

Maryland MCAP Grade 8  
English Language Arts Practice

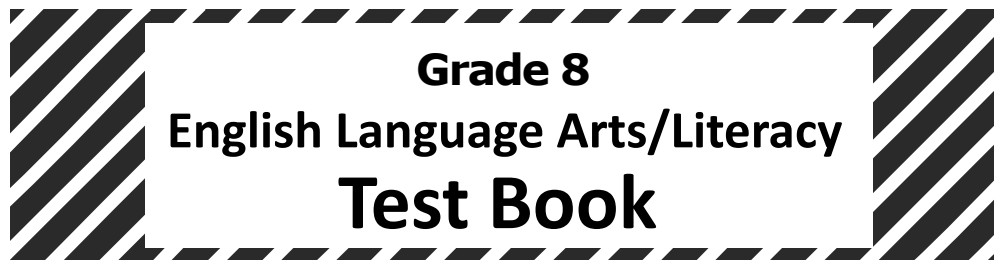
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Student Name \_\_\_\_\_



Maryland Comprehensive  
Assessment Program



*Practice Test*

TEST BOOKLET SECURITY BARCODE

# Section 1

**Directions:**

Today, you will take Section 1 of the Grade 8 English Language Arts/Literacy Practice Test.

Read each passage and question. Then, follow the directions to answer each question. Mark your answers by completely filling in the circles in your answer document. Do not make any pencil marks outside of the circles. If you need to change an answer, be sure to erase your first answer completely.

If you do not know the answer to a question, you may go on to the next question. If you finish early, you may review your answers and any questions you did not answer in this Section ONLY. Do not go past the stop sign.

Read the passage from *Jasmine Skies*. Then answer the questions.

from *Jasmine Skies*

by Sita Brahmachari

- 1 I'm looking out of the window but I can't help glancing at the family sitting with us. The girl about my age has long, perfectly curled eyelashes, and when she lifts her head I try my hardest not to stare at her eyes. They are also an amazing gray-green, like those of the rest of her family, but she has an "I will not be defeated" look, which reminds me so much of my Nana Josie. I know it's nothing more than an expression, but it's as if she's challenging me not to look away, to *really* see who she is. Those eyes could haunt you.
- 2 The little girl starts to moan and her mother picks up a metal tiffin tin and begins to unpack the tower of bowls, handing a layer of watery dhal, a tiny portion of rice, and a quarter of a chapatti to each child. They eat slowly, savoring every mouthful. The woman is just about to take a bite of her chapatti when she changes her mind, placing it back in the tiffin tin and offering it to Janu and me instead. Janu smiles at her and shakes his head. She shrugs before biting into the flatbread hungrily. I can't believe that she can be this generous when she has so little for her own family.
- 3 When the little girl has finished eating she jumps off her sister's knee as if this tiny bit of fuel has got her going again. She leans on Janu's legs to stay upright as the train jerks along, and he gets her giggling by taking a coin from his pocket and making it appear and disappear in his palm. She squeals every time he makes it reappear. Everyone in the family laughs except the girl my age, whose haunting eyes follow my every move. I wonder if she's thinking the same as me—what makes *me* lucky enough to be born into *my* life? If that is hatred in her eyes, I wouldn't blame her.
- 4 Janu has handed over the coin and now the little girl is tugging at my charm bracelet . . . she's taking the artichoke heart and rubbing the silver metal against her gums. She must be teething. Her sister pulls her back to stop her, but she clings on to the charm in her mouth. My arm is outstretched halfway across the carriage now as her sister tries to prize the bracelet from the child's mouth. My little sister Laila once put this charm in her mouth and wouldn't spit it out. It's like tiny children know how precious it is. I figure the easiest way to end this tug of war, without the little girl choking on it, is to take the bracelet off and let her sister deal with it. She nods at me as if she's understood my plan and starts to tickle the little girl under her arm. As she falls about laughing, she opens her mouth and out pops my charm.

- 5 The older girl glances down at the charm for a moment and then hands it back to me before staring out of the window. I follow her gaze along the meandering path of the river. Great storks are nesting in the trees, and a family is washing and drying great lengths of sari cloth on giant rocks.
- 6 “Come on, Mira!” Janu says, suddenly standing up.
- 7 Just as I’m about to leave the carriage the girl reaches toward me and squeezes my hand tightly. I look deeply into her eyes and try to understand what she is saying to me. I feel I have to look at her, that it would be cowardly to look away. I’m still holding Nana Josie’s charm. I wonder if she thinks that my charm can bring her luck. I drop my bracelet and my precious artichoke-heart charm into her hands because I have everything and she has nothing. As I stand on the platform, the girl pushes her face up to the window and mouths the words “thank you” her haunting eyes seem to soften.
- 8 The girl is waving to me as the train moves off. She opens her hand and my charm glints, catching Janu’s eye. He starts to run toward the carriage door, but the train is already going too fast. She smiles. Forget all the models you see in magazines. I think she might be the most beautiful girl in the whole world.
- 9 “Pickpockets! You have to be careful—of course they have to find whatever they can.” Janu shrugs. “Was it valuable?”
- 10 “Not in money. It belonged to my grandmother. But the girl didn’t steal it. I knew she wanted it, so I just sort of gave it to her,” I explain, still trying to make sense of what I’ve done as a sudden heaviness enters my chest.
- 11 Janu stares at me as if I’ve lost my mind. Maybe I have.
- 12 “I think she needed it more than me. And it just felt like the right thing to do!”
- 13 He shakes his head and frowns at me. “Her ma will find it, and she will sell it. You don’t understand the way things work here. You think your silver charm is going to change her life?” His anger gives a hard, cold edge to his voice.
- 14 Janu strides on, still shaking his head. I can hardly keep up with him as he goes toward a cluster of straw-roofed, earth-covered buildings with pads of cow dung drying on their sides. I feel sick. Of course he’s right. What was I thinking? How could I have given away Nana Josie’s charm?! What good could it possibly do? Janu must think I’m an idiot, a silly girl who thinks she can make things better. I’ll never see my charm again. I slump down on a large boulder at the side of the road and stare and stare at my empty wrist. I have never felt so far away from home.

- 15 Janu's walking back toward me and holding out his hand. I try to cover up my face as the tears spill over. He must think I'm always crying, which is funny because I usually make sure I keep my tears locked safely behind my bedroom door.
- 16 Janu perches on the stone next to me and takes my wrist gently in his hands. "I'm sorry," he says.
- 17 But he's right. I should never have given the bracelet away. I feel naked without it.

Used with permission.

1 What is the meaning of the word **prize** as it is used in paragraph 4?

- A to avoid breaking
- B to move by force
- C to insert carefully
- D to give a solution

2 **Part A**

Based on the passage, which statement about the girl on the train is **most likely** accurate?

- A She is jealous of Mira's family.
- B She is traveling to the same destination as Mira.
- C She has a strong impact on Mira.
- D She has found an opportunity to talk with Mira.

**Part B**

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

- A ". . . it's as if she's challenging me not to look away, to *really* see who she is." (paragraph 1)
- B "Everyone in the family laughs except the girl my age. . . ." (paragraph 3)
- C "She nods at me as if she's understood my plan. . . ." (paragraph 4)
- D "'I knew she wanted it, so I just sort of gave it to her.' . . ." (paragraph 10)

**3 Part A**

What aspect of Mira's character does paragraph 7 reveal?

- A** Mira wants to help the girl have a better life.
- B** Mira wishes to become friends with the girl.
- C** Mira is concerned about what others think of her.
- D** Mira places little value on material objects.

**Part B**

Which quotation from paragraph 7 **best** supports the answer to Part A?

- A** ". . . the girl reaches toward me and squeezes my hand tightly."
- B** ". . . that it would be cowardly to look away."
- C** "I'm still holding Nana Josie's charm."
- D** "I wonder if she thinks that my charm can bring her luck."

**4** Which **two** statements **best** describe the effects that Janu's words and actions have on Mira in paragraphs 9 through 14?

- A** Mira feels embarrassed for giving away an important possession.
- B** Mira considers the influence that her grandmother had on her actions.
- C** Mira insists that her actions will have a positive impact in the end.
- D** Mira realizes that her act of generosity may not have the intended result.
- E** Mira believes herself incapable of explaining her true motivations.



- 5 How does telling the story from Mira’s point of view create suspense?
- A The reader is unable to experience the shift in Mira’s emotions.
  - B The reader is unsure how other characters will react to Mira’s actions.
  - C The reader develops different opinions about the family than Mira.
  - D The reader feels concerned with what might happen to Mira on the train.

6 **Part A**

Which theme is revealed through Mira’s actions?

- A Sacrificing a personal item is like sacrificing a piece of one’s past.
- B Making sacrifices for others creates a sense of independence.
- C Trying to help others improves the world for all.
- D Providing guidance can make others dependent.

**Part B**

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

- A ““And it just felt like the right thing to do!”” (paragraph 12)
- B ““You don’t understand the way things work here.”” (paragraph 13)
- C “How could I have given away Nana Josie’s charm?!” (paragraph 14)
- D “I try to cover up my face as the tears spill over.” (paragraph 15)

**7 Part A**

Based on the passage, which statement about Janu is **most** accurate?

- A** Janu is critical of Mira's behavior, but he remains sympathetic to the family.
- B** Janu is tired of Mira's complaining, but he accepts it because he cares about her.
- C** Janu is confused by Mira's generosity, but he continues to act as her protector.
- D** Janu is frustrated with Mira's actions, but he is compassionate toward her.

**Part B**

Which **two** quotations from the passage, when taken together, support the answer to Part A?

- A** "Janu shrugs. 'Was it valuable?'" (paragraph 9)
- B** "His anger gives a hard, cold edge to his voice." (paragraph 13)
- C** "I feel sick. Of course he's right." (paragraph 14)
- D** "He must think I'm always crying. . . ." (paragraph 15)
- E** ". . . takes my wrist gently in his hands. 'I'm sorry,' he says." (paragraph 16)

**8** How do Mira's and Janu's actions create irony in the passage?

- A** Janu refuses food from the mother on the train, but Mira wonders if they should accept it.
- B** Mira unhappily gives away the charm bracelet, and Janu angrily criticizes her decision.
- C** Mira tries to understand the emotions of the girl on the train, but she does not realize that Janu is angry.
- D** Janu gives the little girl a coin, but he scolds Mira for giving away her charm bracelet.

Read the passage “Is Listening to a Book the Same Thing as Reading It?” Then answer the questions.

## Is Listening to a Book the Same Thing as Reading It?

*by Daniel T. Willingham*

- 1 A few years ago, when people heard I was a reading researcher, they might ask about their child’s dyslexia or how to get their teenager to read more. But today the question I get most often is, “Is it cheating if I listen to an audiobook for my book club?”
- 2 Audiobook sales have doubled in the last five years while print and e-book sales are flat. These trends might lead us to fear that audiobooks will do to reading what keyboarding has done to handwriting — rendered it a skill that seems quaint and whose value is open to debate. But examining how we read and how we listen shows that each is best suited to different purposes, and neither is superior.
- 3 In fact, they overlap considerably. Consider why audiobooks are a good workaround for people with dyslexia: They allow listeners to get the meaning while skirting the work of decoding, that is, the translation of print on the page to words in the mind. Although decoding is serious work for beginning readers, it’s automatic by high school, and no more effortful or error prone than listening. Once you’ve identified the words (whether by listening or reading), the same mental process comprehends the sentences and paragraphs they form.
- 4 Writing is less than 6,000 years old, insufficient time for the evolution of specialized mental processes devoted to reading. We use the mental mechanism that evolved to understand oral language to support the comprehension of written language. Indeed, research shows that adults get nearly identical scores on a reading test if they listen to the passages instead of reading them.
- 5 Nevertheless, there are differences between print and audio, notably prosody. That’s the pitch, tempo and stress of spoken words. “What a great party” can be a sincere compliment or sarcastic put-down, but they look identical on the page. Although writing lacks symbols for prosody, experienced readers infer it as they go. In one experiment, subjects listened to a recording of someone’s voice who either spoke quickly or slowly. Next, everyone silently read the same text, purportedly written by the person whose voice they had just heard. Those hearing the quick talker read the text faster than those hearing the slow talker.
- 6 But the inferences can go wrong, and hearing the audio version — and therefore the correct prosody — can aid comprehension. For example, today’s student who

reads “Wherefore art thou Romeo?” often assumes that Juliet is asking where Romeo is, and so infers that the word *art* would be stressed. In a performance, an actress will likely stress *Romeo*, which will help a listener realize she’s musing about his name, not wondering about his location.

- 7 It sounds as if comprehension should be easier when listening than reading, but that’s not always true. For example, one study compared how well students learned about a scientific subject from a 22-minute podcast versus a printed article. Although students spent equivalent time with each format, on a written quiz two days later the readers scored 81 percent and the listeners 59 percent. What happened? Note that the subject matter was difficult, and the goal wasn’t pleasure but learning. Both factors make us read differently. When we focus, we slow down. We reread the hard bits. We stop and think. Each is easier with print than with a podcast.
- 8 Print also supports readers through difficult content via signals to organization like paragraphs and headings, conventions missing from audio. Experiments show readers actually take longer to read the first sentence of a paragraph because they know it probably contains the foundational idea for what’s to come.
- 9 So although one core process of comprehension serves both listening and reading, difficult texts demand additional mental strategies. Print makes those strategies easier to use. Consistent with that interpretation, researchers find that people’s listening and reading abilities are more similar for simple narratives than for expository prose. Stories tend to be more predictable and employ familiar ideas, and expository essays more likely include unfamiliar content and require more strategic reading.
- 10 This conclusion — equivalence for easy texts and an advantage to print for hard ones — is open to changes in the future. As audiobooks become more common, listeners will gain experience in comprehending them and may improve, and publishers may develop ways of signaling organization auditorily.
- 11 But even with those changes, audiobooks won’t replace print because we use them differently. Eighty-one percent of audiobook listeners say they like to drive, work out or otherwise multitask while they listen. The human mind is not designed for doing two things simultaneously, so if we multitask, we’ll get gist, not subtleties.
- 12 Still, that’s no reason for print devotees to sniff. I can’t hold a book while I mop or commute. Print may be best for lingering over words or ideas, but audiobooks add literacy to moments where there would otherwise be none.
- 13 So no, listening to a book club selection is not cheating. It’s not even cheating to listen while you’re at your child’s soccer game (at least not as far as the book is

concerned). You'll just get different things out of the experience. And different books invite different ways that you want to read them: As the audio format grows more popular, authors are writing more works specifically meant to be heard.

- 14 Our richest experiences will come not from treating print and audio interchangeably, but from understanding the differences between them and figuring out how to use them to our advantage — all in the service of hearing what writers are actually trying to tell us.

“Is Listening to a Book the Same Thing as Reading It?” by Daniel T. Willingham. Copyright 2018 by The New York Times Company. Reproduced with permission of The New York Times Company via Copyright Clearance Center.

- 9 What is the meaning of the word **rendered** as it is used in paragraph 2?
- A provided or given a service
  - B delivered a judgment or handed over
  - C made or caused to be
  - D suggested or explained a meaning

**10 Part A**

In paragraph 3, what does the phrase **skirting the work of decoding** mean?

- A grasping the meaning without actually reading the words
- B focusing on the specific meaning of each individual word
- C visualizing words to comprehend their meaning
- D creating a new way to understand word meanings

**Part B**

Which phrase from paragraph 3 **best** supports the answer to Part A?

- A “they overlap considerably”
- B “a good workaround”
- C “the translation of print”
- D “words in the mind”

- 11** In paragraph 6, how does the phrase “Wherefore art thou Romeo?” from *Romeo and Juliet* expand upon the information presented in paragraph 5?
- A** It reinforces the idea that skilled readers make inferences about prosody that help them with print texts.
  - B** It clarifies the important similarities between the experience of reading a text and listening to an audio version.
  - C** It explains why the experiment resulted in a connection between recorded speed and reading speed.
  - D** It reveals that audio versions can sometimes help readers build comprehension differently from print texts.

## 12 Part A

In paragraph 8 of the passage, the experiments develop the idea that

- A** spending more time reading the beginning of texts can provide access to information presented later.
- B** organizing a written text is made easier through the use of conventions.
- C** reading print text takes longer than listening to audiobooks.
- D** studying foundational ideas before reading a text has no bearing on understanding of the material.

## Part B

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

- A** “Note that the subject matter was difficult, and the goal wasn’t pleasure but learning.” (paragraph 7)
- B** “. . . expository essays more likely include unfamiliar content and require more strategic reading.” (paragraph 9)
- C** “Print may be best for lingering over words or ideas, but audiobooks add literacy. . . .” (paragraph 12)
- D** “You’ll just get different things out of the experience.” (paragraph 13)

**13 Part A**

According to the passage, which of the following is a benefit of print texts?

- A** Print texts provide symbols for understanding prosody in dramatic works.
- B** Print texts result in higher scores on written quizzes for scientific subjects.
- C** Print texts are commonly viewed as the preferred format for book clubs.
- D** Print texts allow readers to decide on their own interpretations of a text.

**Part B**

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

- A** “But today the question I get most often is, ‘Is it cheating if I listen to an audiobook for my book club?’” (paragraph 1)
- B** “‘What a great party’ can be a sincere compliment or sarcastic put-down, but they look identical on the page.” (paragraph 5)
- C** “. . . the readers scored 81 percent and the listeners 59 percent.” (paragraph 7)
- D** “. . . all in the service of hearing what writers are actually trying to tell us.” (paragraph 14)



**14 Part A**

Based on information in the passage, what is **one** conclusion that can be drawn about audiobooks?

- A** Audiobooks teach people to become better readers.
- B** The popularity of audiobooks will continue to increase.
- C** The format of audiobooks will likely remain the same.
- D** Audiobooks are more often preferred by young people.

**Part B**

Select **two** quotations from the passage that **best** support the conclusion in Part A.

- A** “. . . sales have doubled in the last five years. . . .” (paragraph 2)
- B** “. . . a skill that seems quaint and whose value is open to debate.” (paragraph 2)
- C** “. . . different books invite different ways that you want to read them. . . .” (paragraph 13)
- D** “. . . authors are writing more works specifically meant to be heard.” (paragraph 13)
- E** “Our richest experiences will come not from treating print and audio interchangeably. . . .” (paragraph 14)

**15 Part A**

What is the author's main purpose in writing the passage?

- A** to argue that print texts and audiobooks both provide unique benefits
- B** to explain why audiobooks are likely to change in the future by adopting features from print texts
- C** to inform about the many benefits of audiobooks for individuals with dyslexia and other learning disabilities
- D** to encourage people to read only print texts when they need to retain information

**Part B**

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

- A** "Although decoding is serious work for beginning readers, it's automatic by high school. . . ." (paragraph 3)
- B** "Experiments show readers actually take longer to read the first sentence of a paragraph. . . ." (paragraph 8)
- C** ". . . although one core process of comprehension serves both listening and reading, difficult texts demand additional mental strategies." (paragraph 9)
- D** ". . . understanding the differences between them and figuring out how to use them to our advantage. . . ." (paragraph 14)



## Section 2

**Directions:**

Today, you will take Section 2 of the Grade 8 English Language Arts/Literacy Practice Test.

Read each passage and question. Then, follow the directions to answer each question. Mark your answers by completely filling in the circles in your answer document. Do not make any pencil marks outside of the circles. If you need to change an answer, be sure to erase your first answer completely.

One of the questions may ask you to write a response. Write your response in the space provided in your answer document. Only responses written within the space provided will be scored.

If you do not know the answer to a question, you may go on to the next question. If you finish early, you may review your answers and any questions you did not answer in this Section ONLY. Do not go past the stop sign.

**Today you will read a passage from *Banner in the Sky* as well as a passage from *Gathering Blue*. You will answer questions and then write a response.**

Sixteen-year-old Rudi Matt leaves work secretly to climb a mountain in the heart of the Swiss Alps. Read the passage from *Banner in the Sky*. Then answer the questions.

from *Banner in the Sky*

by James Ramsey Ullman

- 1 The cook muttered under his breath. But, almost at the same time, he smiled. He smiled because he knew what the boy was up to, and in his old heart he was glad.
- 2 Outside, Rudi did not follow the alley to the main street. He went in the other direction, came to a second alley, and ran quickly through the back part of the town. He made a wide detour around his mother's house; another around the house of his uncle, Franz Lerner. Fortunately he met no one who knew him—or at least who knew he was supposed to be working in the kitchen of the Beau Site.
- 3 Soon he came to the edge of the town and a roaring brook. Across the brook lay a footbridge; but, instead of using it, he worked his way upstream around a bend and then crossed over, leaping agilely from boulder to boulder. From the far side he looked back. Apparently no one had seen him. Scrambling up the bank, he plunged through a clump of bushes, skirted a barnyard and picked up a path through the meadows. Here, for the first time, he stopped running. There was no living thing to be seen except a herd of grazing cows. The only sound was the tinkling of their bells.
- 4 The meadows rolled gently, tilting upward, and their green slope was sprayed with wildflowers. The path crossed a fence, over a rickety stile, then bent and rejoined the brook; and now the cowbells faded and there was again the sound of rushing water. Rudi walked on. Three or four times he passed people going in the opposite direction, but they were only *Ausländer*—tourists—and nothing to worry about. Whatever guides were climbing that day were already high in the mountains. And any others who might have known and questioned him were back in the town or on their farms.
- 5 Rudi smiled at the passersby. "*Grüss Gott*," he said—"God's Greetings"—in the ancient salutation of the Alps. "*Grüss Gott*," they said in reply.
- 6 He was no longer hurrying. He walked with the slow, rhythmic pace of the mountain people, and, though the path was now steepening sharply, he felt no

strain. His legs, his lungs, all of his slight wiry body, were doing what they did best; what they had been born to do. His feet, through the soles of his shoes, moulded themselves to each hump and crevice of the path. Arms and shoulders swung in easy balance. His breathing was steady, his heartbeat strong and even.

- 7 “A typical mountain boy,” one would have said, seeing him at a distance. But then, coming closer, one would have seen that he was not typical at all. Partly, this was because of his slimness, his lightness of muscle and bone; but even more it was in his small, almost delicate features and his fair, pink-and-white complexion. Rudi Matt hated his complexion. In summer he exposed his face for hours to the burning sun, in winter he scrubbed it violently with snow, trying to make it brown and tough and weather stained, as a mountain man’s should be. But no stain appeared. No whisker sprouted. “Angel-face,” the other boys called him. Or, rather, *had* called him, until they learned that his fists, though small, were useful. Most of the men of Kurtal had black hair. Rudi’s was blond. Most of them had dark eyes. Rudi’s were light—though exactly what color no one was quite sure. His mother called them hazel, but she saw them only when he was at home or around the village. When he left the village, when he climbed above it, they seemed to change, as the light changed. Looking up at the great peaks above the valley, they seemed to hold within themselves the gray of mountain rock, the blue of mountain sky.
- 8 Rudi Matt climbed on. Now that he was no longer afraid of being stopped, his heart was filled with peace and joy. Just why he had run off on this particular day he could not have said. He had had to—that was all. He had looked from the window of the hotel kitchen and seen the peaks that rimmed the valley rising vast and shining in the morning sun; and he could no more have stopped himself than he could have stopped breathing. A few minutes before, he had been a prisoner. Now he was free. He no longer looked backward—only up—as slowly the great mountain world unfolded before him.

*Banner in the Sky* by James Ramsey Ullman. Copyright 1954 by Collins Publishing. Reproduced with permission of CLA, the Copyright Licensing Agency Ltd. via the Copyright Clearance Center.

- 1 In paragraph 3 of the passage from *Banner in the Sky*, what is the meaning of the word **agilely**?

A with strength  
B with ease  
C with courage  
D with purpose

2 **Part A**

In the passage from *Banner in the Sky*, why does Rudi slow his pace as he climbs higher into the mountains?

- A He is tired because he is not accustomed to hiking long distances.  
B He is less worried about being discovered by someone who knows him.  
C He wants to stop and talk with other hikers on the mountain.  
D He needs to focus more carefully as the hike gets steeper.

**Part B**

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

- A “. . . others who might have known and questioned him were back in the town or on their farms.” (paragraph 4)  
B “‘*Grüss Gott*,’ he said—‘God’s Greetings’—in the ancient salutation of the Alps.” (paragraph 5)  
C “His feet, through the soles of his shoes, moulded themselves to each hump and crevice of the path.” (paragraph 6)  
D “Partly, this was because of his slimness, his lightness of muscle and bone. . . .” (paragraph 7)

Kira belongs to a futuristic society where her skills allow her to contribute to her community. Read the passage from *Gathering Blue*. Then answer the questions.

from *Gathering Blue*

by Lois Lowry

- 1 The community cloth was drab, all no-color; the formless shifts and trousers worn by the people were woven and stitched for protection against the sudden occasional rain, thorn scratch, or poison berry. The usual village fabric was not decorated.
- 2 But Kira's mother had known the art of dye. It was from her stained hands that the colored threads used for rare ornamentation were produced. The robe worn each year by the Singer when he performed the Ruin Song was richly embroidered. The intricate scenes on it had been there for centuries, and the robe had been worn by each Singer and passed from one to the next. Once, many years before, Katrina had been asked to replace a few threads that had torn loose. Kira was only a small tyke then, but she remembered standing in the cott's shadowed corner when a guardian brought the fabulous robe and waited while her mother made the small repair. She remembered watching, fascinated, as her mother pushed a bone needle with thick colorful thread through the fabric; gradually a bright gold replaced the small frayed spot on one sleeve. Then they had taken the robe away again.
- 3 At that year's Gathering, Kira remembered, both she and her mother had peered from their seats at the stage, trying to find the repaired place as the Singer moved his arms in gestures during the Song. But they were too far away, and the repaired spot was too small.
- 4 Each year that followed, they had brought the ancient robe again to her mother for small repairs.
- 5 "One day my daughter will be able to do this," Katrina had said one year to the guardian. "Look what she has done!" she said and showed him the scrap that Kira had just completed, the one that had composed itself so magically in her fingers. "She has a skill far greater than mine."
- 6 Kira had stood silently, embarrassed but proud, as the guardian examined the threading she had done. He made no comment, simply nodded and returned the small piece to her. But his eyes had been bright with interest, she could see. Each year following, he had asked to see her work.

- 7 Kira always stood at her mother's side, never touching the fragile ancient cloth, marveling each time at the rich hues that told the history of the world. Golds and reds and browns. And here and there, faded pale, almost reduced to white, there had once been blue. Her mother showed her the faded places that remained of it.
- 8 Her mother did not know how to make blue. Sometimes they talked of it, Kira and Katrina, looking at the huge upturned bowl of sky above their world. "If only I could make blue," her mother said. "I've heard that somewhere there is a special plant." She looked out at her own garden, thick with the flowers and shoots from which she could create the golds and greens and pinks, and shook her head in yearning for the one color she could not create.

*Gathering Blue* by Lois Lowry. Copyright 2011 by Houghton Mifflin. Reproduced with permission of Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Publishing Company via the Copyright Clearance Center.



- 3 Which **three** phrases from paragraph 2 of the passage from *Gathering Blue* **best** indicate the complexity of the Singer's robe?
- A "... the art of dye."
  - B "... from her stained hands . . ."
  - C "... rare ornamentation . . ."
  - D "... richly embroidered."
  - E "... intricate scenes . . ."
  - F "... passed from one to the next."
- 4 Which quotation from the passage from *Gathering Blue* provides the **best** evidence that Katrina is trusted by the community leaders?
- A "Once, many years before, Katrina had been asked to replace a few threads that had torn loose." (paragraph 2)
  - B "Each year that followed, they had brought the ancient robe again to her mother for small repairs." (paragraph 4)
  - C "'One day my daughter will be able to do this,' Katrina had said one year to the guardian." (paragraph 5)
  - D "Kira always stood at her mother's side, never touching the fragile ancient cloth. . . ." (paragraph 7)

**5 Part A**

Based on the passage from *Gathering Blue*, which words **best** describe how Katrina wants the community leaders to think of her daughter, Kira?

- A** curious and thoughtful
- B** talented and gifted
- C** considerate and respectful
- D** confident and protective

**Part B**

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

- A** “Kira was only a small tyke then, but she remembered standing in the cott’s shadowed corner when a guardian brought the fabulous robe. . . .” (paragraph 2)
- B** “. . . both she and her mother had peered from their seats at the stage, trying to find the repaired place as the Singer moved his arms in gestures during the Song.” (paragraph 3)
- C** “‘Look what she has done!’ she said and showed him the scrap that Kira had just completed, the one that had composed itself so magically in her fingers.” (paragraph 5)
- D** “Kira had stood silently, embarrassed but proud, as the guardian examined the threading she had done.” (paragraph 6)

Refer to the passages from *Banner in the Sky* and from *Gathering Blue*. Then answer the questions.

- 6 Which statement **best** describes how the author of each passage uses setting to develop the plot?
- A The author of the passage from *Banner in the Sky* uses the setting to emphasize Rudi's desire to connect with others, while the author of the passage from *Gathering Blue* uses the setting to emphasize Kira and Katrina's desire to isolate from others.
  - B The author of the passage from *Banner in the Sky* uses the setting to describe Rudi's effort to improve his skills at climbing, while the author of the passage from *Gathering Blue* uses the setting to describe how Kira and Katrina take their skills for granted.
  - C The author of the passage from *Banner in the Sky* uses the setting to highlight Rudi's connection to the mountains, while the author of the passage from *Gathering Blue* uses the setting to highlight the connection between Kira and Katrina.
  - D The author of the passage from *Banner in the Sky* uses the setting to communicate Rudi's lack of confidence, while the author of the passage from *Gathering Blue* uses the setting to communicate Kira and Katrina's abundance of confidence.

- 7 You have read the passage from *Banner in the Sky* and the passage from *Gathering Blue*. Write a response analyzing how the setting of **each** passage impacts the development of the characters. Use evidence from **both** passages to support your response.



## Section 3

**Directions:**

Today, you will take Section 3 of the Grade 8 English Language Arts/Literacy Practice Test.

Read each passage and question. Then, follow the directions to answer each question. Mark your answers by completely filling in the circles in your answer document. Do not make any pencil marks outside of the circles. If you need to change an answer, be sure to erase your first answer completely.

One of the questions may ask you to write a response. Write your response in the space provided in your answer document. Only responses written within the space provided will be scored.

If you do not know the answer to a question, you may go on to the next question. If you finish early, you may review your answers and any questions you did not answer in this Section ONLY. Do not go past the stop sign.

**Today you will read “Testing Thinking” as well as an excerpt from “Am I Human?” Then you will answer questions about the selections and write a response in which you analyze both texts.**

Read the passage “Testing Thinking.” Then answer the questions.

## Testing Thinking

*by Susan Berk Koch*

- 1 Twenty years ago, computer program Deep Blue defeated a human grandmaster in a six-game chess match. Computers can quickly analyze huge amounts of data. This ability leads to remarkable results. Today, they can drive cars and identify people in photos. Does this mean computers can think?

### TALKING THE TALK

- 2 It probably takes some serious thinking for you to complete your math homework. But a computer armed with the right program will arrive at the right answers to almost any math problem quicker than any human. Computers excel at complicated mathematics. But they don't have the imagination and common sense that humans take for granted. A computer assistant such as Siri may struggle to devise solutions to the question, “What do we do if it rains on our picnic?” And if you suggest standing on your head and chanting to the rain gods, it won't understand that was a joke.
- 3 Artificial intelligence (AI) is a broad field of computer science. Researchers in the field program computers to do things that normally require a human brain, like learning, solving problems, or conversing with people.
- 4 To talk to people, computers need to grasp the different meanings of words and how they fit together to form ideas and stories. This is called natural language processing. It gives a computer the ability to interpret human text or even speech. When a computer understands our sentences and responds sensibly, we sometimes believe that it's a thinking being. In fact, some people have proposed that a program that can successfully converse must really be thinking. They have even devised tests that involve striking up conversations with computers.

### INVENTING A TEST

- 5 British mathematician and code breaker Alan Turing was a pioneer in the fields of computer science and AI. He proposed the Turing test in 1950 as a way to answer the question, “Can machines think?” His original proposal for the Turing test is a simple game that looks for how closely a computer mimics a human. A

human judge text chats on two screens with two partners. One is a computer program. The other is another human. The chat lasts five minutes. After time's up, if a judge mistakenly thinks the computer is a human in seven out of ten rounds, the computer passes.

- 6 To judge this sort of test, the human would want to ask questions that are difficult for a computer to answer. Asking questions that involve the outside world is one possible tactic. A judge may say, "What did you think of the weather today?" An AI chatbot may answer, "Here's the forecast for today." A human could say, "Not the best, I can barely see in all the fog."
- 7 In 2014, a computer program seemed to pass the Turing test by convincing 10 out of 30 judges that it was human. The test has limitations, though. For one thing, it depends on which questions are asked. And experts can't quite agree on what is a passing score.

### **TAKING THE PRIZE**

- 8 Each year since 1990, chatbots have competed in a contest based on the Turing test. It's called the Loebner Prize. First place goes to the most human-like AI. Unlike the original Turing test, this is not a pass-or-fail test. And this competition begins with an elimination round of questions that all the computer programs must answer. In 2015, each entrant fielded 20 questions. One was: "If Alex lent money to Joe because they were broke, who needed the money?" AIs often have trouble with twisty phrasing like this. Another was: "Are you on Twitter?"
- 9 In the final round, judges chat with a human and with a computer. They spend 25 minutes asking the contestants anything, like in the Turing test.
- 10 AI programmer Bruce Wilcox won the Loebner Prize four times in seven years. His computers made the finals by answering questions such as "Do you like tea?" with "Sure, I like tea. Haven't had any recently though."

### **GETTING TO "UNDERSTANDING"**

- 11 It has become clear over time that a computer probably doesn't need to think like a human to converse. Often, the conversations make sense—to a point. Wilcox says that the difference between how humans and computers think is that humans plan ahead. They reason about consequences. People often decide what to do based on personal goals, or motives. If you asked an AI chatbot, "Where were you yesterday?" it may answer, "In Chicago." But if you asked why, it wouldn't know.
- 12 Bodies allow people to sense the outside world. And we have years of experience interacting with that world. Most AI programs don't have senses or experience living in a physical world. If you ask a computer, "If I keep pouring this pitcher of

water into a glass, what will happen?” the computer likely won’t understand how to answer. It’s never held a glass, touched water, or taken a drink. Everything about the real world that requires common sense is a challenge for an AI. In the Loebner competition several years ago, the AIs were asked, “Would it hurt you if I stabbed you with a towel?” Humans have all used towels before, so we’d be able to answer, “No, because towels are soft.” But none of the AI contestants had an answer that made sense.

- 13 AIs experience thousands of terabytes of data, accessible in an instant. They never feel frustrated, sad, or angry while trying to solve a problem. They have abilities people can only dream of. AIs beat humans at chess and correctly identify pictures of Persian cats. But they might not be able to tell you what it means if a cat hisses. And AIs don’t feel the sun’s warmth, the exuberance of making that winning shot, or the pain of stubbing a toe. Not yet, anyway.

“Testing Thinking” from *Muse* by Susan Berk Koch. Copyright November/December 2017 by Carus Publishing Company. Reproduced with permission of Carus Publishing Company via Copyright Clearance Center.

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- 1 Which statement **best** explains the structure of paragraph 2 in “Testing Thinking”?
- A The author contrasts a computer’s ability with the human experience.
  - B The author presents the problem of humans relying on artificial intelligence.
  - C The author describes the advantages of using computers to answer math problems.
  - D The author draws parallels between technological growth and human development.
- 2 What is the main purpose of paragraph 3 in “Testing Thinking”?
- A to establish a claim that will be defended
  - B to give additional support to an earlier idea
  - C to explain the history of a field of study
  - D to define a concept to be discussed
- 3 Read this sentence from paragraph 4 of “Testing Thinking.”

When a computer understands our sentences and responds sensibly, we sometimes believe that it’s a thinking being.

Which statement **best** explains the significance of this sentence?

- A It suggests that humans want a computer’s response to be more realistic.
- B It provides a clear definition of the mental processes that computers use for communication.
- C It shows how humans can make inaccurate assumptions about computers based on limited evidence.
- D It explains how a computer’s mental processes rely on external input in order to communicate.

Read the passage from “Am I Human?” Then answer the questions.

from “Am I Human?”

by Gary Marcus

- 1 In 1950 Alan Turing devised a thought experiment that has since been revered as the ultimate test of machine intelligence. He called it the “imitation game,” but most people know it as the Turing test. Anticipating what we now call chat bots—computer programs that masquerade as humans—Turing envisioned a contest in which a machine tries to trick an interrogator into believing it is human, answering questions about poetry and deliberately making mistakes about arithmetic. Today, in the eyes of the general public, the Turing test is often seen as a kind of a Rubicon, a measure of whether machines have truly arrived. But it shouldn’t be: the Rubicon can be passed, though for the wrong reasons. It is now possible to build machines that fool people, at least for brief periods—but the victories are fleeting, and they do not seem to be carrying us even close to genuine intelligence.
- 2 The problem is that Turing’s test is too easily gamed. One can “win” simply by being deceptive or feigning ignorance. As Turing himself partly anticipated, the trick to winning is mostly *not* to answer the questions. If a judge asks a machine, “Do you have feelings?” the machine must lie to win. But that odd twist is not an exception—it is the rule. The way to win the Turing test is to deceive.
- 3 In 2014, for example, a chat bot named “Eugene Goostman” supposedly “won” the Turing test by pretending to be a sarcastic 13-year-old boy from Odessa, Ukraine, who never answered questions directly. Some judges were fooled (about a third, enough to count as a shallow victory). But so what? The judges got only a few minutes to conduct their interviews, and they undoubtedly would have ferreted out the truth soon enough. In reality, Eugene knew—and understood—almost nothing. Consider this dialogue, which computer scientist Scott Aaronson had with the bot:

**SCOTT:**

Which is bigger, a shoebox or Mount Everest?

**EUGENE:**

I can’t make a choice right now. I should think it out later. And I forgot to ask you where you are from . . .

**SCOTT:**

How many legs does a camel have?

**EUGENE:**

Something between 2 and 4. Maybe, three? :-))) By the way, I still don’t know your specialty—or, possibly, I’ve missed it?

**SCOTT:**

How many legs does a millipede have?

**EUGENE:**

Just two, but Chernobyl mutants may have them up to five. I know you are supposed to trick me.

**SCOTT:**

No, I need to know that you're not a chatbot. Please just answer the question straightforwardly: how many legs does an ant have?

**EUGENE:**

Something between 2 and 4. Maybe, three? :-))) Oh, what a fruitful conversation ;-).

- 4 Clearly, Turing's original test has not withstood the test of time.

"Am I Human?" from *Scientific American* by Gary Marcus. Copyright March 2017 by Scientific American, a Division of Springer Nature America, Inc. Reproduced with permission of Scientific American, a Division of Springer Nature America, Inc. via Copyright Clearance Center.

- 4 Which phrase **best** helps the reader understand the effect of the word **masquerade** as is used in paragraph 1 of the passage from “Am I Human?”
- A “. . . envisioned a contest . . .”
  - B “. . . tries to trick . . .”
  - C “. . . questions about poetry . . .”
  - D “. . . making mistakes about arithmetic.”
- 5 In paragraph 2 of the excerpt from “Am I Human?,” which **two** phrases **best** help the reader determine the meaning of **feigning**?
- A “partly anticipated”
  - B “must lie to win”
  - C “that odd twist”
  - D “not an exception”
  - E “is to deceive”

**6 Part A**

According to the author of the excerpt “Am I Human?,” what is the main reason the Turing test is not effective?

- A** Programmers have learned how to program computers to fool the test.
- B** Computers are now advanced beyond the simple conversations of the test.
- C** Computers can impersonate people in order to confuse the test.
- D** Programmers have created types of conversation not recognized by the test.

**Part B**

Which quotation from the excerpt **best** supports the answer to Part A?

- A** “Turing envisioned a contest in which a machine tries to trick an interrogator into believing it is human. . . .” (paragraph 1)
- B** “As Turing himself partly anticipated, the trick to winning is mostly *not* to answer the questions.” (paragraph 2)
- C** “‘Eugene Goostman’ supposedly ‘won’ the Turing test by pretending to be a sarcastic 13-year-old boy. . . .” (paragraph 3)
- D** “Clearly, Turing’s original test has not withstood the test of time.” (paragraph 4)

Refer to the passage “Testing Thinking” and the excerpt from “Am I Human?” Then answer the questions.

- 7** The authors of **both** “Testing Thinking” and the excerpt from “Am I Human?” establish connections between which **two** concepts?
- A** the desire of humans to develop artificial intelligence
  - B** the similarities between human and artificial intelligence
  - C** the development of machines that imitate human behavior
  - D** the practical advances in intelligence tests for computers
  - E** the challenges of measuring the actual intelligence of a computer

- 8** After reading both the article “Testing Thinking” and the excerpt from “Am I Human?” write a response to analyze how each author examines the differences in the ways that humans and artificial intelligence process information. Be sure to use evidence from **both** passages in developing your response.



**Practice Test Answer and Alignment Document**  
**ELA/Literacy: Grade 8**  
**Paper and Pencil**

<b>Section 1</b>		
<b>Items 1–15</b>		
<b>Task:</b> Literary Single		
<b>Passage 1:</b> from <i>Jasmine Skies</i>		
<b>Item Number</b>	<b>Answer(s)</b>	<b>Standards Alignment</b>
1.	B	L.8.4
2.	<b>Part A:</b> C <b>Part B:</b> A	RL.8.3
3.	<b>Part A:</b> A <b>Part B:</b> D	RL.8.3
4.	A, D	RL.8.3
5.	B	RL.8.6
6.	<b>Part A:</b> A <b>Part B:</b> C	RL.8.2
7.	<b>Part A:</b> D <b>Part B:</b> B, E	RL.8.3
8.	D	RL.8.3



**Section 1** *continued***Task:** Informational Single**Passage 2:** "Is Listening to a Book the Same Thing as Reading It?"

9.	C	L.8.4
10.	<b>Part A:</b> A <b>Part B:</b> B	L.8.5
11.	D	RI.8.5
12.	<b>Part A:</b> A <b>Part B:</b> B	RI.8.3
13.	<b>Part A:</b> B <b>Part B:</b> C	RI.8.1
14.	<b>Part A:</b> B <b>Part B:</b> A, D	RI.8.2
15.	<b>Part A:</b> A <b>Part B:</b> D	RI.8.6

<b>Section 2</b>		
<b>Items 1–7</b>		
<b>Task:</b> Literary Performance Task		
<b>Passage 1:</b> from <i>Banner in the Sky</i>		
<b>Item Number</b>	<b>Answer(s)</b>	<b>Standards Alignment</b>
1.	B	L.8.4
2.	<b>Part A:</b> B <b>Part B:</b> A	RL.8.1
<b>Passage 2:</b> from <i>Gathering Blue</i>		
3.	C, D, E	RL.8.4
4.	B	RL.8.1
5.	<b>Part A:</b> B <b>Part B:</b> C	RL.8.3
<b>Passages 1 and 2:</b> from <i>Banner in the Sky</i> and from <i>Gathering Blue</i>		
6.	C	RL.8.5
7.	Constructed Response Item: Refer to MCAP Informative/Explanatory Performance Task Rubric Grades 6–10	W.8.2

<b>Section 3</b>		
<b>Items 1–8</b>		
<b>Task:</b> Informational Performance Task		
<b>Passage 1:</b> “Testing Thinking”		
<b>Item Number</b>	<b>Answer(s)</b>	<b>Standards Alignment</b>
1.	A	RI.8.5
2.	D	RI.8.5
3.	C	RI.8.5
<b>Passage 2:</b> from “Am I Human?”		
4.	B	RI.8.4
5.	B, E	L.8.4
6.	<b>Part A:</b> A <b>Part B:</b> B	RI.8.1
<b>Passages 1 and 2:</b> “Testing Thinking” and from “Am I Human?”		
7.	C, E	RI.8.3
8.	Constructed Response Item: Refer to MCAP Informative/Explanatory Performance Task Rubric Grades 6–10	W.8.2