



New York State Testing Program

English

Language Arts Test

Listening Selection

Grade

8

January 16–19, 2007

This listening selection is to be used in administering Book 2 of the English Language Arts Test. The entire selection is to be read aloud twice to the students. For complete directions, please follow the instructions in the *Teacher's Directions*.

Remember: This is a secure test. You are not to discuss this test, show it to anyone, or photocopy these materials, as the security of the test could be breached.

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Louis Braille: A Light in the Dark

by Carol Oostman

Louis Braille could not believe it. All he wanted to do was learn how to read, but the one-room school in Coupvray, France, had no books for a blind boy.

This was common in 1815. Blind people didn't learn to read or write. They weren't taught to earn a living. If they had no one to take care of them, they became outcasts.

Even at 6 years old, Louis wanted something better. He was determined to learn to read—and to teach others like him as well.

Louis Braille was born with sight in 1809. When he was 3, an accident in his father's workshop left his left eye infected. The bacteria spread to the right eye, and Louis slowly lost his sight.

That didn't stop him from wanting to learn how to read. A young priest told the Braille family of the National Institute for Blind Youth in Paris. There they had books specially made for the blind, with raised letters Louis could feel with his hands.

He soon devoured the school's 14 books and begged for more. But the special books were difficult and expensive to make. Not discouraged, he told himself he would find a way to make reading easier.

Over the years he spent many hours on the back steps of his school, trying to figure out an inexpensive, easy system. Then it hit him: dominoes!

As he felt the dots on the playing pieces of the game he loved, he began to think. He experimented with combinations of dots until there was a different pattern for every letter of the alphabet, patterns that could be raised on paper much easier than actual letters.

Louis finished his dot system in 1824 and taught the patterns to his excited school friends. They figured blind students like them were that much closer to reading.

Unfortunately, his friends were the only excited ones. Most of his teachers would not listen. After all, Louis was only 15 years old and blind. Writing and teaching were jobs for grownups.

Louis would not give up. At 17 he became a teacher at the school, introducing his system to friends, students, and other teachers.

Go On

Finally, 18 years later, the dot system was introduced outside the school. People were impressed. Braille was on its way to bringing books to the blind.

Louis Braille died in 1852 of tuberculosis. His dot system, however, lived on, slowly spreading around the world. People started calling it Braille, after the determined boy who wanted to read.

Even though Louis Braille never knew the effect of his dots on the world, every person who uses Braille knows about him. They know him as the man who opened more doors to reading.

STOP



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