



# ***New York State Testing Program***

**English**

**Language Arts Test**

**Book 1**

Grade

**6**

**April 26–28, 2010**

## 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 choosing your response.

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**Reading**

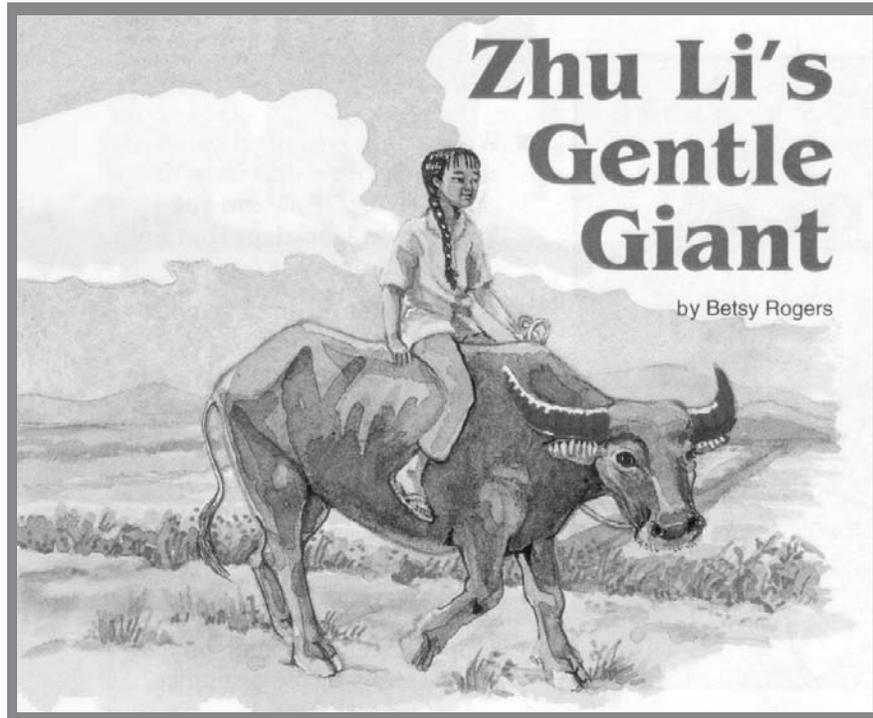
***D*irections**

In this part of the test, you will do some reading and answer questions about what you have read.

***Go On***

# Directions

Read this passage. Then answer questions 1 through 5.



Zhu Li hurries toward home as soon as school is out. Signs of spring are all around her. The warm sun feels good on her bare arms. Swallows swoop in the air, catching insects, and there are flowers blooming beside the path.

Zhu Li lives on a farm in Sichuan Province, China. She is excited because starting this afternoon she will be taking care of the family's water buffalo every day after school.

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Zhu Li's father, Mr. Ching, is preparing the fields for the planting of tiny new rice shoots, just as his father and grandfather have done before him. The work is hard, but it is made easier with the help of a water buffalo.

Zhu Li's family calls the buffalo Qiang Dade Shan, which means Strong Mountain. Strong Mountain is the most valuable animal on the farm because he is so useful. He does

many chores besides pull the plow. He draws cartloads of produce and homemade bricks to the village on market day. When Mr. Ching gathers firewood or bamboo in the hills, Strong Mountain patiently carries the heavy bundles home on his broad back.

Strong Mountain is much taller than Zhu Li is. He has massive horns that are curved like crescent moons,<sup>1</sup> and he weighs nearly a ton. In spite of his size and strength, Strong Mountain is a gentle giant. Everyone in Zhu Li's family loves him because he is so good-natured and easy to handle. Zhu Li has never been afraid of him. In fact, she has ridden Strong Mountain many times.

<sup>1</sup>**crescent moon:** the moon's curved shape when only one-quarter of it is visible

\* \* \*

Mr. Ching has removed his sandals and rolled up his pant legs to wade in the flooded paddy.<sup>2</sup> He guides the plow through the mud behind Strong Mountain, who steps slowly with his head held low.

Whenever Mr. Ching wants Strong Mountain to stop or change direction, all he has to do is whistle or gently tug on a rope attached to the buffalo's nose ring. If Strong Mountain stops too long in one place, Mr. Ching lightly taps the buffalo's rump with a bamboo stick, and off he will go again.

When Mr. Ching finishes plowing, he removes Strong Mountain's yoke and turns the buffalo over to his daughter. Proudly, Zhu Li climbs onto the gentle giant's back, using one horn as a handle. Zhu Li will now watch over Strong Mountain as he eats and rests after his day's work.

Strong Mountain knows the way. He plods along the dikes,<sup>3</sup> pausing often to tear up grass with his raspy tongue. Zhu Li can feel his powerful backbone moving beneath her. Now and then, his hide quivers as he shakes off flies.

When Strong Mountain arrives at a pond, Zhu Li slides off his back and sits on the bank.

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<sup>2</sup>**paddy:** a flooded field where rice is grown

<sup>3</sup>**dikes:** banks or mounds of dirt and rock used to control water

The buffalo wades into the pond, then sinks into the refreshing water. Soon only his eyes and black nose are showing. Strong Mountain grunts with contentment.

The only thing that Strong Mountain likes better than taking a bath is wallowing in the mud on a hot summer day. A coating of mud keeps him cool and protects him from annoying insects.

That evening, after putting Strong Mountain in his pen, Zhu Li joins her family for dinner. Her father praises her for her good work with Strong Mountain.

Then the family eats bowls of rice that Mr. Ching has grown the year before—with Strong Mountain's help, of course. Everybody agrees that the gentle giant is a very important member of the family.



**Go On**

**1**

Why is the water buffalo referred to as a “gentle giant”?

- A** He has huge horns.
- B** He works hard on the farm.
- C** He is very strong but looks small.
- D** He is very large but good-natured.

**2**

How does Zhu Li care for the water buffalo each day?

- A** She sits on his back as he plows the fields.
- B** She watches over him as he eats and rests.
- C** She washes him when he slides into the mud.
- D** She makes sure that he is safe from other animals.

**3**

Zhu Li can **best** be described as

- A** wise
- B** strong
- C** cautious
- D** responsible

4

Read this sentence from the passage.

**He has massive horns that are curved like crescent moons, and he weighs nearly a ton.**

In this sentence, the water buffalo's horns are compared to crescent moons because of their

- A color
- B shape
- C size
- D weight

5

How is Zhu Li's life probably **different** from most children in the United States?

- A She goes to school most weekdays.
- B She likes to play with her animals at home.
- C She does chores after finishing her studies.
- D She cares for a large animal that works for her family.

***Go On***

# Directions

Read this passage. Then answer questions 6 through 11.

## The Pool Visitor

by Marilyn Naito

Illustrated by Helen Kunze

In this passage, an American girl named Martine has traveled to Australia to visit her cousin, Stephen. In Australia, it is summertime in December.



“All done!” Stephen placed a bowl by the sink. “Let’s swim.”

Martine watched the dishwater swirl down the drain. “Swimming! I just can’t get used to it in December.”

All Stephen had heard since his American cousin, Martine, arrived were stories about snow and fireplaces. Stephen had only seen snow in pictures.

SPLASH! The sound came from the backyard.

“Mr. Baker’s spaniel, Max, must be taking a dip again.” Stephen rolled his eyes upward.

Martine tagged behind Stephen as he went to the pool and stopped, dumbfounded. In the water was a round, furry ball that looked like a soggy Teddy bear.

“A koala bear!” Martine sounded happy as the animal splashed water over his ears.

“He isn’t a bear,” Stephen told her. “He’s a marsupial, like a kangaroo.”

Martine and Stephen sat on the edge of the pool and watched. The koala swam, then floated on his back until he headed for the opposite side of the pool across from Stephen and Martine. The koala tried to pull himself out, but the tiles were too slippery.

“He can’t get out,” Martine said. “We’ve got to help him.”

Stephen kicked off his thong sandals and stepped quietly into the pool.

By the time Stephen reached the frightened animal, the koala was paddling to the metal ladder. Stephen put his arms under the koala and gave him a boost up. Martine lifted the animal onto solid ground. The koala gave one shake, spraying Martine with water, before waddling across the lawn and up the nearest tree.

“We’ve never had a koala in the pool before,” Stephen said, “but koalas love to swim. My teacher said that backyard pools are a big cause of accidents to koalas in Australia.”

“What if he falls in when no one’s home?” Martine asked.

“All the koala needs is something rough to hang onto,” Stephen replied, “and he can haul himself right out.”

After hearing what happened, Stephen’s mom said, “There is some leftover carpeting in the basement. You can use that.”

Stephen and Martine found the carpet rolled up in a corner and carried it to the pool. Then they found some sturdy rope in the garage and stitched the rope to one side of the carpet. They

tied the rope to two poolside grab rails. They cut the carpet section so that it extended into the pool. After it was hosed down, the carpet lay against the inside pool wall.

“I hope it works,” said Stephen.

They waited and waited, but the koala didn’t appear, and the koala ramp was almost forgotten.

SPLASH!

Stephen and Martine looked at each other with the same thought. It could be Mr. Baker’s spaniel or—

Martine dashed outside with Stephen at her heels.

The water glistened on the koala’s furry head. He paddled around, then swam toward the carpet ramp.

Gripping it with his claws, he slowly pulled his chubby body up and out of the water. With four paws planted firmly on the pool deck, he shook himself and scampered off.

Martine giggled. “I’ll always remember my trip to Australia and the swimming koala!”

**6** What is the setting for most of the events in the passage?

- A** near a lake
- B** in a backyard
- C** at a fitness center
- D** at a community pool

**7** Which **best** describes the koala’s problem in the passage?

- A** He cannot get out of the pool.
- B** He is afraid to jump into the pool.
- C** He cannot find his way home from the pool.
- D** He becomes cold while swimming in the pool.

**Go On**

**8** Stephen can **best** be described as

- A** funny
- B** helpful
- C** lazy
- D** sad

**9** After Martine first sees the koala, her emotions quickly change from

- A** confused to angry
- B** amused to concerned
- C** frightened to frustrated
- D** hopeful to disappointed

**10** How is the koala's problem solved in the passage?

- A** The cousins build a ramp for the pool.
- B** The cousins place a ladder in the pool.
- C** The cousins take turns watching the pool.
- D** The cousins build a fence around the pool.

**11** How can the reader tell this passage is realistic fiction?

- A** The events take place in the past.
- B** The events take place in a different country.
- C** The events in the passage could really happen.
- D** The passage is about actual events in the author's life.

# Directions

Read this article. Then answer questions 12 through 16.



# Olykoeks

by Sue Larson Pascoe



Most people have eaten doughnuts. Have you ever wondered where the first doughnuts were made? Who thought up the idea of a fried pastry with a hole in the center?

No one knows for sure who made the first doughnuts. Some people think that doughnuts probably began in the 1800s as Dutch “olykoeks” or “oily cakes.” In those days, a cook would not want to waste any scraps of food. Leftover pieces of bread dough were put into hot oil and fried. Olykoeks were tasty on the outside, but soggy and uncooked in the center.

Some people say that the mother of a New England sea captain invented the first real doughnut. Her name was Elizabeth Gregory. She replaced the soggy center with spices and nuts. But, Elizabeth’s son, Captain Gregory, did not like nuts. He punched out the center, and the outcome was the first hole in a doughnut.

Others say the real story is that Captain Gregory had difficulty steering his ship while trying to eat doughnuts. He asked the ship’s cook to make his doughnuts with holes so he could hang them on the pegs of the steering wheel!



Salvation Army workers serve fresh doughnuts to soldiers in France in 1918.

**Go On**

Others think that Captain Gregory saw holed pastries in Europe and brought the idea back to America with him.

During World War I, homesick American soldiers in Europe were served doughnuts by the Salvation Army. These brave women volunteering for the job were called “Doughnut Girls.” They often worked in dangerous conditions near the soldiers, so the Doughnut Girls wore helmets and uniforms. The women made doughnut cutters out of a large can with a smaller can inside it to cut out the hole. They could set up a kettle of hot oil to fry the dough almost anywhere.

In the 1920s, doughnut machines were invented. Doughnuts were produced faster

and easier than ever before. Still, many people preferred to make their favorite doughnut recipes at home.

Today, doughnuts are available at markets, bakeries, and coffee shops. Most people have a favorite type. You might like sugar-glazed doughnuts, doughnuts dipped in chocolate, or doughnuts covered in sprinkles. Perhaps you prefer doughnuts that don’t even have holes, like maple bars, twisted cinnamon, or jelly-filled doughnuts. Then again, when you go to the bakery, you might just like to eat the doughnut holes. Yum!

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**12** According to the article, the first Dutch “olykoek” may have been invented because

- A** people did not like to eat fried foods
- B** cooks did not like to waste leftover food
- C** sea captains needed a way to eat while steering a ship
- D** soldiers needed food that could be eaten in dangerous conditions

**13** Which statement from the article expresses an **opinion**?

- A** “During World War I, homesick American soldiers in Europe were served doughnuts by the Salvation Army.”
- B** “In the 1920s, doughnut machines were invented.”
- C** “Today, doughnuts are available at markets, bakeries, and coffee shops.”
- D** “You might like sugar-glazed doughnuts, doughnuts dipped in chocolate, or doughnuts covered in sprinkles.”

**14** According to the article, Elizabeth Gregory improved doughnuts in the 1800s when she replaced the uncooked center section with

- A** sugar glaze
- B** jelly filling
- C** spices and nuts
- D** leftover bread dough

**15** According to the article, what was **most** dangerous about the conditions under which the Doughnut Girls worked?

- A** They worked aboard a ship.
- B** They worked near battlefields.
- C** They used untested machines.
- D** They used kettles of hot oil.

**16** Read this sentence from the article.

**He punched out the center, and the outcome was the first hole in a doughnut.**

In this sentence, the word “outcome” means

- A** action
- B** damage
- C** problem
- D** result

***Go On***

# Directions

Read this story. Then answer questions 17 through 21.

## The Owl and the Painted Bird

*Retold by Angel Vigil*

A long time ago, during the time when the world was new, animals across the Earth were busy developing their natures and appearances. The birds of the world were especially active at this time.

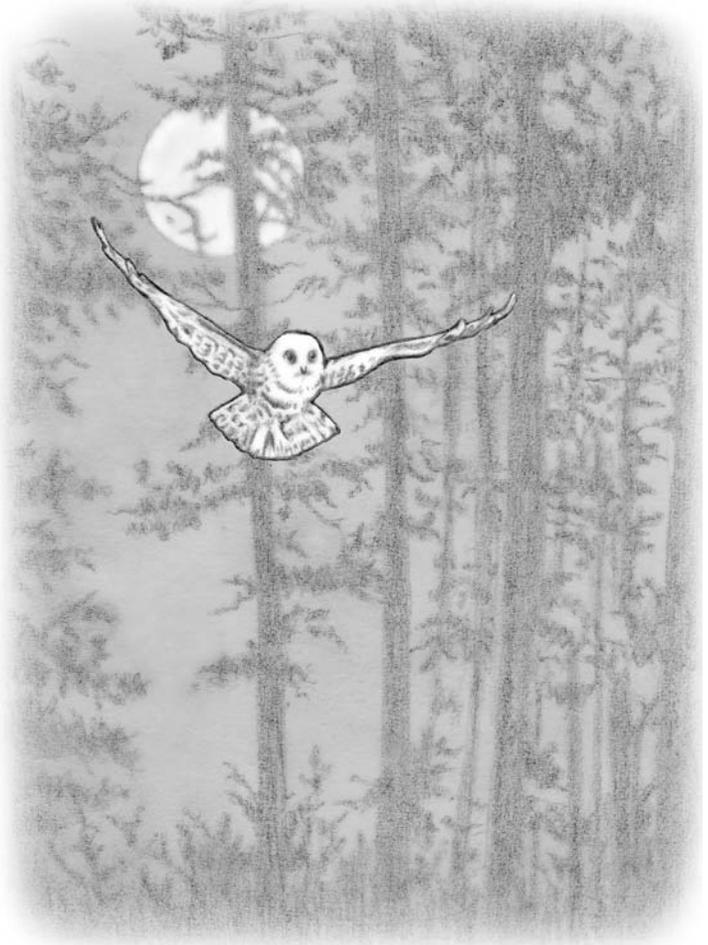
Each bird was learning the songs that would be its own and that would identify that particular bird to the other animals. They were also trying on feathers that would mark each type of bird as distinct and beautiful.

One bird, Pi-coo, was having an especially difficult time. She could not make up her mind about which feathers she should wear. The more she tried on, the more confused she became. Soon, almost all of the feathers were spoken for, and she was left with almost nothing to cover her naked body. Because she had no feathers, she was very ashamed and refused to come out of her nest.

The other birds felt sorry for her. They gathered together and talked about a way they could help Pi-coo.

The eagle, who spoke first, said, "Why don't we each give her one feather? We all have so many. It wouldn't be missed and would really help her."

The other birds were not so sure about the idea, but not one bird could come up with another plan. The birds worried that if they each gave a feather to Pi-coo, she might become the most beautiful of all the birds.



Finally, the wise old owl spoke up. He said, "Why don't we each just loan her a feather? Then she will be covered. As soon as her own feathers grow in, then she will return our feathers. I myself will be responsible for the return of the feathers."

The other birds agreed to this plan only because of the guarantee by the wise old owl to return their feathers.

Soon all the birds had given Pi-coo a feather. She gathered all of the feathers and carefully arranged them on her naked body. As soon as she saw her reflection in the still waters of the river, she realized that she was the most beautiful of all the birds. She looked like a painted bird,

with all the colors of the rainbow shining on her magnificent body. Realizing that the other birds would be jealous and would never allow her to keep their feathers, she immediately flew high into the sky, never to return.

It was not long before the birds realized that Pi-coo was not returning. Incensed,<sup>1</sup> they searched for the wise old owl, but he was nowhere to be found. They could not stand the idea that Pi-coo was now the most beautiful of the birds and demanded that the wise old owl keep his word and return the donated feathers.

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<sup>1</sup>**incensed:** angry

The wise old owl knew how angry the other birds were. So he hid in the trees during the day and came out only at night when he knew that the other birds were sleeping. During the night, he would quietly fly around and call out for Pi-coo, “Pi-coo. Pi-coo.”

And that is why, to this day, the owl is a nocturnal bird, only coming out at night to fly through the air with its plaintive,<sup>2</sup> searching cry of “Pi-coo. Pi-coo.”

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<sup>2</sup>**plaintive:** sorrowful

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**17** At the beginning of the story, the birds have no feathers because

- A** they have not chosen their feathers yet
- B** they believe that feathers are unnecessary
- C** they do not like any of the available feathers
- D** they have given their feathers away to other animals

**18** Which statement **best** describes why the birds are unsure about giving Pi-coo a feather?

- A** She is already the most beautiful bird.
- B** The owl advises them not to give away their feathers.
- C** They do not trust her because she never comes out of her nest.
- D** They are concerned that she will become more beautiful than they are.

**Go On**

**19** Which statement **best** describes how Pi-coo feels about herself at the end of the story?

- A** She thinks she is wise.
- B** She thinks she is popular.
- C** She is proud of her appearance.
- D** She is embarrassed by her actions.

**20** This story is an example of a **folktale** because it

- A** uses animals to represent real people in history
- B** tells a fictional story to explain an animal's behavior
- C** uses exact descriptions of animals' appearances
- D** tells an animal story to teach an important life lesson

**21** "The Owl and the Painted Bird" was **most likely** written to explain why

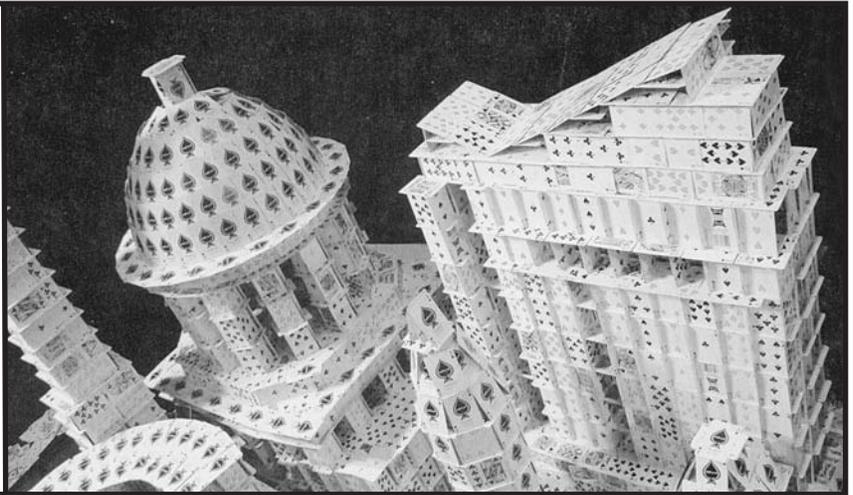
- A** owls come out at night
- B** owls are considered wise
- C** every bird has a different song
- D** birds have feathers of many colors

# Directions

Read this article. Then answer questions 22 through 26.

## A House of Cards

by Pamela Dell



A house of cards? Sounds flimsy, doesn't it? Not if the architect is 31-year-old Bryan Berg. He's made a career out of building spectacular card houses, stadiums, capitols, castles—and the world's tallest card tower. How *does* he do it?

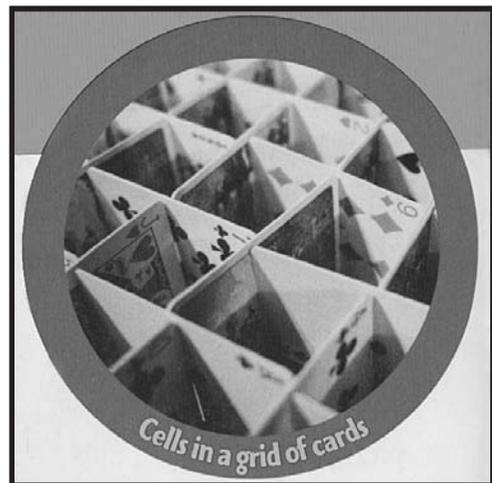
Bryan's structures are amazing because they are made entirely of perfectly balanced, freestanding playing cards. He never uses glue, tape, or anything else to hold the cards together. Nor does he fold the cards. He's discovered another way to make a sturdy house of cards, using a trick from nature.

To make plants strong, nature builds them with cells that have tough walls. Rows and rows of these cells form a grid that helps leaves and stems keep their shape. Bees use the same kind of repeating pattern to create sturdy honeycombs, where they live and store honey. Bryan designs similar grids, using cards to create a repeating pattern of cells.

He begins with a single cell made by balancing four cards against one another to form a box. Then he repeats the cell over and over, expanding outward to form the grid, which makes a good foundation for a sturdy

card structure. The larger the grid, the more weight it can carry. Sometimes Bryan uses several cards, instead of just one, to construct the cell walls, making the grid even stronger. The trick, he tells kids when he speaks in classrooms, is to place your cards as tightly together as possible when laying out your grid, making sure the cards are not leaning at all.

After building this solid base, Bryan lays cards across the top to make the floor for the next "story" of the building. He may add towers, columns, steeples, or domes. Using



**Go On**

the principle of repeating cells, Bryan builds structures of amazing strength.

### **In the Cards**

Not surprisingly, Bryan has always been interested in building things. Growing up on a “big, old farm” in rural Iowa, he had plenty of room to play. “We were in the middle of nowhere,” Bryan remembers, “with lots of space to do whatever we wanted. I was always making something, using things like sticks or bales of hay.”

Bryan’s grandfather taught him how to stack cards. Bryan’s two interests—building and card stacking—soon combined. But stacking in his family’s farmhouse was challenging. “Our old house had wood floors that weren’t all level,” he reports. “And they weren’t very firm. When people walked around, it was like ‘earthquake action.’ It was a challenge to build something that wouldn’t fall down immediately.”

Bryan constructed tower after tower; he went through a lot of trial and error before he built anything taller than himself. “One day,” he says, “I stumbled on the grid pattern.” When he placed a few decks of cards on top of his grid, he discovered how strong it was. Bryan’s towers began to grow taller.

### **How Tall Is Too Tall?**

Bryan’s first Guinness World Record for the world’s tallest card tower came in the spring of 1992, when he was in high school. Learning that the world record was 12 feet 10 inches, Bryan built a slim tower that topped out at 14 feet 6 inches. Done as a project for his geometry class, it took him 40 hours and 208 decks of

cards. Since then he’s gone on to win world records for even taller buildings. His latest winner measured 25 feet 3.5 inches and used about 2,400 decks of cards. The building, which tapered to a high, narrow point, had 131 stories.

Why don’t these towers fall down? The key is in a good solid base, a repeating pattern of stories, and a tapering top. Bryan likes to point out how card buildings resemble real ones. They are built cell by cell, story by story. The separate parts make one sturdy whole. The heavier the building, the stronger and more stable it is. But the weight can’t all be at the top.

\* \* \*

### **Demolition Derby**

What goes up must come down—even Bryan’s magnificent card buildings. But it isn’t easy demolishing them.

\* \* \*

Bryan learns more about card stacking from tearing down his works—he likes to blow them apart with a leaf blower—than from creating them. That’s because the demolitions show him where the weak points are. The strongest parts of his buildings always take longer to collapse.

\* \* \*

After spending so much time building something so cool, Bryan admits it’s sometimes painful to see his structures destroyed. But he likens his work to the building of a sandcastle or an ice sculpture.

“They wouldn’t be as special if they were permanent,” he points out. “My buildings are like snowdrifts, or clouds in the sky. They can’t last forever.”

**22** According to the article, which natural structure is a model for Bryan’s card structures?

- A** a thundercloud
- B** a honeycomb
- C** a sand dune
- D** a snowdrift

**23** What was Bryan’s first world record?

- A** tallest card tower
- B** widest card dome
- C** heaviest card house
- D** sturdiest card structure

**24** Bryan’s hobby is the result of combining which two boyhood interests?

- A** plant cells and honeycombs
- B** world records and geometry
- C** building things and stacking cards
- D** playing cards and designing houses

**25** Why was it a challenge for Bryan to build card structures in his family’s farmhouse?

- A** The floors of the house were uneven.
- B** The ceilings in the house were too low.
- C** The floors of the house were slippery.
- D** The windows in the house were drafty.

**26** Read this sentence from the article.

**The building, which tapered to a high, narrow point, had 131 stories.**

In this sentence, the word “tapered” means the top of the building was

- A** older
- B** shinier
- C** stronger
- D** thinner

**STOP**



**Grade 6**  
**English Language Arts Test**  
**Book 1**  
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