

Massachusetts MCAS 2023
Grade 5 English Language Arts

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MASSACHUSETTS

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MCAS Test Items

from the

*Grade 5 English Language Arts
Paper-Based Test*

June 2023

**Massachusetts Department of
Elementary and Secondary Education**

Grade 5 English Language Arts

This session contains 19 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.

Caitlin O’Connell is a scientist who studies elephants and their behavior. In this passage, she shares what she has learned about elephants. Read the passage and answer the questions that follow.

from *The Elephant Scientist*

by Caitlin O’Connell and Donna M. Jackson

LIVING LARGE

- 1 African elephants reign as the largest living land mammals in the world. Adult males, called bulls, typically weigh up to 14,000 pounds, and adult females, called cows, average about 7,000 pounds. The largest African elephant on record weighed an estimated 24,000 pounds—twelve tons—and stood thirteen feet high at his shoulders. That’s about twice as tall as the average professional basketball player in America. Newborn elephants, called calves, tip the scales at anywhere from 110 to 260 pounds and stand at about three feet tall at the shoulders. Despite their enormous size, however, some elephants have been clocked running as fast as fifteen miles an hour, which is about the average top speed of physically fit men.

Photograph 1



A baby elephant fits under its mother’s belly for up to a year after birth.

- 2 To survive in the wild, elephants eat a healthy mix of foliage and may drink between thirty and fifty gallons of water a day—sometimes all in one drinking session, says Caitlin [O’Connell]. The plant-eating pachyderms (a term used for elephants that refers to their thick skin) dine on an average of 250 to 450 pounds of vegetation daily. Grass makes up part of their diet during the rainy season, but elephants also eat shrubs, twigs, buds, pods, fruits, vegetables, shoots, roots, and tree bark.
- 3 Helping find all that food is an elephant’s versatile trunk—a unique appendage¹ among living mammals. Comprising more than 40,000 muscles, this long fusion of nose and upper lip helps an elephant breathe, smell, drink, and explore objects. It’s so powerful that it can uproot a tree, yet nimble enough to grasp a nut or a berry, says Caitlin. When swimming, an elephant uses its trunk as a snorkel to take in and release air. Elephants also use their trunk to play, fight, comfort, and communicate with one another.
- 4 Along with its trunk, an elephant’s tusks aid in its daily quest for green cuisine. The spearlike extensions allow elephants to dig for food and water and to rip the bark from trees. Tusks are giant incisor teeth made of dentin or ivory—the same material that forms our teeth. They grow throughout an elephant’s life and can extend as long as eight feet and weigh more than two hundred pounds. In hostile situations, elephants use their tusks to fight with other elephants or to defend themselves and their calves against predators. Sadly, some people kill elephants for their tusks so that they can sell the ivory illegally. “A poor villager might do this for as little as five dollars of profit,” says Caitlin.

¹appendage—a part of the body that projects outward

Photograph 2



Elephants eat everything from grass to tree bark. When an elephant severely strips a tree of its bark, it eventually kills the tree.

- 5 When left to live out their natural lives, elephants generally grow to be about sixty-five years old. "It all depends on when they lose their teeth," explains Caitlin. Elephants grow six sets of teeth during their lifetime, with one to two molars in place on each side of the top and bottom jaw at any one time. New teeth erupt at the back of the jaw and push the older ones forward. When the last set of teeth wears out and drops out of an elephant's mouth, the elephant goes hungry and dies because it isn't able to chew and consume enough food. . . .

SENSITIVE SOULS

- 6 Elephants may be big, but they're remarkably delicate in many ways, says Caitlin. "Their wrinkly skin, for example, looks tough and impenetrable, but it's really sensitive." To protect it from sunburns and insect bites, elephants spray themselves with water, roll in the mud, and dust their bodies with dirt. "The wrinkles help them stay cool," notes Caitlin. When an elephant gets wet, water fills all its crinkly crevices, and the skin remains moist longer.

Photograph 3



Elephants greet one another by placing their trunk in each other's mouth. This important ritual is similar to a handshake.

- 7 Elephants are believed to be smarter than most mammals and to have longer-term memories, says Caitlin. Brain-size comparisons between large mammals show that elephants have an extra-large temporal lobe²—the area where sound cues are processed and within which is the hippocampus,³ where mammals form and store memories. This larger temporal lobe probably explains why more experienced matriarchs,⁴ who typically lead family groups, can readily distinguish the vocalizations of friends versus foes and recall where to find food and water during a drought.
- 8 Perhaps most striking—and the characteristic that intrigued Caitlin most early on—is that elephants are highly social animals that form lifelong relationships. They often engage in ritualistic⁵ behaviors that seem to mark special events. When a baby is born, or when they're reunited with old friends, elephants will trumpet, scream, and roar wildly. "They'll also use body language," says Caitlin, who has since witnessed many such joyous occasions in her career. "They'll flap their ears and embrace with their trunks," she says. "Strangely, they'll also pee and poop as part of the celebration."

²temporal lobe—a part of the brain

³hippocampus—a part of the brain

⁴matriarchs—the female heads of families

⁵ritualistic—repetitive; in a manner suggesting an established process

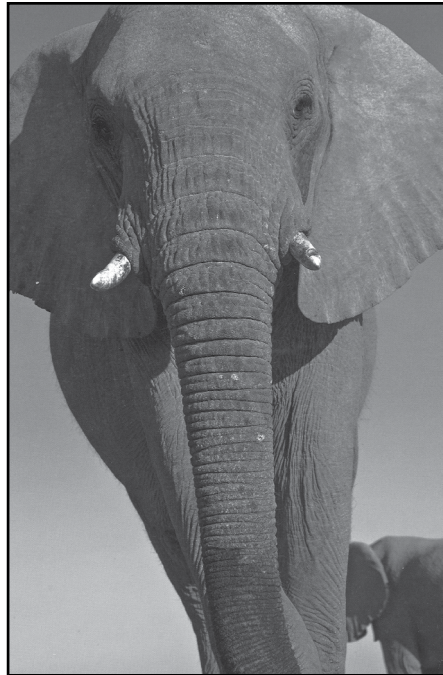
Photograph 4



Elephants use their trunk to rescue others from danger. In this case, a mother and sister come to the aid of a small calf that has fallen into a drinking trough.

- 9 As elephants travel across vast tracts of land, families frequently send vocal messages and coordinate their movements until they meet again. When a family member dies along the way, elephants become extremely curious about the remains. They've been observed lingering around a body for days, touching it with their feet, stroking it with their trunk, and even sometimes covering it with clumps of grass and other bits of earth. They're also curious about the skulls and bones of unrelated elephants and will often examine their remains extensively with their trunk and feet—even after the animal has been dead for some time.

Photograph 5



An elephant matriarch's long-term memory helps her distinguish the vocalizations of friends from those of unfamiliar elephants. It also enables her to remember migration paths and places to eat during droughts.

- 10 The more Caitlin learned about elephants, their relationships, and their strong bonds, the more intrigued she was with their world—and the stronger her desire to protect them.

The Elephant Scientist by Caitlin O'Connell and Donna M. Jackson, photographs by Caitlin O'Connell and Timothy Rodwell. Text copyright © 2011 by Caitlin O'Connell and Donna M. Jackson. Photographs copyright © 2011 by Caitlin O'Connell and Timothy Rodwell. Reprinted by permission of Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Publishing Company.

English Language Arts

- 1 Read the sentence from paragraph 1 in the box.

Newborn elephants, called calves, tip the scales at anywhere from 110 to 260 pounds. . . .

What is the **most likely** reason the authors use the phrase “tip the scales” in the sentence?

- Ⓐ to suggest why baby elephants are a specific size
- Ⓑ to call attention to how much baby elephants weigh
- Ⓒ to show that scientists need special equipment to study elephants
- Ⓓ to demonstrate that scientists take risks when observing elephants

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

When swimming, an elephant uses its trunk as a snorkel to take in and release air.

What is the **main** purpose of the sentence?

- Ⓐ to show how elephant trunks work
- Ⓑ to give evidence that elephants enjoy the outdoors
- Ⓒ to describe a challenge that elephants might encounter
- Ⓓ to explain why researchers are interested in elephant trunks

3 Part A

The passage shows that elephants' trunks

- Ⓐ change over time.
- Ⓑ are difficult to control.
- Ⓒ serve many purposes.
- Ⓓ are unable to lift heavy objects.

Part B

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

- Ⓐ "The plant-eating pachyderms . . . dine on an average of 250 to 450 pounds of vegetation daily." (paragraph 2)
- Ⓑ ". . . elephants also eat shrubs, twigs, buds, pods, . . . and tree bark." (paragraph 2)
- Ⓒ "Comprising more than 40,000 muscles . . ." (paragraph 3)
- Ⓓ ". . . helps an elephant breathe, smell, drink, and explore objects." (paragraph 3)

4 Based on paragraph 7, the temporal lobe would **most likely** help an elephant to

- Ⓐ make a warning call.
- Ⓑ form a new social group.
- Ⓒ store water during dry weather.
- Ⓓ recall where meals can be found.

English Language Arts

5 Which word from the passage contains a prefix that means “again”?

- Ⓐ uproot (paragraph 3)
- Ⓑ forward (paragraph 5)
- Ⓒ impenetrable (paragraph 6)
- Ⓓ reunited (paragraph 8)

6 Read the sentence from paragraph 8 in the box.

Perhaps most striking—and the characteristic that intrigued Caitlin most early on—is that elephants are highly social animals that form lifelong relationships.

Which of the following could **best** replace the word **striking** in the sentence?

- Ⓐ pleasing
- Ⓑ confusing
- Ⓒ interesting
- Ⓓ distracting

- 7 In the passage, how do the authors help the reader understand that elephants are intelligent?
- Ⓐ by detailing challenging experiences people have with elephants
 - Ⓑ by providing examples of elephants interacting with one another
 - Ⓒ by describing the size of elephants compared to other animals
 - Ⓓ by suggesting reasons people are puzzled by elephants
- 8 What is the **main** purpose of the headings in the passage?
- Ⓐ to describe a series of steps
 - Ⓑ to organize the information by topic
 - Ⓒ to compare information about different elephants
 - Ⓓ to label the actions of elephants in chronological order

English Language Arts

- 9 Based on the passage, with which statement would the authors **most likely** agree?
- Ⓐ Elephants are gentle in most situations.
 - Ⓑ People understand very little about African elephants.
 - Ⓒ Elephants are fascinating creatures with unique behaviors.
 - Ⓓ People should help transport elephants to new areas within Africa.
- 10 The photographs and captions **mainly** help the reader
- Ⓐ define important scientific words.
 - Ⓑ identify elephants from several regions.
 - Ⓒ compare ways that scientists complete tasks.
 - Ⓓ understand key details about the lives of elephants.

11

Choose **one** sentence that states the main idea of the passage.

- Ⓐ Elephants use their trunks and tusks to help them find food.
- Ⓑ Elephants communicate with each other over large areas of land to plan their movements.
- Ⓒ Elephants are among the largest animals on Earth, and they have unique traits that help them survive.
- Ⓓ Elephants eat tree bark, and they also enjoy fruits and vegetables.

Choose **two** details that support the main idea.

- Ⓐ Elephants use their trunks and tusks to help them find food.
- Ⓑ Elephants communicate with each other over large areas of land to plan their movements.
- Ⓒ Elephants are among the largest animals on Earth, and they have unique traits that help them survive.
- Ⓓ Elephants eat tree bark, and they also enjoy fruits and vegetables.

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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.**

- 12** Based on the passage, write an essay that explains how the special features of elephants help them to survive. 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.

12

Read the folktale about Hodja, a wise man known for his sense of humor. Then answer the questions that follow.

Hodja and the Hungry Coat: A Turkish Tale

Retold by Gale Sypher Jacob

- 1 When Hodja arrived home late one fall afternoon, dirt clung to his patched trousers, his faded shirt, and his tattered felt cap. He'd been laboring in the vineyards since sunrise.
- 2 "Hurry! Change your clothes and bathe," said his wife, Fatima. "You'll be late for the grand banquet at the Emir's!"
- 3 "I can't be late," declared Hodja, washing his hands and splashing water on his face. "I'll have to go in these clothes."
- 4 Fatima frowned and brushed dirt from his trousers. Then Hodja climbed on Zeki, his little donkey, and waved good-bye.
- 5 As he approached the Emir's mansion, Hodja admired the candles gleaming in the many windows. Music and bits of conversations drifted through the crisp air, and heavy footsteps and laughter echoed in the courtyard as the men arrived for the banquet. Hodja tethered Zeki and joined the well-dressed crowd inside.
- 6 Servants circled the reception room carrying trays of sweetmeats and cups of tea. Hodja greeted other guests, but not one spoke to him in return. People turned their backs or swept past, barely glancing his way.
- 7 Soon the Emir announced that the banquet was ready. Groups of chattering guests pressed through the doorway and sat at low tables where soup was waiting for them. Hodja, not wanting to be jostled in the crowd, stood waiting in a dark corner of the candlelit room.
- 8 The Emir glanced briefly in Hodja's direction and clapped his hands to call a servant. "Who admitted that dirty laborer in patched trousers?" the Emir whispered to the man. "Get rid of him."
- 9 The dark-eyed servant grabbed Hodja's arm and pulled him outside.
- 10 "I'm going, I'm going," said Hodja, "but you may see me again."
- 11 He climbed on Zeki and plodded home.

English Language Arts

- 12 "What happened?" asked Fatima. When he told her, she cried, "Oh, my poor dear!"
- 13 "Don't worry," Hodja said. "I have a plan. Bring me basins of hot water and soap, my new shoes, and my best shirt, trousers, turban, and coat."
- 14 He soaped and scrubbed himself, then donned his festive clothes, a perfectly wound turban, and his fine coat.
- 15 Fatima kissed him. "Is that still you, Hodja?"
- 16 "Yes, indeed," he replied. "And now I will return to the banquet."
- 17 As before, he tethered Zeki in the courtyard and walked toward the house. In the doorway stood the dark-eyed servant who had thrown Hodja out.
- 18 The servant bowed. "Welcome. It is a pleasure to see you, effendi.* Allow me to escort you."
- 19 Hodja smiled and followed the servant into the banquet room. Heads turned as he was led toward the Emir. Guests whispered.
- 20 "Come, Hodja Effendi," called the Emir, "sit here beside me in the place of honor. The soup is finished, but there will be other courses for your pleasure."
- 21 "Thank you," Hodja replied as he sat on a cushion at the low table.
- 22 Soon trays of lamb shish kebab, rice pilaf, vegetables, cheeses, and breads were passed. Hodja filled his plate. Then he picked up several pieces of lamb and a handful of rice and tucked the food into his left coat pocket.
- 23 "Eat, coat, eat!" commanded Hodja.
- 24 He picked up a fistful of vegetables, a slice of bread, and a wedge of cheese. He stuffed them into his right coat pocket.
- 25 "Eat, coat, eat!" commanded Hodja.
- 26 All the guests stared at him.
- 27 "Tell me, Hodja Effendi," said the Emir, "why are you feeding your coat?"

*effendi—a term of respect or courtesy, similar to "Sir"

- 28 "When I came to your banquet wearing my work clothes, you threw me out," declared Hodja. "Now I'm wearing my fine coat, and you welcome me. It must be the coat, then, that you invited to your banquet, not me."
- 29 The Emir's face flushed with shame. Other guests lowered their eyes and stared at their laps.
- 30 "Ah, here comes dessert!" cried Hodja. "Before I leave, my coat would love to savor pieces of sweet baklava and perhaps a cup of rich coffee."

"Hodja and the Hungry Coat: A Turkish Tale" by Gale Sypher Jacob, from *Spider Magazine*, (February 2007).
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- 13** What does paragraph 1 **mainly** suggest about Hodja?
- Ⓐ He is a very hard worker.
 - Ⓑ He works alone in the fields.
 - Ⓒ He wastes time while working.
 - Ⓓ He is hoping to find new work.
- 14** What do paragraphs 2–4 **mainly** show about Fatima?
- Ⓐ She wonders what is taking Hodja so long to get ready.
 - Ⓑ She hopes that Hodja will take better care of his clothes.
 - Ⓒ She feels jealous that Hodja is going to the banquet without her.
 - Ⓓ She worries about how others might react to Hodja at the banquet.
- 15** Why is paragraph 8 important to the folktale?
- Ⓐ It describes the moment Hodja first saw the Emir.
 - Ⓑ It explains the reason the Emir wants Hodja to leave.
 - Ⓒ It shows the effect of Hodja arriving at the banquet unannounced.
 - Ⓓ It reveals the problem the Emir has with the servants at the banquet.

16 Based on the folktale, why does Hodja wear his work clothes to the banquet?

- Ⓐ His nice clothes are not clean.
- Ⓑ His nice clothes are not comfortable.
- Ⓒ He does not have time to change into nice clothes.
- Ⓓ He thinks his friends will not recognize him in nice clothes.

17 **Part A**

What is the **main** lesson of the folktale?

- Ⓐ Being late to a gathering is impolite.
- Ⓑ Eating more than your share shows greed.
- Ⓒ Judging people by their appearance is unfair.
- Ⓓ Talking about other people causes hurt feelings.

Part B

Which paragraphs from the folktale **best** support the answer to Part A?

- Ⓐ paragraphs 2 and 3
- Ⓑ paragraphs 6 and 7
- Ⓒ paragraphs 22 and 23
- Ⓓ paragraphs 28 and 29

English Language Arts

- 18** Read the sentences from the folktale in the box.

- Hodja tethered Zeki and joined the well-dressed crowd inside. (paragraph 5)
- As before, he tethered Zeki in the courtyard and walked toward the house. (paragraph 17)

Based on the folktale, what is the **most likely** meaning of **tethered** as it is used in the sentences?

- Ⓐ tied up
 - Ⓑ climbed on
 - Ⓒ covered up
 - Ⓓ brushed off
- 19** What does focusing on Hodja’s experiences in the folktale **best** help the reader understand?
- Ⓐ why Hodja decides to return to the banquet
 - Ⓑ how Hodja becomes better friends with the other banquet guests
 - Ⓒ when Hodja realizes that he is not welcome at the banquet and how he explains it to his wife
 - Ⓓ what Hodja finds important and how it is different from what others at the banquet find important

Grade 5 English Language Arts
Spring 2023 Released Operational Items

PBT Item No.	Page No.	Reporting Category	Standard	Item Type*	Item Description	Correct Answer (SR)**
1	9	<i>Language</i>	L.5.5	SR	Determine the effect of figurative language used in the passage.	B
2	9	<i>Reading</i>	RI.5.3	SR	Identify the purpose of a sentence in the passage.	A
3	10	<i>Reading</i>	RI.5.1	SR	Make an inference about a topic presented in the passage and choose evidence from the passage that supports the inference.	C;D
4	10	<i>Reading</i>	RI.5.1	SR	Determine which idea is presented in the passage.	D
5	11	<i>Language</i>	L.5.4	SR	Identify a word from the passage based on its affix.	D
6	11	<i>Language</i>	L.5.4	SR	Determine a synonym for a multiple-meaning word in the passage.	C
7	12	<i>Reading</i>	RI.5.1	SR	Identify how the authors develop an important idea in the passage.	B
8	12	<i>Reading</i>	RI.5.5	SR	Determine the purpose of a text feature used in the passage.	B
9	13	<i>Reading</i>	RI.5.1	SR	Identify a statement with which the authors of the passage would agree.	C
10	13	<i>Reading</i>	RI.5.7	SR	Determine how text features contribute to the overall understanding of the passage.	D
11	14	<i>Reading</i>	RI.5.2	SR	Determine a main idea of the passage and select evidence from the passage to support the main idea.	C;A,B
12	15	<i>Language, Writing</i>	L.5.1, L.5.2, L.5.3, W.5.2, W.5.4	ES	Write an essay that explains an important idea presented in the passage; use important details from the passage as evidence.	
13	20	<i>Reading</i>	RL.5.3	SR	Identify a character trait of an individual based on a specific part of the folktale.	A
14	20	<i>Reading</i>	RL.5.3	SR	Describe characters' feelings based on a specific part of the folktale.	D
15	20	<i>Reading</i>	RL.5.5	SR	Determine the importance of specific paragraphs to the overall folktale.	B
16	21	<i>Reading</i>	RL.5.1	SR	Make an inference based on details from the folktale.	C
17	21	<i>Reading</i>	RL.5.2	SR	Identify the main lesson of the folktale and choose evidence from the folktale that supports the lesson.	C;D
18	22	<i>Language</i>	L.5.4	SR	Determine the meaning of a word in context.	A
19	22	<i>Reading</i>	RL.5.6	SR	Identify how the point of view supports the reader's understanding of the folktale.	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 5 English Language Arts
Spring 2023 Unreleased Operational Items

PBT Item No.	Reporting Category	Standard	Item Type*	Item Description
20	<i>Reading</i>	RL.5.3	SR	Describe characters' feelings based on a specific part of the passage.
21	<i>Language</i>	L.5.4	SR	Determine the correct meaning of a multiple-meaning word in context.
22	<i>Language</i>	L.5.2	SR	Determine the purpose of punctuation in a sentence and choose another sentence from the passage that uses punctuation for the same purpose.
23	<i>Language</i>	L.5.6	SR	Identify the function of a phrase used in the passage.
24	<i>Reading</i>	RL.5.2	SR	Determine how a specific part of the passage supports development of a key idea.
25	<i>Reading</i>	RL.5.1	SR	Make an inference based on details from the passage.
26	<i>Reading</i>	RL.5.3	SR	Identify details about a character based on a specific part of the passage.
27	<i>Reading</i>	RL.5.3	SR	Explain how a character changes in a specific part of the passage.
28	<i>Reading</i>	RL.5.3	SR	Determine what is being suggested by a specific detail from the passage.
29	<i>Reading</i>	RL.5.4	SR	Determine what a phrase suggests about a character in the passage.
30	<i>Reading</i>	RL.5.2	SR	Determine a theme of the passage and choose evidence from the passage that best supports the theme.
31	<i>Language, Writing</i>	L.5.1, L.5.2, L.5.3, W.5.2, W.5.4	ES	Write an essay that explains how the characters worked together to solve a problem; use information from the passage as evidence.

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