

Grade 5 English Language Arts

Reading Comprehension Test

The spring 2014 grade 5 English Language Arts Reading Comprehension test was based on Pre-K–5 learning standards in two content strands of the *Massachusetts Curriculum Framework for English Language Arts and Literacy* (March 2011) listed below. Page numbers for the learning standards appear in parentheses.

■ Reading (*Framework*, pages 13–19)

■ Language (*Framework*, pages 33–40)

The *Massachusetts Curriculum Framework for English Language Arts and Literacy* is available on the Department website at www.doe.mass.edu/frameworks/current.html.

ELA Reading Comprehension test results are reported under two MCAS reporting categories, **Reading** and **Language**, which are identical to the two framework content strands listed above.

The tables at the conclusion of this chapter indicate each released and unreleased common item’s reporting category and the standard it assesses. The correct answers for released multiple-choice questions are also displayed in the released item table.

Test Sessions and Content Overview

The grade 5 ELA Reading Comprehension test included two separate test sessions. Each session included reading passages, followed by multiple-choice and open-response questions. Selected common reading passages and approximately half of the common test items are shown on the following pages as they appeared in test booklets.

Reference Materials

The use of bilingual word-to-word dictionaries was allowed for current and former English language learner students only, during both ELA Reading Comprehension test sessions. No other reference materials were allowed during any ELA Reading Comprehension test session.

English Language Arts

READING COMPREHENSION

DIRECTIONS

This session contains two reading selections with fifteen multiple-choice questions and two open-response questions. Mark your answers to these questions in the spaces provided in your Student Answer Booklet.

Read “Day 1” and answer the questions that follow.

Day 1

from *The Library Card*

by Jerry Spinelli

1 “Five minutes!”

2 Brenda froze.

3 Once, she had watched a TV show about zebras. The narrator said that sometimes a lion gets real close to a zebra and stares at it, and the zebra is so terrified it doesn’t try to run. It just stands there waiting to be devoured.

4 How dumb, thought Brenda at the time. She did not understand the zebra. Now she did. Now an even meaner beast came stalking, ready to pounce, ready to swipe away her very life. And she was paralyzed with fear.

5 “Four minutes!”

6 Four minutes. Two hundred and forty seconds.

7 She squeezed her pillow to her chest. She tried to concentrate on her TV, on the figures speaking and moving, but she could not. The screen was like a half-remembered dream.

8 When first she heard about it, she had scoffed. Impossible, she said. It would never happen. A date had been set, and a time, but it was so long off it did not seem real. It could not be seen coming down the street. It could not be heard. In her room things were as they had always been. Her beanbag chair. The bed. *Ace Monahan*, *Weird Kid*, as always on the tube at 6:30 Sunday. She simply could not believe that anything horrible was on the way.

9 “Three minutes!”

10 At times like this in the movies, some people would try to look on the bright side. They would say something like, “Well, it’s been a good life.”

11 How stupid!

12 The convict on death row—in the final minutes of a movie or before the commercial—that’s who she related to. Sweaty palms clutching cell bars—the raw, terrified stare—the footsteps of priest and warden—the faint buzz that means they’re testing the electric chair—the seconds ticking louder, louder—yes, that

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13 “Two minutes!”

she understood. In one movie a man being strapped to the chair cried out, “Just give me one more minute!” How silly, she had thought then.

14 Her hands and feet were spongy. She was tortured by thoughts that she might have done something to stop this. Had she tried everything? Had she cried? Yes. Pouted? Refused to speak? Refused to eat? Refused to move? Yes, yes, but nothing stopped it. It was a ten-ton steamroller squashing every protest in its way, crunching.

15 “One minute!”

16 So fast. She had never known time was so fast. It did not help to remind herself that she was not alone, that it was happening all over town. She had heard once that the greatest fear was fear of the unknown.

17 “Thirty seconds.”

18 She could hear footsteps now, on the stairs, rising, in the hallway now, closer, on the other side of the bedroom door now . . . the warden, the priest . . . A lock! She should have gotten a lock!

19 “Ten seconds.”

20 Had it been a good life?

21 The doorknob turned. She opened her eyes as wide as she could, swallowing, gorging herself on the glowing screen, the beautiful screen.

22 “Three . . . two . . . one . . .”

23 The door swung open. Her father walked in. He looked at her. She clutched at the bedspread, she wailed, “One more minute! Pleeeeeeese!”

24 The warden smiled a weak, regretful smile. “Sorry, kiddo,” he said and pushed the power button: *plink*. The picture shrank to a point and vanished. Flushed. Gone. Herself with it.

25 Was it her imagination, or could she really hear ten thousand *plinks* all over town?

26 The Great TV Turn-Off had begun.

27 It was 7:00 P.M. Sunday. Brenda had already done the arithmetic. She would have to go without TV for one hundred and sixty-eight hours. Or ten thousand and eighty minutes. Or six hundred and four thousand, eight hundred seconds.

28 One week.

29 At the moment the numbers meant nothing to Brenda. Nothing meant anything. She was numb. Dead.

30 And so was her beloved TV. The voices, the laughter, the bright leaping colors—gone with the flick of a father’s finger. Where moments before *Ace Monahan* was filling the screen, now there was only a flat gray nineteen-inch square. A shroud.* A tombstone.

* *shroud* — a sheet used to cover a body for burial

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- 31 Brenda knew she was in shock. She knew this from hospital and emergency room dramas she watched. Even zebras facing lions went into shock. It was nature's way of shielding its creatures from the extremest moments of agony.
- 32 But shock was not a healthy state either—let it go on too long and you might never come out of it. That's why doctors always said of someone in shock: "Keep him warm. Raise his legs." Brenda got under the covers and put the pillow under her feet.
- 33 The red numbers of her digital clock said 7:01. Ten thousand and seventy-nine minutes to go. She groaned aloud.

"Day 1" by Jerry Spinelli, from *The Library Card*. Copyright © 1997 by Jerry Spinelli. Reprinted by permission of Scholastic Inc.

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|--|--|
| <p>1 Based on paragraph 12, how does Brenda relate to the "convict on death row"?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">A. Brenda remembers she has missed her favorite program.B. Brenda thinks she has been unfairly accused.C. Brenda believes she will be trapped indoors.D. Brenda feels anxious about what is to come. | <p>2 In paragraph 24, who is the "warden"?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">A. Brenda's fatherB. Brenda's teacherC. a person from a prisonD. a character in a program |
|--|--|

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- 3 What is the **main** purpose of paragraph 26?
- A. to present a flashback
 - B. to reveal the main problem
 - C. to change the story's setting
 - D. to show a character's thoughts

- 4 In paragraph 27, what does "Brenda had already done the arithmetic" mean?
- A. She completed her homework.
 - B. She estimated how long she had been alive.
 - C. She counted how many hours of TV she had watched.
 - D. She knew how long the Great TV Turn-Off would last.

- 5 In paragraph 30, what does the contrast between bright colors and a gray tombstone suggest?
- A. how late at night it is
 - B. how unhappy Brenda is
 - C. how quickly time has passed
 - D. how sleepy Brenda has become

Question 6 is an open-response question.

- **Read the question carefully.**
- **Explain your answer.**
- **Add supporting details.**
- **Double-check your work.**

Write your answer to question 6 in the space provided in your Student Answer Booklet.

- 6 Based on the selection, describe Brenda's feelings about the Great TV Turn-Off. Support your answer with important details from the selection.

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Wangari Maathai (1940–2011) lived in the African nation of Kenya. She won the Nobel Peace Prize in 2004 for her work to improve the environment. Read the selection and answer the questions that follow.

Planting the Trees of Kenya

by Claire A. Nivola

1 **A**s Wangari Maathai tells it, when she was growing up on a farm in the hills of central Kenya, the earth was clothed in its dress of green.

2 Fig trees, olive trees, crotons, and flame trees covered the land, and fish filled the pure waters of the streams.

3 The fig tree was sacred then, and Wangari knew not to disturb it, not even to carry its fallen branches home for firewood. In the stream near her homestead where she went to collect water for her mother, she played with glistening frogs' eggs, trying to gather them like beads into necklaces, though they slipped through her fingers back into the clear water.

4 Her heart was filled with the beauty of her native Kenya when she left to attend a college run by Benedictine nuns in America, far, far from her home. There she studied biology, the science of living things. It was an inspiring time for Wangari. The students in America in those years dreamed of making the world better. The nuns, too, taught Wangari to think not just of herself but of the world beyond herself.

5 How eagerly she returned to Kenya! How full of hope and of all that she had learned!

6 She had been away for five years, only five years, but they might have been twenty—so changed was the landscape of Kenya.

7 Wangari found the fig tree cut down, the little stream dried up, and no trace of frogs, tadpoles, or the silvery beads of eggs. Where once there had been little farms



Wangari Maathai, pictured in 1988, inspired thousands of Kenyans to care more for the land.

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growing what each family needed to live on and large plantations growing tea for export, now almost all the farms were growing crops to sell. Wangari noticed that the people no longer grew what they ate but bought food from stores. The store food was expensive, and the little they could afford was not as good for them as what they had grown themselves, so that children, even grownups, were weaker and often sickly.

8 She saw that where once there had been richly wooded hills with grazing cows and goats, now the land was almost treeless, the woods gone. So many trees had been cut down to clear the way for more farms that women and children had to walk farther and farther in search of firewood to heat a pot or warm the house. Sometimes they walked for hours before they found a tree or bush to cut down. There were fewer and fewer trees with each one they cut, and much of the land was as bare as a desert.

9 Without trees there were no roots to hold the soil in place. Without trees there was no shade. The rich topsoil dried to dust, and the “devil wind” blew it away. Rain washed the loose earth into the once-clear streams and rivers, dirtying them with silt.

10 “We have no clean drinking water,” the women of the countryside complained, “no firewood to cook with. Our goats and cows have nothing to graze on, so they make little milk. Our children are hungry, and we are poorer than before.”

11 Wangari saw that the people who had once honored fig trees and now cut them down had forgotten to care for the land that fed them. Now the land, weak and suffering, could no longer take care of the people, and their lives became harder than ever.

12 The women blamed others, they blamed the government, but Wangari was not one to complain. She wanted to do something. “Think of what we ourselves are doing,” she urged the women. “We are cutting down the trees of Kenya.

13 “When we see that we are part of the problem,” she said, “we can become part of the solution.”

14 She had a simple and big idea.

15 “Why not plant trees?” she asked the women.

16 She showed them how to collect tree seeds from the trees that remained. She taught them to prepare the soil, mixing it with manure. She showed them how to wet that soil, press a hole in it with a stick, and carefully insert a seed. Most of all she taught them to tend the growing seedlings, as if they were babies, watering them twice a day to make sure they grew strong.



Wangari's movement relied on the efforts of many, including these women meeting in Muranga, Kenya, in 2001.

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- 17 It wasn't easy. Water was always hard to come by. Often the women had to dig a deep hole by hand and climb into it to haul heavy bucketfuls of water up over their heads and back out of the hole. An early nursery in Wangari's backyard failed; almost all the seedlings died. But Wangari was not one to give up, and she showed others how not to give up.
- 18 Many of the women could not read or write. They were mothers and farmers, and no one took them seriously.
- 19 But they did not need schooling to plant trees. They did not have to wait for the government to help them. They could begin to change their own lives.
- 20 All this was heavy work, but the women felt proud. Slowly, all around them, they could begin to see the fruit of the work of their hands. The woods were growing up again. Now when they cut down a tree, they planted two in its place. Their families were healthier, eating from the fruit trees they had planted and from the vegetable plots filled again with the yams, cassava, pigeon peas, and sorghum that grew so well. They had work to do, and the work brought them together as one, like the trees growing together on the newly wooded hills.
- 21 The men saw what their wives, mothers, and daughters were doing and admired them and even joined in.
- 22 Wangari gave seedlings to the schools and taught the children how to make their own nurseries.
- 23 She gave seedlings to inmates of prisons and even to soldiers. "You hold your gun," she told the soldiers, "but what are you protecting? The whole country is disappearing with the wind and water. You should hold the gun in your right hand and a tree seedling in your left. That's when you become a good soldier."
- 24 And so in the thirty years since Wangari began her movement, tree by tree, person by person, thirty million trees have been planted in Kenya—and the planting has not stopped.
- 25 "When the soil is exposed," Wangari tells us, "it is crying out for help, it is naked and needs to be clothed in its dress. That is the nature of the land. It needs color, it needs its cloth of green."

Planting the Trees of Kenya: The Story of Wangari Maathai by Claire A. Nivola. Copyright © 2008 by Claire A. Nivola. Reprinted by permission of Farrar, Straus and Giroux, LLC. Photograph 1 copyright © William Campbell/Sygma/CORBIS. Photograph 2 copyright © Wendy Stone/CORBIS.

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- 7 What is the **most likely** reason the author describes Wangari's childhood in paragraphs 1–3?
- A. to show Wangari's early connection to nature
 - B. to contrast Wangari's country with other places
 - C. to explain why Wangari had to go away to school
 - D. to show how hard Wangari worked as a young girl
- 8 Based on paragraphs 4 and 5, how did Wangari's years in America **most** affect her?
- A. She decided to become a teacher.
 - B. She met people who came from other places.
 - C. She learned new ideas that she would use later on.
 - D. She was able to compare her country with other countries.
- 9 In paragraph 6, why did it seem as if Wangari had been away from Kenya for twenty years?
- A. She had missed her family.
 - B. Her memories were confusing.
 - C. Her country had changed so much.
 - D. She had grown used to living in another place.
- 10 What do paragraphs 9 and 10 describe?
- A. how the solutions would work
 - B. what people hoped to achieve by their actions
 - C. that people need to control the forces of nature
 - D. that many unplanned results can come from one cause

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- 11** Reread paragraph 14. Based on the selection, how can an idea be both simple and big?
- A. It can be new and interesting.
 - B. It can be basic and important.
 - C. It may require many people to help.
 - D. It may take a long time to carry out.

- 12** According to paragraph 20, what was an unexpected benefit of Wangari's work?
- A. The women received more money.
 - B. The women became part of a team.
 - C. The women met people from other areas.
 - D. The women learned new ways of preparing food.

- 13** What do Wangari's comments in paragraph 23 suggest?
- A. Kenya needed to assign soldiers to harder jobs.
 - B. Kenya needed to train people to guard themselves.
 - C. Kenya needed to focus more on developing its military.
 - D. Kenya needed to be improved so it would be worth defending.

- 14** Based on the selection, what did Wangari's project prove?
- A. People need a lot of money to be successful.
 - B. Every person has the right to state an opinion.
 - C. Individuals can make a difference in the world.
 - D. We must study something to truly understand it.

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- 15** Read the sentence from paragraph 4 in the box below.

Her heart was filled with the beauty of her native Kenya . . .

In the sentence, the word *native* refers to

- A. a place that is undeveloped.
- B. a place that is shrinking.
- C. a person's childhood.
- D. a person's homeland.

- 16** Read the sentence from paragraph 17 in the box below.

An early nursery in Wangari's backyard failed; almost all the seedlings died.

In the sentence, the word *nursery* refers to a place where

- A. plants are grown.
- B. ill people are taken.
- C. children are cared for.
- D. experiments are performed.

Question 17 is an open-response question.

- **Read the question carefully.**
- **Explain your answer.**
- **Add supporting details.**
- **Double-check your work.**

Write your answer to question 17 in the space provided in your Student Answer Booklet.

- 17** Based on the selection, explain a lesson that can be learned from the actions of Wangari Maathai. Support your answer with important details from the selection.

**Grade 5 English Language Arts
Reading Comprehension
Spring 2014 Released Items:
Reporting Categories, Standards, and Correct Answers***

Item No.	Page No.	Reporting Category	Standard	Correct Answer (MC)*
1	44	<i>Reading</i>	3	D
2	44	<i>Reading</i>	4	A
3	45	<i>Reading</i>	2	B
4	45	<i>Reading</i>	1	D
5	45	<i>Reading</i>	6	B
6	45	<i>Reading</i>	3	
7	49	<i>Reading</i>	3	A
8	49	<i>Reading</i>	1	C
9	49	<i>Reading</i>	2	C
10	49	<i>Reading</i>	1	D
11	50	<i>Reading</i>	4	B
12	50	<i>Reading</i>	3	B
13	50	<i>Reading</i>	1	D
14	50	<i>Reading</i>	2	C
15	51	<i>Language</i>	4	D
16	51	<i>Language</i>	4	A
17	51	<i>Reading</i>	2	

* Answers are provided here for multiple-choice items only. Sample responses and scoring guidelines for the open-response items, which are indicated by the shaded cells, will be posted to the Department's website later this year.

Grade 5 English Language Arts
Reading Comprehension
Spring 2014 Unreleased Common Items:
Reporting Categories and Standards

Item No.	Reporting Category	Standard
18	<i>Reading</i>	5
19	<i>Reading</i>	1
20	<i>Reading</i>	3
21	<i>Reading</i>	3
22	<i>Reading</i>	8
23	<i>Language</i>	5
24	<i>Reading</i>	8
25	<i>Reading</i>	1
26	<i>Reading</i>	1
27	<i>Reading</i>	6
28	<i>Reading</i>	3
29	<i>Reading</i>	4
30	<i>Reading</i>	3
31	<i>Reading</i>	8.a
32	<i>Reading</i>	4
33	<i>Language</i>	4
34	<i>Language</i>	1
35	<i>Reading</i>	6
36	<i>Reading</i>	3
37	<i>Reading</i>	4
38	<i>Reading</i>	1
39	<i>Reading</i>	3
40	<i>Language</i>	4