



New York State Testing Program

English

Language Arts Test

Book 1

Grade

8

January 16–19, 2007

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

Directions

In this part of the test, you will do some reading and answer questions about what you have read.

Go On

Directions

Read this story about a young boy and a runaway slave. Then answer questions 1 through 6.

The Sign

by Laura Wrang
illustrated by Joel Snyder



Jess tried to steady his trembling legs. It wasn't easy to do with the strangers in the house. They were searching every room and surrounding Ma, who stood there bravely.

"A slave?" she was saying. "We have no slaves on our farm."

"We're looking for a runaway named Orion," said a bearded man. "If you're hiding my slave . . ."

Jess didn't wait to hear more. Ma had helped many slaves on their way to freedom; she was an expert at handling men like these. Jess slipped outdoors. In the distance, the river roared in the night. A light flickered on its bank. Jess ran toward it and gasped, "Orry, they're searching for you!"

In the glow of the fire, Jess saw Orry wince. Then, with his good arm, Orry grabbed a pail of water and put out the flames.

"Their search won't be easy."

"The men won't find you," Jess said firmly. "Ma told me what to do. I'll row you across the river. Then, you go to the farm Ma told you about. They'll help you from there."

Orry shook his head. "Taking the boat wouldn't be safe. The men will probably look here soon. They'd spot us in the water."

Orry crawled into the pit that he had dug, where he had slept the past few nights. He came out with a bundle and tied it to his belt with a bandanna. He stuck a hunting knife in his sheath, then took a step toward the river.

Jess went cold as he looked across the raging river's expanse. "Swimming's too dangerous."

Orry chuckled softly. "I'm not afraid of the river. I'll be fine."

Jess gulped. How could Orry swim with a wounded arm? Six days ago, Orry had staggered into their yard, hurt from his journey. Ma had treated his arm, but it still hadn't healed completely.

"Even if you make it across, will you be able to find the farm in the dark?" asked Jess.

"Look at the sky," Orry said gently. "All the stars are out. I reckon they'll guide me safely."

Jess tilted his head to the stars he and Orry had loved studying during their brief friendship. Jess had told Orry their names and drawn the constellations for him. But it was Orry who had brought the stars to life. He had made up stories about the dancing Seven Sisters, the rumbling Big Bear, the laughing Little Bear. . . .

"The stars will guide me," Orry repeated. "When I make it to the opposite bank, I'll leave a sign for you. Then you'll know I'm safe."

"What kind of sign?"

"Why, I'll—"

Orry stopped at the sound of a shout. "They're on their way," he whispered.

Jess felt a warm hand on his shoulder. Seconds later, Orry was gone. Orry had been his friend for six days of his life; he would miss him all the rest of it. "You've got to be safe, Orry," he thought. "If you can just swim the river, you can make it to the North, too."

The roaring river filled Jess's dreams that night. He slept fitfully. But in the morning, the river had quieted. Ma followed Jess to the boat. Together they rowed across the water.

"The men might come back," said Ma.

"It doesn't matter," said Jess. "Orry must be far away by now. When we see his sign on the bank, at least we'll know that he made it across the river."

But as they docked, Ma gasped. Tangled in some riverbank weeds was a bandanna.

Jess gritted his teeth. "Orry's all right. The sign has to be here."

Jess stumbled through the brush, searching everywhere. He paused at a tree to study some marks on its trunk. Had Orry made them with his knife?

But Ma shook her head. "It's just woodpeckers, Jess."

Ma was blinking back tears as they rowed home. Jess stared silently at the shoreline ahead. He tried not to look at the mighty river; he tried not to think of Orry lost in its depths. When they got to the farm, Jess went to work in the yard. He chopped wood until his hands were blistered and burning. Then he dropped to the ground for a rest.

The sky above Jess was blue. But in his mind, it was night again, with the stars shining. Orry's words came back: "The stars will guide me. . . . I'll leave a sign. . . ." A terrible sadness filled Jess. But as he stared upward, a pattern came to mind. Like pieces of a puzzle, the pattern clicked into place.

“Ma!” shouted Jess. Trembling with joy, he jumped up and ran into the house.

“Orry’s name, Ma. Remember what it’s short for?”

Ma said softly, “Orion.”

Jess grabbed his slate and drew a pattern on it. “Those marks on the tree weren’t from woodpeckers. They’re the shape of a constellation.” Jess held out the slate. “The stars of Orion, Ma. Orry made them. He’s safe!”

Ma gave a happy cry and hugged Jess. From the open door came the sound of the rushing river. To Jess, it sounded just like Orry’s soft chuckle.

1 This story is told from the point of view of

- A** Orry
- B** Jess’s mother
- C** Jess
- D** an outside narrator

2 Ma’s actions in the story are **best** described as

- A** convenient and practical
- B** peculiar and disturbing
- C** sympathetic and daring
- D** negligent and mischievous

3 Read these phrases from the story.

“The stars will guide me. . . . I’ll leave a sign”

These phrases foreshadow, or predict, that

- A** the strangers will go elsewhere to conduct their search
- B** Jess will stay silent if asked about slaves staying on the farm
- C** Orry will successfully escape the men who are looking for him
- D** the use of the river as an escape route for slaves will remain a secret

4 Read this sentence from the story.

Like pieces of a puzzle, the pattern clicked into place.

The author uses this description to indicate that Jess understands

- A** the message Orry left and knows he is safe
- B** why Orry left his bandanna behind in the weeds
- C** the reason Orry studied stars and made up stories
- D** why Orry uses a shorter version of his full name

5 Which statement **best** describes the theme of “The Sign”?

- A** You never miss friends until they are gone.
- B** Memories of special friendships last forever.
- C** Staying alone is better than hiding among others.
- D** Never take on more responsibility than you can handle.

6 Read these sentences from the story.

The roaring river filled Jess’s dreams that night. He slept fitfully.

The word “fitfully” **most likely** means

- A** easily
- B** heavily
- C** noisily
- D** restlessly

Go On

Directions

Read this article. Then answer questions 7 through 11.

The Shopping Cart

by Don Wulffson

Today there are twenty to twenty-five million shopping carts rolling around the world. In fact, the shopping cart is presently one of the most often used items on four wheels, second only to the automobile.

Indeed, almost everybody in America will spend a part of his or her life behind a shopping cart. They will, in a lifetime, push the chrome-plated contraptions many miles. But few will know—or even think to ask—who it was that invented them.

Mr. Sylvan N. Goldman of Oklahoma City invented the shopping cart in 1937. Mr. Goldman's invention did not make him famous. It did, however, make him very rich.

When Goldman invented the cart he was in the supermarket business. Every day he would see shoppers lugging groceries around in baskets that they had to carry.

One day Goldman suddenly had the idea of putting baskets on wheels. The wheeled baskets would make shopping much easier for his customers. And by lightening their chore, he would attract their business.

Pondering the idea, Goldman walked into his office and sat down on a folding chair. Looking down at the chair, Goldman had another idea. The carts, he realized, should be made so they could be folded up. This would make it easier to store them when not in use.

On June 4, 1937, Goldman's first batch of carts was ready for use in his market. He was terribly excited on the morning of that day as customers began arriving. He couldn't wait to see them using his invention.

But Goldman was disappointed. Most shoppers gave the carts a long look, but hardly anybody would give them a try.

After a while, Goldman decided to ask customers why they weren't using his carts. "Don't you think this arm is strong enough to carry a shopping basket?" one offended shopper replied.

Day after day, the same thing happened. People wouldn't use the carts. They preferred a basket on the arm to a basket on wheels.

But Goldman wasn't beaten yet. He knew his carts would be a great success if only he could persuade people to give them a try. To this end, Goldman tried something that was both very clever and very funny. Believe it or not, he hired a group of people to push carts around his market and pretend they were shopping! Seeing this, the real customers gradually began copying the phony customers.

As Goldman had hoped, the carts were soon attracting larger and larger numbers of customers to his market. But not only did more people come—those who came bought more. With larger, easier-to-handle baskets, customers unconsciously bought a greater number of items than before.

Today's shopping carts are five times larger than Goldman's original model. Perhaps that's one reason Americans today spend more than five times as much money on food each year as they did before 1937—before the coming of the shopping cart.

- 7** In this article, the author’s purpose is **most likely** to
- A** analyze the secrets of business success
 - B** explain the power of advertising
 - C** tell about the life of an inventor
 - D** describe the history of an invention

- 8** Which phrase **best** describes Goldman’s technique for getting customers to use the new shopping cart?
- A** printing advertisements
 - B** giving a special discount
 - C** offering a demonstration
 - D** selling different products

- 9** Goldman achieved his goal **mostly** by
- A** acting on instinct
 - B** perfecting his skills
 - C** demanding obedience
 - D** exercising persistence

- 10** What unintended benefit did Goldman gain from his invention?
- A** More customers came to Goldman’s store.
 - B** Shoppers bought more items.
 - C** Goldman became famous.
 - D** Shopping carts became larger.

- 11** All of the following secrets of success are suggested by the article **except**
- A** act on your ideas
 - B** believe in your work
 - C** use your imagination
 - D** watch your competition

Go On

Directions

Read this poem. Then answer questions 12 through 16.

Neighbors

by Michael Spooner

Some people like to
put up a fence
a hickety rickety white painted pickety
(keep your bikes on your own side)

FENCE

to tell the street
where the street should be
to tell the neighbors
that side's you /
this side's me.

But I am
raising a row of sapling green
a ragged row of curving stems
(of rough sweet bark),
of vining twines and
branching tangles,
and oh
the smallest leaves
greening the sun
with their little hands.
(and of bright
busybirds
neighboring
cheerily)
tree to tree /
tree to tree.

12 Read this line from the poem.

(keep your bikes on your own side)

The space in this line is **most likely** used to

- A** show how fences separate people
- B** create a sense of irritation
- C** show that two people are talking
- D** suggest the speaker is confused

13 The placement of the word “FENCE” in the poem indicates

- A** what a fence looks like
- B** where a fence should be
- C** how a fence divides space
- D** why some people like fences

14 Read these lines from the poem about a row of saplings.

a ragged row of curving stems
(of rough sweet bark),
of vining twines and
branching tangles,

These lines suggest the saplings are different from a fence because they

- A** take up more space than a fence
- B** look more interesting than a fence
- C** can be more dangerous than a fence
- D** are more difficult to care for than a fence

Go On

15 The poet **most likely** includes birds in the poem to indicate that they

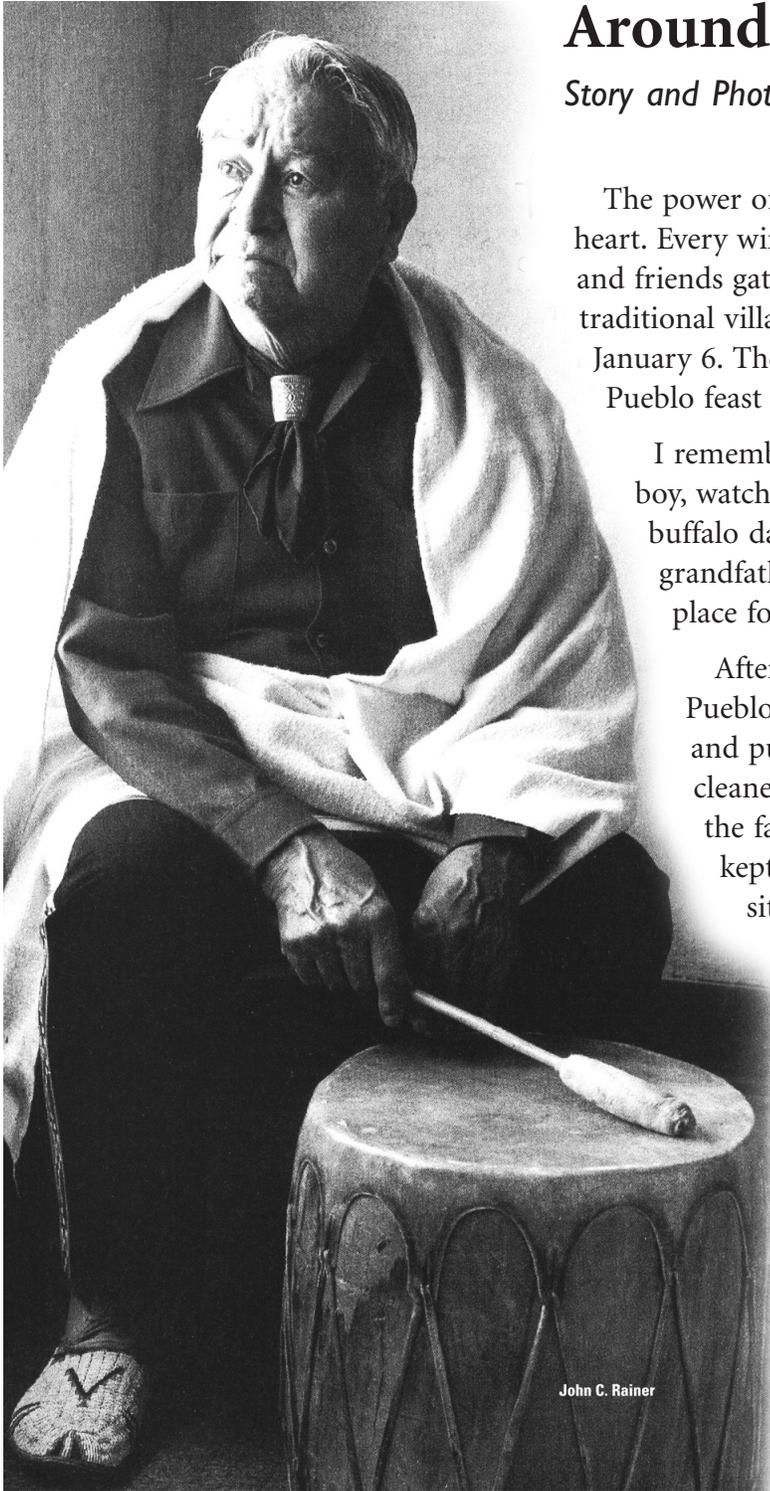
- A** build their nests with leaves
- B** happily share space in the trees
- C** bring noise to their surroundings
- D** quickly move into friendly neighborhoods

16 Which example of repetition in the poem **best** suggests a sense of sharing?

- A** “to tell the street / where the street should be”
- B** “that side’s you / this side’s me”
- C** “raising a row of sapling green / a ragged row of curving stems”
- D** “tree to tree / tree to tree”

Directions

Read this story. Then answer questions 17 through 20.



Around the Family Drum

Story and Photo by Howard Rainer

The power of the family drum remains tied to my heart. Every winter as long as I can remember, family and friends gathered at my grandfather's home in the traditional village of Taos Pueblo, New Mexico, on January 6. The sixth was, and is, a special traditional Pueblo feast day for the Taos Pueblo Indians.

I remember with great fondness, as a young boy, watching and eventually participating in the buffalo dance during the day. In the evening my grandfather's home became the central gathering place for family, friends and relatives.

After eating a scrumptious traditional Pueblo meal, the women would clear the table and put away the dishes. After everything was cleaned up, one of the uncles would bring out the family drum from where it was usually kept. While a warm fire crackled, those sitting around the family drum would commence singing Taos round dance songs that had been fondly recorded in the minds of those who sang them.

My father loved to sing the old Taos Pueblo and Apache round dance songs dating back as far as the late 1800s. I would watch him close his eyes and he seemed to travel back in time trying to recall a particular sage's song. With a growing smile he would start beating the drum and introduce a found song.

John C. Rainer

Go On

Back then I marveled at the volume of the voices of my uncles and father. There was a powerful spirit of camaraderie around the family drum as song after song was sung far into the night.

The day I was finally allowed to sit around the family drum was a memorable time for me, a time of intense boyhood concentration to not only memorize the songs, but to beat the drum on tempo and end in unison. I made my share of mistakes, and I must have sounded like a young coyote howling among the seasoned, but in time I gained confidence, and a strong voice to start leading some of the songs.

Sitting around the family drum with my father and uncles brought me a sense of great comfort and inner joy. It was a marvelous experience to be seated around the circle of love, acceptance and teaching.

During our singing, there was a particular war dance song my grandfather thoroughly enjoyed. As soon as we would begin this song, he would get up from his place at the drum and start dancing. This made all of us want to sing harder and louder! He would dance proudly and with a face beaming with satisfaction, he would come near the drum and dance with great intensity.

Sometimes while we were singing, there might come a knock at the door. In Pueblo tradition, the person outside would peek his head in and respectfully say, “I heard the drum, and I wanted to ask permission to enter your house, if ‘my’ grandfather would permit it!” My grandfather would graciously nod and tell the visitor to enter and join us around the drum.

These are cherished memories. I often close my eyes and can hear uncles and a beloved father now departed singing around the family drum!

-
- 17** Which statement **best** describes the theme of the story?
- A** The value of old songs lies in the words they contain.
 - B** People value family and family traditions.
 - C** The journey to adulthood is difficult for some people.
 - D** People have special skills they can call their own.

- 18** This story is told from the point of view of
- A** an adult recalling his childhood
 - B** a young boy describing a family celebration
 - C** a group of family members reliving an enjoyable experience
 - D** an uninvolved narrator describing events that happened to others

19 Based on the story, which description **best** fits the speaker’s grandfather?

- A** a respected family elder
- B** a powerful leader in the community
- C** a man who regrets his lost youth
- D** a relative who worries about his grandchildren

20 Read this sentence from the story.

While a warm fire crackled, those sitting around the family drum would commence singing Taos round dance songs that had been fondly recorded in the minds of those who sang them.

What does the word “commence” mean?

- A** praise
- B** begin
- C** teach
- D** witness

Go On

Directions

Read this article about an accomplished swimmer. Then answer questions 21 through 26.



Making A Splash

by Carla C. Engelbrecht

“Swimmers, step up.”

Goggles clamped over her eyes, nineteen-year-old Kate Pavlacka stepped onto the starting block. She was about to race against the world’s fastest competitors at the 2000 Paralympic Games in Sydney, Australia.

To stay relaxed, Kate pictured herself making the proper strokes and the turns. She was the American record-holder in this event—the 400-meter freestyle for visually impaired swimmers—but she was worried. Her qualifying races that morning had been several seconds slower than her best.

“Take your mark.”

A loud blast signaled the start of the race. Kate’s worries disappeared as she dived. “When I’m swimming, my mind is clear,” she says.

With each stroke, Kate brushed her hand against the rope that separated her lane from the next one. This is how she knows she is swimming in a straight line. It’s not easy. “My high-school coach would always tease me about swimming 105 yards instead of 100 because I would zig and zag so much,” she says. Thousands of hours of practice have helped her overcome that problem.

A tap on the shoulder tells Kate that she is near the end of the pool and should prepare to turn. A person taps her on the shoulder with a tennis ball attached to a bamboo pole. In an earlier race at the Paralympics, she thought she had felt a tap, so she turned. It was too early, though, and she was nearly disqualified.

Fortunately, she had no such problems in the final. She finished in fifth place among swimmers from around the world. Her time of six minutes, three and two-hundredths seconds set a new American record.

When she heard the time, “I started flipping out!” she recalls.

To prepare for the Paralympics, Kate had taken a semester off from college to devote all of her efforts to training. She spent three months at the Olympic Training Centers in California and Colorado swimming and lifting weights for five to six hours a day.

“The Paralympics were incredible and a lot of fun, but also a lot of stress,” she says. She was glad to take a break after all that intensity to focus on her studies. She plans to become a sports dietician after graduating from college.

Learning to Be Blind

Kate hasn’t always been blind. When she was five, doctors discovered she had a very rare degenerative eye condition. Unfortunately, there is no cure. Her eyesight became progressively worse until she could not see at all.

Letting people help her allows Kate to do things she might not have been able to do on her own. She loves to run, for example, and is able to do it if she runs with a partner. The partner can warn her about branches, curbs, and other obstacles.

Swimming is the best of both worlds—Kate can be independent while in the pool, but she is also part of a team. She has excelled at swimming ever since she started competing with her high-school team in Liverpool, New York.

Many swimmers learn by watching others. For Kate the process is different. A coach demonstrates the techniques by moving her arms and legs in the proper way.

“I try to let the coaches know that I am not any different from their other swimmers except for the fact that they might have to physically show me things instead of just telling me,” Kate says.

Swimming has helped Kate connect with people, especially other athletes. “I have found that I inspire many people,” she says. “It is not only uplifting and beneficial for others to see me, but it is also uplifting and beneficial for me when I know that I have helped others, through inspiration, to reach their own goals.”

21 According to the article, which description **best** fits Kate Pavlacka?

- A** goal-oriented
- B** overambitious
- C** self-conscious
- D** easygoing

22 Study the chart below.

Kate's Challenge	Kate's Solution
swimming in a straight line	uses her hand to touch a lane rope to indicate her position
recognizing when she's near the end of the pool	gets a tap on the shoulder as a signal to prepare to turn
developing proper stroke techniques	

Which phrase **best** completes the chart?

- A** has a coach move her body to make the strokes
- B** has a partner describe the form of the strokes
- C** practices at a special camp to learn the strokes
- D** pictures herself correctly making the strokes

23 The information under the subheading "Learning to Be Blind" is **best** described as

- A** a personal interview with Kate about her future plans
- B** specific details explaining how Kate encourages others
- C** background information about Kate and her swimming
- D** a summary of the athletic achievements Kate has reached

24 According to the article, Kate **mainly** inspires others by

- A** actively pursuing personal goals
- B** planning for a career after college
- C** staying relaxed before each race
- D** accepting help with difficult tasks

25 Which advice would Kate Pavlacka **most likely** give to other visually impaired athletes?

- A** Contain your excitement when experiencing personal success.
- B** Find a sport that is adaptable to your needs, and learn to enjoy it.
- C** Focus on what you want to accomplish, and work to make it possible.
- D** Participate in team sports rather than those that require individual performance.

26 Study the sample index below from a book about the Paralympic Games.

Swimming

coaching opportunities, 54–60

records and rules, 61–64

safety in the water, 65–66

suits and equipment, 67–72

workouts and techniques, 73–78

On which pages would a swimmer **most likely** find information about training for the games?

- A** pages 61–64
- B** pages 65–66
- C** pages 67–72
- D** pages 73–78

STOP



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