to submit designs of an appropriate industrial marvel. A man named Gustave Eiffel, an engineer who had already made a fortune designing bridges and railway stations, won the contest.
 - 3 Eiffel's design was a triumph of innovative engineering. He used mathematics to devise a stable structure that was artistically pleasing and, despite its unprecedented height, capable of withstanding strong winds. When the tower was finished, its size dismayed many Americans, who had taken pride in the fact that the Washington Monument was—until that time—the tallest building in the world.
 - 4 Dismay of a different sort could be heard in Paris before construction of the tower even started. Paris was home to hundreds of influential artists and writers, and many were horrified by a building they considered ugly and structurally flawed. One person even disparagingly referred to the tower as a "gigantic black smokestack." When the Expo selection committee made Eiffel's winning design public, these artists assumed that public outcry would influence this group to change its plans. Ground was broken for the construction of Eiffel's design, however, and the artists began a public campaign against the tower.

- 5 The Artists' Protest officially commenced with the publication of "Protest Against the Tower of Monsieur Eiffel" in the February 14, 1887, edition of *Le Temps*, a prominent French newspaper. This letter was addressed to the director of works for the Exposition Universelle and was signed by many poets, authors, and artists. In all, forty-seven individuals joined together to stop construction of a structure they described as a "half-built factory pipe" and a "mast of iron gymnasium apparatus, incomplete, confused and deformed."
- 6 The artists' displeasure was based partly on a disagreement about the essential nature of art. In the nineteenth century, many artists and intellectuals looked down on engineers and their lack of formal training in literature and the arts. The idea that a work of engineering could also be considered a work of art was deemed absurd. Many artists were taken aback when Eiffel defended his creation in a subsequent issue of *Le Temps*, justifying his design on artistic terms and declaring that his tower was a bold demonstration of scientific progress. The Expo committee stood behind its choice, and construction went on as planned.
- 7 Gustave Eiffel continued to defend his tower from critics while it was being built. People living near the construction site were terrified that heavy iron girders might come crashing through their roofs. One resident even sued the city, an effort that halted construction for several months. Desperate to return to work, Eiffel pledged that he would be financially responsible for any damage his tower might cause. He even declared that he would destroy his creation if it proved to be dangerous. Work on the tower resumed.
- 8 When the Eiffel Tower officially opened in 1889, it was an immediate sensation with visitors from around the world. A new industry arose, dedicated to creating souvenirs featuring the image of the world's tallest building. Still, once the Exposition Universelle was over, the detractors reappeared. They argued that since the event was now past, Eiffel's tower should be torn down, as no one had ever agreed that the construction would be permanent. Indeed, the original contract called for Eiffel to disassemble his tower after twenty years. Eiffel was ready for the foes of his creation, however. He showed how the tower aided scientific research, and he made the tower available to the French military to use for its radio network. Radio signals are still broadcast from the top of the Eiffel Tower, which now bristles with dozens of antennae.
- 9 When the Eiffel Tower was built, many Parisians declared that the structure would make France the laughingstock of the world. Gustave Eiffel had the last laugh. He lived until 1923, long enough to witness his "temporary" building become an icon of his country.

Selection 2

From the Diary of Pierre Rocher

written for the
Minnesota Department of Education

January 23, 1887

- 10 I left home this morning to begin work on the new tower. The weather was bitterly cold, with a damp chill coming from the river. But I am happy to have the work, as it will keep food on our table for two years, maybe three. This does seem to be a very odd project, however. I was able to catch a glimpse of the architect's designs; from what I can tell, this tower is not exactly a building. More like the inside of a building. A skeleton without a body. No walls, no windows; simply interlacing girders with a point at the apex. A building that a small child would construct from sticks, and perhaps just as useless. I was told the structure will be more than three hundred meters tall when it is finished. The tallest building in the world, they claim. Apparently, this is important to some people. Arrogance, I say. Simone fears for my safety, though she knows how much we need the steady money I will be earning. Our baby, due this summer, cannot live on air and promises. Let us hope fortune smiles on Mr. Eiffel's lofty plans, and that his workers remain healthy and safe until the tower is complete.

July 12, 1887

- 11 I yearn for the icy grip of winter. Although the work pays well, I often find myself resisting the urge to resign. It was sweltering today; it has been sweltering for weeks. They say horses are fainting on the Paris streets. Yet Jacques, Philippe, and I find ourselves fifty-seven meters closer to the sun than any other human being on the planet, driving rivets into a hot girder. Our sweat dances and disappears on the hot, reflecting metal. It is amazing that none of us has followed the example of the horses, especially since Mr. Eiffel is determined to stay on schedule, heat wave or no. But he, too, feels warmth of a different kind. Many artists have been writing to the newspapers, condemning the tower as a work of folly. I also hear mocking comments in the cafés we frequent after our daily work is done. The tower is, indeed, a strange beast; however, I am beginning to detect some beauty in the delicate steel arches. Jacques claims that the heat has affected my head. Perhaps he is right. The only person suffering more from the heat is poor Simone, with the baby due any day now. But she never complains. She is stronger than I.

September 22, 1888

- 12 We worked today with hearts as heavy as the metal to which we cling. We lost a brother yesterday, the first to give his life to this never-ending tower. We were all sick at heart. Mr. Eiffel allowed us to leave early, though I could tell he was of two minds about it. He is bound and determined to have his tower finished on time. Still, even he could not justify retaining us after the incident. I went home and hugged my wife and my son with an almost desperate intensity. I did not tell Simone about the accident, since I know she would worry even more, but I am sure she could read the truth in my eyes. Almost no sleep. Today was work as usual, as though nothing had happened. However, the illusion of invincibility is gone. I work, though I am angry. Accidents happen in construction. We all know that. Without risk, no great buildings would ever be built. But this one, as unusual as it is, is all for nothing, a trifling curiosity for a fair that no one will likely remember.

March 31, 1889

- 13 Today was the unveiling, although the tower has certainly not been hidden. We completed work last week; the tower is officially open. Despite all the difficulties, I am proud of our efforts. The tower may be without purpose, but it is magnificent nonetheless. The artists still howl in outrage, but no one listens to their voices today. I saw faces of every description gazing upward in astonishment. I believe that I know what some were thinking. Like me, they had not considered a steel edifice to be capable of beauty. Perhaps this is the actual purpose of the tower. All the workers and their families were there for the opening, as of course was Mr. Eiffel, ever the showman in his silk hat. I brought Simone and little Pierrot. He is not quite two years old, but I hope he will somehow remember this day. It pains my heart to think this tower will be torn down in just a few years. All that work for naught. Perhaps I will be hired for that project as well. Years from now, few if any will even remember that the tower once existed. Perhaps they will consider it a dream from their youth.

18. What is the main message in both the article and the diary entries?

- A.** Life is full of undesirable outcomes.
 - B.** Reaching goals often involves taking risks.
 - C.** Public opposition often transforms ideas.
 - D.** Regret may follow the completion of a task.
-

19. What is the primary reason the passage is written as a diary?

- A.** It suggests how long the project took to complete.
 - B.** It records the thoughts of Pierre Rocher over time.
 - C.** It illustrates the problems Pierre Rocher encountered.
 - D.** It records information that is historically important.
-

20. What can the reader infer about the overall character of Pierre Rocher?

- A.** He is dedicated to fulfilling his commitments.
- B.** He is eager to share his opinion with others.
- C.** He is aware of the impact of his work on society.
- D.** He is motivated by the need for perfection.

21. Read the following phrase from Pierre Rocher's second diary entry.

Our sweat dances and disappears

These words provide a clue to the

- A.** sweltering temperature of the day.
 - B.** towering height of the structure.
 - C.** congenial attitude of the workers.
 - D.** reflecting metal of the structure.
-

22. What can readers conclude about Gustave Eiffel from the way he managed the protestors?

- A.** He ignored the protestors by refusing to communicate with them.
 - B.** He recognized concerns and responded accordingly.
 - C.** He defended his ideas and interfered with the protestors.
 - D.** He revealed his flexibility by allowing others to make decisions.
-

23. Readers can better understand the impact of Pierre Rocher's colleague's death on other workers because Rocher

- A.** avoids telling his wife about the tragic accident at the tower.
- B.** compares the hearts of the workers to the heavy metal of the tower.
- C.** appreciates that the workers are given the rest of the day off.
- D.** concludes that risk is a necessary part of constructing great buildings.

24. Which statement reflects the common purpose of both the article and the diary entries?

- A.** Both describe the tower as a magnificent achievement.
 - B.** Both demonstrate the intricate design of the tower.
 - C.** Both reveal tragedies during the building of the tower.
 - D.** Both justify the reasons the tower was built.
-

25. How is the author's approach in the article different from the author's approach in the diary entries?

- A.** The article emphasizes the phases of construction, but the diary entries present a broad overview of the construction.
- B.** The article explains the process of the construction, but the diary entries encourage sympathy for the people involved with the construction.
- C.** The article presents factual information about the project, but the diary entries focus on a personal interpretation of the project.
- D.** The article exhibits how individuals can impede a project, but the diary entries showcase how individuals can work together on a project.

26. Read these statements from Pierre Rocher's second diary entry.

. . . Mr. Eiffel is determined to stay on schedule, heat wave or no. But he, too, feels warmth of a different kind.

Based on the second diary entry, what does the word warmth mean?

- A.** Affectionate feeling
 - B.** Lively excitement
 - C.** Outside pressure
 - D.** Stifling heat
-

27. Read the following sentence from Pierre Rocher's third diary entry.

However, the illusion of invincibility is gone.

With this statement, Pierre suggests that the workers

- A.** plan to reduce the number of risks they take.
- B.** think that finishing the tower is not worth the danger.
- C.** understand that chances of harm are real.
- D.** are concerned that they cannot finish the tower.

28. What is the purpose of the article?

- A.** To explain how Gustave Eiffel changed engineering
- B.** To describe the design of a famous French landmark
- C.** To demonstrate how Gustave Eiffel overcame opposition
- D.** To emphasize the importance of art to the French people

29. Read the following sentence from paragraph 9.

Gustave Eiffel had the last laugh.

The most likely reason the author included this sentence was to convey

- A.** that Mr. Eiffel reacted to his critics.
- B.** that Mr. Eiffel achieved satisfaction.
- C.** that Mr. Eiffel knew he was famous.
- D.** that Mr. Eiffel had a sense of humor.