

Massachusetts MCAS 2021  
Grade 4 English Language Arts

Exam Materials  
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MASSACHUSETTS DEPARTMENT OF  
ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY  
**EDUCATION**

*Release of Spring 2021  
MCAS Test Items*

*from the*

*Grade 4 English Language Arts  
Paper-Based Test*

**June 2021**

**Massachusetts Department of  
Elementary and Secondary Education**

# Grade 4 English Language Arts

This session contains 18 questions.

## Directions

Read each passage and question carefully. Then answer each question as well as you can. You must record all answers in this Test & Answer Booklet.

For most questions, you will mark your answers by filling in the circles in your Test & Answer Booklet. Make sure you darken the circles completely. Do not make any marks outside of the circles. If you need to change an answer, be sure to erase your first answer completely.

Some questions will ask you to write a response. Write your response in the space provided. Only responses written within the provided space will be scored.

Read the story about a rocket launch contest, and then answer the questions that follow.

### Winning

*by Joseph Yenkovitch*

- 1 Tom Perry concentrated hard. The rocket competition would begin shortly, and he wanted to be sure he hadn't left any detail unchecked. No possible glitch was too small to be ignored. Nothing could jeopardize his winning.
- 2 He had never lost a contest, but that didn't calm him. Being on top counted, and he pushed himself to remain there.
- 3 The other kids, however, rarely came over to him. Whenever they did, it usually made him feel like they'd been forced to do it. No way, though, was he going over to them. He'd win again, and they couldn't ignore that.
- 4 He opened his toolbox. Pushing aside engines, igniters, glue, tape, and microclips, he pulled out the pieces of his launch pad and began assembling it.
- 5 A shadow fell over him, and he looked up. His father stood there. . . .
- 6 "How's it going?" his father asked.
- 7 "Fine," Tom replied, grunting as he tried to put one leg of the launch pad in the wrong way and finally turned it around.
- 8 His father pursed his lips. Tom knew the look. It meant he had something important on his mind.
- 9 "Relax," his father said. "Enjoy yourself. You've done the best you can, haven't you?"
- 10 Tom nodded. He wanted to say he always did his best. He won every time, didn't he? Mostly, though, he wanted to ask why it made so little difference. Why didn't being first make everyone like him better?
- 11 He felt his father's hand on his shoulder. When he looked up, he was almost sure his father understood. But did he really understand losing and what it meant? No one had much to do with him now. What would happen if he lost?
- 12 Time was passing, and he hadn't started readying his rocket. "Uh, Dad . . ." he said.

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- 13 "Oh sure," his father replied. "Good luck." He winked and went to the bleachers.
- 14 Tom checked his rocket again. Everything from the smooth fuselage\* to perfect aerodynamics told him he had another winner—especially when he glanced at the other rockets.
- 15 He noticed problems quickly. A green rocket had dents and rough areas around the decals: drag. He knew its altitude would be limited. Another had fins too close to its center of gravity: without a doubt the rocket would tumble. A red rocket with overly wide fins showed cracks where the stages met. Uncalled for, he felt. Sloppiness.
- 16 One rocket, however, caught his eye. Its finish glinted in the sun. The painted areas were finely done, and the seal between the stages was practically invisible.
- 17 It had the look. His critical eye detected that this rocket could beat his.
- 18 A thin boy lifted it carefully. Tom turned away and started placing the igniter wire into his engine. It slipped from his hand and became lost in the grass. Unable to find it, he found another one and fitted it carefully into place.
- 19 "Hi," said a voice out of the blue.
- 20 Tom looked up. The thin boy peered down, a nervous smile on his face. His hands jingled coins in his pocket.
- 21 "Nice rocket you've got there," the boy said.
- 22 "Thanks," Tom replied without much emotion, then regretted it. "Looks like you spent a lot of time on yours. Where do you fire it? I haven't seen you at any of the competitions."
- 23 "In the field behind my house. By the way, my name's Ed."
- 24 "Tom. You don't care for these contests?"
- 25 "I never really thought about them. I keep pretty much to myself."
- 26 One of the other boys walked past and tapped Ed on the arm. "You're new here," he said. "Maybe you can beat him." The boy glanced down at Tom, but there wasn't any warmth in his face.

\*fuselage—the main body of an aircraft

- 27 "Guess you're king of the hill," Ed said.
- 28 Tom waited for a snide remark, but it didn't come.
- 29 "Well," Ed said, "good luck. Maybe sometime we could . . . well, see you after the contest." He walked away and knelt beside his rocket.
- 30 Seeing the rocket again gave Tom a sinking feeling in his stomach. He ran a hand through his damp brown hair and wiped it across his blue T-shirt. Trying to ignore his nervousness, he sat back on the grass, propping himself up on his elbows. A refreshing breeze started. The airless, sticky morning was changing. Pulling out his notes, Tom matched up these conditions with those of previous flights to see what angle his launch pad would need. He didn't have to alter a thing.
- 31 The announcer asked for everyone's attention and proceeded to explain the competition. Tom barely listened, his gaze constantly drifting to Ed's rocket.
- 32 Suddenly his heart did a leap, and he sat upright—within a fraction of a second, Tom knew that Ed had no chance of winning.
- 33 Tom had noticed that as Ed lifted his rocket to place it on the launch pad, one fin had caught against something in the ground, pulling it away from the fuselage. Not enough to break it off, just enough to loosen it. Immediately the fin resumed its proper place, only now it was fatally weakened.
- 34 But Ed hadn't noticed. He glanced back at Tom and gave a thumbs-up sign. Tom felt a twinge of regret but decided he wasn't going to jeopardize a sure win by saying anything. Anyway, it was up to Ed to keep checking his rocket.
- 35 The announcer called the first contestant. A blond-haired girl excitedly clipped on the firing wires. With a facial expression that made it seem she was setting off a pound of dynamite, she pressed the ignition button. The rocket spit out exhaust and sped upward, then quickly tumbled, hitting the ground. It sputtered, firing its second stage into the grass. Teeth clenched, the girl walked back to the other contestants.
- 36 The second rocket flew a considerable distance, but Tom noticed an obvious wobble and knew that would certainly reduce its altitude.
- 37 And so it went, one rocket after another, most gaining respectable heights, while a few careened wildly. Men at tracking stations that looked like giant protractors far off to each side of the launch pad scribbled down numbers.

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- 38 Tom watched, but the problems the others had didn't make him feel good. For the first time the looks on their faces bothered him.
- 39 Someone made a joke, and that got everyone laughing. . . . Tom felt twice as alone now. He would have his victory, yet they seemed to be having more fun. The knowledge he had about what was wrong with their rockets soured within him. It felt like something he had stolen. He pulled at a few blades of grass.
- 40 "Ed Malovich will be our next contestant," the announcer said, interrupting Tom's daydream. Immediately Ed lifted his rocket and started to the launch area.
- 41 Without thinking, words flowed from Tom's mouth so that it almost surprised him to hear them.
- 42 "Ed, hold up!" he yelled. Ed stopped. Heads in the bleachers turned, watching him.
- 43 "What is it?" Ed asked.
- 44 Tom walked up to him and pointed at his rocket. "It's your fin. It's loose."
- 45 Alarmed, Ed looked down and tested the fin. Like a broken wing, it bent. He held it up to the announcer, who gave him five minutes to fix it.
- 46 "You should have kept quiet," Ed said. "You'd have won for sure."
- 47 A few minutes later Ed's rocket blasted skyward, shooting up flawlessly. No wobbles, cutting the air as though it knew nothing could stop it. Higher and higher it climbed, a puff of smoke indicating the second stage had fired, and soon after another puff signaled that the parachute had deployed. Even without tracking equipment, Tom could tell it had beaten all the others easily.
- 48 Everyone cheered. Tom watched so intently that he didn't hear his name being called. When it was repeated, it startled him.



- 49 He moved to the pad. The excited jabbering of the other kids continued, but he tuned it out. Nonetheless, his fingers trembled as he connected the wires to the igniter. He wondered if he should have said anything. Who would have known?
- 50 Stepping back to the firing board, he took a deep breath and pushed the button. For the briefest moment there was nothing, only a dreadful silence. He let out a tiny gasp.
- 51 Then, as though finished with its little joke, the rocket roared to life. Spitting smoke, it leaped from the pad—true in its direction—slicing the air effortlessly. It climbed wonderfully. Tom anxiously awaited the second puff. When it came, the rocket sped higher, seeming as though it could puncture the blue sky and speed into space. Then the parachute deployed, and it drifted down leisurely.
- 52 Tom ran out into the field as the rocket swung to the ground. As he picked it up along with the first stage, he heard the numbers being announced.



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- 53 They were read in the order of the flights. Tom ignored them, only interested in his and Ed's.
- 54 "Ed Malovich," the announcer boomed. Tom perked up and watched Ed. "Eleven hundred fifty feet." The crowd came to life. No one else had reached a thousand feet.
- 55 Tom wrapped the string from the parachute around his hand. For the first time, he realized he was standing in the field alone. Alone in victory or a sitting duck in defeat, he thought.
- 56 He started walking as his name was called. He stopped. The crackle of paper came over the loudspeaker, and there was a pause. Tom stared at the mountains in the distance.
- 57 "Eleven hundred feet."
- 58 The number struck Tom a blow. He began walking one way, then turned, not sure of where he was going. Voices spread from the bleachers, a great noise from which he wanted to escape.
- 59 Squeezing his rocket, he strode from the field. At his toolbox he methodically put everything in its place, amazed at how his attention to detail hadn't left him at this horrible moment. Still his hands gripped each object as though he hated it.
- 60 A hand fell on his shoulder. He kept his head down, not wishing to face his father. But that's not who it was.
- 61 "Thanks," Ed said, when Tom finally looked up. "Sorry you didn't win." Tom could almost feel that he meant it. He stood up.
- 62 He noticed a few other kids who'd gathered around him. A tall boy walked past and smirked. "Finally got your butt kicked, huh, Perry," he said. Tom stepped backward, glancing at the others.
- 63 "Don't mind him," a blond girl said. "It was nice what you did. Both of you are great rocketeers."
- 64 Another boy piped up. "Do you think you could help us with ours?"
- 65 "I'd like one to fly up, not down," the blond girl said. Everyone laughed.
- 66 "Well, sure," Tom replied. He felt awkward. "Anytime."
- 67 "We're going over to my house," Ed spoke up. "See you there?"

68 Tom could only nod. He wanted to say something, but just couldn't. All he did was stare after everyone as they left. At that moment he felt relaxed, and the competition seemed very far away.

"Winning" by Joseph Yenkovitch, illustrated by Karen Donnelly, from *Cricket* magazine (September 2017). Text copyright © 2017 by Carus Publishing Company. Illustrations copyright © 2017 by Karen Donnelly. Reprinted by permission of Carus Publishing Company, d/b/a Cricket Media, and/or various authors and illustrators.

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- 1** What does paragraph 9 **mainly** show about Tom’s father?
- Ⓐ He thinks that Tom has made a good rocket.
  - Ⓑ He tries to be caring because Tom feels bored.
  - Ⓒ He thinks that Tom is ready to launch his rocket.
  - Ⓓ He tries to be comforting because Tom is worried.
- 2** Based on the story, what does the phrase “critical eye” in paragraph 17 suggest about Tom?
- Ⓐ He sees clearly.
  - Ⓑ He notices details.
  - Ⓒ He makes changes.
  - Ⓓ He thinks creatively.
- 3** Based on paragraphs 21–23, what does Tom **most likely** think he should have done when he met Ed?
- Ⓐ helped Ed with his rocket
  - Ⓑ learned more about where Ed lives
  - Ⓒ responded to Ed in a friendlier way
  - Ⓓ talked to Ed before the competition began

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- 4 Read the sentence from paragraph 34 in the box.

Tom felt a twinge of regret but decided he wasn't going to jeopardize a sure win by saying anything.

Which phrase has almost the same meaning as the word **jeopardize** as it is used in the sentence?

- Ⓐ give up
  - Ⓑ count on
  - Ⓒ search for
  - Ⓓ brag about
- 5 Based on paragraphs 47–49, how does the picture **most** help the reader to understand the story?
- Ⓐ by showing that people are paying attention
  - Ⓑ by showing that people are standing together to watch
  - Ⓒ by showing that people are amazed by Ed's rocket launch
  - Ⓓ by showing that people are worried about Ed's rocket launch

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**6** What does paragraph 51 **mainly** help the reader to understand?

- Ⓐ what Tom was doing
- Ⓑ the shape of the rocket
- Ⓒ the power of the rocket
- Ⓓ where Tom was looking

**7** Read paragraph 58 in the box.

The number struck Tom a blow. He began walking one way, then turned, not sure of where he was going. Voices spread from the bleachers, a great noise from which he wanted to escape.

Based on the paragraph, how does Tom **most likely** feel at the end of the competition?

- Ⓐ He is eager to improve his rocket.
- Ⓑ He is hopeful that he will make friends.
- Ⓒ He is curious about the other kids in the competition.
- Ⓓ He is disappointed that someone has a faster rocket.

**8** Based on the story, select **two** details that describe Tom.

- Ⓐ worries that he will lose the competition
- Ⓑ wishes good luck to the other boy
- Ⓒ feels better after the other kids walk over to talk with him
- Ⓓ tells the other boy that he should have kept the broken fin a secret
- Ⓔ builds a rocket that wobbles
- Ⓕ enjoys making others laugh

Based on the story, select **two** details that describe Ed.

- Ⓐ worries that he will lose the competition
- Ⓑ wishes good luck to the other boy
- Ⓒ feels better after the other kids walk over to talk with him
- Ⓓ tells the other boy that he should have kept the broken fin a secret
- Ⓔ builds a rocket that wobbles
- Ⓕ enjoys making others laugh

- 9** Read paragraph 54 in the box.

“Ed Malovich,” the announcer boomed. Tom perked up and watched Ed. “Eleven hundred fifty feet.” The crowd came to life. No one else had reached a thousand feet.

Based on the story, what do the words “the crowd came to life” **most likely** mean as they are used in the paragraph?

- Ⓐ The crowd moved quickly.
- Ⓑ The crowd listened quietly.
- Ⓒ The crowd watched closely.
- Ⓓ The crowd reacted excitedly.

- 10** Based on the story, what does Tom **most likely** learn from his experience at the competition?

- Ⓐ Making friends is more satisfying than coming in first place.
- Ⓑ Launching rockets is the only way to meet other people.
- Ⓒ Paying attention to details is the most important skill.
- Ⓓ Success can only be achieved by doing your best.

- 11 Which paragraph **best** retells the events of the story in the correct order?
- Ⓐ Tom rushes over to Ed to tell him about an issue with the fin. Tom meets Ed, who has built a rocket as good as Tom's. Tom sets up his rocket while the other kids don't pay attention to him. Tom is invited to hang out with the other kids.
  - Ⓑ Tom sets up his rocket while the other kids don't pay attention to him. Tom meets Ed, who has built a rocket as good as Tom's. Tom rushes over to Ed to tell him about an issue with the fin. Tom is invited to hang out with the other kids.
  - Ⓒ Tom is invited to hang out with the other kids. Tom meets Ed, who has built a rocket as good as Tom's. Tom sets up his rocket while the other kids don't pay attention to him. Tom rushes over to Ed to tell him about an issue with the fin.
  - Ⓓ Tom meets Ed, who has built a rocket as good as Tom's. Tom rushes over to Ed to tell him about an issue with the fin. Tom is invited to hang out with the other kids. Tom sets up his rocket while the other kids don't pay attention to him.
  - Ⓔ Tom is invited to hang out with the other kids. Tom rushes over to Ed to tell him about an issue with the fin. Tom meets Ed, who has built a rocket as good as Tom's. Tom sets up his rocket while the other kids don't pay attention to him.



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**For this question, you will write a story based on the passage(s). Write your story in the space provided on the next page. Your writing should:**

- **Use characters, settings, events, and other details from the passage(s).**
- **Use correct grammar, spelling, and punctuation.**

- 12** Based on “Winning,” write a story that tells what will happen when Tom goes to Ed’s house. Use what you know about the characters, settings, and events to write your story.

**Write your answer on the next page.**

*You have a total of one page on which to write your response.*

12

Lined area for writing response.

Read the article about Hans and Margret Rey. Then answer the questions that follow.

### How Curious George Came to America

by Valerie Bendt

- 1 What do you think about when you hear the name Curious George? Do you think about a good little monkey who is always very curious? Do you think about books with bright yellow covers and a man with a big yellow hat?
- 2 *Curious George*, the story, was “born” in France, but its creators had an international background. Hans and Margret Rey, who created George, were both born in Germany. They first worked together when they lived in Brazil, where they later married. They spent their honeymoon in Paris, France, and liked it so much they decided to stay.
- 3 It was in Paris that the Reys began writing and illustrating books, and it was in Paris that Curious George was created. He first appeared in the Reys’ book *Cecily G. and the Nine Monkeys*. Yes, he was one of the nine monkeys. Hans and Margret liked George so much they decided to write a whole story about his adventures. They called the book *Curious George*. They went on to write and illustrate six more Curious George books. Hans Rey once said, “Basically, I illustrate and Margret writes.”
- 4 George is a very curious little monkey and is always getting into trouble. However, more than once, George got Hans and Margret out of trouble. Here’s what happened: There was a war going on. The French police thought the Reys might be spies working for the German government. Officers arrested the couple, searched their belongings, and discovered their story about Curious George. The police decided that the creators of such a charming story could not possibly be spies. The police released Hans and Margret. Curious George saved the Reys from jail!
- 5 It wasn’t long before Hans and Margret were in danger once again. It was 1940, and Adolph Hitler’s German army was charging across Europe. The Reys knew they had to escape before Hitler’s soldiers arrived in Paris. Hans, who was skilled at making gadgets, built two bicycles from spare parts. Then, early one morning in June, the Reys strapped their Curious George story to one of their bicycle racks. They grabbed their warm coats and a bit of food, and they were off.



- 6 A few hours later, when the German army invaded Paris, Hans and Margret were pedaling away. They were headed toward Spain, riding along the country roads of France. After four tiring days, the Reys and George reached Spain. They sold their bicycles and bought train tickets to Portugal. There they boarded a ship and crossed the Atlantic Ocean to Brazil. Following a short visit there, the Reys sailed for America.

**Hans Rey once said,** “Among children, we seem to be known best as the parents of Curious George. . . . ‘I thought you were monkeys, too,’ said a little boy who had been eager to meet us, disappointment written all over his face.”

- 7 The Statue of Liberty welcomed Hans and Margret as they sailed into New York Harbor. Meanwhile, Curious George waited patiently in their baggage. The Reys settled into an apartment in New York. Within a week, they found a publisher who liked their story about a good little monkey who was always very curious. Curious George had finally come to America!

“How Curious George Came to America” by Valerie Bendt, illustrations by Kevin Menck, from *AppleSeeds* (April 2006). Copyright © 2006 by Carus Publishing Company. Reprinted by permission of Carus Publishing Company, d/b/a Cricket Media, and/or various authors and illustrators.

- 13** Based on the article, how did Hans and Margret work as a team?
- Ⓐ by catching spies together
  - Ⓑ by creating stories together
  - Ⓒ by helping animals together
  - Ⓓ by building bicycles together
- 14** In paragraph 2, the word “born” is in quotation marks to show that Curious George
- Ⓐ was not really born.
  - Ⓑ was not ready to be born.
  - Ⓒ was born at an earlier time.
  - Ⓓ was born in an unusual place.

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- 15** In the article, why are *Curious George* and *Cecily G. and the Nine Monkeys* printed in italics?
- Ⓐ They are titles of books.
  - Ⓑ They are names of characters.
  - Ⓒ They are words spoken aloud.
  - Ⓓ They are words describing sounds.
- 16** According to the article, how did Hans Rey help with the Curious George books?
- Ⓐ He wrote the words.
  - Ⓑ He drew the pictures.
  - Ⓒ He printed the pages.
  - Ⓓ He corrected the mistakes.

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- 17 Read the sentence from paragraph 6 in the box.

There they boarded a ship and crossed the Atlantic Ocean to Brazil.

Which of the following sentences uses the word **boarded** the same way it is used in paragraph 6?

- Ⓐ She boarded up the broken window.
- Ⓑ We boarded the bus to go to school.
- Ⓒ They boarded in a house with another family.
- Ⓓ He boarded up the house before the storm arrived.

- 18 Read the sentence from paragraph 7 in the box.

Meanwhile, Curious George waited patiently in their baggage.

Based on the sentence, what is in the Reys' baggage?

- Ⓐ a toy monkey
- Ⓑ a real monkey
- Ⓒ the story of a monkey
- Ⓓ the supplies for a monkey

**Grade 4 English Language Arts**  
**Spring 2021 Released Operational Items**

<b>PBT Item No.</b>	<b>Page No.</b>	<b>Reporting Category</b>	<b>Standard</b>	<b>Item Type*</b>	<b>Item Description</b>	<b>Correct Answer (SR)**</b>
1	10	<i>Reading</i>	RL.4.3	SR	Determine what is suggested about a character based on information in the story.	D
2	10	<i>Language</i>	L.4.5	SR	Interpret the meaning of a phrase in the story.	B
3	10	<i>Reading</i>	RL.4.3	SR	Determine what is suggested about a character based on information in the story.	C
4	11	<i>Language</i>	L.4.4	SR	Determine the meaning of a word in context.	A
5	11	<i>Reading</i>	RL.4.7	SR	Determine how a picture contributes to the understanding of the story.	C
6	12	<i>Reading</i>	RL.4.4	SR	Determine how a paragraph is important to the story.	C
7	12	<i>Reading</i>	RL.4.3	SR	Determine how a character feels using details from the story.	D
8	13	<i>Reading</i>	RL.4.3	SR	Choose details that best describe the characters in the story.	C,A;D,B
9	14	<i>Language</i>	L.4.5	SR	Interpret the meaning of a phrase using details from the story.	D
10	14	<i>Reading</i>	RL.4.3	SR	Determine how a character changes at the end of the story.	A
11	15	<i>Reading</i>	RL.4.2	SR	Choose the summary that retells the events in the story in the correct order.	B
12	16	<i>Language, Writing</i>	L.4.1, L.4.2, L.4.3, W.4.3, W.4.4	ES	Write a narrative that describes what will most likely happen next in the story.	
13	20	<i>Reading</i>	RI.4.2	SR	Identify a description of two individuals based on information in the article.	B
14	20	<i>Language</i>	L.4.2	SR	Identify the reason a word is placed in quotation marks in the article.	A
15	21	<i>Language</i>	L.4.3	SR	Identify the reason italics are used in the article.	A
16	21	<i>Reading</i>	RI.4.1	SR	Identify the actions of an individual in the article.	B
17	22	<i>Language</i>	L.4.4	SR	Determine which meaning of a multiple-meaning word is used in the article.	B
18	22	<i>Reading</i>	RI.4.1	SR	Identify an event using information from the article.	C

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

\*\* Answers are provided here for selected-response items only. Sample responses and scoring guidelines for any constructed-response and essay items will be posted to the Department's website later this year.



**Grade 4 English Language Arts**  
**Spring 2021 Unreleased Operational Items**

<b>PBT Item No.</b>	<b>Reporting Category</b>	<b>Standard</b>	<b>Item Type*</b>	<b>Item Description</b>
19	<i>Reading</i>	RI.4.1	SR	Determine what is suggested about an individual based on information in the passage.
20	<i>Reading</i>	RI.4.1	SR	Make an inference about an individual and choose evidence from the passage that best supports the inference.
21	<i>Language</i>	L.4.4	SR	Determine the meaning of a word in context.
22	<i>Reading</i>	RI.4.7	SR	Determine how an illustration contributes to the reader's understanding of the passage.
23	<i>Reading</i>	RI.4.1	SR	Identify the sentence that best describes an individual in the passage.
24	<i>Reading</i>	RI.4.1	SR	Determine what is suggested about an individual based on information in the passage.
25	<i>Reading</i>	RI.4.9	SR	Identify evidence that compares the feelings of others toward individuals in both passages.
26	<i>Reading</i>	RI.4.3	SR	Identify the feelings of individuals described in the passages.
27	<i>Reading</i>	RI.4.9	SR	Identify which problems individuals in the passages faced.
28	<i>Reading</i>	RI.4.9	SR	Identify the steps two individuals had to take to accomplish their goals in the passages.
29	<i>Reading</i>	RI.4.9	SR	Identify a difference between two individuals and choose evidence from one of the passages that best supports the difference.
30	<i>Reading</i>	RI.4.3	SR	Determine the effect of the successes of two individuals based on information in both passages.
31	<i>Reading</i>	RI.4.3	CR	Write a paragraph that describes a character trait of an individual in the passage, using important details from the passage as evidence.

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