

PRACTICE TEST

English Language Arts

Grade 7

Student Name

School Name

District Name



Grade 7 English Language Arts

PRACTICE TEST

This practice test contains 13 questions.

Directions

Read each passage and question carefully. Then answer each question as well as you can. You must record all answers in your Practice Test Answer Document.

For most questions, you will mark your answers by filling in the circles in your Practice Test Answer Document. 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 each response in the space provided in your Practice Test Answer Document. Only responses written within the provided space will be scored.

Merlin was a famous wizard in British legend. This excerpt from the novel *The Lost Years of Merlin* describes a major event from Merlin's childhood. Read the excerpt and then answer the questions that follow.

from *The Lost Years of Merlin*

by T. A. Barron

- 1 A dark wave rose on the rolling sea, and from it lifted a hand.
- 2 As the wave surged higher, reaching toward sky as smoky gray as itself, the hand reached higher as well. A bracelet of foam swirled around the wrist, while desperate fingers groped for something they could not find. It was the hand of someone small. It was the hand of someone weak, too weak to fight any longer.
- 3 It was the hand of a boy.
- 4 With a deep sucking sound, the wave began to crest, tilting steadily toward the shore. For an instant it paused, hovering between ocean and land, between the brooding Atlantic and the perilous, rock-bound coast of Wales, known in those days as Gwynedd. Then the sucking swelled into a crashing roar as the wave toppled over, hurling the boy's limp body onto the black rocks.
- 5 His head smacked against a stone, so violently that his skull would surely have split open were it not for the thick mat of hair that covered it. He lay completely still, except when the whoosh of air from the next wave tousled his locks, black beneath the stains of blood.
- 6 A shabby seagull, seeing his motionless form, hopped over the jumble of rocks for a closer look. Bending its beak toward the boy's face, it tried to pull a strand of sea kelp that was wrapped around his ear. The bird tugged and twisted, squawking angrily.
- 7 At last the kelp broke free. Triumphantly, the bird jumped down to one of the boy's bare arms. Beneath the shreds of a brown tunic still clinging to him, he seemed small, even for a boy of seven years. Yet something about his face—the shape of his brow, perhaps, or the lines around his eyes—seemed far older.
- 8 At that instant, he coughed, vomited seawater, and coughed again. With a screech, the gull dropped the kelp and fluttered off to a stony perch.

- 9 The boy remained motionless for a moment. All he could taste was sand, slime, and vomit. All he could feel was the painful throbbing of his head, and the rocks jabbing into his shoulders. Then came another cough, another gush of seawater. A halting, labored breath. Then a second breath, and a third. Slowly, his slender hand clenched into a fist.
- 10 Waves surged and subsided, surged and subsided. For a long while, the small candle flame of life in him wavered at the edge of darkness. Beneath the throbbing, his mind seemed strangely empty. Almost as if he had lost a piece of his very self. Or as if a kind of wall had been erected, cutting him off from a portion of himself, leaving nothing but a lingering sense of fear.
- 11 His breathing slowed. His fist relaxed. He gasped, as if to cough again, but instead fell still.
- 12 Cautiously, the seagull edged closer.
- 13 Then, from whatever quarter, a thin thread of energy began to move through his body. Something inside him was not yet ready to die. He stirred again, breathed again.
- 14 The gull froze.
- 15 He opened his eyes. Shivering with cold, he rolled to his side. Feeling the rough sand in his mouth, he tried to spit, but succeeded only in making himself gag from the rancid taste of kelp and brine.
- 16 With effort, he raised an arm and wiped his mouth with the tatters of his tunic. Then he winced, feeling the raw lump on the back of his head. Willing himself to sit up, he braced his elbow against a rock and pushed himself upright.
- 17 He sat there, listening to the grinding and splashing sea. Beyond the ceaseless pulsing of the waves, beyond the pounding inside his head, he thought for an instant that he could hear something else—a voice, perhaps. A voice from some other time, some other place, though he could not remember where.
- 18 With a sudden jolt, he realized that he could not remember *anything*. Where he had come from. His mother. His father. His name. *His own name*. Hard as he tried, he could not remember. *His own name*.
- 19 "Who am I?"
- 20 Hearing his cry, the gull squawked and took flight.

- 21 Catching sight of his reflection in a pool of water, he paused to look. A strange face, belonging to a boy he did not know, peered back at him. His eyes, like his hair, were as black as coal, with scattered flecks of gold. His ears, which were almost triangular and pointed at the top, seemed oddly large for the rest of his face. Likewise, his brow rose high above his eyes. Yet his nose looked narrow and slight, more a beak than a nose. Altogether, his face did not seem to belong to itself.
- 22 He mustered his strength and rose to his feet. Head swirling, he braced himself against a pinnacle of rock until the dizziness calmed.
- 23 His eyes roamed over the desolate coastline. Rocks upon rocks lay scattered everywhere, making a harsh black barrier to the sea. The rocks parted in only one place—and then only grudgingly—around the roots of an ancient oak tree. Its gray bark peeling, the old oak faced the ocean with the stance of centuries. There was a deep hollow in its trunk, gouged out by fire ages ago. Age warped its every branch, twisting some into knots. Yet it continued to stand, roots anchored, immutable against storm and sea. Behind the oak stood a dark grove of younger trees, and behind them, high cliffs loomed even darker.
- 24 Desperately, the boy searched the landscape for anything he might recognize, anything that might coax his memory to return. He recognized nothing.
- 25 He turned, despite the stinging salt spray, to the open sea. Waves rolled and toppled, one after another after another. Nothing but endless gray billows as far as he could see. He listened again for the mysterious voice, but heard only the distant call of a kittiwake¹ perched on the cliffs.
- 26 Had he come from somewhere out there, beyond the sea?
- 27 Vigorously, he rubbed his bare arms to stop the shivers. Spying a loose clump of sea kelp on a rock, he picked it up. Once, he knew, this formless mass of green had danced with its own graceful rhythm, before being uprooted and cast adrift. Now it hung limp in his hand. He wondered why he himself had been uprooted, and from where.
- 28 A low, moaning sound caught his ear. That voice again! It came from the rocks beyond the old oak tree.

¹kittiwake—a seabird species in the gull family

- 29 He lurched forward in the direction of the voice. For the first time he noticed a dull ache between his shoulder blades. He could only assume that his back, like his head, had slammed against the rocks. Yet the ache felt somehow deeper, as if something beneath his shoulders had been torn away long ago.
- 30 After several halting steps he made it to the ancient tree. He leaned against its massive trunk, his heart pounding. Again he heard the mysterious moaning. Again he set off.
- 31 Often his bare feet would slip on the wet rocks, pitching him sideways. Stumbling along, his torn brown tunic flapping about his legs, he resembled an ungainly water bird, picking his way across the shoreline. Yet all the time he knew what he really was: a lone boy, with no name and no home.

The Lost Years of Merlin: Book One by T.A. Barron. Copyright © 1996 by Thomas A. Barron. Reprinted by permission of Philomel, an imprint of Penguin Young Readers Group, a division of Penguin Random House LLC.

1 How do the events in paragraph 18 represent a change in the boy?

- A. He becomes aware of his helplessness.
- B. He begins to discover details about his past.
- C. He starts to appreciate the loveliness of the area.
- D. He gains courage from knowing someone is nearby.

2 Read the sentences in the box.

- A strange face, belonging to a boy he did not know, peered back at him. (paragraph 21)
- Yet the ache felt somehow deeper, as if something beneath his shoulders had been torn away long ago. (paragraph 29)

Which of the following from the excerpt is **best** supported by the sentences?

- A. "His head smacked against a stone, so violently that his skull would surely have split open were it not for the thick mat of hair that covered it."
- B. "All he could feel was the painful throbbing of his head, and the rocks jabbing into his shoulders."
- C. "Almost as if he had lost a piece of his very self."
- D. "Had he come from somewhere out there, beyond the sea?"

- 3 Read the sentence from paragraph 23 in the box.

Its gray bark peeling, the old oak faced the ocean with the stance of centuries.

What does the imagery in the sentence suggest about the tree?

- A. its changing appearance
 - B. its enduring strength
 - C. its unknown origin
 - D. its exotic location
- 4 What does the description in paragraph 25 suggest about the boy?
- A. His memory of home is fading.
 - B. His fear of nature is diminishing.
 - C. His feeling of fatigue is growing.
 - D. His sense of isolation is increasing.

- 5 Based on the excerpt, how does the mysterious voice affect the boy?
- A. It ends his worry.
 - B. It sparks his interest.
 - C. It deepens his sadness.
 - D. It highlights his gratitude.

- 6 Read the sentences from paragraph 31 in the box.

Often his bare feet would slip on the wet rocks, pitching him sideways. Stumbling along, his torn brown tunic flapping about his legs, he resembled an ungainly water bird, picking his way across the shoreline.

Which phrase from the sentences **best** helps readers understand the word *ungainly*?

- A. "Often his bare feet"
- B. "Stumbling along"
- C. "torn brown tunic"
- D. "across the shoreline"

7 Part A

Read the sentence from paragraph 21 in the box.

Altogether, his face did not seem to belong to itself.

Based on the excerpt, what does the sentence **mainly** suggest about the boy?

- A. He feels angry.
- B. He is maturing.
- C. He is disoriented.
- D. He lacks confidence.

Part B

Which additional detail from the excerpt **best** supports the answer to Part A?

- A. "With effort, he raised an arm and wiped his mouth with the tatters of his tunic." (paragraph 16)
- B. "He sat there, listening to the grinding and splashing sea." (paragraph 17)
- C. "With a sudden jolt, he realized that he could not remember *anything*." (paragraph 18)
- D. "He mustered his strength and rose to his feet." (paragraph 22)

For this question, you will write a narrative based on the passage. Write your narrative in the space provided in your Practice Test Answer Document. Your writing should:

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

8 Based on the excerpt from *The Lost Years of Merlin*, write a narrative that tells what will most likely happen to the boy next. Use what you know about the characters, setting, and events from the excerpt to write your narrative.

Read the two passages about famous blizzards that swept through parts of the United States in early 1888. Then answer the questions that follow.

Read the article “Blizzard!”

Blizzard!

by Jeanie Mebane

- 1 No one on the prairie was prepared for the violent blizzard that blew in on January 12, 1888. The morning had dawned 30 to 40 degrees warmer than the day before. After weeks of below zero temperatures, the day seemed almost balmy. Many residents thought a January thaw had arrived.
- 2 But the day changed quickly. As an Arctic cold front collided with warm, moisture-filled air from the Gulf of Mexico, a blizzard formed. It raced southeastward from Canada at 60 to 70 miles per hour. Gale-force winds whipped the falling snow. Temperatures dropped and objects became hidden in a snowy sea of white.
- 3 The storm hit western North Dakota in the morning and then moved through South Dakota and western Nebraska by noon. It reached eastern Nebraska and Iowa in mid-afternoon—school dismissal time. It became known as the Schoolchildren’s Blizzard.
- 4 When the blizzard hit near Huron, South Dakota, around noon, Mae Hunt tried to keep classes going in the country school where she taught. However, the school ran out of fuel in a few hours, and Hunt knew that she and the children would freeze if they stayed. She decided to take her seven students to a farmhouse only about 140 yards (just a little longer than a 120-yard football field) from the schoolhouse.
- 5 Stepping outside, Hunt and her students were blinded by the force of the blizzard and almost immediately felt their eyelashes crust over with ice. After stumbling through the snow, teacher and students were ready to give up when they happened to find a large straw pile. The older boys dug a cave into the straw, and all eight of them piled into it. They were still cold but glad to be out of the wind and snow.
- 6 They spent the night there with Hunt calling her students’ names again and again to keep them awake and make sure that they were alive. When it grew light, they could see the farmhouse they had been trying to reach less than 100 feet away. The oldest student, a boy of 18, staggered to the house on his frozen feet. He and the farmer helped the rest of the group get inside to warmth and safety. Hunt and her students all survived, but one little girl’s feet had frozen overnight when her wet socks and shoes had formed into ice boots. . . .

- 7 In eastern Nebraska, Barney and Anna Barry feared for the lives of their three older children who had walked the mile to school that morning. The Barrys decided it would be safest for their children and their schoolmates to stay at school. While Barney prepared to take supplies to the school, Anna put the stew she was cooking into a covered kettle for Barney to carry. After dressing warmly, Barney tied a bag of blankets onto his back.
- 8 Unable to see in the storm, Barney knew that he could get lost if he tried to walk along the road to the school. He decided to follow fence lines through the fields between his home and the school. As he made his way, Barney couldn't see anything in the blowing snow—not even his left hand guiding him along the fence wire. He trudged through the deep snow as fast as he could to reach the school before dismissal time. If he did not get there in time, the children would start home—and get lost in the storm.
- 9 Near the school, Barney had to leave the fence and blindly cross the long schoolyard before he safely reached the schoolhouse. Inside, the teacher and students were huddled around a heating stove. Leaving the stew and blankets, Barney told the teacher to keep the students there for the night. Then, concerned about his wife and young children left at home, Barney made the return trip, again following the fences.
- 10 Barney, his family, and all the children in their school survived the storm. Two hundred thirty-five other Nebraska schoolchildren did not. About 500 people died in the blizzard. . . .
- 11 The Schoolchildren's Blizzard continued eastward and southward across the country. At the same time, part of the frigid air mass slipped westward. Within days, the entire country experienced record-breaking low temperatures. Snow fell in areas usually too warm for snow.
- 12 Two months later, from March 11 to 14, a second devastating blizzard struck in 1888. This time, the East Coast from Maryland to Maine was covered with up to 50 inches of snow in some places. Wind gusts of up to 70 miles per hour were recorded. Daily life along the heavily populated East Coast ground to a halt in what became known as the Great White Hurricane of 1888. Roads were blocked and railroads were stopped, trapping travelers in trains. The weight of the snow took down telegraph lines. Snowdrifts reached the top of some homes. Buried under huge amounts of snow for days, cities became isolated and about 400 people died. After the snow stopped falling, the melting snow caused flooding.
- 13 But the future would be different: One outcome of the blizzard was that cities more quickly embraced the idea of building underground transportation systems, which are the backbones of major urban centers today. And communication lines were moved underground, too.

"Blizzard!" by Jeanie Mebane, from *Cobblestone: The Perfect Storm: When Weather Made History* (March 2012). Copyright © 2012 by Carus Publishing Company d/b/a Cricket Media. Reprinted by permission of Cricket Media.

Read the poem from *The Blizzard Voices*.

from *The Blizzard Voices*

by Ted Kooser

A Woman's Voice:

In all my years I never saw
another thing like that storm.
When it came it felt as if
an enormous fist had struck
5 the house. Snow fine as flour
sifted in under the eaves
and piled along the walls.
Our youngest, Jim, was at school
on a place two miles above,
10 and we were worried sick
for fear he'd try to get home
and be lost. You couldn't see
your hand at the end of your arm
out in it. My husband led
15 one of the horses up the lane
but had to turn back. The snow
had frozen the horse's eyes.
Halvor¹ was just drying out
by the stove when we heard
20 a knocking out on the porch,
and there stood Jimmy's pony,
covered with ice and snow,
with a bag on her halter,
and in it a note which said
25 "Your boy is safe at the school."

¹Halvor—the speaker's husband

The Blizzard Voices by Ted Kooser. Copyright © 1986 by Theodore J. Kooser. Reprinted by permission of Bieler Press.

- 9 The author's **main** purpose in the article is to
- A. explain winter temperature patterns.
 - B. describe how to survive an emergency.
 - C. present historical data for future research.
 - D. provide information about a specific natural disaster.
- 10 Based on the article, what was one effect of the blizzards that occurred in 1888?
- A. Cities purchased snow removal equipment.
 - B. Urban areas began to build transportation below city streets.
 - C. Principals started to cancel school during bad conditions.
 - D. Laws were created that prevented citizens from traveling during storms.

- 11 What is the **most likely** reason the poet ends the poem with the line, “Your boy is safe at the school”?
- A. to offer a feeling of relief
 - B. to show a new point of view
 - C. to provide a sense of suspense
 - D. to include a quotation from a source

- 12 Read the sentence from paragraph 1 of the article in the box.

No one on the prairie was prepared for the violent blizzard that blew in on January 12, 1888.

Which image from the poem **best** supports the description in the sentence?

- A. “an enormous fist had struck” (line 4)
- B. “Snow fine as flour” (line 5)
- C. “we were worried sick” (line 10)
- D. “Halvor was just drying out” (line 18)

For this question, you will write an essay based on the passage(s). Write your essay in the space provided in your Practice Test Answer Document. Your writing should:

- Present and develop a central idea.
- Provide evidence and/or details from the passage(s).
- Use correct grammar, spelling, and punctuation.

- 13 Write an essay that explains how the article **and** the poem portray the blizzards of 1888. Be sure to use information from the article and the poem to develop your essay.

MASSACHUSETTS COMPREHENSIVE ASSESSMENT SYSTEM

Grade 7 English Language Arts
Practice Test Answer Document

School Name: _____
District Name: _____
Last Name of Student: _____
First Name of Student: _____

MARKING INSTRUCTIONS

- Use a No. 2 pencil only.
- Do not use ink, ballpoint, or felt-tip pens.
- Make solid marks that fill the circles completely.
- Erase cleanly any marks you wish to change.
- Do not make any stray marks on this form.
- Do not fold, tear, or damage this form.

1. (A) (B) (C) (D)
2. (A) (B) (C) (D)
3. (A) (B) (C) (D)
4. (A) (B) (C) (D)
5. (A) (B) (C) (D)
6. (A) (B) (C) (D)
7. **Part A** (A) (B) (C) (D)
Part B (A) (B) (C) (D)

