

Name: \_\_\_\_\_



# *New York State Testing Program*

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## English Language Arts Test Session 1

Grade **6**

Spring 2026

**RELEASED QUESTIONS**

Excerpt from *Under the Ashes* by Cindy Rankin. Copyright © 2016 by Albert Whitman & Company. Used with permission of Albert Whitman & Company via Copyright Clearance Center.

“Rescuing Orphan Elephants” by Amy Tao, *Ask*, May 1, 2016. Copyright © 2016 by Cricket Media. Used with permission of Cricket Media, Inc. via Copyright Clearance Center.

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# Session 1



## TIPS FOR TAKING THE TEST

Here are some ideas to help you do your best:

- Read the whole passage before you answer the questions. Most questions will only make sense after you read the whole passage.
- You might need to read the passage more than once to answer a question.
- Read each question carefully. Take your time.
- A question may include a quote from a passage. You might need to review both the quote and the whole passage to answer the question.

When you write your answers

- make sure to answer the whole question;
- use examples or details from the text;
- write in complete sentences; and
- use correct spelling, grammar, capitalization, and punctuation.

# **D**irections

Read this story. Then answer questions 1 through 7.

*In 1906, the narrator attends the rehearsal of a famous opera with her Aunt Sally and her aunt's neighbor, Mr. Steinberg.*

## **Excerpt from *Under the Ashes***

*by Cindy Rankin*

1 Sold Out signs were pasted over Mr. Caruso's profile on all the Carmen posters around the opera house. Two police officers stood off to the side, keeping an eye on things. I asked why, and Mr. Steinberg told me they had to make sure people in our line didn't try to profit by selling their tickets directly to the eager folks in the other line for more than the theater would charge, which I figured was plenty. . . .

2 Instead of money, the cashier gave us each a piece of paper he'd stamped with an official-looking seal and told us to join a small group gathered by the big doors. A man in wire-rimmed spectacles poked his head out from behind the middle door. He gestured for us to come inside. We gathered around him in the lobby. . . .

3 The man in the gray suit walked to the foot of the widest, fanciest staircase in creation. Polished wood and gold-trimmed molding framed everything around us. He went up the first step, turned, and waved for us to follow. Looking at me, the man said, "Children are not normally allowed." . . .

4 As we climbed the magenta-carpeted stairs, Mr. Steinberg leaned near to say, "This is one of the largest, best-appointed opera houses in the entire United States."

5 I rubbed the shiny banister. What a fun ride this would be. Mr. Steinberg must have guessed my thought because he winked at me.

6 Aunt Sally squeezed close. For an instant I wondered if she too shared the idea of sliding down full-speed.

7 "Think of all the elegantly dressed ladies and gentlemen who have stood on these very steps over the years," she said.

8 Her imaginings were different from mine. A hint of girlishness flickered across her face. I reckoned she pictured herself wearing a fine evening gown with strings of pearls around her neck and carrying a small fan in her gloved hand. A dashing escort on her arm. A dream she could have lived if she'd only agreed to see the opera tonight with Mr. Steinberg. . . .

**GO ON**

9            “This evening,” the guide said, “our audience, including the city’s elite, will be elbow to elbow for Signore Caruso’s performance as Don Jose, and, of course, Madam Olive Fremstad as Carmen.” He spread his hands wide in front of his chest, continuing, “Every one of the 2,400 seats in the house will be filled.”

10           “Golly, that’s more folks than we have in my town!” The words flew from my mouth.

11           I stiffened, expecting Aunt Sally to shush or scold me. But the gilded mirror on the wall reflected her turning this way and that, taking in the full splendor of the place. She hadn’t heard me, didn’t even notice people twittering. Her attention rested on the crystal chandelier overhead. Daylight caught its long prisms to cast off colorful patterns against the brocade wallpaper. I realized she was as awed by all this as I’d been when I first experienced the hubbub of the city. . . .

12           “Young lady, over four hundred thousand people live in San Francisco,” the guide said. He opened a door and directed us to the balcony, saying, “Our culture rivals the great cities back east.”

13           Mr. Steinberg carefully led the way down the steep steps to the front chairs. He and Aunt Sally took a seat on either side of me. I remained on my feet, putting my hands on the railing and leaning over for a bird’s eye view. The rows below us were covered in drop cloths. . . .

14           “Ladies and gentlemen.” The man in the gray suit now stood on the main floor in front of the orchestra. He cupped his hands around his mouth to project his voice up to us. “Because the demand to see Signore Caruso is overwhelming,” he said, “the maestro<sup>1</sup> has graciously opened this rehearsal to you. A rare opportunity. Absolute silence is required. No talking or applause. Think of yourselves as flies on the wall, observing, careful not to draw attention, lest you be promptly dispatched.” . . .

15           We all inhaled at the same time when Mr. Caruso appeared. He looked just like his picture—a bushy shock of dark hair and portly. But I was shocked to see how short he was. Not nearly as tall as Mr. Steinberg. . . .

16           The famous Caruso strode to center stage then let out the fullest, most peculiar, yet perfect sound I’d ever heard. Music from the pit filtered in beneath his tones. . . .

17           Then the tenor’s voice captured me. It unfurled like a bolt of rich silk floating over the stage—higher and higher it went, until it dipped thrillingly low, then rose again. It filled all the space inside this grand theater. His voice was gigantic, even if he was not.

18           Hairs on my neck and arms tingled and stood straight up. My heart raced to hold the notes, to ride the current of the melody. Closed my eyes, stretched my ears wide, and listened with my whole body. When he finished, I had to suck air into my lungs. Nothing had ever taken my breath away like the magical sound of Mr. Caruso’s voice.

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<sup>1</sup>**maestro:** person who writes and conducts music

**1** In paragraphs 3 through 5, how does the narrator’s opinion affect the description of the theater?

- A** The narrator believes the theater is confusing and is glad to have a guided tour.
- B** The narrator believes the theater is boring, so she considers sliding down the banister.
- C** The narrator believes the theater is unwelcoming because children are forbidden.
- D** The narrator believes the theater is grand, so she describes its structures and elegance.

**2** As used in paragraph 11, what does the word “awed” suggest about Aunt Sally?

- A** She is distracted by the activity in the theater.
- B** She is amazed by the magnificence of the place.
- C** She is bothered by the patterns on the wallpaper.
- D** She is embarrassed by the comments of the narrator.

**3** What do the details in paragraphs 10 through 12 reveal about the narrator?

- A** She is from a small town that is less busy than San Francisco.
- B** She wishes she had dressed more nicely for the theater.
- C** She often visits the city of San Francisco.
- D** She admires all the objects in the theater.

**GO ON**

4

What is the meaning of the word “dispatched” as it is used in paragraph 14?

- A made to leave the theater
- B ordered to speak quietly
- C asked to join the performance
- D told to listen carefully

5

Music can be a powerful force for some people. How do the details in paragraphs 15 through 18 support this idea in the story?

- A by showing the audience’s reaction to Caruso’s appearance
- B by telling where Caruso stands during the performance
- C by describing the narrator’s reaction to Caruso’s singing
- D by highlighting how Caruso walks to the center of the stage

6

Which detail represents a turning point in the direction of the story?

- A The cashier gives pieces of paper to the narrator, Aunt Sally, and Mr. Steinberg.
- B The theater guide leads the guests to the foot of a wide, fancy staircase.
- C Mr. Caruso walks onto the stage and begins to sing.
- D Mr. Steinberg leads the narrator and Aunt Sally to their seats.

7

Which detail would be **most** important to include in a summary of the story?

- A The narrator and Aunt Sally attend an opera rehearsal with Mr. Steinberg.
- B The narrator wonders if Aunt Sally also wants to slide down the banister.
- C Aunt Sally tells the narrator to think about past guests of the opera house.
- D Aunt Sally and Mr. Steinberg sit on either side of the narrator in the balcony.

**GO ON**

# Directions

Read this article. Then answer questions 15 through 21.

## Rescuing Orphan Elephants

by Amy Tao

1           What would you do if you found a stray kitten? Give it a saucer of milk, cuddle it and keep it warm, try to convince Mom you need a new pet? Sounds good. But what if you found a baby elephant?

2           Little lost elephants may not be common in your neighborhood, but they are in Kenya in East Africa. And the best thing to do there is call the David Sheldrick Wildlife Trust. They've been rescuing orphan elephants and successfully reintroducing them to the wild for more than 25 years.

3           Raising a baby elephant is a big responsibility. Like people, healthy elephants can live 70 years or longer, and their development is remarkably similar to ours. Babies two years and younger need almost constant attention. Children begin doing some things on their own but still need to be with their families. Teenagers are more independent, but elephants aren't considered fully adult until they're in their thirties. So taking in a stray elephant requires a long-term commitment.

4           It's hard work, too. A baby elephant can usually stand and walk soon after it's born, but for almost everything else during the next several years it depends on its mother. It drinks about five gallons of milk a day and must be fed every two hours. It needs to be kept warm but can't stay in the sun too long or its tender baby skin might get sunburned. It has to be taught how to behave and communicate—even how to use its trunk, which babies sometimes trip over while walking. And it needs to feel safe and loved.

### **In the Nursery**

5           When a baby elephant first arrives at the orphanage nursery, one of the biggest problems it faces is grief. Elephants are highly intelligent, loving family members. In the wild, a female elephant usually stays with her family her whole life. Males don't leave until they're in their teens and then frequently return to visit. A baby separated from its family may feel so sad that it becomes ill and dies. The keepers at the Sheldrick Trust, therefore, must become the baby's substitute family. They spend every hour—waking and sleeping—with the little orphans, forming a lifelong friendship. They've learned, however, that each baby should have several human family members. If a baby bonds with only one person, it may become depressed when that person leaves, even to go home for a night.

**GO ON**

6 The keepers spend a lot of their time just feeding the babies. Sometimes they have to teach a baby how to drink from a bottle. In the wild, a baby elephant will stand under its mother and rest its trunk on her body as it nurses with its mouth. To make bottle-feeding feel less strange, the keepers often hang big blankets for the orphans to cuddle up against while they drink. As they get more comfortable, the babies begin to wind their trunks around the keepers instead.

7 Those blankets have another useful purpose. They keep the orphans warm on cool mornings and evenings. A baby's elephant family would normally protect it from cold or bad weather by surrounding it and sheltering it from wind or rain. Standing under mom or in her giant shadow protects the baby from sunburn, too. The keepers aren't big enough to offer much weather protection all by themselves so they rely on blankets and parasols<sup>1</sup> and mud.

8 Yes, mud. Every day the orphans and their keepers go for a mud bath. Not only is the mud fun to play in, but the babies learn that a nice coating of gooey mud can cool them off on a hot day. As the mud dries, it continues to protect them from the sun and prevents ticks and other insects from biting them. Most of the babies love the mud, but if one's a little shy, the keepers gently coax it into a shallow puddle and scoop mud on it, just like a mom would, only with a shovel in place of a trunk.

#### **At Tsavo National Park**

9 When an orphan has its first birthday, it's ready to move from the nursery to Tsavo National Park, where it will eventually be released into the wild elephant community. The orphans always go to Tsavo in a group. Being very social animals, they feel more at home when they're part of a herd. And they are always accompanied by their keepers.

10 They're not ready to roam free yet, though. They still need to be bottle-fed for at least one more year, and they're still too little to be safe from lions and other predators in the park, so they live in a stockade<sup>2</sup> with their keepers. But the keepers take them into the wild every day and show them which grasses and leaves are good to eat. Older, previously released orphans welcome and befriend the newcomers and help teach them proper elephant behavior. They introduce the orphans to the wild herds, and gradually the orphans begin to spend more time with other elephants than with their human keepers.

11 There's no special age for releasing an orphan. Whenever it's ready—and every elephant is different—it just stops returning to the stockade at night and joins an elephant family. It never forgets its human family, though, and will often visit, helping to welcome the newest orphans.

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<sup>1</sup>**parasols:** umbrellas

<sup>2</sup>**stockade:** enclosed area

15

Read this sentence from paragraph 5.

**When a baby elephant first arrives at the orphanage nursery, one of the biggest problems it faces is grief.**

What does the use of the word “grief” in the article show about baby elephants?

- A They have strong emotions.
- B They are unable to be cared for by humans.
- C They have difficulty bonding with caretakers.
- D They must learn to drink from a bottle.

16

Which sentence **best** supports the author’s indication that raising baby elephants is a great responsibility?

- A “They’ve been rescuing orphan elephants and successfully reintroducing them to the wild for more than 25 years.” (paragraph 2)
- B “When a baby elephant first arrives at the orphanage nursery, one of the biggest problems it faces is grief.” (paragraph 5)
- C “They spend every hour—waking and sleeping—with the little orphans, forming a lifelong friendship.” (paragraph 5)
- D “Sometimes they have to teach a baby how to drink from a bottle.” (paragraph 6)

**GO ON**

17

Read this sentence from paragraph 5.

**Elephants are highly intelligent, loving family members.**

Which detail from the article **best** supports this claim?

- A “. . . healthy elephants can live 70 years or longer, and their development is remarkably similar to ours.” (paragraph 3)
- B “. . . a baby elephant will stand under its mother and rest its trunk on her body as it nurses with its mouth.” (paragraph 6)
- C “. . . it’s ready to move from the nursery to Tsavo National Park, where it will eventually be released into the wild elephant community.” (paragraph 9)
- D “. . . previously released orphans welcome and befriend the newcomers and help teach them proper elephant behavior.” (paragraph 10)

18

Which sentence from the article **best** shows that orphaned elephants often form long-term relationships with human keepers?

- A “It has to be taught how to behave and communicate—even how to use its trunk, which babies sometimes trip over while walking.” (paragraph 4)
- B “As they get more comfortable, the babies begin to wind their trunks around the keepers instead.” (paragraph 6)
- C “Not only is the mud fun to play in, but the babies learn that a nice coating of gooey mud can cool them off on a hot day.” (paragraph 8)
- D “It never forgets its human family, though, and will often visit, helping to welcome the newest orphans.” (paragraph 11)

19

How does paragraph 11 provide support for a central idea of the article?

- A by identifying the age that is appropriate for orphan elephants to be released
- B by describing the way older elephants will welcome new orphans into a herd
- C by explaining why elephants are returned to the same stockade each night
- D by showing that baby elephants make strong connections when cared for

20

In the article, what is the **main** way the author develops the role of the caretakers?

- A by comparing the way elephants are treated in different parts of the world to the way they are treated in Kenya
- B by providing examples of the activities that orphaned elephants experience while living at the Wildlife Trust
- C by describing how orphan elephants are moved from the Wildlife Trust to Tsavo National Park when they are a year old
- D by explaining how the Wildlife Trust started its mission of saving orphaned elephants several years before

21

According to a well-known science professor, “Empathy is the ability to share and understand the feelings of another.” How does the author develop this idea in the article?

- A by describing the process that orphaned elephants must go through to find a new herd
- B by including detailed descriptions of the activities of baby elephants at a national park
- C by describing how caretakers imitate elephant behaviors to help baby elephants experience love
- D by including information about the daily physical needs of rescued orphaned elephants

**GO ON**

# Directions

Read this article. Then answer questions 22 through 28.

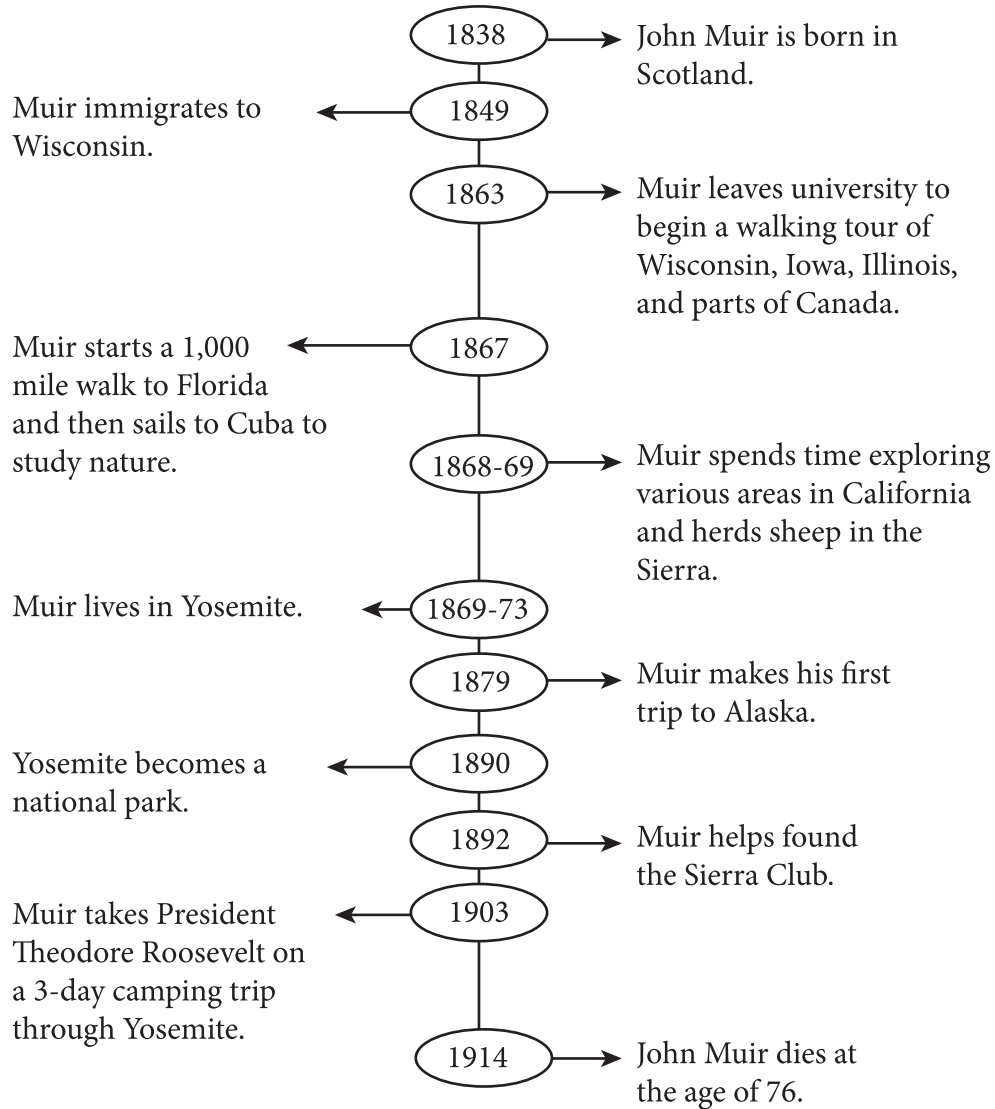
## Excerpt from “Man on a Mission”

by Carollyne Hutter

- 1        Every year, about 4 million people from around the world travel to California to see the stunning beauty of Yosemite National Park. The park exists thanks to the efforts of a single man who spent decades fighting to preserve wilderness areas: John Muir. Today, Muir is referred to as “Father of Our National Parks” and is famous as one of America’s first environmentalists. His love of nature and his writings inspired others to take action and protect our nation’s natural places.
- 2        Muir was born on April 21, 1838, in Dunbar, Scotland. When he was 11, his family moved to a small farm in Wisconsin. He worked 16 hours a day on the farm, but he had a tremendous hunger for knowledge. “I loved to read, and I wanted to learn about everything,” he explained. He often read books before he began his chores.
- 3        Although Muir’s formal education ended with his family’s move to Wisconsin, he enrolled in classes at the University of Wisconsin when he was 23 years old. After 2½ years, he became restless and decided to explore the world and study nature instead of staying to graduate. In 1864, he went to Canada for a couple of years and then to Indianapolis, Indiana. While he was working at a carriage factory there in 1867, an accident injured his right eye. He was blind and in pain for weeks. He feared that he would never again see the natural world that he loved.
- 4        In time, Muir’s sight came back. When it did, he decided to devote himself to the study of nature. He left the factory and set off on a 1,000 mile walk to Florida to study plants. The next year, Muir sailed to Cuba and then to San Francisco. From there, he headed eastward to see the wilderness of the Sierra Nevada. He explored Yosemite Valley, located within that mountain range. It was a place that few people visited in those days, and Muir fell in love with its beauty.
- 5        For the rest of his life, Muir was happiest when he was hiking and camping in the mountains. Often, he carried “only a tin cup, a handful of tea, a loaf of bread,” and a journal. He began to offer guided tours in Yosemite in 1870, and in 1871, the *New York Tribune* published his first article about the site’s glaciers.

- 6       Muir spent years studying the area’s plants and glaciers. He marveled at Yosemite’s majestic waterfalls, massive granite cliffs, and giant sequoia trees. He continued writing about what he saw and learned, and he also gave lectures. His newspaper articles gave him a large audience interested in learning about his experiences.
- 7       In the mid-1800s, railroad, lumber, and mining companies wanted to own or develop any land in the West that might offer a profit. Muir was determined to protect the wilderness he loved from being permanently destroyed by those large industries. . . .
- 8       Muir worked with politicians to make Yosemite and other places be protected by the federal government rather than a state government. On October 1, 1890, Muir and his supporters won a big battle. The US Congress established Yosemite National Park. It was the second national park in the United States—Yellowstone had been carved out of the Wyoming Territory in 1872. Then, in May 1892, Muir and others set up the Sierra Club, an organization of citizens who wanted to protect the entire Sierra Nevada region. Muir was its first president. . . .
- 9       Muir spent the rest of his life exploring nature, writing about it, and fighting to save wilderness areas. His knowledge and his passion about nature made him an influential voice. He did not win every battle, however. He fought for 12 years to save Hetch Hetchy Valley in Yosemite, but in 1913 Congress allowed the site to be dammed to create a reservoir. As one historian later put it, the destruction of that beautiful valley went down in history as “the worst disaster ever to come to any national park.” Yet it is often held up as an example of the importance of preserving natural areas. Today, John Muir’s spirit lives on through his writings, the work of the Sierra Club, and the various natural sites that are named for him.

## TIMELINE OF JOHN MUIR'S LIFE



- 22 How is John Muir first introduced in paragraph 1 of the article?
- A with a story about his life
  - B with a listing of his accomplishments
  - C with an example that shows the impact of his work
  - D with a comparison between him and other conservationists

- 23 What is the **main** way paragraphs 2 and 3 contribute to the organization of the article?
- A by providing biographical information about Muir
  - B by giving examples of what inspired Muir to study nature
  - C by sharing stories that come from Muir’s writings
  - D by highlighting Muir’s opinions about the importance of nature

- 24 Read this sentence from paragraph 5.

**Often, he carried “only a tin cup, a handful of tea, a loaf of bread,” and a journal.**

What can the reader conclude about Muir from this sentence?

- A He was often poorly prepared for his trips.
- B He usually preferred to be by himself.
- C He chose to live as simply as possible.
- D He made sacrifices to study nature.

**GO ON**

25

In paragraph 6, what is the **main** effect of the author’s word choice?

- A to emphasize the number of glaciers found in Yosemite
- B to indicate the importance of the lectures Muir gave about Yosemite
- C to highlight the great size of some natural features in Yosemite
- D to illustrate the popularity of the articles Muir wrote about Yosemite

26

Which detail **best** expresses a central idea of the article?

- A “His love of nature and his writings inspired others to take action . . .” (paragraph 1)
- B “. . . he became restless and decided to explore the world and study nature . . .” (paragraph 3)
- C “From there, he headed eastward to see the wilderness . . .” (paragraph 4)
- D “. . . newspaper articles gave him a large audience interested in learning . . .” (paragraph 6)

27

How did Muir’s experience at a carriage factory **most** affect his life?

- A It gave him a reason to leave college and explore the world.
- B It taught him about the hardships associated with certain jobs.
- C It showed him the importance of choosing to live in different places.
- D It made him think carefully about how he wanted to spend his time.



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**Grade 6**  
**English Language Arts Test**  
**Session 1**  
**Spring 2026**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_



# *New York State Testing Program*

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## English Language Arts Test Session 2

Grade **6**

Spring 2026

**RELEASED QUESTIONS**

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# Session 2



## TIPS FOR TAKING THE TEST

Here are some ideas to help you do your best:

- Read the whole passage before you answer the questions. Most questions will only make sense after you read the whole passage.
- You might need to read the passage more than once to answer a question.
- Read each question carefully. Take your time.
- A question may include a quote from a passage. You might need to review both the quote and the whole passage to answer the question.

When you write your answers

- make sure to answer the whole question;
- use examples or details from the text;
- write in complete sentences; and
- use correct spelling, grammar, capitalization, and punctuation.

For the last question in this test book, you may plan your writing on the Planning Page provided. However, do NOT write your final answer on the Planning Page. Write your final answer on the lined pages.

## ***D***irections

Read this story. Then answer questions 29 through 35.

*A young man goes into a swamp hoping to take a photo of a rare woodpecker. He stores his photos and other things in an airtight ammo can.*

# Excerpt from *The True Blue Scouts of Sugar Man Swamp*

*by Kathi Appelt*

1           Back in 1949, there were no feral<sup>1</sup> hogs in the Sugar Man Swamp. Not one. But Audie Brayburn hadn't gone to the swamp to look for hogs.

2           From the time he was fifteen until he turned twenty, he worked for a bakery in southeast Houston. For those five years he worked as many hours as he could, until by 1949 he saved enough money to buy a brand-new DeSoto Sportsman.<sup>2</sup>

3           It had always been his dream to find the ivory-billed woodpecker, ever since he was a small boy and his father gave him his first birder's journal. In fact, his nickname was Audubon, for the famous avian artist, John James Audubon. It was quickly shortened to Audie. So, once he had that DeSoto, and a little pocket change left over, he headed east, to the first place he thought he might find the elusive woodpecker—the Sugar Man Swamp.

4           All he took with him were his old binoculars, his sketchbook, a Hohner Marine Band harmonica, and his Polaroid Land Camera, given to him by his parents as a parting gift. He also took a .30-caliber steel ammo can, which he bought at the Army/Navy Surplus. It was airtight and watertight, perfect for keeping his matches dry, and also for storing any photos that he took on his camera. One-of-a-kind photos.

5           After hours of driving, he finally found his way to the Sugar Man Swamp. He had never seen so many old trees, including dead trees that were still standing, perfect trees for woodpecker nests. He parked the DeSoto, set up his camp, and settled in.

6           At first, the critters of the forest dodged out of his way and stayed hidden from his sight. After all, most of the humans who entered their domain brought arrows and guns and traps with them. But as the days passed, the animals began to notice that Audie wasn't toting anything except for a pair of binoculars, a camera, an ammo can, and a book that he was always scratching in. And they loved the tunes he played on his harmonica. Just loved them.

7           Pretty soon Audie Brayburn was considered an Honorary Swamp Critter.

**GO ON**

8 One day he got out his Polaroid Land Camera, pointed it toward an armadillo, and took his shot. As soon as he pulled the back of the film from the photo, he smiled. There, printed on the slick paper, was a perfect, instant picture of a nine-banded armadillo, a surprised-looking armadillo, at that. Audie rolled a tube of gooey “coater” over the photo and waved it in the air until it was dry.

9 Just as he tucked the photo of the armadillo into his ammo can, he heard the unmistakable sound he had been waiting for. A sharp *kint kint* followed by *kaPOW kaPOW*.

10 Only one creature on the entire planet made that sound, only one. He grabbed his binoculars and his camera and followed it. His heart raced in the same rhythm—*kaPOW kaPOW kaPOW*. He hurried, stepping as lightly as he could. He paused here and there to cock his ears. Hours passed, and the sound pulled him deeper and deeper into the woods.

11 As he walked, he was so intent upon keeping the beautiful bird within earshot that he failed to notice that the air had grown increasingly still. Not a single leaf fluttered. Not a single animal stirred. . . .

12 Audie Brayburn should have paid attention to all that quiet, all that stillness. If he had, he would have realized that the only time the forest became that still was right before a major storm.

13 Instead, he kept following the certain sound of the ivory-billed woodpecker. The air was unbearably hot, sweat soaked his clothes, the water from the swampy floor oozed into his boots, making them feel like lead weights on his feet. He was hungry and thirsty, but more than that, he was determined.

14 And then, just before the sun gave up for the day, Audie felt a whoosh of powerful wings fly just over his head, and he knew, he knew what it was, and with utter joy he spoke the words he’d been longing to say his whole life long. “Lord God, what a bird!”

15 The beautiful black wings with their trailing white feathers and the large red crest on the bird’s head left no doubt. Everything about the bird said *ivory-bill*.

16 Audie raised his Polaroid Land Camera and snapped his shot. When he pulled the strip of film out and peeled the back off, there it was, in black and white: the broad black wings with their trailing feathers, the stripes on the sides of its neck, and the tall crest on its head. Audie opened the tube of coater and covered the surface of the shot, making sure there weren’t any streaks. Then he waved the photo in the air until it dried, and slipped it into the ammo can. All just in time, because in the very next instant the rain began to fall, and there he was, deep, deep in the heart of the Sugar Man Swamp, without any idea where he was or where he had left his DeSoto Sportsman.

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<sup>1</sup>**feral:** wild

<sup>2</sup>**DeSoto Sportsman:** a type of car

29

Read this sentence from paragraph 7.

**Pretty soon Audie Brayburn was considered an Honorary Swamp Critter.**

Which important idea does the author develop in this sentence?

- A Audie has not told many people that he went to the swamp.
- B Audie seems to belong in his surroundings in the swamp.
- C Audie becomes interested in other animals in the swamp.
- D Audie does not remember how to get out of the swamp.

30

The author's word choice in paragraph 9 affects the story by

- A introducing an anxious tone
- B introducing an excited tone
- C creating a playful tone
- D creating an impatient tone

31

In paragraph 11, the phrase "keeping the beautiful bird within earshot" suggests that

- A Audie needs to hear the woodpecker to locate it
- B Audie hopes that hunters will leave the woodpecker alone
- C Audie wants to avoid frightening the woodpecker
- D Audie thinks that the song of the woodpecker is pleasant

**GO ON**

- 32 How does paragraph 12 relate to paragraph 16?
- A Paragraph 12 introduces a new setting that is further described in paragraph 16.
  - B Paragraph 12 describes a decision that the main character regrets in paragraph 16.
  - C Paragraph 12 mentions an event that is described in a flashback in paragraph 16.
  - D Paragraph 12 foreshadows an event that begins to occur in paragraph 16.
- 33 Which sentence **best** shows the rising action in the story?
- A “From the time he was fifteen until he turned twenty, he worked for a bakery in southeast Houston.” (paragraph 2)
  - B “He had never seen so many old trees, including dead trees that were still standing, perfect trees for woodpecker nests.” (paragraph 5)
  - C “Only one creature on the entire planet made that sound, only one.” (paragraph 10)
  - D “Then he waved the photo in the air until it dried, and slipped it into the ammo can.” (paragraph 16)
- 34 Which statement **best** expresses a theme of the story?
- A Being alone in nature can relieve stress.
  - B Trying a new activity is often rewarding.
  - C Certain locations are potentially dangerous.
  - D Some people are driven by their interests.

35

How does the author **mainly** convey Audie's character in the story?

- A by allowing the reader to understand the reasons for his tools
- B by describing his choices and actions to the reader
- C by helping the reader understand some of his childhood interests
- D by sharing his thoughts and concerns with the reader

**GO ON**

**Directions** Read this story. Then answer questions 36 and 37.

## Excerpt from *Pig Tales*

by Kate Tym

- 1 Sharon Black had never considered herself an impulsive<sup>1</sup> person until the day she fell in love with a pot-bellied pig! It was 1996 and she'd been doing some reading around the subject of being a pot-bellied pig owner and had very much taken to the idea. She persuaded her somewhat skeptical<sup>2</sup> husband to drive her over to Oklahoma City and a date with fate was set.
- 2 When she arrived at the house that had three pigs for sale, Sharon knew she wasn't going to leave without one . . . they were all so cute. And when she looked at Peaches, the only girl in the bunch, she knew she was the one.
- 3 Peaches was amazing: she picked up on things so quickly. She was completely house-trained within a few days and soon figured out that the fridge door was the best one to learn how to open! She could get at it with her snout and it soon became clear that anything openable was going to have to be fitted with child-proof locks for as long as Peaches was around!
- 4 Peaches and Sharon have a wonderful time together. As long as Peaches is rested and well fed she's as happy as anything. She loves the pillows on Sharon's couch and if one of them happens to be on the floor she runs up and grabs it with her snout and tosses it up in the air. Then, when it lands on the floor she falls over on it and plays dead; she rolls her eyes up in her head and becomes totally still . . . until someone laughs, then she jumps straight back up and starts the whole routine all over again. She'll keep doing it for ages and ages and then, as soon as she's had enough, she lies down and has a nap.
- 5 Sharon says Peaches is very much like a child and she even hires babysitters for her as there's just too much mischief she could get up to while Sharon's out. She follows Sharon from room to room, curls up to watch TV with her and even sleeps in Sharon's bed!
- 6 One day when Sharon had to leave the house in an emergency, she put Peaches to bed and drew the blinds hoping she would think it was night time and take a quick nap but when Sharon returned home she found Peaches, in the middle of the floor . . . "sobbing!" Peaches was so glad to see Sharon back that she jumped up and smothered her in piggy-love!
- 7 Peaches loves her weekly bath and her favorite snacks for special times are white seedless grapes and apple juice and . . . Pepsi—but only if she manages to get her snout on someone's open can and slurp it down really fast before she gets caught!

- 8 Sharon says that Peaches has brought so much joy to her life that she can't even put it into words. There is never a dull moment with Peaches around and their relationship is a perfect partnership as Peaches only gives back the love she gets given by having a very special place in a very special household.

<sup>1</sup>**impulsive:** acting without thinking

<sup>2</sup>**skeptical:** unwilling to go along with an idea or action because of worries or doubts

**GO ON**





**D***irections* Read this poem. Then answer questions 38 and 39.

## *We Keep a Pig in the Parlor*

*by Suzanne Bloom*

Some people keep pigs in a pigpen,  
Or out in a field roaming free.  
We keep a pig in the parlor.  
He sleeps on the settee.<sup>1</sup>

5 He used to live in the pig barn,  
And sit looking out at the field,  
Till a plan took shape  
For a great escape,  
“I want to be free,” he squealed.

10 He fairly flew out of the window,  
With a run and a jump and a grunt.  
He came down in the mud  
With a squishy, soft thud,  
It was quite an incredible stunt.

15 He wandered way out to the pasture  
In search of some company.  
“I just want a friend to spend time with,”  
He said, grinning sheepishly.<sup>2</sup>

We pitched him back in the pig barn,  
20 Tail over snout over heels.  
    A pen made of pine  
    Is just fine for a swine,  
No matter how loudly he squeals.

Outside he heard quizzical quacking  
25 And finding a large enough crack  
    Between two loose boards  
    That rattled like gourds,<sup>3</sup>  
He squeezed himself out of that shack.

The zucchini and peas looked so tempting  
30 And the broccoli grew in great clumps.  
His tummy felt ever so empty.  
He ate everything but the stumps.

You know, pig, you're driving me crazy.  
Why are you doing this stuff?  
35 The garden and barn are a terrible mess.  
Enough is enough is enough!

He looked at me sadly and mumbled,  
"I'm sorry I've been such a pest."

Then he snorted and said,  
40 “I detest a straw bed,  
Corn that’s unpopped  
Supper called slop.  
Mud on my face,  
that ramshackle<sup>4</sup> place.  
45 It makes me disgruntled,<sup>5</sup> at best.

Besides,” he said, “I’m so lonesome,”  
And he rested his head on my knee.  
As I hugged him I had an idea.  
“Piggy, cheer up. Follow me.”

50 So, we keep our pig in the parlor;  
He sleeps on the settee.  
    We watch TV,  
    Have popcorn and tea  
As cozy as we can be.

---

<sup>1</sup>**settee:** sofa

<sup>2</sup>**sheepishly:** in an embarrassed way

<sup>3</sup>**gourds:** the shells of dried fruit with seeds inside

<sup>4</sup>**ramshackle:** broken down

<sup>5</sup>**disgruntled:** unhappy, upset



**DO NOT WRITE  
THIS PAGE PURPOSELY  
LEFT BLANK**

***GO ON***

*Planning Page*

You may **PLAN** your writing for question 39 here if you wish, but do **NOT** write your final answer on this page. Writing on this Planning Page will **NOT** count toward your final score. Write your final answer on Pages 17 and 18.



**GO ON**





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**Grade 6**  
**English Language Arts Test**  
**Session 2**  
**Spring 2026**

## 2026 Grade 6 ELA Test Text Complexity Metrics for Released Questions

During the test development process, NYS educators approve all passages for use on the Grades 3–8 English Language Arts Tests. Selecting high-quality, grade-appropriate texts requires both objective text complexity metrics and educator judgment. For English Language Arts Tests, both quantitative and qualitative measures are used to determine the complexity of the texts.

**Quantitative measures** of text complexity are used to measure aspects of text complexity that are difficult for a human reader to evaluate when examining a text. These aspects include word frequency, word length, sentence length, and text cohesion. These aspects are efficiently measured by computer programs. While quantitative text complexity metrics are a helpful start, they are not definitive.

**Qualitative measures** are a crucial complement to quantitative measures. To qualitatively determine the complexity of a text, NYS educators use a rubric composed of meaning, text structure, language features, and knowledge demands.

### New York State 2026 Quantitative Text Complexity Chart for Assessment and Curriculum

To determine if a text’s quantitative complexity is at the appropriate grade level, New York State uses the table below. In cases where a text is excerpted from a large work, only the complexity of the excerpt that students see on the test is measured, not the large work.

Grade Band	ATOS	Degrees of Reading Power	Flesch-Kincaid	The Lexile Framework	Reading Maturity	SourceRater
2 <sup>nd</sup> –3 <sup>rd</sup>	2.75 – 5.14	42 – 54	1.98 – 5.34	420 – 820	3.53 – 6.13	0.05 – 2.48
4 <sup>th</sup> –5 <sup>th</sup>	4.97 – 7.03	52 – 60	4.51 – 7.73	740 – 1010	5.42 – 7.92	0.84 – 5.75
6 <sup>th</sup> –8 <sup>th</sup>	7.00 – 9.98	57 – 67	6.51 – 10.34	925 – 1185	7.04 – 9.57	4.11 – 10.66
9 <sup>th</sup> –10 <sup>th</sup>	9.67 – 12.01	62 – 72	8.32 – 12.12	1050 – 1335	8.41 – 10.81	9.02 – 13.93
11 <sup>th</sup> –12 <sup>th</sup>	11.20 – 14.10	67 – 74	10.34 – 14.20	1185 – 1385	9.57 – 12.00	12.30 – 14.50

Source: Student Achievement Partners

### Text Complexity Metrics for 2026 Grade 6 Passages

Passage Title	Word Count	Lexile	Flesch-Kincaid	ATOS	Qualitative Review
Excerpt from <i>Under the Ashes</i>	880	970L	5.75	6.55	Appropriate
“Rescuing Orphan Elephants”	887	1010L	8.03	7.14	Appropriate
Excerpt from “Man on a Mission”	717	1000L	8.69	8.14	Appropriate
Excerpt from <i>The True Blue Scouts of Sugar Man Swamp</i>	873	1010L	7.05	7.11	Appropriate
PAIR: Excerpt from <i>Pig Tales</i>	535	1080L	8.55	6.71	Appropriate
PAIR: <i>We Keep a Pig in the Parlor</i>	331	N/A	N/A	N/A	Appropriate

**THE STATE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT**  
**THE UNIVERSITY OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK / ALBANY, NY 12234**  
**2026 English Language Arts Tests Map to the Standards**  
**Grade 6**

Question	Type	Key	Points	Standard	Strand	Subscore	Secondary Standard(s)
<b>Session 1</b>							
1	Multiple Choice	D	1	NGLS.ELA.Content.NY-6R6	Reading Standards for Literature	Reading	
2	Multiple Choice	B	1	NGLS.ELA.Content.NY-6R4	Reading Standards for Literature	Reading	
3	Multiple Choice	A	1	NGLS.ELA.Content.NY-6R3	Reading Standards for Literature	Reading	
4	Multiple Choice	A	1	NGLS.ELA.Content.NY-6L4	Language Standards	Reading	
5	Multiple Choice	C	1	NGLS.ELA.Content.NY-6R9	Reading Standards for Literature	Reading	
6	Multiple Choice	C	1	NGLS.ELA.Content.NY-6R3	Reading Standards for Literature	Reading	
7	Multiple Choice	A	1	NGLS.ELA.Content.NY-6R2	Reading Standards for Literature	Reading	
15	Multiple Choice	A	1	NGLS.ELA.Content.NY-6R4	Reading Standards for Informational Text	Reading	
16	Multiple Choice	C	1	NGLS.ELA.Content.NY-6R2	Reading Standards for Informational Text	Reading	
17	Multiple Choice	D	1	NGLS.ELA.Content.NY-6R8	Reading Standards for Informational Text	Reading	
18	Multiple Choice	D	1	NGLS.ELA.Content.NY-6R6	Reading Standards for Informational Text	Reading	
19	Multiple Choice	D	1	NGLS.ELA.Content.NY-6R5	Reading Standards for Informational Text	Reading	
20	Multiple Choice	B	1	NGLS.ELA.Content.NY-6R3	Reading Standards for Informational Text	Reading	
21	Multiple Choice	C	1	NGLS.ELA.Content.NY-6R9	Reading Standards for Informational Text	Reading	
22	Multiple Choice	C	1	NGLS.ELA.Content.NY-6R3	Reading Standards for Informational Text	Reading	
23	Multiple Choice	A	1	NGLS.ELA.Content.NY-6R5	Reading Standards for Informational Text	Reading	
24	Multiple Choice	C	1	NGLS.ELA.Content.NY-6R4	Reading Standards for Informational Text	Reading	
25	Multiple Choice	C	1	NGLS.ELA.Content.NY-6R4	Reading Standards for Informational Text	Reading	
26	Multiple Choice	A	1	NGLS.ELA.Content.NY-6R2	Reading Standards for Informational Text	Reading	
27	Multiple Choice	D	1	NGLS.ELA.Content.NY-6R3	Reading Standards for Informational Text	Reading	
28	Constructed Response		2	NGLS.ELA.Content.NY-6R7	Reading Standards for Informational Text	Writing to Sources	
<b>Session 2</b>							
29	Multiple Choice	B	1	NGLS.ELA.Content.NY-6R2	Reading Standards for Literature	Reading	
30	Multiple Choice	B	1	NGLS.ELA.Content.NY-6R4	Reading Standards for Literature	Reading	
31	Multiple Choice	A	1	NGLS.ELA.Content.NY-6L4	Language Standards	Reading	
32	Multiple Choice	D	1	NGLS.ELA.Content.NY-6R5	Reading Standards for Literature	Reading	
33	Multiple Choice	C	1	NGLS.ELA.Content.NY-6R3	Reading Standards for Literature	Reading	
34	Multiple Choice	D	1	NGLS.ELA.Content.NY-6R2	Reading Standards for Literature	Reading	
35	Multiple Choice	B	1	NGLS.ELA.Content.NY-6R6	Reading Standards for Literature	Reading	
36	Constructed Response		2	NGLS.ELA.Content.NY-6R5	Reading Standards for Informational Text	Writing to Sources	
37	Constructed Response		2	NGLS.ELA.Content.NY-6R9	Reading Standards for Informational Text	Writing to Sources	
38	Constructed Response		2	NGLS.ELA.Content.NY-6R4	Reading Standards for Literature	Writing to Sources	
39	Constructed Response		4	NGLS.ELA.Content.NY-6R3	Reading Standards for Literature	Writing to Sources	

\*This item map is intended to identify the primary analytic skills necessary to successfully answer each question on the 2026 operational ELA test. However, each constructed-response question measures proficiencies described in multiple standards, including writing and additional reading and language standards. For example, two-point and four-point constructed-response questions require students to first conduct the analyses described in the mapped standard and then produce written responses that are rated based on writing standards. To gain greater insight into the measurement focus for constructed-response questions, please refer to the rubrics shown in the Educator Guides.