

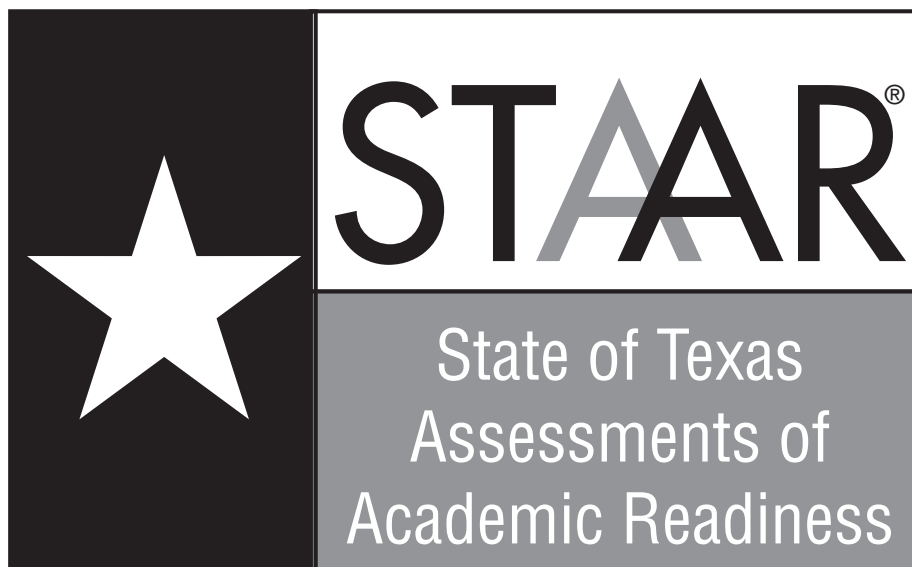
Texas STAAR 2021 Grade 3 Reading

Exam Materials

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Answer Key Materials

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GRADE 3

Reading

Administered May 2021

RELEASED

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

Prickly Porcupines

by Kathy Kranking

- 1 What's the first thing you think of when you hear the word "porcupine"? Maybe it's those famous pointy quills. A porcupine has 30,000 or more of them!
- 2 You might have seen cartoons showing porcupines that could "shoot" their quills. Real porcupines can't do that. But if a predator attacks a porcupine, the animal whirls around with its sharp quills raised. It swishes its tail from side to side. And if the attacker gets whacked, the quills will easily get stuck in its skin.

On the Menu

- 3 The name *porcupine* means "quill pig." The quill part is right, but porcupines aren't pigs at all. Like mice, squirrels, and beavers, they're rodents. North American porcupines live in much of the United States and Canada.
- 4 Porcupines are out and about both day and night, though more at night. They don't hibernate, so during different times of the year different things are on a porcupine's menu. In the spring, for example, they nibble on buds, flowers, leaves, and more. During winter, there's less to eat, so porcupines live mostly on bark and evergreen needles then.
- 5 Porcupines have long, orange front teeth that never stop growing. But that's OK, because porcupines hardly ever stop gnawing! That keeps their teeth worn down. Besides chewing their normal food, they'll also gnaw at things such as picnic tables, rake handles, cabins, and even shoes!

Porcupines in North America





A porcupine is eating leaves while sitting on a tree branch.

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Little Pricklies

6 In the spring, a mother porcupine gives birth to one baby. Some newborn animals are helpless, but not baby porcupines. They're born with their eyes open and are able to walk right away.

7 At first, their quills are soft and wet. But in just a few hours, the quills dry out and become stiff little stabbers. They aren't long enough to hurt a predator, though. So if a baby feels threatened, it quickly finds a place to hide.



Porcupine Mother and Baby

© iStock.com/dssimages

8 A baby porcupine nurses from its mom for about four months. But it also begins eating soft plant parts when it's just a few days old. After it stops nursing, a young porcupine will separate from its mom for longer and longer periods, until it's ready to live on its own.

At Home up a Tree

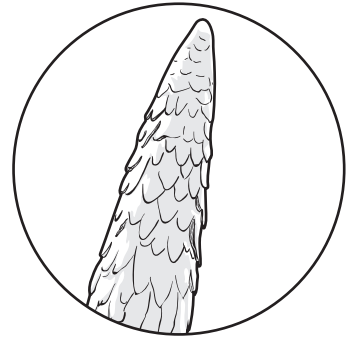
9 Porcupines are great climbers and spend a lot of their time in trees. Long claws and rough paw pads help them get a grip. When they're just a few weeks old, even babies can climb young, skinny trees. Climbing can be a good way to help porcupines avoid enemies.

10 Speaking of enemies, porcupines don't have very many. Only a few kinds of animals know how to get around a porcupine's prickly defenses. Some predators of porcupines include cougars, wolves, and bears.

Super Quills

- 11 Most animals, though, won't mess with a porcupine. Its quills are amazing weapons. They're on every part of the animal's body except for its belly, face, and ears. But most are on the porcupine's back and tail. Quills are actually sharp, stiff hairs. And some of them can be up to four inches long!
- 12 The tips of the quills are covered with tiny hook-like barbs. The barbs make the quills very hard to pull out. And the ends of the quills are covered with greasy stuff that makes it easier for them to keep moving in deeper. As they do, they can cause more problems inside a victim's body.
- 13 An animal brave (or foolish) enough to attack a porcupine does get some warning. When a porcupine feels threatened, it clacks its teeth together. Then it lets off a strong warning smell as it raises its quills. If that doesn't work, the porcupine whirls around, swishing its prickly tail back and forth. Some animals might give up at this point and go find an easier meal. But if an animal does attack, it will end up with a face or foot full of sharp quills. *Yow!*
- 14 Porcupines have one of the best self-defense systems in nature. These walking pincushions sure can take care of themselves!

Close-Up View of a Quill



Tiny barbs cover the tip of a quill.

Used with permission.

1 In paragraph 6, the suffix *-less* helps the reader know that the word helpless means —

- A** one who helps others
 - B** to help again
 - C** not able to help oneself
 - D** too much help
-

2 Which text feature helps the reader locate information about why many animals leave porcupines alone?

- F** The labels on the map “Porcupines in North America”
 - G** The subheading “On the Menu”
 - H** The caption under the photograph next to paragraph 6
 - J** The subheading “Super Quills”
-

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

- A** To tell the reader where to find porcupines in the wild
- B** To describe how a porcupine acts around an attacker
- C** To provide the reader with many different facts about porcupines
- D** To explain why porcupines look different from other animals

4 Which section is most likely to give information about what a porcupine eats?

- F** On the Menu
 - G** Little Pricklies
 - H** At Home up a Tree
 - J** Super Quills
-

5 Which word is a synonym for nibble in paragraph 4?

- A** Sleep
 - B** Hide
 - C** Walk
 - D** Chew
-

6 What is the most likely reason the author includes the map in the selection?

- F** To show that porcupines live in Canada and in part of the United States
- G** To show that porcupines can be found only in the United States
- H** To show that porcupines are mostly found in Alaska
- J** To show that porcupines live only near oceans

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

A Gift from Nature

- 1 Layla knew the grin on her face stretched from ear to ear. She just couldn't help it. Was there anything better than spending a school day exploring a national park? Layla didn't think so. She loved being outside because there was always something new to discover. This was only the second field trip she had ever been on, but Layla was certain this would be the best one of her school career.
- 2 The group's hike had just begun, yet Layla had already seen and learned about many interesting things. She listened carefully as the tour guide pointed to a plant covered with tiny yellow flowers. The guide explained that butterflies loved this native Texas plant called lantana. Then she gathered the group to move ahead.
- 3 As Layla got close to the lantana, she couldn't believe her luck. A beautiful orange butterfly with black and white spots had landed on one of the tiny yellow flowers. Layla quickly grabbed her camera and snapped a picture. As she tucked her camera back in her backpack, something on the trail caught her eye. Layla picked up the object. It looked like a rock that had been broken in half. When she turned it over in her hand, Layla gasped in surprise. She could see that the rock was not solid all the way through. Along the inside wall of the hollow rock were tiny, beautiful crystals.
- 4 Layla gazed at the little twinkling gift tucked inside the rock. She was so absorbed in her discovery that she did not hear her classmate Cooper walking behind her. Cooper leaned over Layla's shoulder and said, "You found a geode? Cool!"
- 5 Layla jumped. "A what?" she asked.
- 6 "A geode. It's a kind of rock with crystals inside. That's a nice one. Quick! Hide it before the tour guide sees it."



7 Layla quickly shoved it into the pocket of her jacket. Then she turned, looking over her shoulder to see where the tour guide was. She breathed a sigh of relief when she saw the guide far down the trail with the rest of the group.

8 "I'm not sure I should keep it," Layla said. "The tour guide might like to see it and tell us what she knows about it. Besides, don't you remember what she told us?"

9 Cooper rolled his eyes. "Yeah, yeah. 'Take only pictures. Leave only footprints.' But there are probably a million of those rocks lying around in this area. Do you really think they are going to miss this one rock? You know what I think? It will make an awesome souvenir." With that, Cooper jogged down the trail to catch up with the rest of the class.

10 Layla bit her lip uncertainly as her fingers touched the rock inside her pocket. "It would give me something to help me remember the trip," she thought. But Layla could not ignore the heavy feeling that had settled in her heart.

11 *Take only pictures. Leave only footprints.* The tour guide's words played over and over in Layla's mind.

- 12 As she stood on the edge of the trail, Layla suddenly noticed the cool breeze, and it comforted her. The sweet scent of the honeysuckle blossoms brought a smile to her face. The songs of nearby birds seemed to speak to her and tell her what she should do.
- 13 Carefully, Layla removed the geode from her pocket. As she held it, she felt the heaviness lift from inside her. She smiled when the sunlight bounced off the crystals, sending the rays in a thousand directions at once. "You sure are pretty," she murmured.
- 14 She was still smiling as she looked ahead at her classmates, who were down the trail with the tour guide. As she started to jog toward them, Layla cradled the geode gently in her hands.
- 15 "I know just who to show you to," Layla said with confidence as she ran to join the group and talk to the guide.

7 Which words from paragraph 14 best help the reader understand what cradled means?

- A** *at her classmates*
 - B** *down the trail*
 - C** *with the tour guide*
 - D** *gently in her hands*
-

8 The details in paragraph 1 are important to the plot of the story because they help the reader understand that Layla —

- F** is easy to please
 - G** enjoys being alone
 - H** loves and respects nature
 - J** has been to a forest on another field trip
-

9 What is the main message of the story?

- A** People do not always learn from their mistakes.
- B** Spending time outdoors can be rewarding.
- C** Rules are made for the safety of everyone.
- D** Making the right choice can be difficult.

10 Which of these events leads to Layla finding the geode?

- F** She stops to take a photograph.
 - G** She listens to what Cooper tells her.
 - H** She remembers the tour guide's words.
 - J** She starts to jog toward her classmates.
-

11 Read this sentence from paragraph 10.

But Layla could not ignore the heavy feeling that had settled in her heart.

The imagery in this sentence suggests that Layla feels —

- A** angry, because she doesn't like what she is thinking to herself
- B** uncomfortable, because she knows that she is making a mistake
- C** curious, because she wants to study the rock and learn more about it
- D** proud, because she realizes that she is the one who found an unusual rock

12 Read paragraph 11.

Take only pictures. Leave only footprints.
The tour guide's words played over and over in Layla's mind.

What do these sentences show about Layla?

- F** She wants to take pictures of the geode.
 - G** She is good at recalling important ideas.
 - H** She is not sure what the tour guide meant.
 - J** She is considering what she should do with the geode.
-

13 What is the most likely reason Layla decides against taking the geode home?

- A** She cannot think of a way to make the rock useful.
 - B** She realizes that the rock should stay in its natural surroundings.
 - C** She is afraid of what others might say if she keeps it.
 - D** She is worried that Cooper will try to take it away from her.
-

14 What can the reader tell about how Layla feels toward the tour guide?

- F** Layla wishes the tour guide had selected a more interesting path for the group to walk in the park.
- G** Layla thinks the tour guide is boring.
- H** Layla thinks the tour guide saw the geode near the trail and forgot to talk about it.
- J** Layla respects the tour guide's knowledge.

15 The imagery in the first sentence of the story helps the reader understand that Layla is —

- A** tired from doing schoolwork
 - B** excited about being on a field trip
 - C** concerned about hiking in a national park
 - D** curious about where her class will go next
-

16 Read this sentence from paragraph 13.

She smiled when the sunlight bounced off the crystals, sending the rays in a thousand directions at once.

The author uses this description to suggest that —

- F** the geode looks beautiful as it shines
- G** Layla really wants to keep the geode
- H** the forest has many other hidden geodes
- J** Layla is wondering how the geode formed

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

Superstars of Slow

- 1 Many animals are superstars in their own ways. Some can jump very far. Others can run very fast. But one animal is a superstar for being s-l-o-w. The sloth is the slowest mammal on Earth. The sloth may seem like it is just lazy. But as scientists are discovering, this cute animal may actually be super smart. Its slow movements help make it go unnoticed by its enemies.



A sloth hangs out in a tree.

© iStock.com/Nachosuch

- 2 You might think it would be easy to learn about slow animals. If they cannot move fast, it must be easy to watch them. But sloths spend most of their time hanging upside down in trees. Because of this, scientists cannot see the sloths or follow them easily. Even today these animals are very mysterious. One thing that scientists do know is that sloths are very different from most other animals.

Sloth Style

- 3 Sloths have longer arms than legs with curved claws on each hand and foot. The claws help these animals hang upside down. Their bodies are covered with long, gray-brown fur. Algae, which is plantlike matter that can grow on pond water, grow on their fur. This makes the sloths look green. Up in the tree, the colors and shape of the sloth blend in with the tree. If you were to stare at the sloth, you might think it was a branch.



A sloth rests on a tree branch.

© Janossygergely/Dreamstime.com

- 4 With gentle brown eyes and a flat little nose, the sloth might win the award for cutest animal. Its lips are always turned up as though it is smiling. Its mouth holds only 18 teeth, and its ears are very small. Sloths grow to be only about 25 inches long—around the size of a human baby.

Slow Movers

- 5 When sloths are awake, they move very slowly. They spend most of their time in trees. In fact, the animals come down only about once a week. While sloths are good climbers, they are not good walkers. Their back legs are weak. To walk the sloths must drag themselves using their front claws. Sloths are excellent swimmers. Sometimes they fall straight from their trees into rivers and go for a swim.
- 6 Most of the time sloths are sleeping. They snooze between 15 and 20 hours each day. Then, at night sloths wake up to eat.

Sloth Snacks

- 7 Scientists are still learning about what sloths eat. They are known to eat twigs, leaves, and fruit. They get most of their water from the juicier parts of their food. Because sloths do not move much, they do not need to eat much. They also need to go to the bathroom only once a week. For this, they slowly climb down from their homes in the trees.



A sloth munches on a leaf.

© iStock.com/Damoclean

Staying Safe

- 8 Whether in trees or on the ground, sloths face dangers. The greatest danger comes from predators like jaguars, large birds, and snakes. It is difficult for a sloth to defend itself.
- 9 Sloths face other challenges too. The animals live high in the rain forest. When parts of the rain forest are cut down, sloths lose their homes. Fortunately, places like the Sloth Sanctuary of Costa Rica help sloths when they are in trouble.

Helping Sloths

- 10 The Sloth Sanctuary of Costa Rica cares very much about sloths. The people there provide a home for sick or hurt sloths. The workers nurse them back to health. Then, they return them to the rain forest.

- 11 A scientist named Becky Cliffe works with the Sloth Sanctuary of Costa Rica to care for the sloths. Cliffe studies sloths and wants to learn more about their habits. She found a new way to study sloths in the wild by using a special sloth backpack. The tiny backpack contains a camera and a GPS tracker. The backpack records the sloth's location and takes photographs. It allows Cliffe to collect a huge amount of important information about the daily life of a sloth.



Cliffe studies sloths at the Sloth Sanctuary of Costa Rica.

Suzi Eszterhas/Minden Pictures

- 12 Cliffe plans to keep studying sloths. "There is still so much we need to know about them," she says. By learning more, scientists may be able to keep these slow superstars safe for years to come.

17 The prefix *un-* helps the reader understand that unnoticed in paragraph 1 means —

- A** first seen
 - B** not seen
 - C** seen together
 - D** seen from below
-

18 Which word means the opposite of curved in paragraph 3?

- F** Straight
 - G** Thick
 - H** Dark
 - J** Soft
-

19 Which section contains information about what sloths eat?

- A** Sloth Style
- B** Slow Movers
- C** Sloth Snacks
- D** Staying Safe

20 What is the most likely reason the author includes the details in paragraph 1?

- F** To suggest that some sloths can move fast if they have to
 - G** To show that sloths are a lot like other animals that live in trees
 - H** To show that some sloths have become well known to scientists
 - J** To suggest that sloths have a special quality that helps them survive
-

21 Which idea from the selection does the author best support by including the first three photographs?

- A** Sloths spend a lot of time in trees.
- B** Scientists want to know more about sloths.
- C** Some sloths are much bigger than others.
- D** Sloths may not be as lazy as they look.

- 22** Which sentence from the selection suggests that the author likes sloths?
- F** *The sloth is the slowest mammal on Earth.* (paragraph 1)
 - G** *One thing that scientists do know is that sloths are very different from most other animals.* (paragraph 2)
 - H** *With gentle brown eyes and a flat little nose, the sloth might win the award for cutest animal.* (paragraph 4)
 - J** *Sloths grow to be only about 25 inches long—around the size of a human baby.* (paragraph 4)
-

- 23** What is the most likely reason the author wrote this selection?
- A** To provide the reader with interesting facts about sloths
 - B** To encourage the reader to support a place that helps sloths
 - C** To explain to the reader the biggest dangers that sloths face
 - D** To show the reader what it is like to visit a sloth sanctuary

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

Autumn Walk

by Yoshiko Uchida

Crunch

Crunch

Crunch

Crunch

5 I love the sound
My feet can make
When the leaves
Turn red and
Yellow and brown,

10 And one dark night
The wind blows hard
Whirling them
Onto the walks
And streets

15 Where they tumble
And gather
In piles and drifts

Just waiting
For me and my
20 Marching feet
To come
Shuffling and
Scuffling and
Stomping
25 Up and down

Making a wonderful
Crunching sound

Crunch

Crunch

30 Crunch

Crunch

Me
And my feet
And the
35 Dry brown
Leaves.

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24 Lines 18 through 21 suggest that the speaker feels —

- F** surprised to find a big pile of leaves
 - G** excited to go through the pile of leaves
 - H** curious about what is hiding under the leaves
 - J** worried about the amount of leaves on the ground
-

25 Which sentence best describes the stanzas of the poem?

- A** Each stanza contains lines that rhyme.
 - B** Each stanza creates an image for the reader.
 - C** Each stanza describes a new event for the reader.
 - D** Each stanza repeats important lines.
-

26 Read lines 15 through 17 of the poem.

Where they tumble
And gather
In piles and drifts

These lines help the reader picture the way the leaves —

- F** are colored
- G** look along the street
- H** sound as they fall
- J** feel in the darkness

- 27** In lines 1 through 4 and lines 28 through 31, the placement of the word “Crunch” is meant to emphasize —
- A** that the speaker is talking
 - B** the number of leaves there are
 - C** how carefully the speaker is moving
 - D** each step the speaker is taking
-

- 28** Which lines of the poem best show why the speaker likes the leaves?
- F** Lines 7 through 9
 - G** Lines 12 and 13
 - H** Lines 26 and 27
 - J** Lines 32 and 33
-

- 29** Throughout the poem, the speaker can best be described as feeling —
- A** confused
 - B** curious
 - C** upset
 - D** pleased

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

Mexican Bark Art

- 1 In 1900 a scientist named Frederick Starr was exploring a mountain in Mexico. Suddenly he heard soft pounding sounds. He listened carefully and followed the sounds coming through the trees. The sounds grew louder. Soon Starr came to a village. There he found something very interesting. The pounding came from people hitting rocks on bark. They were making paper that would be used to create art. Other scientists had thought people no longer knew how to make bark paper, but Starr found out differently. The villagers were making a very special kind of paper—*amate* (ah-MAH-tay).
- 2 Starr made his discovery more than 100 years ago. Since then scientists have learned much more about amate. The people of Mexico have been making this beautiful paper for hundreds of years.

Bark Paintings Now and Then

- 3 Today the paper is still handmade by people in Mexican villages. The paper is decorated with colorful paints to make paintings that might show interesting scenes from village life. Or the paintings might be pictures from nature. Rainbow-colored birds, animals, or flowers are common. These paintings are often used as decorations in homes.



A Bird and Flowers Painted on
Amate Paper

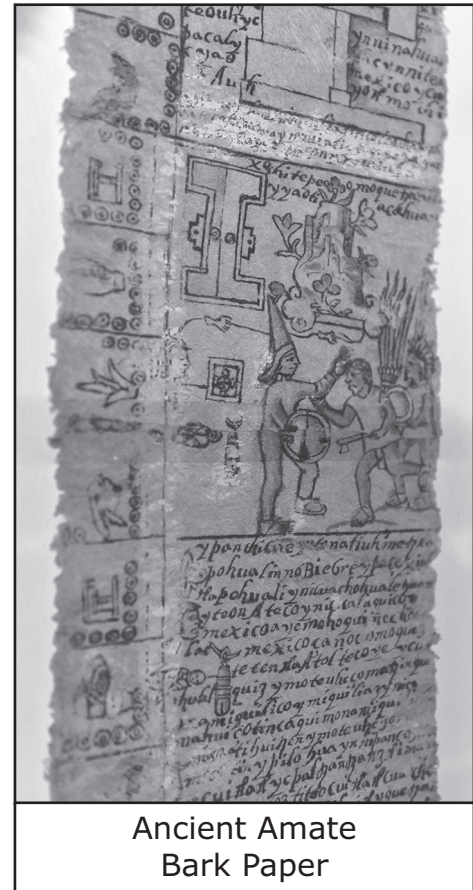
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- 4 Amate paintings are popular in Mexico and around the world. Many visitors buy these special works of art. People appreciate having a piece of this important part of Mexican history.

- 5 Long ago bark paper had another purpose. It was used for books. The bark paper was folded into a book with several pages. Then small pictures were painted on the pages. These paintings tell stories of the past. They also give helpful information. For example, they show us how people made different medicines.
- 6 Many of these books were lost over time. Scientists treasure the books that are left. They are important because they tell what life in Mexico was like long ago.

Making Bark Paper

- 7 Amate is made from the bark of mulberry or fig trees. The mulberry bark makes light-colored paper, while the fig bark makes dark-colored paper.
- 8 The bark is stripped from the trees. Then it is washed. Next the bark is boiled in a pot of water and ashes for hours until it breaks apart into strips.
- 9 The strips of bark are placed on a flat, wooden drying board. Some strips are placed across in rows, while other strips are placed from top to bottom. Any long ends of the bark are cut off so that they do not hang over the edges of the board. After that the strips are flattened with rocks. Soon there is just one flat rectangle of paper. This paper is left to dry in the sun.
- 10 When the paper is dry, it is ready to paint. The artists make outlines of their drawings using black paint. Then they fill in the shapes with bright colors. Now the painted bark paper is ready to display and enjoy.
- 11 Amate has been around for hundreds of years, but it is still important today. This beautiful handmade paper teaches us much about Mexico and its people.



Ancient Amate
Bark Paper

OMAR TORRES / Staff

Make Your Own Amate Painting

You will need:

- A piece of brown or tan paper (A paper bag works well.)
- Pencil
- Paints in black, white, and bright colors
- Paintbrushes

Steps:

1. Crumple the paper. Then flatten it out. This will make it look rough, like bark paper.
2. Think about what you want to paint. Use your imagination. Maybe you want to make an orange horse or a tree with purple leaves.
3. Draw your picture on the paper using a pencil.
4. Next paint your outlines. Dip a thin paintbrush into the black paint. Then paint over the pencil lines with light strokes.
5. Wait for the outlines to dry. Then fill in the painting with brightly colored paint.



ArtForSmallHands.com



ArtForSmallHands.com



ArtForSmallHands.com

- 30** Which sentence supports the conclusion that there are differences in the way bark paper looks even before it is painted?
- F** *The mulberry bark makes light-colored paper, while the fig bark makes dark-colored paper.* (paragraph 7)
 - G** *The bark is stripped from the trees.* (paragraph 8)
 - H** *Next the bark is boiled in a pot of water and ashes for hours until it breaks apart into strips.* (paragraph 8)
 - J** *The strips of bark are placed on a flat, wooden drying board.* (paragraph 9)
-

- 31** What is the most likely reason the author included paragraph 1 in the selection?
- A** To show how bark art is different from other art
 - B** To interest the reader in learning about bark art
 - C** To describe how bark art has changed over time
 - D** To tell the reader why villagers made bark art
-

- 32** How is the paper in the section titled “Make Your Own Amate Painting” different from the bark paper described in the rest of the selection?
- F** It has been flattened.
 - G** It is made from strips.
 - H** It has been crumpled.
 - J** It is hard to draw on.

33 Which statement best explains why Starr’s discovery was important?

- A** He learned about a different kind of amate.
 - B** He found that people were still making amate.
 - C** He realized how amate had been used in the past.
 - D** He learned that amate was made many years ago.
-

34 Where should a reader look to find information about what happens after bark is stripped from trees?

- F** The first paragraph
- G** The section titled “Bark Paintings Now and Then”
- H** The section titled “Making Bark Paper”
- J** The boxed section at the end of the selection



Item Number	Reporting Category	Readiness or Supporting	Content Student Expectation	Correct Answer
1	1	Readiness	3.3(C)	C
2	3	Readiness	3.9.(D)(ii)	J
3	3	Readiness	3.10(A)	C
4	3	Readiness	3.9(D)(ii)	F
5	1	Supporting	3.3(D)	D
6	3	Supporting	3.10(C)	F
7	1	Readiness	3.3(B)	D
8	2	Readiness	3.8(C)	H
9	2	Supporting	3.10(A)	D
10	2	Readiness	3.8(C)	F
11	2	Supporting	3.10(D)	B
12	2	Readiness	3.6.(F)	J
13	2	Readiness	3.6(F)	B
14	2	Readiness	3.6(F)	J
15	2	Supporting	3.10(D)	B
16	2	Supporting	3.10(D)	F
17	1	Readiness	3.3(C)	B
18	1	Supporting	3.3(D)	F
19	3	Readiness	3.9(D)(ii)	C
20	3	Readiness	3.10(A)	J
21	3	Supporting	3.10(C)	A
22	3	Readiness	3.7(C)	H
23	3	Readiness	3.10(A)	A
24	2	Supporting	3.6(F)	G
25	2	Supporting	3.9(B)	B
26	2	Supporting	3.10(D)	G
27	2	Supporting	3.6(F)	D
28	2	Supporting	3.6(F)	H
29	2	Supporting	3.6(F)	D
30	3	Readiness	3.7(C)	F
31	3	Readiness	3.10(A)	B
32	3	Readiness	3.6(F)	H
33	3	Readiness	3.6(F)	B
34	3	Readiness	3.9(D)(ii)	H

2021 STAAR Grade 3 Reading Rationales

Item#	Rationale	
1	Option C is correct	In paragraph 6, the suffix <i>-less</i> is added to the root word <i>help</i> . The author's use of the suffix and the context in the sentences "Some newborn animals are <u>helpless</u> , but not baby porcupines" and "They're born with their eyes open and are able to walk right away" show that some newborn animals are "not able to help" themselves like the baby porcupines.
	Option A is incorrect	The suffix <i>-less</i> does not mean "others," and there is no context to support the idea that newborn animals help others.
	Option B is incorrect	The suffix <i>-less</i> does not mean "again," and the author does not include context that supports that newborn animals are helping again.
	Option D is incorrect	The suffix <i>-less</i> does not mean "too much," and the author does not include context that supports that newborn animals help too much.
2	Option J is correct	The reader can locate information about "why many animals leave porcupines alone" under the subheading "Super Quills." The author begins the section "Super Quills" with "most animals, though, won't mess with a porcupine," and then explains why.
	Option F is incorrect	The labels on the map can be used to locate places, but the labels cannot be used to explain "why many animals leave porcupines alone."
	Option G is incorrect	The reader can locate information about what porcupines eat under the subheading "On the Menu." There is no information about "why many animals leave porcupines alone" included in the section.
	Option H is incorrect	The caption under the photograph next to paragraph 6 is included to identify what is in the picture. There is no information about "why many animals leave porcupines alone" included in the caption.

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Item#	Rationale	
3	Option C is correct	In the selection, the author provides a broad range of facts about porcupines, including what kind of animals they are, where and when they can be seen, what they look like, their abilities as babies, and their means of defense against predators.
	Option A is incorrect	Only the section "On the Menu" and the map "Porcupines in North America" are included to give the reader information about the location of porcupines. Where porcupines live is just one of many facts about porcupines the author provides in the selection.
	Option B is incorrect	The author does mention how porcupines act when a predator attacks in paragraph 2 and again in the section "Super Quills," but the author presents a broader range of facts about porcupines throughout the selection.
	Option D is incorrect	The author does compare porcupines to other animals in paragraphs 3 and 6. However, the author does not include these comparisons to "explain why porcupines look different from other animals."
4	Option F is correct	The subheading "On the Menu" is included to provide a clue that information about what a porcupine eats will be described in the section. The author states in this section that a porcupine eats "buds, flowers, leaves, and more" in the spring and "bark and evergreen needles" in the winter.
	Option G is incorrect	The subheading "Little Pricklies" is included to provide a clue that information about baby porcupines will be described in the section. The author does mention that baby porcupines nurse from their mother but does not mention different types of food porcupines eat.
	Option H is incorrect	The subheading "At Home up a Tree" is included to provide a clue that information about where a porcupine spends its time will be described in the section.
	Option J is incorrect	The subheading "Super Quills" is included to provide a clue that information about a porcupine's quills will be described in the section.

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Item#	Rationale	
5	Option D is correct	The word “chew” is a synonym for the word <u>nibble</u> because both words can be used to tell that porcupines chew “buds, flowers, leaves, and more” while eating.
	Option A is incorrect	The word <u>nibble</u> is not a synonym for “sleep.” There is no evidence to suggest that porcupines would sleep on the food they eat.
	Option B is incorrect	Although animals do “hide” their food, the word <u>nibble</u> is used to describe the way porcupines eat. Specifically, they “chew” their food.
	Option C is incorrect	The words <u>nibble</u> and “walk” are not synonyms. No evidence is given to suggest porcupines “walk” on their food.
6	Option F is correct	On the map of North America, shading is used to show “Where porcupines live,” according to the key, and most of Canada and part of the United States are shaded.
	Option G is incorrect	The shaded part of the map, which is used to show where porcupines live, includes Canada as well as the United States.
	Option H is incorrect	Most of Alaska is shaded to show that porcupines live there, but there is no information comparing the number of porcupines that live in Alaska to the number in other areas.
	Option J is incorrect	There is a lot of land shaded that is not near an ocean. Since the shaded part of the map is used to show where porcupines live, porcupines do not live only near water.

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Item#	Rationale	
7	Option D is correct	The words “gently in her hands” are used to help the reader understand what <u>cradled</u> means in paragraph 14. Layla is holding the geode in paragraph 13, and <u>cradled</u> is used in paragraph 14 to emphasize how “gently” she is holding the geode.
	Option A is incorrect	The words “at her classmates” are used to tell the reader where Layla is looking, not how Layla is holding the geode.
	Option B is incorrect	The words “down the trail” are used to tell the reader where Layla’s classmates are, not how Layla is holding the geode.
	Option C is incorrect	The words “with the tour guide” are used to tell the reader where Layla’s classmates are, not how Layla is holding the geode.
8	Option H is correct	In paragraph 1, Layla is excited about exploring a park. She “loved being outside because there was always something new to discover.” Knowing that Layla loves nature helps the reader understand Layla’s actions (admiring and then choosing to respect nature), which guide the plot of the story.
	Option F is incorrect	Layla is pleased while on the field trip because she enjoys nature and she is in a national park, but there is no indication that she is generally “easy to please.”
	Option G is incorrect	Layla is enjoying herself on the field trip, but she is on the field trip with her classmates and hurries to join them after she is separated from them.
	Option J is incorrect	Layla does like to be outside, and she is on her second field trip, but there is no indication that her first field trip was to a forest.

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Item#	Rationale	
9	Option D is correct	Layla is conflicted when she finds the geode. She wants to keep it because it's pretty and will remind her of the field trip, but in paragraph 11, she thinks about the tour guide's words, " <i>Take only pictures. Leave only footprints.</i> " Layla has a difficult choice to make but ultimately does the right thing.
	Option A is incorrect	Layla does not make a mistake. She has a difficult choice to make, and she makes the right decision.
	Option B is incorrect	Layla feels that being outdoors is rewarding, but the main message is related to the resolution of Layla's conflict (choosing to make the right decision).
	Option C is incorrect	No one is in danger in this story, so safety is not in question. The guide's rule is about respecting nature, and Layla thinks about it to make her decision.
10	Option F is correct	Layla stopping to take a photograph of a butterfly on the lantana in paragraph 3 leads to her discovery of the geode. "As she tucked her camera back in her backpack, something on the trail caught her eye," and it is the geode that Layla sees.
	Option G is incorrect	Layla finds the geode in paragraph 3, but Cooper doesn't speak to her until paragraph 4, after she has already found it.
	Option H is incorrect	Cooper repeats the tour guide's words to Layla in paragraph 9, and Layla thinks about these words again in paragraph 11, but this is after she finds the geode.
	Option J is incorrect	Layla jogs toward her classmates in paragraph 14 with the geode in her hand, so this is after she finds the geode.

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Item#	Rationale	
11	Option B is correct	Imagery is the use of vivid language to represent objects, actions, or ideas. The imagery in this sentence, “the heavy feeling that had settled in her heart,” is not used to describe an actual weight in Layla’s heart but rather to describe an uncomfortable feeling Layla experiences because she knows she’s making a mistake.
	Option A is incorrect	Layla does not show any signs of anger in paragraph 10. She acknowledges that taking the geode makes her uncomfortable because she knows it is wrong.
	Option C is incorrect	Layla shows no signs of curiosity in paragraph 10. She is trying to decide what to do with the geode, but she does not consider studying it to “learn more about it.”
	Option D is incorrect	Layla does not feel proud in paragraph 10. She feels uncomfortable because she knows taking the geode is wrong.
12	Option J is correct	In paragraph 11, Layla is considering what she should do with the geode. Layla wants to take the geode home with her but remembers that her tour guide had said, “Take only pictures,” which suggests that taking the geode would be wrong.
	Option F is incorrect	The tour guide had said, “Take only pictures,” but Layla is considering taking the geode itself, not a picture of the geode.
	Option G is incorrect	Layla is remembering the tour guide’s words, but only because they pertain directly to her situation. By remembering this detail, Layla cannot be said to be “good at recalling important ideas.”
	Option H is incorrect	Layla knows exactly what the tour guide meant, which is why she thinks about those words while trying to decide what to do with the geode.

2021 STAAR Grade 3 Reading Rationales

Item#	Rationale	
13	Option B is correct	The reader can infer that Layla decides against taking the geode home because she realizes it should stay in the park. She remembers the tour guide's words, "Take only pictures," and realizes that the geode should stay in the park.
	Option A is incorrect	In paragraph 10, Layla says the geode would help her remember the trip, so she is able to "think of a way to make the rock useful."
	Option C is incorrect	Layla is not concerned about what anyone else would say about her keeping the geode. In fact, Cooper encourages her to keep it.
	Option D is incorrect	Cooper encourages Layla to keep the geode for herself, so he is not trying to take it from her.
14	Option J is correct	Layla "listened carefully" to the tour guide in paragraph 2, and in paragraph 8, she thinks she should show the geode to the tour guide in order to find out more about it. The reader can conclude from Layla's actions that she "respects the tour guide's knowledge."
	Option F is incorrect	Layla sees and learns "about many interesting things" (paragraph 2) on the path, so she does not wish "the tour guide had selected a more interesting path."
	Option G is incorrect	Layla listens to the tour guide with interest and is enthusiastic about learning new information, so Layla does not think "the tour guide is boring."
	Option H is incorrect	Layla finds the geode by accident because she stayed behind to take a picture. There is no indication that the tour guide has also seen the geode.

2021 STAAR Grade 3 Reading Rationales

Item#	Rationale	
15	Option B is correct	Imagery is the use of vivid language to represent objects, actions, or ideas. The imagery in the first sentence, "the grin on her face stretched from ear to ear," is used to help the reader understand that Layla is excited about being on a field trip because of her big smile.
	Option A is incorrect	Layla is smiling in this sentence, which does not indicate tiredness, and she is not "doing schoolwork."
	Option C is incorrect	Layla is smiling in this sentence, which does not indicate concern.
	Option D is incorrect	Layla is smiling in this sentence, which does not indicate curiosity, and she is more focused on the current trip rather than wondering "where her class will go next."
16	Option F is correct	The author mentions the sunlight bouncing off the crystals and sending rays in different directions to describe what Layla sees when her geode reflects sunlight. Layla then says, "'You sure are pretty'" while looking at the geode.
	Option G is incorrect	Although there is support for Layla wanting to keep the geode, the description is about what the geode looks like.
	Option H is incorrect	The author includes this sentence to describe the specific geode that Layla finds, not to mention other geodes hidden in the forest.
	Option J is incorrect	This description is about what the geode looks like, not about what Layla is wondering.

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Item#	Rationale	
17	Option B is correct	The reader can use the prefix <i>un-</i> to understand that <u>unnoticed</u> means “not seen” as used in paragraph 1 because <i>un-</i> means “not” and <i>noticed</i> means “seen.” In paragraph 1, the reader also learns that sloths move slowly to go <u>unnoticed</u> , or to keep from being seen, by their enemies.
	Option A is incorrect	The prefix <i>un-</i> means “not”; it does not mean “first.” The sloths are trying to keep enemies from seeing them; they do not want to be the “first seen.”
	Option C is incorrect	The prefix <i>un-</i> means “not”; it does not mean “together.” The sloths are trying to keep enemies from seeing them; they do not want to be “seen together.”
	Option D is incorrect	The prefix <i>un-</i> means “not”; it does not mean “from below.” The sloths are trying to keep enemies from seeing them; they do not want to be “seen from below.”
18	Option F is correct	Sloths have <u>curved</u> claws that can hook onto tree branches, allowing them to hang upside down. The opposite of <u>curved</u> is “straight.”
	Option G is incorrect	The author uses <u>curved</u> to describe the shape of sloths’ claws, not how thin (opposite of “thick”) the claws are.
	Option H is incorrect	The author uses <u>curved</u> to describe the shape of sloths’ claws, not how light (opposite of “dark”) in color the claws are.
	Option J is incorrect	The author uses <u>curved</u> to describe the shape of sloths’ claws, not how rough (opposite of “soft”) the claws are.
19	Option C is correct	In the section “Sloth Snacks,” there is “information about what sloths eat.” The author explains that sloths eat “twigs, leaves, and fruit.”
	Option A is incorrect	In the section titled “Sloth Style,” the author describes what sloths look like, not what sloths eat.
	Option B is incorrect	In the section titled “Slow Movers,” the author describes how and when sloths move. The author does mention that “at night sloths wake up to eat,” but does not say what sloths eat.
	Option D is incorrect	In the section titled “Staying Safe,” the author explains the dangers sloths face, not what sloths eat.

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Item#	Rationale	
20	Option J is correct	The reader can conclude that the author includes the details in paragraph 1 to suggest that sloths' slow movement is a special quality that helps them survive. In this paragraph, the author explains that sloths can avoid being noticed by their enemies by moving slowly.
	Option F is incorrect	The author says other animals "can run very fast," but does not say sloths can move fast.
	Option G is incorrect	The author does not compare sloths to other animals that live in trees.
	Option H is incorrect	The author uses the phrase "as scientists are discovering" to suggest that scientists are learning about sloths, but there is no mention of any specific sloths that have become well known to scientists.
21	Option A is correct	Each of the first three photographs depicts a sloth in a tree. The author includes these photographs to support the idea that "sloths spend a lot of time in trees."
	Option B is incorrect	The photographs are of sloths in trees, not scientists studying sloths.
	Option C is incorrect	The sloths are shown from different angles and distances in each photograph, so their sizes are not being compared.
	Option D is incorrect	In the photographs, each sloth is either eating, resting, or hanging out in a tree. These are not activities that require energy or would suggest sloths are not "as lazy as they look."
22	Option H is correct	In this sentence, the author describes the sloth as having "gentle brown eyes and a flat little nose" and provides an opinion that sloths look cute, which suggests that the author likes sloths.
	Option F is incorrect	A fact is stated in this sentence, so it is not the author's opinion of sloths.
	Option G is incorrect	A general observation scientists have made about sloths is included in this sentence, but not what the author thinks of sloths.
	Option J is incorrect	The approximate size of sloths is provided in this sentence, but whether the author likes sloths is not included.

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Item#	Rationale	
23	Option A is correct	The reader can infer that the author wrote this selection to provide interesting facts about sloths. Throughout the selection, the author includes facts about sloths' appearance, behavior, diet, and how they are being studied and cared for.
	Option B is incorrect	The author does not include a call to action asking the reader to support a place that helps sloths.
	Option C is incorrect	The author discusses dangers sloths face only in the section "Staying Safe." There is a wider range of interesting facts about sloths throughout the selection.
	Option D is incorrect	The author mainly describes the purpose of a sloth sanctuary in the section "Helping Sloths"; there is no mention of "what it is like to visit a sloth sanctuary."
24	Option G is correct	In lines 18 through 21, the speaker shows excitement and anticipation by suggesting that the leaves are there "Just waiting" for the speaker to crunch them underfoot.
	Option F is incorrect	The speaker describes the leaves gathering in piles in the previous stanza (lines 10–17), so the speaker is not "surprised to find a big pile of leaves."
	Option H is incorrect	The speaker wants to crunch the leaves, not find out what is under them.
	Option J is incorrect	The speaker is excited, not worried, about the amount of leaves on the ground.
25	Option B is correct	Sounds are described in the first stanza (lines 1–4), the fifth (lines 26–27), and the sixth (lines 28–31), and colors are described in the second stanza (lines 5–9) and the seventh (lines 32–36). Actions are described as leaves gather in the third stanza (lines 10–17) and as the speaker marches in the fourth stanza (lines 18–25).
	Option A is incorrect	There are no intentional rhymes in this poem.
	Option C is incorrect	Throughout the poem, there are descriptions related to the speaker's experience with piles of leaves. New events are not described in each stanza.
	Option D is incorrect	Lines are only repeated in the first stanza (lines 1–4) and the sixth stanza (lines 28–31).

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Item#	Rationale	
26	Option G is correct	The leaves are tumbling in the wind and gathering in “piles and drifts” in the street. The reader pictures how the leaves “look along the street” using this description.
	Option F is incorrect	There are no colors mentioned in these lines.
	Option H is incorrect	There are no sounds mentioned in these lines.
	Option J is incorrect	There is no description of how leaves feel in these lines.
27	Option D is correct	In lines 1 through 4 and lines 28 through 31, the word “Crunch” is staggered like footsteps, which is meant to emphasize “each step the speaker is taking” through the crunchy leaves, first with the left foot and then with the right foot.
	Option A is incorrect	It is the leaves, not the speaker talking, that is making the “Crunch” sound.
	Option B is incorrect	Given the description of the leaves in the third stanza, there are likely more leaves in the piles the speaker crunches through than there are instances of the word “Crunch” in the poem.
	Option C is incorrect	The placement of the word “Crunch” is used to show movement, but there is no evidence to suggest that the speaker is moving carefully through the piles of leaves.
28	Option H is correct	The speaker likes the leaves because they make a “wonderful/Crunching sound” (lines 26–27).
	Option F is incorrect	The speaker describes the color of the leaves in these lines but does not express an opinion about them.
	Option G is incorrect	The speaker describes the movement of the leaves in these lines but does not express an opinion about them.
	Option J is incorrect	These lines focus on the speaker’s feet, not on crunching leaves, which is what the speaker enjoys.

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Item#	Rationale	
29	Option D is correct	The speaker is pleased by the crunching sound the leaves make (lines 1–6) and describes the sound as “wonderful” in lines 26 and 27. In the fourth stanza (lines 18–25), the speaker seems pleased that the leaves are “Just waiting” to be crunched underfoot.
	Option A is incorrect	There are no words that imply bewilderment or chaos, so the speaker is not confused.
	Option B is incorrect	The speaker does not wonder or ask any questions in the poem, which would have indicated curiosity.
	Option C is incorrect	There are no words that would suggest sadness or anger in the poem, so the speaker is not upset.
30	Option F is correct	The reader can conclude from this sentence that there are differences in the way bark paper looks even before it is painted since bark from different types of trees makes different colors of paper.
	Option G is incorrect	A step in the amate-making process is described in this sentence. Although bark is mentioned, there is no comparison to show differences in the way bark paper looks before it is painted.
	Option H is incorrect	A step in the amate-making process is described in this sentence. Although bark is mentioned, there is no comparison to show differences in the way bark paper looks before it is painted.
	Option J is incorrect	A step in the amate-making process is described in this sentence. Although bark is mentioned, there is no comparison to show differences in the way bark paper looks before it is painted.
31	Option B is correct	The reader can infer that the author included paragraph 1 to “interest the reader in learning about bark art.” By beginning with a story about Frederick Starr’s discovery, the author tries to make the reader want to know what happens and develop an interest in bark art.
	Option A is incorrect	Bark art is not compared to any other art in paragraph 1.
	Option C is incorrect	The author mentions that scientists “thought people no longer knew how to make bark paper,” but this is not a change in bark art over time.
	Option D is incorrect	There is no reason given for making bark art in paragraph 1.

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Item#	Rationale	
32	Option H is correct	The paper in the section "Make Your Own Amate Painting" is different from the bark paper described in the rest of the selection because it is crumpled to look rough like paper made from bark. Real bark paper is not crumpled.
	Option F is incorrect	In the section "Make Your Own Amate Painting," the paper itself is flattened. The author mentions in paragraph 9 that strips of bark are flattened to make the bark paper.
	Option G is incorrect	Bark paper is made from strips (paragraph 8). The imitation bark paper is made from a paper bag. There is no mention of cutting the imitation bark paper into strips in the section "Make Your Own Amate Painting."
	Option J is incorrect	The difficulty of drawing on real bark paper or on imitation bark paper is not mentioned anywhere in the selection.
33	Option B is correct	Starr's discovery was important because "he found that people were still making amate." Before his discovery, scientists thought that people did not know how to make amate anymore (paragraph 1).
	Option A is incorrect	The author mentions a different purpose for bark paper in paragraph 5 but does not mention that the type of amate Starr saw was a different kind.
	Option C is incorrect	The author, not Starr, mentions in paragraph 5 that amate was used for books.
	Option D is incorrect	The author, not Starr, mentions in paragraph 2 that people have made amate "for hundreds of years."
34	Option H is correct	In the section "Making Bark Paper," the author begins paragraph 8 by noting that "bark is stripped from the trees" and then describing the process of making that bark into paper.
	Option F is incorrect	In the first paragraph, the author describes a man witnessing people making bark paper but does not tell the steps of what happens after the bark is stripped from trees.
	Option G is incorrect	In the section "Bark Paintings Now and Then," the author describes ways the bark paper is decorated, not the process people take to turn the bark that is stripped from trees into bark paper.
	Option J is incorrect	Tree bark is not mentioned in the boxed section at the end of the selection.