



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

**English**

**Language Arts**

**Listening Selection**

Grade

**7**

**January 17–20, 2006**

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

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**Listening Selection*****Kate Tamarkin, Conductor***

*by Felicia Silcox*

Kate Tamarkin grew up in California, playing among the rocks at the beach, acting in “pretend” worlds. She loved drama class in school and all her pets at home. She drew strength from her mother’s respect for life and from her grandmother’s love of poetry. But the seeds of greatness lay in Kate’s immense love of music.

The fifth-grader “happily played alto saxophone” in the school band and sang in the school chorus. She knew music was her “favorite thing to do in the whole world.” But few women in America trained to become professional musicians when Kate was young. Most symphony orchestras hired only men to perform in concerts.

That didn’t matter to Kate. When she entered college, she chose to study music and play the French horn, her favorite instrument. In one course, Kate had to stand up in front of her classmates and conduct a piece of music. She thought, “I’m so happy in the back of the orchestra. Why do I have to get up there?” But after class, her professor told her she had remarkable talent for conducting. Kate had found a new way to express herself through music.

After graduation, Kate took advanced music classes and continued to conduct. A special honor came to her in 1988. She was one of three music students chosen to guest-conduct the famous Chicago Symphony, under the direction of master-conductor Leonard Bernstein. The legendary musician had asked that a talented woman be included in the group—a bold step, since women conductors were so rare.

How did Kate do when she “took the baton” and conducted? Leonard Bernstein described her as “extremely musical, a vivid personality, and a strong performer.”

Kate learned well from her many teachers. She went on to become Music Director of two small orchestras: the Vermont Symphony and the East Texas Symphony. When England’s Queen Elizabeth visited the United States, a thrilled Kate conducted the Dallas Symphony as it played “God Save the Queen” for Her Majesty.

Then in 1999, Kate received stunning news. She’d been chosen the first woman Music Director of the 75-member Monterey Symphony in California, her home state. Whooping wildly, Kate accidentally threw out the batter for the banana bread she’d been making after receiving the news.

**Go On**

As a conductor, one of Kate’s jobs is to create programs for the orchestra to perform during its regular season and for special events such as holiday concerts. She compares this process to putting together a recipe for dinner. “Different pieces in different order will have a different effect on the mood of the audience,” she says.

Like her former teacher, Leonard Bernstein, Kate enjoys giving children’s concerts. She believes children should be able to express themselves in school through music education. Kate’s approach is to teach kids that music is simply “organized sound” so they “can create all kinds of music.”

Kate Tamarkin is a pioneer in her field. She found the strength to overcome obstacles by responding with all her heart to what attracted her most—music. Kate offers this advice about choosing a career. “Instead of saying ‘What should I be?’ I think it’s more valuable to say ‘What am I like? What do I have fun doing?’ and then see what professions might meet that.”

**STOP**









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