



New York State Testing Program

English

Language Arts Test

Book 3

Grade

8

April 26–28, 2010

Name _____

TIPS FOR TAKING THE TEST

Here are some suggestions to help you do your best:

- Be sure to read carefully all the directions in the test book.
- Plan your time.
- Read each question carefully and think about the answer before writing your response.

In this test, you will be writing about texts that you will be reading. Your writing will be scored on

- how clearly you organize your writing and express what you have learned
- how accurately and completely you answer the questions being asked
- how well you support your responses with examples or details from the texts
- how correctly you use grammar, spelling, punctuation, capitalization, and paragraphing



Whenever you see this symbol, be sure to plan and check your writing.

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Reading and Writing***D***irections

In this part of the test, you are going to read a passage called “Rufus” and a passage called “The Gift of Reason.” You will answer questions 31 through 34 and write about what you have read. You may look back at the passages as often as you like.

Go On

Rufus

by C.W. Gusewelle



The bird dog is lost again.

Not lost in the literal, physical sense. He's still around, and still a friend. But I have lost him as a useful working animal, which hunting dogs are supposed to be. It happened during this summer's spell of blistering heat when he discovered air conditioning.

The bedroom has a window unit. When the awful heat came, he immediately noticed the difference between the pleasant nights in his chair and the sweltering days outside. And it occurred to him he might correct this situation. Were not the cats in there and cool? Was not the old dog snoozing in the lap of air-conditioned comfort? Then why should he, a dog of real utility, provider of fowl for the family table, not have some of this luxury?

He pressed his hopeful face against the outer glass, but our hearts were hard. To present his case in a more dramatic way, he began sitting on a patio table, glaring in accusingly at eye level through a kitchen window. It yielded nothing, though. He remained outside.

So he learned to open the back door. That's right, *learned to open it himself!* One afternoon I looked up from my typewriter and there he was, indisputably inside, looking immensely pleased by his new competence. As far as he's concerned, the case is closed. He's in where it's cool, and it's not negotiable. He makes himself as small as possible and rarely moves.

The other day Katie called him, suggesting it might be time to trot outside on a sanitary errand. He didn't budge—just looked around the room to see if, by some coincidence, she might be speaking to another dog of the same name. So I called him, and he growled.

As you probably know, the main virtue of a fine bird dog, apart from a keen nose, is unquestioning obedience. The master's command is his highest law. Defiance is unthinkable. He is indifferent to the elements. If game is downed, he will endure any discomfort to find and bring it to hand. In a word, there is nothing a bird dog will not do for his master.

Wrong! This one will not even leave his chair in an air-conditioned room.

When he was chosen from his littermates several years ago, I was looking for a pup with intelligence and staying power. That's exactly what I got. Rufus is no fool. And he's staying cool.

31

In the passage “Rufus,” the author describes Rufus as having intelligence and staying power. Using details from the passage, complete the chart below with **one** example of Rufus’s intelligence and **one** example of his staying power.

Quality Exhibited by Rufus	Example from the Passage
Intelligence	
Staying Power	

Go On

32

The author of the passage says that he lost Rufus as a useful working animal during a summer heat spell. Explain why the author makes this comment about his dog. Use details from the passage to support your answer.

The Gift of Reason

by Walter D. Edmonds

Walter D. Edmonds was a writer from upstate New York. After seeing dogs help each other, he wondered whether animals had the power to reason. In this part of his article, he tells of another encounter with animals.

I am carried back to a sweltering midday in August many summers ago. I am fishing down Cold Brook, a small stream that rises beyond our back line and circles through the northeast corner of the place, and then for better than two miles runs through a heavy growth of alders till it meets the Black River at Hawkinsville. I used to fish it every summer, because no matter how warm the river water might have become, a trout out of the icy water of Cold Brook was always prime. I also fished it because it was a very sporting stream.

The heavy growth of alders made using a fly impossible. Instead, to find your trout you floated a worm down the current into the pockets under the alder roots where the water was seldom more than a foot deep.

I do not know when the two swamp sparrows discovered me. I was so preoccupied that it might have been several minutes before their insistence brought them to my attention. But then, there they were in the bush beside me, two small brown birds with dull rusty caps and undistinguished plumage. They were profoundly upset, spreading their wings, repeating over and over a rough single note.

When I stopped fishing, they flew to another bush upstream and repeated their antics. I thought that perhaps they had new hatched babies somewhere nearby and wanted to lead me away from them, but as I had no intention of harming them, I resumed my fishing, passing around the next downstream clump of alders to try a new riffle.¹

Immediately the two birds changed their tactics. In an instant they were in front of me, fluttering before my face almost like flycatchers, still uttering their distressed *chink* note.² I stopped again to watch them. It would have been impossible to continue fishing with that flurry of wings going on almost in my face. Once more they flew to a bush upstream, but the minute I faced downstream again, they were back around my head.

I put my rod down, leaning it against a bush, and watched them. They quieted, but continued to flutter their wings. It came to me, how I do not know, that they were not trying to lead me *from* something. They wanted me to come *with* them.

¹**riffle:** a stretch of water

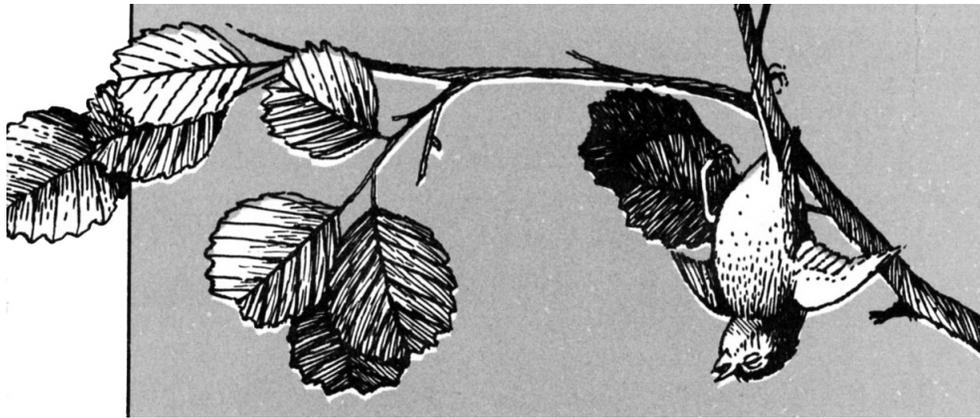
²**chink note:** a sharp sound

Go On

As soon as I started back upstream in their direction, they fluttered on, much less noisily now. I followed them for perhaps a hundred feet, and then they led me away from the brook until they came to rest in another alder clump. Their voices were much quieter now; in an odd way they sounded reassuring. I looked where they were looking.

There, its tiny leg caught in a vertical cleft of an alder stem, hung a sparrow nestling. It hung totally inert. It gave no sign that it might be alive when I went up to it, not even when I took the little body in one hand and with the other opened the cleft. I held it for several minutes cupped in my hands. Finally its eyes opened, and it stirred a little on my palm.

Only then did I realize that both birds had come close to me. They watched the young bird as intently as I. And in the end the little body gathered itself. The stretched leg moved under it. I put it on a branch two feet or so away from its parents. They had apparently no fear of me. They did not offer to move away. When I saw the toes of the baby take hold of the branch, I released it and left them so. I resumed my fishing, but nothing that happened that afternoon was as exciting as my encounter with the swamp sparrows. Few things that have happened to me since have moved me more.



33

The author of “The Gift of Reason” says that few things have moved him more than his encounter with the sparrows. Explain the **most likely** reason this encounter has moved him so much. Use details from the passage to support your answer.

Go On

Planning Page

You may PLAN your writing for question 34 here if you wish, but do NOT write your final answer on this page. Your writing on this Planning Page will NOT count toward your final score. Write your final answer on Pages 9 and 10.



Place Student Label Here



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