


# Minnesota MCA Grade 3 Reading Practice

Exam Materials  
Pages 2 - 32

Name \_\_\_\_\_

# Minnesota Comprehensive Assessments-Series III

Reading Item Sampler  
Grade 3



ITEM SAMPLERS ARE NOT SECURE TEST MATERIALS. THIS ITEM  
SAMPLER TEST BOOK MAY BE COPIED OR DUPLICATED.

## Directions for Reading Test

- For each question, choose the answer you think is best.
- You must answer each question in your test book.
- You can use scratch paper or write in your test book to help you answer the questions.
- When you finish a segment, review your answers. Then raise your hand for a sticker to seal the segment. Once you seal it, you cannot go back.

On this test, do your own best work to show what you know and can do.

- Do not accept help finding answers to test questions.
- Do not give answers to other students.
- Do not tell others what is on the test.
- There may be consequences if you do not follow directions or if you behave dishonestly.



# Reading Test — Segment 1

1

Madan is well-known for his sewing. Read this story to find out if he can make a dress that would fit the moon. Then answer the questions. Some questions may ask you about certain paragraphs. The paragraphs are numbered on the left side.

## A Dress for the Moon

by Indira Krishnan

- 1 Once upon a time a young man named Madan lived in a village in northern India. Madan's father wanted him to become a farmer. But Madan wished to leave the village and find work in town. He promised his father that he would send a part of his earnings home regularly. His father wished him a safe trip.
- 2 In town, Madan learned to be a tailor. He worked hard and soon became known for the fine clothes he made. The entire town wanted clothes sewed by Madan. The more his fame spread, the more proud and boastful Madan became.
- 3 One night Madan sat gazing at the full moon that shone from behind a tall coconut tree. He said, "I am sure I can make a dress for the moon. The moon will praise my handiwork, and then my fame will spread to the sun and stars."
- 4 A breeze carried his words to the coconut tree. Laughing softly, the tree bent down and whispered, "That's one thing you can't do."
- 5 Madan frowned. "How do you know what I can do?" he said. "You are only a tree."
- 6 The coconut tree tried to say something more, but Madan would not listen.
- 7 "If you want to be of some use, tell the moon that I want to make a dress for her. You are tall enough to do that," he said.

- 8 So the tree told the moon about Madan. The moon agreed to have a dress made by the famous tailor from Earth.
- 9 Madan jumped for joy. Quickly he began to sew a dress of smooth white satin for the moon. When it was done, he called out to the coconut tree, "You must give this dress to the moon, as I cannot reach her." The coconut tree agreed.
- 10 The following evening, as Madan waited eagerly for the moon to appear, the coconut tree bent down and whispered, "The moon says your dress doesn't fit. It's too loose."
- 11 Madan was stunned. "It can't be!" he cried. "The clothes I make always fit perfectly." But the moon returned the dress to him, and he had to redo it. He spent the night making the dress a little smaller and gave it back to the tree.
- 12 The next evening the moon rose a little later. Madan waited impatiently. But again the coconut tree bent down and whispered, "The dress is still too loose."
- 13 Madan nearly wept with disappointment. "I can't believe it! How could I go wrong?" he wailed.
- 14 "I tried to tell you before," said the tree. "After the moon is full, she grows smaller each day until you can't see her at all. I have been noticing this for many years. So how can you make one dress that would fit the moon properly? But you wouldn't listen to me."
- 15 Brokenhearted, Madan sat with his head in his hands the whole night.
- 16 At the break of day he saw the moon on the other side of the sky. He whispered, "I am sorry, dear Moon. I am not as great a tailor as I thought."
- 17 "It's all right," said the moon. "After all, I'm the moon. How can I wear clothes as people do?"

- 18 From that day on, Madan resolved to work harder than before. He was not vain anymore, and his hard work brought him more money. He remembered to send a good part of it to his father. People liked him better because he was an excellent tailor and a humble one, too.

1. Which sentence best describes Madan at the beginning of the story?
- A. He is shy and works quietly.
  - B. He is proud and seeks greatness.
  - C. He is sad and tries to learn more.
  - D. He is kind and generous to others.
- 

2. Read the following dictionary definitions.

**spread**

- 1. to open over a larger area (spread out a map)
- 2. to stretch out; extend (spread my arms wide)
- 3. to cover something (spread a cloth on the table)
- 4. to pass from person to person (the news spread rapidly)

Which meaning best fits the way spread is used in paragraph 2 of the story?

- A. Meaning 1
- B. Meaning 2
- C. Meaning 3
- D. Meaning 4

- 3.** Why does Madan want to make a dress for the moon?
- A.** He thinks the moon will be his friend.
  - B.** He thinks the moon will look prettier in a dress.
  - C.** He wants to impress his father and get more money.
  - D.** He wants the moon to praise him so he will be more famous.
- 
- 4.** The tree thinks Madan's idea to make a dress for the moon is
- A.** silly.
  - B.** mean.
  - C.** smart.
  - D.** clever.



5. After the moon returns the dress the first time, Madan
- A. asks for help.
  - B. tries again.
  - C. cries all night.
  - D. gives up.
- 
6. In paragraph 14, the word properly means
- A. loosely.
  - B. correctly.
  - C. happily.
  - D. handsomely.

7. What does Madan send home to his father?
- A. Clothes
  - B. Food
  - C. Jewelry
  - D. Money

## Reading Test — Segment 2

A young girl named Helen Keller was blind and deaf. Read this article about how Helen's teacher helped her learn about the world around her. Then answer the questions. Some questions may ask you about certain paragraphs. The paragraphs are numbered on the left side.

### Helen Keller: The World in Her Heart

by Lesa Cline-Ransome

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- 1 Helen found ways to speak to her family. For Father, she made the shape of glasses with her fingers. For baby sister Mildred, she sucked her thumb, and for Mother, she laid her hand against her face. But each day she grew more frustrated and angry, hitting Mildred, kicking at her family, and crying. Her parents tried to make her happy, but Helen's behavior only got worse.
- 2 They needed help, so they sent for a teacher from the Perkins Institute for the Blind, a school in Boston.
- 3 A stranger was here. Helen reached forward to touch her.
- 4 A smooth, round face with no lines.
- 5 *Young.*
- 6 Curly hair, pulled back smooth.
- 7 *Neat.*
- 8 Tight lips, turned up just a little on each end.
- 9 *Trying to hide a smile.*
- 10 And her eyes.
- 11 *Hidden behind glasses.*

- 12 The stranger will not leave. Each day there is something new. The stranger's hand in hers. Fingers tracing, fists pounding, so many unfamiliar shapes.
- 13 *What do they mean?*
- 14 The stranger stayed by her side every minute of the day. Helen tried to hide, but she was always found. She even tried locking the stranger in her room. Nothing worked. Helen reached for her favorite things: her doll, a piece of hard candy, a bowl of cake batter. The stranger always took Helen's hand in hers, fingers tracing, fists pounding, too many strange shapes.
- 15 *I don't like her.*
- 16 Helen fought. She cried. She touched her cheek.
- 17 *I want my mother.*
- 18 Helen learned her first word at the pump. A cool splash, slippery and wet. *Water*. She learned quickly. With the stranger's help she discovered that each of the movements in her hand was the shape of a letter. And that all of the letters put together made words.
- 19 One by one the words came. Perched high in her favorite oak amid the caresses of plants came *tree*. And *leaves*. A smooth, hard something nestled in the palm of her hand. *Egg*. Then *birds* and *nests*.
- 20 Helen touched everything in her path. *Tell me the name*, she gestured.
- 21 And the stranger taught her to spell the names of her family: *M-o-t-h-e-r*; all the foods she ate: *e-g-g-s* and *b-r-e-a-d* and, her favorite, *c-a-k-e*.
- 22 *Is there a name for everything?*

- 23 *Y-e-s*, the stranger responded.
- 24 *But who are you?* Helen asked by pointing and placing a hand on the stranger's chest.
- 25 The letters were spelled slowly into her hand. *T-e-a-c-h-e-r*.
- 26 *T-e-a-c-h-e-r*. Helen spelled back.
- 27 *I like her*.
- 28 Soon Helen could spell nearly six hundred words. Stepping onto a well-worn path, leading Teacher down past the old barn, Helen paid close attention. She felt the sharp crunch of pine needles underfoot, then the spongy cushion of moss, and the rickety planks of a bridge.
- 29 *Almost there*, she signaled to Teacher.
- 30 When she caught the scent of water she stopped.
- 31 *W-a-t-e-r*, she spelled in Teacher's hand.
- 32 *T-e-n-n-e-s-s-e-e R-i-v-e-r*, Teacher corrected.
- 33 Helen dug in mud up to her elbows, filling holes with water, stacking pebbles one by one, and shaping mounds of mud. She trudged home with dirt-caked fingernails and a dress stiff with dirt, but in her head were many new words, such as *o-c-e-a-n*, *d-a-m*, *m-o-u-n-t-a-i-n*, and *v-a-l-l-e-y*.
- 34 In the heat of the day, Helen soaked in the warmth as *s-u-n*, *s-k-y*, *p-l-a-n-e-t*, and *s-t-a-r* were traced in her palm.
- 35 On other days, as drops poured down on her face, Helen stood perfectly still, her feet in a puddle, drinking in the rain. *C-l-o-u-d-s* and *t-h-u-n-d-e-r* she practiced spelling.

- 36 But it was in the family garden, fragrant with perfumed blossoms, that Helen discovered her favorite spot. *C-l-e-m-a-t-i-s, l-i-l-y, r-o-s-e*, she spelled as she touched each petal. Surrounded by butterflies and bees, beetles and dragonflies, she felt them whirl and crawl and land softly all around her.
- 37 With so many new words came many new questions.

- 8.** What does paragraph 1 tell readers about Helen?
- A.** She does not recognize her family.
  - B.** She understands the thoughts of her family.
  - C.** She does not enjoy time with her family.
  - D.** She wants to communicate with her family.
- 

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- 9.** Why does Helen make “the shape of glasses with her fingers” when she means “Father”?
- A.** Helen’s mother has different glasses.
  - B.** Helen has felt the glasses on her father’s face.
  - C.** Helen’s father has glasses like the teacher.
  - D.** Helen learned about glasses in her teacher’s lessons.

**10.** Read these sentences from paragraph 12.

The stranger's hand in hers. Fingers tracing, fists pounding, so many unfamiliar shapes.

The author includes these sentences most likely to

- A. explain how the teacher makes words.
  - B. show how the teacher wants to comfort Helen.
  - C. explain how the teacher's behavior upsets Helen.
  - D. show how Helen expresses her feelings.
- 

**11.** Which word does Helen first learn to spell?

- A. Tree
- B. Water
- C. Mother
- D. Teacher



**12.** Read paragraph 17 from the article.

*I want my mother.*

Why does the author most likely use italics in this sentence?

- A. To describe Helen's actions
  - B. To inform readers of important ideas
  - C. To show Helen's thoughts
  - D. To explain the meaning of new words
- 

**13.** Based on information in the article, what does gestured mean in paragraph 20?

- A. Asked
- B. Pulled
- C. Motioned
- D. Demanded

**14.** Which sentence from the article shows that Helen is eager to learn?

- A. "The stranger stayed by her side every minute of the day."  
(paragraph 14)
- B. "Helen learned her first word at the pump."  
(paragraph 18)
- C. "The letters were spelled slowly into her hand."  
(paragraph 25)
- D. "Soon Helen could spell nearly six hundred words."  
(paragraph 28)

## Reading Test — Segment 3

Read this poem about a special day at school when an author visits. Then answer the questions. Some questions may ask you about certain lines. The lines are numbered on the left side.

### My Special Day at Third Street School

by Eve Bunting

- 1 AN AUTHOR'S COMING TO OUR SCHOOL.  
Our teacher's so excited.  
The author wrote and said that she  
was glad to be invited.
- 5 Her name is Miss Amanda Drake.  
She's coming on the bus  
from over on Biloxi Street  
just to visit us.
- 10 First, of course, we read her books . . .  
every one we've got.  
Then we borrow fourteen more.  
She's written quite a lot.
- 15 We make a welcome banner  
that we hang up in the hall.  
We draw a million drawings  
just to decorate the wall.
- 20 We fold some origami flowers.  
They're very hard to do.  
We pile them in a basket  
with a note that says "For You."

We make a list of questions  
that we'll ask Amanda Drake.  
Our teacher says "Don't ask her,  
'How much money do you make?'"

25 We squeeze some ice-cold lemonade.  
We bake a chocolate cake.  
Our classroom's looking beautiful  
for Miss Amanda Drake.

30 She's here! She's here! We're in a state  
of great anticipation!  
We stamp our feet and clap our hands  
to show appreciation.

Amanda Drake is tall and thin.  
Her hair is streaked with pink.  
35 It doesn't sound attractive,  
but it's nicer than you think.

She talks to us and reads to us  
and says she loves to write.  
"I'm working, working every day  
40 and sometimes every night.

"Verbs and nouns and adjectives,  
words that show and tell.  
My dictionary's close at hand  
for words that I can't spell.

45 "There's something that I'd like to share  
because it's truly true.  
It doesn't seem like work  
if you are loving what you do."

**15.** Miss Amanda Drake visits Third Street School because

- A.** the children have made her presents.
  - B.** she lives near the school.
  - C.** the school is so beautiful.
  - D.** she has been invited.
- 

**16.** Which statement about Miss Amanda Drake is true?

- A.** She writes to ask for directions to Third Street School.
  - B.** She arrives in the morning at Third Street School.
  - C.** She walks part way to Third Street School.
  - D.** She rides the bus to Third Street School.
- 

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**17.** Why do the students want to meet Miss Amanda Drake?

- A.** They like her books.
- B.** They like her pink hair.
- C.** They like the way she reads to them.
- D.** They like the letter she wrote to them.

**18.** Which line from the poem contains figurative language?

- A. "We make a welcome banner"  
(line 13)
  - B. "We draw a million drawings"  
(line 15)
  - C. "We pile them in a basket"  
(line 19)
  - D. "We make a list of questions"  
(line 21)
- 

**19.** In line 32, what does the word appreciation mean?

- A. Hope
- B. Thanks
- C. Wonder
- D. Surprise

**20.** Read lines 29–32 from the poem.

She's here! She's here! We're in a state  
of great anticipation!  
We stamp our feet and clap our hands  
to show appreciation.

Which phrase describes the students in lines 29–32?

- A. Eager to prepare
  - B. Suddenly shy
  - C. Full of excitement
  - D. Suddenly surprised
- 

**21.** Which quote contains a detail important to the main idea of the poem?

- A. "She's coming on the bus"  
(line 6)
- B. "Then we borrow fourteen more"  
(line 11)
- C. "but it's nicer than you think"  
(line 36)
- D. "and says she loves to write"  
(line 38)

- 22.** Who is the speaker of the poem?
- A. A student at Third Street School
  - B. The principal from Third Street School
  - C. A teacher at Third Street School
  - D. A writer who visits Third Street School
- 

- 23.** What is Miss Amanda Drake's message to the students?
- A. Ask good questions if you expect good answers.
  - B. Use a tool such as a dictionary when you write.
  - C. Enjoy your job even if you have to work hard.
  - D. Behave kindly toward people when they visit.



# Reading Test — Segment 4

Read the following story and article about caves. Then answer the questions. Some questions may ask you about certain paragraphs. The paragraphs are numbered on the left side.

## Selection 1

### Out of the Dark

written for the Minnesota Department of Education

- 1 Jason tried to force a smile as his classmates lined up to enter the cave. "This will be great," he whispered to Dawn, his best friend, who was standing in front of him. Jason wiped his sweaty palms on his pants and swallowed hard. The rest of his classmates were laughing and talking excitedly to one another. Jason hoped that no one would discover how he really felt about this field trip.
- 2 Dawn inched closer to Jason and turned to face him. "What did you say?"
- 3 "I said, 'This will be so great,'" he replied. "Don't you think so?"
- 4 "Well, maybe," Dawn replied, sounding a bit unsure of herself. She swung away from him then and looked past the tour guide, who was standing at the cave entrance. Her eyes darted back and forth, searching the ceiling of the cave.
- 5 Jason took a deep breath as the line began to move, following the guide around a bend where the group could no longer see the light from the entrance. Only a few low lights shone from the sides of the cave. Silence fell as the guide motioned for the line to stop, and he began to explain the rules of cave exploration. Jason was not listening, however. Not only was his attention on his own thoughts, but his heartbeat was also drowning out the sound of the guide's voice. He felt like the cave was swallowing him.
- 6 *I should have told the teacher the truth, Jason thought, rubbing his arms against the chilly air. She would not have made me come. But he*

had not wanted to look foolish to the other kids. After all, how many other third graders were afraid of the dark?

- 7 The guide continued walking deeper into the cave with the students shuffling closely behind him. He stopped and pointed to a dark corner at the top of the cave. "Bats used to live here. They would sleep during the day but become very active at night." He quickly added, "We won't be able to see them today, though, because the bats left this area a long time ago."
- 8 Dawn suddenly grabbed Jason's arm. "Did he say *bats*?" she yelped. Without waiting for an answer, she blurted out, "I knew it! I knew there would be bats here. I should have told the teacher. She wouldn't have made me come if she had known."
- 9 Ignoring the stares and giggles of his classmates, Jason tried to calm Dawn by asking in a quiet voice, "If she had known what?"
- 10 Dawn peered at the ground and kicked a loose rock.
- 11 "I'm a little afraid of bats," Dawn whispered.
- 12 Jason smiled, but only because of the warm feeling spreading throughout his heart. What a relief to know that he was not alone! "Well, I think bats are cool, but I know how it feels to be afraid. I'm a little frightened of the dark." His grin was so big that he thought it might split his face. "Don't forget that the guide just said bats are no longer here."
- 13 Dawn squeezed his arm again, but this time in a slow, careful way. Then she laughed, the sound bouncing around the darkness. With Dawn's support and the echo of her laughter all around him, Jason began to think that the cave was not so scary after all.

## Selection 2

### Caves

by Sally M. Walker

- 14 One cave can be very different from another. That's because caves form in different ways. One kind of cave forms from broken chunks of bedrock. Bedrock is a thick layer of solid rock under the soil. Sometimes water and wind wear away the soil. Then you can see the bedrock.
- 15 Stones and big boulders (BOHL-derz) are rocks that have broken off from bedrock. Sometimes boulders, small rocks, and soil slide down a mountain. They land in a pile at the bottom. The boulders lean against one another. Water from rain or a stream washes away the soil and small rocks. A space is left under the boulders. The space is called a talus (TA-luhs) cave.
- 16 Melted rock deep inside Earth can make another kind of cave. Melted rock flows out of volcanoes when they erupt. When the liquid rock is on Earth's surface, it is called lava. Streams of thick lava flow away from a volcano. The surface of the flowing lava cools quickly. As it cools, a crust of solid rock forms.
- 17 Melted lava still flows beneath the crust, like liquid inside a drinking straw. Finally, lava stops flowing from the volcano. Lava beneath the hard crust drains away. An empty tube is left. The tube is a type of cave called a lava tube.
- 18 Caves also can form inside ice. A glacier is a large body of ice that moves slowly across land. It is so thick that it doesn't melt away in the summer. Sometimes part of the ice inside a glacier melts into water.
- 19 The water drains out of the glacier. As the water moves, it makes tunnels and caves in the ice. The caves are called glacier caves. The walls and ceiling of a glacier cave are made of ice.

- 20 Water creates most other kinds of caves. In some places, bedrock cliffs are near the seashore. Ocean waves crash against the rock. Seawater flows into cracks in the cliffs. The water weakens the rock. Swirling water breaks off pieces of bedrock. Over time, the cracks get wider. They become holes. Holes made by ocean waves are called sea caves.
- 21 Water also creates caves in bedrock that is underground. Soil and some kinds of rocks have tiny air spaces in them. And bedrock has cracks. Water flows through those air spaces and cracks. Water that flows inside the ground is called groundwater.
- 22 Groundwater can make a cave. In some places, bedrock is made of limestone. Limestone is a type of rock. Groundwater can slowly make limestone dissolve (dih-ZAHLV). When something dissolves, it breaks up into tiny pieces and disappears.
- 23 Bits of limestone bedrock dissolve when groundwater flows through cracks in the bedrock. The cracks get bigger. Then more groundwater fills the cracks. It causes even more of the limestone to dissolve. After many years, the crack becomes a cave.

**24.** Who is the narrator of this story?

- A. Dawn
  - B. The tour guide in the story
  - C. Jason
  - D. A person outside the story
- 

**25.** In paragraph 4 of "Out of the Dark," Dawn's eyes "darted back and forth, searching the ceiling of the cave." According to the article "Caves," what was Dawn most likely seeing?

- A. Limestone bedrock
  - B. Ocean waves
  - C. Thick lava
  - D. Melting ice
- 

**26.** Which paragraph clearly explains why Jason is afraid?

- A. Paragraph 1
- B. Paragraph 5
- C. Paragraph 6
- D. Paragraph 11

- 27.** Why does the author write that Jason is “rubbing his arms against the chilly air” in paragraph 6 and has a “warm feeling spreading throughout his heart” in paragraph 12?
- A.** To show that the setting at the end of the story is different from the setting at the beginning
  - B.** To show how Jason’s feelings change between the beginning and end of the story
  - C.** To show Jason’s actions when he tries to keep warm in a cold part of the cave
  - D.** To show that the cave is cold in some places and warm in others
- 

- 28.** Read this sentence from paragraph 4.

‘Well, maybe,’ Dawn replied,  
sounding a bit unsure of herself.

Which paragraph explains why Dawn sounds this way?

- A.** Paragraph 5
- B.** Paragraph 6
- C.** Paragraph 11
- D.** Paragraph 12

- 29.** Which idea do Jason and Dawn share through most of the story?
- A.** Bats and other scary animals are in the cave with them.
  - B.** The tour guide shares facts they already know about the cave.
  - C.** Telling their classmates about their fears will make them feel better.
  - D.** The teacher would have let them stay home if she knew they were afraid.
- 

- 30.** According to the article, how are lava and a hard crust of rock connected?
- A.** Lava that has cooled makes a hard crust of rock.
  - B.** A hard crust of rock melts to become lava.
  - C.** A hard crust of rock fills a tube of lava.
  - D.** Lava flows out of a hard crust of rock.
- 

- 31.** According to the article, what is the ceiling of a talus cave made of?
- A.** Ice
  - B.** Cliffs
  - C.** Soil
  - D.** Boulders

**32.** In paragraph 20, what does creates mean?

- A. Melts
  - B. Cracks
  - C. Makes
  - D. Crashes
- 

**33.** Which idea would help readers find information in "Caves" more quickly?

- A. Including pictures of caves at the beginning of the article
  - B. Highlighting words that appear most often in the article, such as "cave"
  - C. Adding information to the article to tell where examples of each kind of cave are found
  - D. Dividing the article into parts with headings such as "Talus Cave," "Lava Tube," and "Sea Cave"
- 

**34.** Based on the story and the article, if Jason touched the wall of the cave, how would it feel?

- A. Smooth
- B. Warm
- C. Soft
- D. Cool