



New York State Testing Program

English

Language Arts Test

Book 1

Grade

6

January 20–23, 2009

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 story. Then answer questions 1 through 5.

The Wise Fools of Gotham

A Story from England

by Martha Hamilton and Mitch Weiss



There's a small town in the central part of England called Gotham. Some say it's a town of fools. Others say all the villagers are wise. Let me tell you about the people of Gotham so you can decide for yourself.

Long ago, England was ruled by a cruel king named John. One day, the people of Gotham heard that King John and his men would soon be riding through their town. This worried the villagers, for they knew the greedy king would demand food and lodging for his men. What's more, if he saw anything to his liking, he would surely take it.

A town meeting was called. After much discussion, the townspeople decided to cut down a number of huge trees to block the roads leading into Gotham. When King John and his men reached the outskirts of the village, they could not pass. Enraged, King John ordered his men to go into the town and punish the villagers.

When the king's officers finally made their way over the trees, they found a village of fools. Some say that was because the people of Gotham had a plan—they had decided to act like fools since they had never heard of anyone being punished for being a noodlehead. Others say that's just the way they were.

In the village, the king's men encountered a man riding a donkey. The man was hunched over because he carried a huge sack of grain on his own shoulders. He looked exhausted. One of the king's men approached him and asked, "Why, in heaven's name, are you carrying that sack? Why don't you just put it behind you on your donkey's back?"

Go On

“You see,” replied the man from Gotham, “my donkey is feeling poorly today. It’s bad enough that she has to carry me, so I decided to lighten her burden by carrying the sack myself.”

The king’s men said, “But sir, don’t you see that if you’re riding on top of the donkey, she’s still carrying the weight of the sack?”

The man didn’t reply. He just looked at the king’s men as if *they* were crazy and went on his way.

The king’s officers giggled at the foolishness of the man. Before long, they passed a pond where they found a number of villagers in the midst of a great argument. Two of them were holding an enormous eel. “Quiet down,” commanded one of the king’s men. “What’s the problem here?”

One of the villagers stepped forward and said, “Last year we took all the extra fish we caught and put them in this pond so they would multiply. But this year when we came back, all we caught was this one huge eel. Obviously it has eaten all of our fish! Since then, we have argued long and hard over how to punish this wicked eel. But we have finally agreed on the perfect punishment. We are just about to drown the eel in this very pond!”

The king’s officers couldn’t believe their ears. Drown an eel whose home is in the water? These men were sillier than the first man they met!

Before long, they reached the center of the village, where they were in for another surprise. There they found the rest of the townspeople building a towering stone wall. When the soldiers inquired what was going on, one of the villagers replied, “Every spring a cuckoo comes to live in our village. It always brings warm weather. When it leaves, the cold weather returns. Last year we decided that if we could get the cuckoo to stay here all year, we would always have warm weather. We built this stone wall, but it obviously wasn’t high enough because the bird flew away. This year we’re determined to build it so high that the cuckoo can’t escape.”

The king’s officers had heard enough. They couldn’t bring themselves to punish such nincompoops. They returned to King John and told him all about the fools of Gotham. Whether it’s fair or not, the people of Gotham have been known as fools ever since.

What do you think? Were the villagers of Gotham wise or foolish?

1 This story is **most** like

- A** a folktale
- B** a news article
- C** realistic fiction
- D** historical fiction

2 What is the setting of this story?

- A** in a city
- B** in a forest
- C** in a royal palace
- D** in a small village

3 Why do the townspeople cut down the trees?

- A** to make room for their crops
- B** to block the roads to the village
- C** to create a gift for the king's men
- D** to build lodging for the king's men

4 The townspeople are worried about the king's visit because he will

- A** laugh at them
- B** cut down their trees
- C** take anything he wants
- D** want to move to their town

5 Based on the story, why might the townspeople be considered wise?

- A** They trick the king's men into thinking they are fools.
- B** They think ahead by putting their extra fish into a pond.
- C** They make sure their donkeys are healthy enough to work.
- D** They realize the importance of warm weather to their crops.

Go On

A Boy Who Makes a Difference

by Diana Federman

One person can make a difference. Just ask Ryan Hreljac (pronounced *hurl-jack*), who is 15 and lives in Canada. Without his help, hundreds of wells¹ that now provide fresh water for people in Africa, Central America, and India might never have been built. Ryan is what you might call a water ambassador. He travels the world to tell people how they can help solve a big problem: the lack of safe drinking water in many developing countries.

“Everybody can do something,” Ryan says.

Sometimes African-born Jimmy Akana—who is like a brother to Ryan—travels with him to explain how water changed his life. The story of the two boys is the subject of a new children’s book, *Ryan and Jimmy and the Well in Africa That Brought Them Together*, written by Herb Shoveller and published by Kids Can Press.

Ryan’s efforts didn’t begin in a far-off place, though, but right at home in Kemptville, Ontario. In 1998, when he was 6 years old, Ryan learned from his teacher that children in Africa often must walk miles each day to find water. Some even die from drinking bad water, his teacher said.

¹**wells:** storage areas built in the ground to hold water



So Ryan decided to act. He did chores for his parents, Susan and Mark, and for neighbors. He spoke to schools, churches, and clubs about his goal. The word spread, and donations began coming in. After several months of hard work, Ryan had raised \$2,000, enough to dig one well.

An organization called Canadian Physicians for Aid and Relief (CPAR) chose a location for the well in the village of Agweo, in Uganda (in central eastern Africa). Ryan began writing to a pen pal there—Jimmy—who was 9 and whose parents had disappeared in a civil war.

In 2000, CPAR arranged for Ryan to visit Uganda for the opening ceremony of the well. Ryan and Jimmy met then and formed a close friendship that took a dramatic turn in 2003. Jimmy’s life was in danger from the war, so Ryan’s parents obtained permission for him to come to Canada and join their family. That has been his home ever since.



Ryan helps out in Uganda

After the first well, “the ripple effect took over,” Ryan says, “and one goal led to another.”

With adult help, he founded Ryan’s Well Foundation four years ago to educate people

about the vital importance of water. Now the foundation has raised more than \$1.5 million and built 255 wells that serve more than 427,000 people in 12 countries.

Its website (www.ryanswell.ca) lists some of the famous people Ryan has met and the awards he has received, such as the Order of Ontario, the province’s highest honor.

But Ryan isn’t bragging. “The most impressive people I’ve met are the other kids who want to help, too,” he says. “The only reason I accept awards is that each word I say when I get one might help one more person.”

* * *

Asked if he ever feels discouraged that many people still lack good water, Ryan says, “It’s important to be an optimist. When people are dying on the other side of the world, to sit in your house and say, ‘I can’t really help,’ that’s not the person I want to be.

“I’m just a typical kid. I had a small dream, and I stayed with it. Everybody can do something.”

6 What problem is Ryan working to solve?

- A** the poor quality of schools
- B** a lack of safe drinking water
- C** the effect of war on children
- D** a lack of proper medical care

7 How did Ryan first learn about the problem he is trying to solve?

- A** from his teacher
- B** from his parents
- C** from a children’s book
- D** from a physicians’ organization

Go On

8 How did Ryan begin his project to build wells?

- A** He created an educational foundation.
- B** He traveled to a village across the world.
- C** He started a website to request donations.
- D** He raised money by doing chores for people.

9 The title of the article, “A Boy Who Makes a Difference,” suggests that

- A** good deeds are often rewarded
- B** young people are good workers
- C** one boy’s actions help other people
- D** one boy’s life changes when he moves

10 What would Ryan probably say is the **most** important part of making a dream come true?

- A** not giving up
- B** making friends
- C** knowing your limits
- D** not bragging about awards

Directions

Read this story. Then answer questions 11 through 14.

The Wolf at My Window

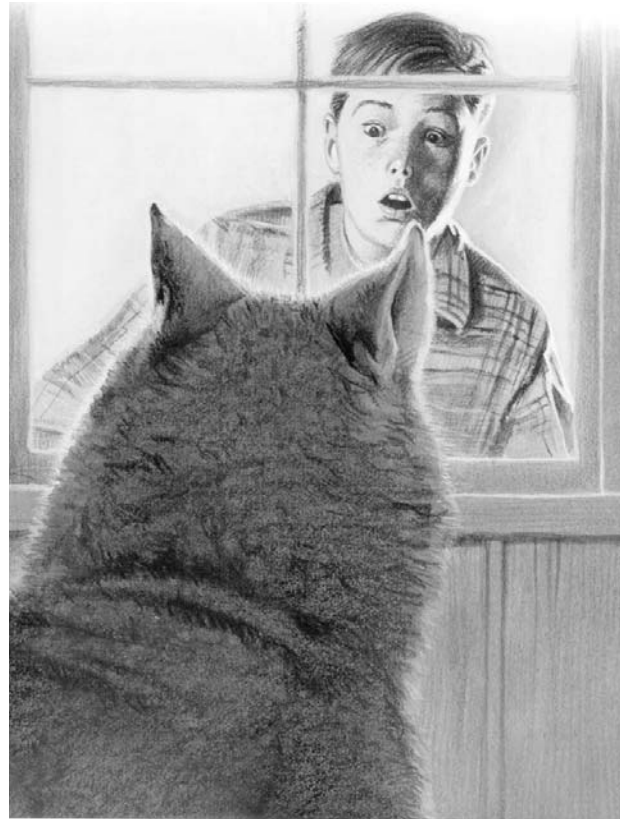
by Diane L. Burns

drawing by Sal Catalano

Wolf! Hank thought. The boy stared out the cabin window at the lone creature. It was sitting a stone's throw away in the moonlight. The wolf howled; Hank shivered. For the first time, he felt truly alone in these Idaho mountains.

It had felt so good to be allowed to come along with Dad. Dad was a scientist who studied wild animals. Together, Hank and Dad had followed the tracks of mountain sheep, goats, and cougars. Through binoculars, they'd studied coyotes and mule deer. And they'd carefully recorded all the information in Dad's logbook every night in their tent. Dad planned to share the information with other wildlife scientists.

Then, two days ago, they had moved into an empty cabin. Here, Dad would write a report about what he had found. But they discovered that dozens and dozens of mice had taken over the cabin. The little rodents scurried in and out through lots of tiny holes in the walls. . . . Worst of all, the mice had gotten into the supplies of dried food and ruined almost everything.



Now, because most of the food was gone, Dad had left overnight to get new supplies from town. Hank had insisted on staying behind.

* * *

The Wolf. Its howl sounded again. Hank opened the logbook to write about it, but his hand shook. Dad had never mentioned having any trouble with wolves. But Hank's friend Jill had once told him of a shopkeeper in Montana who'd faced a whole pack of wolves during a hard winter long ago. He'd been alone in his cabin, Jill had said.

Like I am now, Hank thought with a nervous gulp. The wolves had chewed right through a solid door, Jill had said, to get a smoked ham hanging from the ceiling.

Go On

But . . . Hank took a deep breath and forced down his fright. How could such a story be true? Dad had told him many times that wolves were smart but shy, staying many miles away from people. The big, bad wolf was just a fairy tale, Hank thought. A 13-year-old boy was too old for such things.

Hank closed the logbook and put it on the table. Quickly he looked around for something he could use as a weapon—just in case. He grabbed a poker from the fireplace, went to the door, and took a deep breath. Then he opened the door, waved the poker, and yelled with all his might: “Go away, wolf! Go away!”

Startled, the wolf sprang up—and started trotting away. Hank closed the door and leaned back with a gasp. When he’d caught his breath, he turned back to the window. Oh, no! There was the wolf, sitting right where it had sat before.

Hank stared at the wolf. The wolf stared right back at him. Hank was staring into the eyes of a hunter. He knew, like all creatures, the wolf needed to eat. Hank’s dad had said wolves play their part in the environment by eating deer, elk, rabbits, and other animals. But maybe, like the hungry mice that were frisking about Hank’s feet, wolves go for any food they can find.

Suddenly, the wolf sprang! Hank ducked, expecting to hear the window glass shattering above him. Instead, he heard a muffled snuffling along the ground outside. The wolf wanted a way in! Hank shuddered. His heart pounded. If only Dad were here!

Now came a scratching sound—the sound of pawing at the cabin walls. And then, over the hammering of his heart, Hank heard a high-pitched, tiny . . . *SQUEAK!*

Squeak? Holding his breath, Hank raised his head to see. The wolf was below the window, holding on to a small something. Then it lay in the grass and gulped down its prize—a mouse!

The wolf stood up to pounce, stiff-legged, on another. Hank’s breath rushed out. The wolf was hungry all right. But just for the kind of food it should eat, as Dad had said.

* * *

As the wolf pounced again, Hank opened the logbook. He began to write, neatly and carefully, every detail of his evening with the wolf. The story would be waiting for Dad when he returned in the morning—long after the smart, shy wolf had moved on in search of bigger animals to eat.

11 The theme of this story is **mainly** about

- A** helping others
- B** trusting parents
- C** overcoming fears
- D** developing interests

12 Why are Hank and his father in the mountains?

- A** to hunt for food
- B** to take a vacation
- C** to find a new cabin
- D** to study wild animals

13 What had Hank's father planned to do after moving into the cabin?

- A** repair the cabin
- B** rid the cabin of mice
- C** write a research report
- D** study the behavior of wolves

14 How do Hank's feelings about the wolf change from the beginning of the story to the end?

- A** from angry to amused
- B** from worried to relieved
- C** from curious to dissatisfied
- D** from excited to disappointed

Go On

Directions

Read this article. Then answer questions 15 through 21.

The Clever Crow

by Sara van Dyck

In Aesop's fable about the crow and the jar, a thirsty crow longed for a drink of water. He spotted a jar with a little water in it, but the water was too low for him to reach it with his beak. The crow looked around, saw some stones, and was inspired. He took one stone and dropped it into the jar, then another and another. The water in the jar rose gradually, until it was high enough for him to drink.

Aesop intended this story to remind humans to use their heads to solve problems. But he is also telling us about crows.

From ancient times, crows have been famous for their intelligence. They use tools, figure out how to solve problems, and even enjoy playing.

Scientists have observed carefully how crows go about these activities. To make tools, crows cut off leaves or twigs with their beaks, shape them, and use them to probe for bugs in wood or plants. Just as a carpenter carries his tools with him, a crow will carry its tool around. When the leaf or twig isn't needed for the moment, the bird stores the tool at its feet or secures it on a perch.

To test wild crows' problem-solving abilities, scientists placed food outdoors in closed containers. They watched in fascination as the birds figured out how to open plastic bowls with lids—and even boxes with hinged lids—to get at the treats.

Most of the crow's reputation for cleverness, however, comes not from scientific studies, but from people who study nature.



For example, naturalists¹ have observed the birds take advantage of traffic. The crows drop a walnut on the road and wait for a car to run over it to crush the shell.

In Iceland, fishermen cut holes in the ice, drop a baited string into the hole, and wait for a fish to take the bait. Crows walk over the ice and pull up the string to steal the bait or, better yet, the fish.

Crows seem to enjoy playing. Young crows will carry a stick or nut into the air, drop it, and swoop to catch the object as it falls. They hang upside down from a branch, or lie on their backs and use their feet to play with sticks.

Pet crows are playful, too. A pet crow will follow its owner around, ride on his shoulder, sit beside him, and sometimes pull keys from his pocket.

So just how smart are crows? Perhaps a crow will never do tricks as a dog will. But scientists and naturalists agree with Aesop: There's a lot going on in the brain of the clever crow.

¹naturalists: people who study nature

15 Which statement **best** expresses the main idea of the article?

- A** Crows make excellent pets.
- B** Crows are very intelligent birds.
- C** Crows eat many different kinds of food.
- D** Crows can help humans solve problems.

16 How do crows open walnuts?

- A** They pry them open with sticks.
- B** They crack them open with their beaks.
- C** They use the hinged lids of boxes to crush them.
- D** They drop them on roads so cars will run over them.

17 How do crows use twigs as tools?

- A** They pry off plastic lids with them.
- B** They drop and catch them in midair.
- C** They dig out bugs from trees with them.
- D** They snag and pull fishing line with them.

18 The author describes pet crows pulling keys from their owners' pockets to show that crows are

- A** brave
- B** dishonest
- C** playful
- D** sneaky

Go On

19

Why is the fable about the crow and the jar a good introduction for this article?

- A** It shows that crows have been around for a long time.
- B** It shows that crows drink water when they are thirsty.
- C** It shows that crows are intelligent enough to solve problems.
- D** It shows that crows are strong enough to lift and carry stones.

20

Read this sentence from the article.

To make tools, crows cut off leaves or twigs with their beaks, shape them, and use them to probe for bugs in wood or plants.

In this sentence, the word “probe” means about the same as

- A** set a trap
- B** provide shelter
- C** hide and wait
- D** search and dig

21

If information were to be added to the article, which of these statements would **best** support the main idea of the article?

- A** A fully grown crow weighs about one pound.
- B** Crows are found in both the city and the country.
- C** Some crows use bread crumbs as bait for fishing.
- D** The crow’s black color protects it from nighttime enemies.

Directions

Read this story. Then answer questions 22 through 26.

Under the Rice Moon

by Rhiannon Puck

Illustrated by Kris Waldherr

Far from the evening shadows thrown by Hong Kong's tall buildings, the narrow streets of the city of Kowloon come alive under the rice moon.¹ Food stands sell bowls of noodles, rice, and fried fish balls on bamboo sticks to factory workers strolling homeward at the end of the day.

In a small rattan² cage, a cliff swallow huddles with its tiny wings tucked in around its body. For the first time in its life, the little swallow will not fly under the rice moon tonight.

The man who caught the swallow that same morning sells dried fruits and sugarcane. A young girl walking through the marketplace buys a stick of cane to chew and sees the swallow in its small cage.

She has just enough money to buy it, and as she walks home, the rattan cage swings and bobs lightly on her arm. "I promise to take care of you, little bird," the young girl whispers.

The swallow blinks at her sadly from the corner of the cage, and in a language the young girl cannot understand, the bird cries, "Let me fly under the rice moon!"

¹**rice moon:** a full, white moon of winter or early spring

²**rattan:** palm tree stems used to weave baskets



Sour smells and sharp noises come from the side alleys and drift out to the crowds, and taxi horns blare in a dash for the next fare. Near the center of the market, a boy glances up from the pairs of colorful brocade³ slippers his mother has made for him to sell.

When a young girl stops to look at the slippers, the boy sees a caged bird at her side. The swallow blinks at him from the corner of the cage.

The boy trades a pair of his mother's best brocade slippers for the swallow and lifts the cage to look at the bird. "I promise to take care of you, little bird," the boy murmurs.

The cliff swallow coos, "How I would like to fly under the rice moon!" But the boy does not understand.

He puts the cage to one side as a man stops at the market stand to look at the rows of brocade slippers. After a hard day's work, he wearily searches for a cheerful gift for his young daughter, who has been at home with a fever.

³**brocade:** silk fabric with designs

Go On



He hears the cliff swallow flutter its wings softly as he looks through the stacks of shoes. Thinking that the tiny bird would make his ailing daughter happy, he offers the boy a very high price. “I know who will take care of you, little bird,” the man whispers.

When he arrives home, he carries the cliff swallow in its rattan cage to the room where his daughter lies sleeping. Rather than wake her, he places the caged bird on her bedside table. As he leaves the room the little bird coos, “Oh, please let me fly under the rice moon tonight!” But the man does not understand the swallow’s language.

When the girl wakes suddenly in the middle of the night, the first thing she sees through her fever is a small cliff swallow blinking at her from behind the bars of a rattan cage. She knows too well how terrible it is to be kept inside.

“I know what you need, little bird,” she murmurs. But the swallow no longer believes what people say.

Slowly, the sickly girl rises from her bed and carries the cage to the open window. Unlatching the rattan door, the girl asks, “Will you fly for me, too, little bird?” And her language is one that the swallow understands.

For a moment, the bird studies the open cage door uncertainly. Then it steps to the ledge, carefully spreads its small wings, and flies away.

Although the cliff swallow now can fly anywhere it chooses, it always passes by the little girl’s bedroom window each night. And each night, for a little while, both the bird and the girl are free under the rice moon.

- 22** What does the cliff swallow want the **most**?
- A** to be able to fly free
 - B** to make the sick girl happy
 - C** to find the man who caught it
 - D** to have someone take care of it

- 23** What do the first two children who own the cliff swallow promise to do?
- A** sell it
 - B** set it free
 - C** take care of it
 - D** trade it

- 24** Read this sentence from the story.
- After a hard day’s work, he wearily searches for a cheerful gift for his young daughter, who has been at home with a fever.**

The word “wearily” means that the man is

- A** cautious
- B** nervous
- C** tired
- D** unhappy

- 25** Which word **best** describes the sick girl’s father in this story?
- A** caring
 - B** cheerful
 - C** frightened
 - D** greedy

- 26** What is the **most likely** reason the cliff swallow flies by the girl’s window every night?
- A** The bird is grateful to the girl.
 - B** The bird wants to wake the girl.
 - C** The bird wonders if the girl is still sick.
 - D** The bird wants to return to the girl’s room.

STOP



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