



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

**English**

**Language Arts Test**

**Book 1**

Grade

**8**

**January 14–18, 2008**

## 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 excerpt from *Millicent Min, Girl Genius*. Then answer questions 1 through 5.



## Millicent Min, Girl Genius

by Lisa Yee

The book *Millicent Min, Girl Genius* is the story of how a young girl genius, who has quickly advanced through elementary school into high school, has to deal with the effects of her unusual situation.

Everyone keeps making a fuss about my graduating next year. I can't wait. I want to get on with my life, go to college, embark on the first of several careers, and win the Fields Medal—the highest mathematical honor a person under forty can receive. It would be great to do all this by age twenty, but I don't want to put too much pressure on myself. Therefore, if it doesn't happen until I am, say, twenty-three, that's fine with me.

My age has always been an issue. Not for me, but for everyone else. Even starting at JFK was a big deal. I was nine at the time. On my first day of high school, my grandparents, parents, and the press insisted on tagging along. I made them walk four paces behind me, since I didn't want to stand out.

The next morning I was mortified to learn that the Associated Press picked up a photo of me on tippytoes trying to reach the top of my locker

while a couple of basketball players stood by and gawked. The caption on the photo read "High school may not be a big stretch for nine-year-old Millicent Min, but her locker sure is."

In time things calmed down. Now new students stare, but most of the upperclassmen are used to me, and instead of being known as "that smart little girl," I am vilified<sup>1</sup> as "the one who brings up the curve."

I had a difficult start, though. It's embarrassing enough being a foot shorter and five years younger than your peers, but then to have your grandmother cemented to you makes it even worse.

My parents allowed me to go to high school with the condition that during freshman year, Maddie would walk me to my first-period class.

<sup>1</sup>vilified: spoken badly of

**Go On**

There, she was expected to hand me over directly to Gaspar, my habitually late French instructor whose real name was Lester. Maddie and I made an odd couple, but at least it meant I had somebody to talk to while the other kids made it a point to ignore me.

We were well into the first week and waiting outside Gaspar/Lester’s class when someone, I never did figure out who, made an offending remark using the words “boring,” “brainiac,” and “Millicent” in the same run-on sentence. Believing I was being ridiculed, my grandmother warned my classmates that she knew kung fu and was not afraid to use it. To show how serious she was, Maddie did a series of complicated martial arts moves involving low blocks, high kicks, and several impressive jump spins.

There was a gasp from the crowd and immediately everyone backed away, fearing Maddie might hurt herself. When she was done and the applause petered out, Maddie was still in her age-defying leg-split position.

“Get up,” I hissed. “Everyone’s staring.”

“No can do,” she whispered. “I appear to be stuck.”

By then Gaspar/Lester had arrived. He asked for volunteers and several of the bigger boys carried my grandmother to the school nurse’s office as she waved adieu<sup>2</sup> to first-period French.

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<sup>2</sup>adieu: good-bye

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**1** What does the first paragraph tell the reader about Millicent?

- A** She is spontaneous and flexible.
- B** She has high expectations for herself.
- C** She avoids thinking too much about the future.
- D** She worries about her ability to meet her goals.

**2** When Millicent says her grandmother is “cemented” to her, she means that her grandmother

- A** stays very close
- B** has a hard attitude
- C** moves very slowly
- D** has a solid character

- 3** Maddie becomes upset with some students because they
- A** are staring at Millicent
  - B** do not know who Millicent is
  - C** are making comments about Millicent
  - D** do not help Millicent open her locker
- 4** Which pair of words **best** describes Millicent’s grandmother?
- A** energetic and protective
  - B** patient and thoughtful
  - C** gentle and compassionate
  - D** hardworking and ambitious
- 5** According to the passage, Millicent places great importance on her
- A** age and experience
  - B** fame and reputation
  - C** height and athletic ability
  - D** education and achievements

***Go On***

# Directions

Read this article and sidebar about wolves living in the United States. Then answer questions 6 through 10.



## Living the Wild Life

by Gary Ferguson

Doug Smith has been hard at work with wolves in Yellowstone for six years. But the animals have been a big part of his life since long before that.

“I grew up in northern Ohio,” he says, “where my father owned a camp. As a boy I was outdoors almost every day—tramping through the woods, watching birds, turning over rocks to look for salamanders.”

All that time outside helped create in Dr. Smith not just a fascination with animals, but a strong concern for how people treat them.

“I knew early on I wanted to be a voice for that part of the world that doesn’t have a voice,” he recalls. “At about 12 years old, I started reading about wolves. I found out that they were persecuted, they were rare, they only lived in wilderness areas.”

By the time he was 16, Doug Smith was writing letters to Dave Mech, one of the most respected wolf researchers in the country, looking for ways to get involved. Two years

later, as a senior in high school, he had his first of many volunteer jobs working with wolves.

He could hardly have picked an animal more in need of a voice. Throughout history, all over the world, wolves have been shot, trapped, and poisoned. Though at one time they were common throughout much of America, by 1964 their numbers had dwindled to fewer than 500 animals in the lower 48 states, most in northern Minnesota.

The science of ecology tells us that you can’t remove one piece of nature’s puzzle without affecting the other pieces. As an example, Dr. Smith points to the problem New England has today with deer ticks, a small insect that carries Lyme disease, a danger to humans. “The reason there are so many deer ticks is because, with no predators around, we have record levels of deer. Those deer, in turn, are in many places over-browsing the plants. Once you lose the plants—things like aspen and willow—you also lose the songbirds that make their homes there.”



The wolves of Yellowstone are teaching us much the same lesson. Wolves help keep elk numbers in check. They prompt elk to move, which keeps them from overgrazing the plants that grow along streams and rivers. The remains of the animals that wolves kill for food provide dinner for a variety of other creatures. Beetles feed on wolf kills, as do grizzlies, eagles and fox.

Beyond all that, though, much of the appeal wolves have for Dr. Smith is simply their wildness.

“There are few things in the world that we will never conquer,” he says. “Skunks, coyotes, red fox—all of those animals have learned to deal with people. But we can’t make wolves live with us by turning them into something else. They are truly a symbol of all things wild.”

## *Restoring Wolves: You Make the Call*

**For: Doug Smith, Director of wolf recovery, Yellowstone National Park**

In the world today there is so much we are losing; more and more species vanish from the earth with every passing year. The time has come to put something back, to restore, to heal some of the old wounds we’ve inflicted on the landscape over the years.

Wolves are the dominant predators in North America—as such, they play a critical role in keeping the continent healthy. Most places don’t have enough wild country to make such predator restoration possible, which means it’s even more important to restore wolves where conditions are right; places like Yellowstone, which has both a high level of wildness, as well as an abundant prey base. (Yellowstone offers wolves one of the highest prey-to-predator ratios to be found anywhere in the world.)

Some who oppose wolves have a human-centered point of view—a perspective that basically says the earth is here for humans, and is completely at our disposal. But wolves offer us a chance to live another way—a way that makes it a priority to learn to live with other life forms.

**Against: Larry Bourret, Executive Vice President, Wyoming Farm Bureau**

What does wolf introduction to Yellowstone mean? To the average citizen it probably just means introducing wolves to Yellowstone. There would be no adverse impacts because livestock do not graze in the park and few people live near Yellowstone.

But to ranchers it means introducing wolves, which wander over vast areas—in and out of the park—onto their ranches.

Wolves eat meat—as in the cattle, calves, sheep or lambs that keep ranchers in business. Introduction apparently also means lawsuits by environmental groups attempting to remove livestock from federal lands. To ranchers, who own private lands in the same area, it means the possibility of financial ruin. To ranchers it is a form of land use restrictions. To ranchers introducing wolves means taking away the ranchers’ livelihoods without just compensation.

Why don’t we introduce wolves into New York City; Washington, D.C.; or Chicago, where they were at one time? Because the people in those areas would not like wolves in their area! Why do people not want a nuclear power plant built in their backyard—for the same reason ranchers do not want wolves introduced into their backyard.

***Go On***

**6** According to the information in the article and the sidebar, Doug Smith can **best** be described as a

- A** health advocate
- B** dedicated hunter
- C** wildlife conservationist
- D** national park supporter

**7** Read this quotation by Doug Smith from the article.

**“I knew early on I wanted to be a voice for that part of the world that doesn’t have a voice.”**

By this statement, Smith means he wants to

- A** speak up for misunderstood wildlife
- B** help animals learn to deal with people
- C** speak up for ranchers who enjoy wildlife
- D** help find homes for animals that receive little attention

**8** Which statement from the sidebar **best** supports Larry Bourret’s argument?

- A** “To the average citizen it probably just means introducing wolves to Yellowstone.”
- B** “There would be no adverse impacts because livestock do not graze in the park and few people live near Yellowstone.”
- C** “To ranchers introducing wolves means taking away the ranchers’ livelihoods without just compensation.”
- D** “Why don’t we introduce wolves into New York City; Washington, D.C.; or Chicago, where they were at one time?”

**9** The article describes the chain of events below.

1. **Too few predators leads to too many deer.**
2. **Too many deer leads to over-browsing of plants.**
3. **Over-browsing of plants leads to the loss of songbird habitat.**

Which phrase describes the **most likely** outcome of this chain of events?

- A** too many wolves
- B** an unbalanced environment
- C** a reduction in the number of deer ticks
- D** fewer opportunities for scientific research

**10** Read this sentence from the sidebar.

**Wolves are the dominant predators in North America—as such, they play a critical role in keeping the continent healthy.**

What does the word “dominant” mean as it is used in this sentence?

- A** major
- B** smartest
- C** most unusual
- D** most demanding

***Go On***

# Directions

Read this poem about Joan Benoit. Then answer questions 11 through 15.

## Joan Benoit

1984 U.S. Olympic Marathon Gold Medalist

by Rina Ferrarelli

During the third mile  
not the eighteenth as expected  
she surged ahead  
leaving behind the press  
of bodies, the breath  
hot on her back  
and set a pace  
the experts claimed  
she couldn't possibly keep  
to the end.

Sure, determined,  
moving to an inner rhythm  
measuring herself against herself  
alone in a field of fifty  
she gained the twenty-six miles  
of concrete, asphalt and humid weather  
and burst into the roar of the crowd  
to run the lap around the stadium  
at the same pace  
once to finish the race  
and then again in victory

and she was still fresh  
and not even out of breath  
and standing.



**11** The speaker’s attitude toward Joan Benoit seems to be one of

- A** admiration
- B** disappointment
- C** curiosity
- D** jealousy

**12** Running is said to be a small percentage physical and a great percentage psychological. Which lines from the poem **best** support this statement?

- A** “leaving behind the press  
of bodies, the breath  
hot on her back”
- B** “moving to an inner rhythm  
measuring herself against herself  
alone in a field of fifty”
- C** “she gained the twenty-six miles  
of concrete, asphalt and humid weather”
- D** “to run the lap around the stadium  
at the same pace”

**13** Read the last stanza of the poem.

**and she was still fresh  
and not even out of breath  
and standing.**

Each of these lines emphasizes Joan Benoit’s

- A** slow pace
- B** stunning victory
- C** expected first-place finish
- D** surprising early lead

***Go On***

**14** This type of poem would **most likely** be categorized as

- A** narrative, because it tells a story
- B** classic, because of its formal style
- C** lyric, because of its musical language
- D** symbolic, because it uses many metaphors

**15** The author describes Joan Benoit as “alone in a field of fifty.” This use of figurative language reinforces the idea that

- A** Benoit did not know the other runners
- B** everyone thought Benoit would win
- C** Benoit was competing against herself
- D** some people feel lonely in a crowd

# Directions

Read this article. Then answer questions 16 through 20.



## Tech-Trash Tragedy

by Liam O'Donnell

In our wired world, technology moves at a laser-fast pace. Every day, a new gadget arrives and promises to bring us the future, today. In the race for faster computers and more powerful gadgets, it's easy to forget about yesterday's high-tech wonders.

Unfortunately, many times used computers and gadgets end up in landfills across the country. Each year, we throw away 12 million computers. By the end of 2004, we had junked 30 million cell phones. And that is not good news for the environment. To make our gadgets work, many of them use materials like lead and mercury. When mercury and lead end up in a landfill, they spread poisons into the earth, water, and air for miles around. This is called e-waste—and it's becoming a big pollution problem around the world.

Big problems call for big solutions, so adults and kids from dozens of countries are working hard to clean up our e-waste. And *you* can help, too.

### Turning Old Into New

The trick to stopping e-waste is to catch it before it gets into the landfill. That's why the seventh-grade students at Cityside Middle School in Zeeland, Michigan, organized a computer drop-off event. They put up posters and spread the word around the town, telling people to bring out their old computers.

And the people of Zeeland got the message. They dropped off dozens of old computers, monitors, and printers at the school. Craig Greshaw, the school's computer teacher who helped organize the event, believes that knowing about computers goes beyond surfing the Web. "Part of that is learning about the chemicals inside the computers and what needs to be done with

**Go On**

them to keep them safe,” he told the *Holland Sentinel* during the recycling drive. With their school gym filled with old computers, the students were ready for the next step in cleaning up the high-tech trash: turning old computers into new ones.

That’s where companies like RePC step in. The Seattle company takes e-waste and turns it into e-gold. “Almost all of the parts of a computer can be reused or recycled,” says Mark Dabek, owner of RePC. Any computer parts that can’t be reused or sold get recycled in a way that won’t hurt the environment. “The circuit boards are sent to a circuit board recycler that chops them and sends them to a facility with a very, very hot furnace called ‘the reactor,’” Dabek says. After the computer parts are safely crushed and burned, their raw materials can be reused to make everything from appliances to office buildings.

Sometimes you can make a new computer from the parts of an old computer. Called refurbishing, it’s what the tech whizzes at RePC do best. Buying a refurbished computer is a lot cheaper than buying a new one. But who wants a computer made up of old parts?

A lot of people, actually. Places like schools and community centers are often short on cash, but need computers to help them get things done. Robert Sterling, a computer teacher at Estancia High School in California, uses computers donated from local businesses to motivate students and teach them about recycling. “If kids learn to recycle everything,” says Sterling, “they will set a good example for some of the older people who are not in the habit yet of recycling every day.”

Recycling old computers is big business, and there are many other companies like RePC across the country. Many big charities have computer recycling programs too, but be sure to call them first before you drop off any equipment.

Computers aren’t the only technology that can be reused. Last year, schools in New Mexico gave old cell phones a new lease on life while also helping to raise money for charity. The students collected 11 garbage bags of old cell phones, sold them to a cell phone refurbishing company, donated the money to charity, and helped keep the environment clean—all at the same time.

### Donating Dos and Don’ts

1. **Check first.** Some refurbishing companies don’t accept very old computers, so call or check their Web site before you load up the car.
2. **Don’t forget to accessorize.** By donating keyboard, printer, and mouse along with your computer, you’re more likely to find them all a new home.
3. **Keep the Operating System intact.** Don’t erase Windows from your computer.
4. **Clean your hard drive.** Erase from the hard drive any personal information or e-mails. There are free disc cleaning programs on the Web.



**16** According to the article, why do so many computers and gadgets **most likely** end up in landfills?

- A** It is cheaper to buy new products when replacing old equipment.
- B** Computer manufacturing companies produce low-quality products.
- C** Technology education classes fail to teach students about recycling.
- D** The development of new technology makes current devices outdated.

**17** Which advice is given in the “Donating Dos and Don’ts” section?

- A** Drop off your computer at the nearest landfill.
- B** Ask for a receipt as proof of the contribution.
- C** Keep all of the computer accessories together.
- D** Drain the chemicals found inside the computer.

**18** Which statement is **not** supported with facts or examples in the article?

- A** Computers and electronic gadgets are often dumped in landfills.
- B** People from dozens of countries are recycling computer parts.
- C** Technological devices other than computers can be recycled and reused.
- D** One way to stop electronic waste is to find a need for old equipment.

***Go On***

**19** How is information in the article organized?

- A** A problem and several solutions are described.
- B** New programs are ranked by their success rate.
- C** The events are reported in the order they occur.
- D** Two methods of deciding an issue are compared.

**20** Read the following sentences from the article.

**Robert Sterling, a computer teacher at Estancia High School in California, uses computers donated from local businesses to motivate students and teach them about recycling. “If kids learn to recycle everything,” says Sterling, “they will set a good example for some of the older people who are not in the habit yet of recycling every day.”**

In the first sentence, the word “motivate” means about the same as

- A** confuse
- B** control
- C** encourage
- D** evaluate

## Directions

This excerpt from *Down Garrapata Road* is set in a small Mexican-American community in southern Texas during the 1940s. Read this excerpt. Then answer questions 21 through 26.

# A Fork in the Road

by Anne Estevis

A gust of wind blew a canvas chair across the yard. My eyes followed the swirling dirt out to the road and down toward the school bus stop. I was going to miss walking down the road to catch the big school bus that took us into town to school. I enjoyed being with the teachers and the other students. Now that I was finished with school I seemed to have lost some of the excitement from my life.

As I was folding the canvas chair, Chatita Chávez drove into our yard in her father's old pickup. It rattled and roared, and emitted a trail of black smoke out of its tailpipe. She got out smiling as usual and excitedly pointed toward the storm that seemed to be moving toward us.

"I can't stay long, Nilda. There's a storm coming and I need to beat it home."

I was glad to see her. "Yes, I think we're in for some bad weather. Come on in and have a cup of coffee at least," I said as I ushered her into our kitchen.

"I'm so excited, Nilda! You'll never guess what I just did!"

I stopped pouring the coffee and turned and looked at her.

"I just went over to Edinburg and registered for junior college," she said and looked at me and smiled. "Don't you want to go take classes with me?"

I was stunned. I didn't know what to say. How could I go to college? I didn't have any money. I gave Chatita a cup of coffee. "I don't know. I don't think I can. Isn't college expensive?"

Chatita sat down at the table and began adding sugar to her coffee. "Not really, and I'm working part-time at the packing shed on Canal Road. You could work there, too."

The wind began to gust causing the house to occasionally creak and shudder. The lightbulb hanging over the table blinked off and on and I heard a low roll of thunder in the distance.

I haltingly asked, "Do you think I could get a job at the packing shed?"

"Sure. My *primo*<sup>1</sup> is the *jefe*.<sup>2</sup> He'll give you a job."

Mamá came into the kitchen and exchanged greetings with Chatita. She must have heard our conversation.

"I think it's nice that you're going to go to college, Chatita. What will you study?" my mother asked as she joined us at the table.

"I want to be a teacher."

<sup>1</sup>*primo*: cousin

<sup>2</sup>*jefe*: boss

**Go On**

“¡Una maestra! Qué bueno,”<sup>3</sup> Mamá said as she patted Chatita’s arm.

“A teacher?” I asked. “Don’t you need a degree?”

“You can start teaching before you get your degree. Clarence Duncan has been teaching in Brownsville since last year and I think Zulema will start this year.”

The lightbulb blinked again and went out. Mamá quickly arose from the table. “I’m going to have to bring in the lanterns. I knew I shouldn’t have packed them away.”

“Well, Nilda, do you want to go? Because, if you do, you can go over to Edinburg with me tomorrow.”

I hesitated, then said, “Yes. I want to go.” My heart was beating fast. I couldn’t believe how happy I was feeling.

“But I have to talk to Mamá and Papá. What if they won’t let me?”

“You can at least go with me tomorrow and find out what it’s all about. I’ll come by for you around eight.”

Chatita left me sitting at the table staring at my cup of coffee. It seemed so unreal, this idea of me going to college. My parents had never had the opportunity for much education. Juana had quit school to get married and Roberto and Zeke had graduated from high school as I had. But college? I would be the first one in my family to go to college. Yes, college was exactly what I wanted.

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<sup>3</sup>Una maestra! Que Bueno: A teacher! How nice!

The day had turned dark and the rain had started. My mother came back into the kitchen with two lanterns.

“Mamá, I need to ask you something.”

She picked up a cloth and began to clean the dust from the lanterns. She looked at me and smiled.

“Mamá, if I could find a way to pay, could I take classes at the junior college?” I asked, trying to subdue my excitement.

She stopped cleaning and raised her eyebrows. “What would you study, *m’ija*?”<sup>4</sup>

“I think I want to be a teacher,” I quietly replied.

Mamá sat down at the table across from me. “Pues,<sup>5</sup> I would like for you to go to college,” she said in a serious tone.

“What about Papá? Do you think he will allow me to go?”

“Your father wants you to be happy. If going to college and being a teacher makes you happy, then he will probably allow it,” she answered.

I didn’t say anything. I was enjoying the feeling of happiness and sense of wonder that had come over me. The two of us sat in the darkened room without speaking until I saw my mamá daubing her eyes with the hem of her apron.

“What’s wrong, Mamá.”

“Nothing,” she replied. “I probably got some dust in my eyes. That’s all.”

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<sup>4</sup>*m’ija*: my daughter

<sup>5</sup>Pues: then

- 21** This story is told from the point of view of
- A** Chatita
  - B** Mamá
  - C** Nilda
  - D** Papá
- 22** Chatita responds to Nilda’s hesitancy about going to college with
- A** acceptance
  - B** disappointment
  - C** encouragement
  - D** indifference

- 23** Read this sentence from the story.

**I would be the first one in my family to go to college.**

What feeling does this realization create for Nilda?

- A** compassion
  - B** frustration
  - C** resentment
  - D** satisfaction
- 24** The real reason for Mamá’s tears is **most likely** because she is
- A** proud that Nilda wants to become a teacher
  - B** concerned about missing Nilda once she leaves
  - C** worried her husband will stop Nilda from leaving
  - D** happy that Nilda can work at a job with her friend

**Go On**

**25** How does Nilda **most** show respect for her parents?

- A** She seeks their approval to go to college.
- B** She sits with her mother without speaking.
- C** She picks up a canvas chair from their yard.
- D** She tells her mother she plans to become a teacher.

**26** Which sentence from the story **best** supports Nilda's sense of fulfillment?

- A** "Now that I was finished with school I seemed to have lost some of the excitement from my life."
- B** "I haltingly asked, 'Do you think I could get a job at the packing shed?'"
- C** "'Mamá, if I could find a way to pay, could I take classes at the junior college?'"
- D** "I was enjoying the feeling of happiness and sense of wonder that had come over me."

**STOP**





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**English Language Arts Test**  
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