



MCA P
Maryland Comprehensive
Assessment Program

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**Place the
Student ID Label Here**

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Section 1

Directions:

Today, you will take Section 1 of the Grade 3 English Language Arts/Literacy Practice Test.

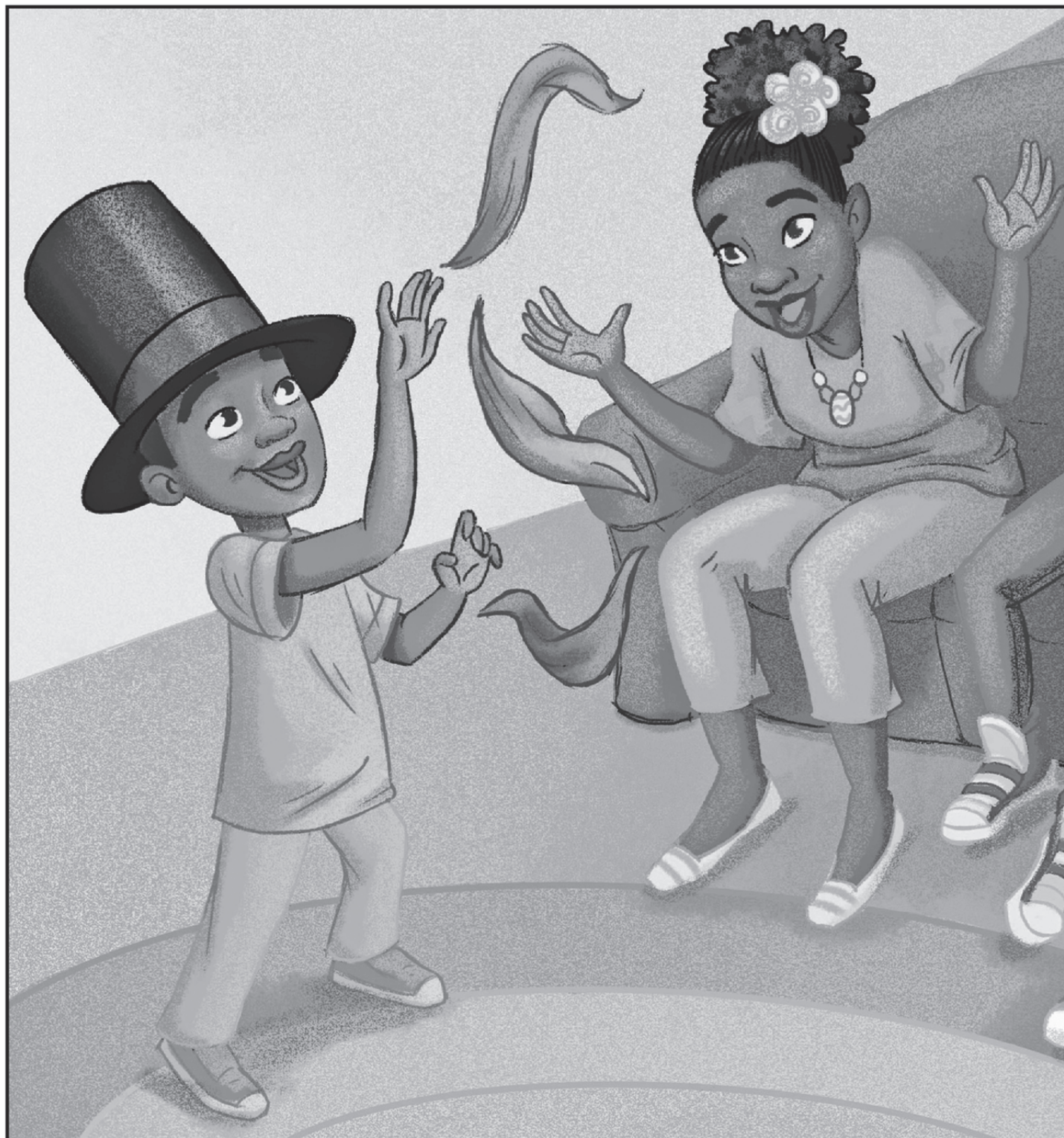
Read each passage and question. Then, follow the directions to answer each question. Mark your answers by completely filling in the circles in your test book. Do not make any pencil marks outside of the circles. If you need to change an answer, be sure to erase your first answer completely.

If you do not know the answer to a question, you may go on to the next question. If you finish early, you may review your answers and any questions you did not answer in this Section ONLY. Do not go past the stop sign.

Read the passage "Nico the Nifty." Then answer the questions.

Nico the Nifty

by Sara Matson



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- 1 Last summer, Sam had returned from camp with seven mosquito bites and three silk scarves.
- 2 "Watch this," he told his younger brother, Nico, one day.
- 3 Sam tossed the scarves into the air, one by one. As each fell, Sam grabbed it and tossed it up again in a slow-moving circle.
- 4 "Wow!" Nico said. "You learned to juggle."
- 5 "I still mess up a lot," Sam admitted as one of the scarves drifted to the floor.

- 6 Nico picked it up. "Remember that juggler who performed at the library?"
- 7 "He could juggle anything," Sam said, "even eggplants and cauliflower."
- 8 "I want to juggle too," Nico said. "Will you teach me?"
- 9 So after lunch, Sam taught Nico how to throw two scarves in an X shape—first the one in his right hand, then the one in his left.
- 10 "Adding the third one is tricky," Sam said.
- 11 "Like this?" Nico said. "Oops!"
- 12 Sam smiled. "It takes time to catch on."
- 13 But it didn't take Nico long at all. After supper, he marched into the family room wearing a magician's hat.
- 14 "Presenting Nico the Nifty!" he announced, then pulled Sam's scarves out of his sleeve. He began to juggle—slowly at first, then faster.
- 15 "Amazing!" Dad said.
- 16 "You're a natural," said Mom.
- 17 Sam was silent. How could Nico be the better juggler? Sam was older, and he'd been practicing longer. It wasn't fair.
- 18 It took three days for Nico to learn to juggle beanbags and three more for tennis balls.
- 19 At first, Sam worked as hard as Nico. But Sam's scarves and beanbags and balls kept drifting and falling and bouncing to the floor, while Nico's stayed in the air. Finally, Sam quit practicing. Juggling wasn't fun anymore.
- 20 A few weeks later, as Sam played basketball in the driveway, Nico hurried out of the house with his magician's hat.
- 21 "Guess what!" he said. "The community center is having a talent show in the park. I'm going to juggle water balloons. Isn't that a great idea?"
- 22 It was. But Sam didn't want Nico to know he thought so. "Better wear your swim trunks," he warned. "You'll get wet when you drop the balloons."
- 23 Nico put his hands on his hips. "I'm a good juggler."

- 24 "So what? Juggling is silly." Sam spun the basketball on his index finger, something Nico had never been able to do.
- 25 Nico scowled. "Yeah? Well, basketball is silly too!"
- 26 After Nico ran inside, Sam dribbled a few times and took aim. The ball swished through the hoop without touching the backboard. "Try to do that, little brother," he muttered.
- 27 On the morning of the talent show, Nico cut his waffle into pieces and built a tower with them. "What if I drop a balloon and everyone laughs?" he said.
- 28 "You'll do great," Mom said. "Won't he, Sam?"
- 29 "You *are* taking a towel, right?" Sam joked.
- 30 "Sam!" said Mom.
- 31 "Just kidding."
- 32 After breakfast, Sam shot hoops outside while Nico practiced one last time. Sam had just made a three-pointer when he heard a splat.
- 33 "Argh!"
- 34 Colorful balloon bits were scattered around Nico's feet. "Do you think it's too late to cancel?" Nico moaned.
- 35 Sam couldn't help feeling bad for his brother. "Probably."
- 36 "Even if I'm sick?" Nico said. "My stomach sort of hurts."
- 37 Sam remembered his basketball tournament last winter. Before the championship game, he'd felt so nervous that he almost wished he could catch a cold so he'd have a reason not to play. At the same time, he'd wanted to play to prove he could. Maybe Nico felt the same way.
- 38 "You know what?" Sam said. "It's good you broke some balloons. If you do it now, you probably won't do it onstage. That's what my coach always says. Make your mistakes in practice, not during the game."
- 39 Nico looked doubtful.
- 40 Sam tried again. "You've practiced a ton."

- 41 "I'll probably mess up," said Nico glumly.
- 42 Finally, Sam told Nico the truth. "Look, you're the best juggler I know. Before you know it, you'll be as good as the one we saw at the library."
- 43 "Really?" Nico said.
- 44 "Yeah," Sam said. "I'm sorry I was mean to you before. Come on. I'll help you fill more balloons before we leave."
- 45 Two hours later, Nico accepted his first-place trophy. He waved to Sam from the stage.
- 46 "Way to go!" Sam called. For once he was happy for Nico, not jealous. It felt good.
- 47 As they headed to the car, Sam had a thought. "We should ask Mom to stop at the store on the way home."
- 48 "Why?"
- 49 "Because I think it's time for Nico the Nifty to try juggling vegetables!"

"Nico the Nifty" by Sara Matson. Copyright 2019 Highlights for Children, Inc.
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- 1** What does the word **drifted** mean as it is used in paragraph 5?
- Ⓐ swayed
 - Ⓑ tumbled
 - Ⓒ turned
 - Ⓓ floated
- 2** What do paragraphs 14 and 18 tell the reader about Nico?
- Ⓐ He wants to be a great juggler.
 - Ⓑ He is very imaginative.
 - Ⓒ He is a quick learner.
 - Ⓓ He wants to make Sam feel bad.
- 3** Why are the events in paragraphs 21 and 22 important to the passage?
- Ⓐ They explain why the talent show is in the park.
 - Ⓑ They describe information Sam gives Nico about the talent show.
 - Ⓒ They provide the reason Sam believes he is more talented than Nico.
 - Ⓓ They show that Sam likes Nico's idea, but still chooses to discourage his little brother.

4 Part A

Why does Sam say that Nico needs to juggle vegetables?

- Ⓐ Sam is worried Nico will drop the balloons.
- Ⓑ Sam realizes Nico is a very talented juggler.
- Ⓒ Sam thinks Nico should begin juggling at the library.
- Ⓓ Sam knows Nico needs to improve.

Part B

Which **two** sentences from the passage **best** support the answer to Part A?

- Ⓐ “‘He could juggle anything,’ Sam said, ‘even eggplants and cauliflower.’” (paragraph 7)
- Ⓑ “‘Do you think it’s too late to cancel?’ Nico moaned.” (paragraph 34)
- Ⓒ “‘If you do it now, you probably won’t do it onstage.’” (paragraph 38)
- Ⓓ “‘Before you know it, you’ll be as good as the one we saw at the library.’” (paragraph 42)
- Ⓔ “He waved to Sam from the stage.” (paragraph 45)

5 Which word means the same as **glumly** as it is used in paragraph 41?

- Ⓐ calmly
- Ⓑ sadly
- Ⓒ angrily
- Ⓓ quietly

6 At the end of the passage, Sam feels

- Ⓐ worried that his brother will be a better basketball player.
- Ⓑ proud that his brother won first place in the talent show.
- Ⓒ relieved he did not have to perform in the talent show.
- Ⓓ certain that both he and his brother can be good jugglers.

7 Part A

What is the central message of the passage?

- Ⓐ Members of a family should encourage each other to share their opinions.
- Ⓑ Everyone should find a hobby they enjoy doing.
- Ⓒ Family members should support the interests and talents of each other.
- Ⓓ Children should work together to learn new skills.

Part B

Which paragraph from the passage **best** supports the correct answer to Part A?

- Ⓐ paragraph 12
- Ⓑ paragraph 20
- Ⓒ paragraph 32
- Ⓓ paragraph 46

Read the passage “Tiny Trees.” Then answer the questions.

Tiny Trees

Would you like a pet tree?

by Kevin Kohler

- 1 Bonsai is a Japanese word that means “potted tree.” But a bonsai is far more than a plant in a pot. Inspired by nature, bonsai artists create beautiful living sculptures from trees or shrubs.
- 2 Bonsai are not special small species of trees. They are regular full-sized trees, but grown in pots and trimmed to keep them small. While all bonsai are smaller than full-grown trees, they range greatly in size. Some you can hold in your hand, while others are so big they need a forklift to move.

Full-sized Japanese cedar



© Varts/Shutterstock.com

Japanese cedar grown as bonsai



Photo courtesy of the National Bonsai Foundation

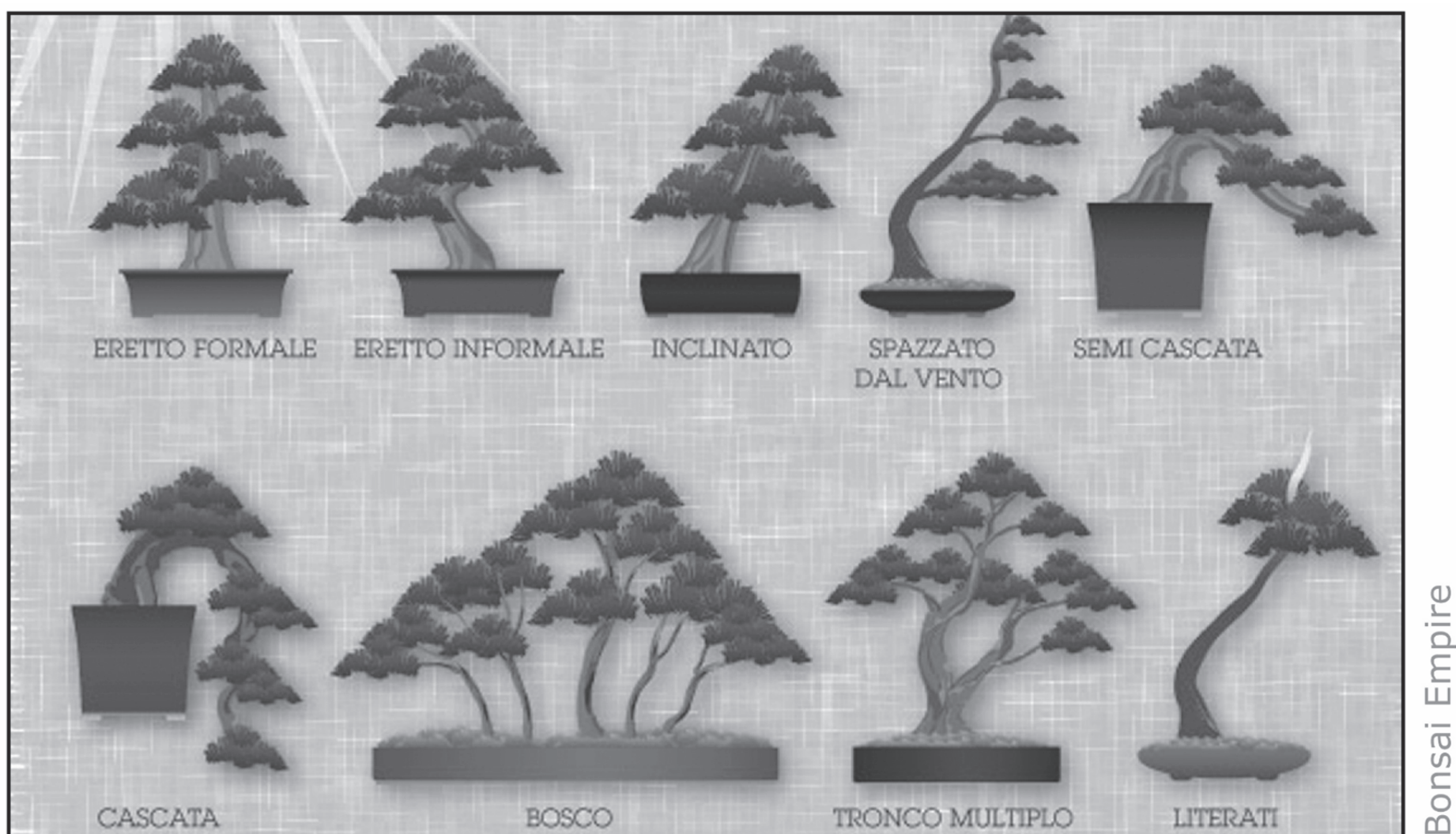
- 3 The Chinese first trained trees in pots more than 1,300 years ago. They called their miniature trees *penjing*. They would often create elaborate landscapes or animal shapes with trees.

This trident maple has been grown into the shape of a dragon.



Photo Courtesy of US National Arboretum

Some common bonsai shapes



- 4 A good bonsai tells a story. Different styles are meant to look like trees growing in harsh winds (windswept), on cliffs (cascade), or in other natural settings. Bonsai from flowering bushes can look like trees in spring.

- 5 Wires are wrapped around living branches to train them to grow into interesting shapes. The wires stay on for a few months, until the shape holds.



Riccardo Sala / Alamy Stock Photo

- 6 Bonsai artists use scissors, clamps, and other small tools to shape the branches. Dramatic dead branches can make a tree look older.
- 7 Once a tree is shaped, it's moved into a pot. The bonsai artist carefully chooses a pot that will look just right with the finished tree. Large roots, which don't feed the tree, are removed. The pot is filled with special soil to keep the roots healthy.
- 8 In nature, some tree roots will tightly grip rocks. This is a popular style for bonsai. While a tree is still young, its roots are draped over a rock and wrapped with medical tape until the roots grip the rock on their own.
- 9 Most bonsai like to live outdoors. They are real, living trees and need plenty of sun and rain. Many also need a cold season to stay healthy. But bonsai grown from tropical trees need to come inside for the winter.

- 10 It can take many years to train a bonsai into just the right shape. Since they are living, growing plants, bonsai are never finished. They need daily care to stay healthy and keep looking their best. But if they're well-tended, they can live for hundreds of years. Anyone can grow bonsai. If you'd like to give it a try, check for a bonsai club near you or ask at your local arboretum.

Tiny Trees by Kevin Kohler, from Ask November 2018 by Carus Publishing Company
d/b/a Cricket Media

8 What does the word **trimmed** mean as it is used in paragraph 2?

- Ⓐ cut shorter
- Ⓑ decorated
- Ⓒ carefully arranged
- Ⓓ removed

9 Read the last sentence from paragraph 2.

Some you can hold in your hand, while others are so big they need a forklift to move.

What is the purpose of the sentence?

- Ⓐ It helps the reader understand that bonsai can be many different sizes.
- Ⓑ It helps the reader understand that bonsai can be displayed in different locations.
- Ⓒ It helps the reader understand the differences between the types of trees used to create bonsai.
- Ⓓ It helps the reader understand why it is important to grow bonsai in pots.

10 Paragraph 4 provides the **most** information about

- Ⓐ the definition of bonsai.
- Ⓑ the reason artists train bonsai.
- Ⓒ the different shapes of bonsai.
- Ⓓ the types of tools used to shape bonsai.

11 Which definition **best** matches how the word **train** is used in paragraph 5?

- Ⓐ to drag behind
- Ⓑ to practice or prepare
- Ⓒ to teach another person
- Ⓓ to form or guide

12 Which statement **best** describes how the sentences in paragraph 8 are related?

- Ⓐ They show the difference between two ideas.
- Ⓑ They show the order of importance.
- Ⓒ They support a popular opinion.
- Ⓓ They explain a cause and an effect.

- 13** In paragraph 10, what is the **most likely** reason the author states that “Anyone can grow bonsai”?
- Ⓐ to encourage others to begin growing bonsai
 - Ⓑ to show that clubs for people who grow bonsai are very popular
 - Ⓒ to prove that bonsai artists need help growing and shaping trees
 - Ⓓ to explain that bonsai live and grow for many years
- 14** Based on the passage, what is one way artists make sure bonsai trees will hold their shape?
- Ⓐ Artists choose trees that grow more easily in larger pots.
 - Ⓑ Artists leave wires wrapped around branches for a few months.
 - Ⓒ Artists remove the dead branches from the trees.
 - Ⓓ Artists leave the trees outdoors during the winter.

Answer the questions by choosing the word that has the same sound as the underlined letter or letters.

15 Which word has the same sound as the underlined letter in the word **middle**?

- Ⓐ listen
- Ⓑ finest
- Ⓒ pilot
- Ⓓ excite

16 Which word has the same sound as the underlined part of the word **destroy**?

- Ⓐ going
- Ⓑ country
- Ⓒ noise
- Ⓓ donkey

17 Which word has the same sound as the underlined letter in the word **circle**?

- Ⓐ safety
- Ⓑ cotton
- Ⓒ bucket
- Ⓓ backward

18 Which word has the same sound as the underlined part of the word **scoot**?

- Ⓐ found
- Ⓑ beauty
- Ⓒ peanut
- Ⓓ nothing

19 Which word has the same sound as the underlined part of the word **before**?

- Ⓐ shepherd
- Ⓑ eighty
- Ⓒ mother
- Ⓓ enough





You have come to the end of Section 1 of the test. Review your answers from Section 1 only.



GO ON TO NEXT PAGE

Section 2

Directions:

Today, you will take Section 2 of the Grade 3 English Language Arts/Literacy Practice Test.

Read each passage and question. Then, follow the directions to answer each question. Mark your answers by completely filling in the circles in your test book. Do not make any pencil marks outside of the circles. If you need to change an answer, be sure to erase your first answer completely.

One of the questions may ask you to write a response. Write your response in the space provided in your test book. Only responses written within the space provided will be scored.

If you do not know the answer to a question, you may go on to the next question. If you finish early, you may review your answers and any questions you did not answer in this Section ONLY. Do not go past the stop sign.

Read the passages. You will then answer questions about the passages and write a response stating your opinion about video games.

Why Do Adults Think Video Games Are Bad?

by Joanne Orlando

- 1 Parents and children can have different ideas when it comes to video games.
- 2 Children like video games because they are fun and because they can be challenging. You have to solve problems, work out the best moves for your character, and decide how to use your equipment and supplies in the best possible way. Making all these decisions can be exciting.
- 3 Parents want to make sure that their children are safe and healthy. Because of this, they notice different things about video games.
- 4 Many worry that playing video games might have a bad effect on the way their child behaves. For example, if a video game has lots of fighting in it, they worry that playing it will encourage their child to be violent.
- 5 They are concerned that their child might always choose to play a video game instead of playing outside and getting exercise. Even though you sit still when you read a book, they know that kids can develop good reading skills and learn a lot. Many adults aren't so sure that kids can learn anything educational from video games.
- 6 Sometimes adults think that spending too much time with animated characters is unhealthy for kids. They know it's important for kids to spend time with "real" people and learn good social skills needed for the real world.

What Do Experts Say?

- 7 Experts think playing video games can have good and bad effects on kids. New research shows that there are lots of benefits.
- 8 One good thing is the video games that children play today often encourage them to work in teams, cooperate, and to help each other. This is because games today are often designed for multiple players, not like old-fashioned video games that were mostly designed for one player.

- 9 However, children who are obsessed with¹ video games and play them for a long time can get really competitive and can often try to win at all costs. Experts aren't sure yet, but they have real concerns that this might lead to kids acting like this in real life too.
- 10 One thing you also might like to know is that kids who regularly play video games often get higher grades in math, science, and reading tests. This is because games require players to solve puzzles. You won't get higher marks² playing *any* video games, just those that require the player to solve these kinds of puzzles.

Doing More of the Good and Less of the Bad

- 11 It's important for kids to think about what types of games they pick.
- 12 Make sure all of your games aren't fighting games. Instead, choose more games where you need to solve puzzles. These are fun and can also help with your schoolwork. Your parents will be much happier about that!
- 13 Also, think about whether the fighting games you play are affecting how you play with your friends in real life. Only you will really know if they are having a bad effect. If they are, you might want to change the games you play.
- 14 Why not ask your parents to play a problem-solving video game with you? This will help your parents see that video games are not all bad.
- 15 It's also important that kids and adults don't spend too much time using a screen. That means kids not spending all their time on technology, and parents not always checking their phone and screens.
- 16 What we want to aim for is adults and kids who can spend some of their time on their screens, but also enjoying other kinds of interests and spending time with family and friends.

Used with permission.

¹**are obsessed with** think all the time about

²**marks** grades

- 1 Which **two** sentences from paragraphs 8 through 10 **best** show that playing video games can be helpful to children?
- Ⓐ "One good thing is the video games that children play today often encourage them to work in teams, cooperate, and to help each other." (paragraph 8)
 - Ⓑ "This is because games today are often designed for multiple players, not like old-fashioned video games that were mostly designed for one player." (paragraph 8)
 - Ⓒ "However, children who are obsessed with video games and play them for a long time can get really competitive and can often try to win at all costs." (paragraph 9)
 - Ⓓ "Experts aren't sure yet, but they have real concerns that this might lead to kids acting like this in real life too." (paragraph 9)
 - Ⓔ "One thing you also might like to know is that kids who regularly play video games often get higher grades in math, science, and reading tests." (paragraph 10)
- 2 In paragraph 8 of the passage "Why Do Adults Think Video Games Are Bad?," what does the word **cooperate** mean?
- Ⓐ to create something new
 - Ⓑ to do something together
 - Ⓒ to ask for something
 - Ⓓ to fix something

- 3 Read the **two** sentences from paragraph 2 of the passage “Why Do Adults Think Video Games Are Bad?”

Children like video games because they are fun and because they can be challenging. You have to solve problems, work out the best moves for your character, and decide how to use your equipment and supplies in the best possible way.

Which statement **best** explains how the sentences are connected?

- Ⓐ They explain events in the order that they happen.
- Ⓑ They make a statement that is supported with details.
- Ⓒ They explain the difference between two ideas.
- Ⓓ They ask a question and then give an answer.

Are Video Games Bad for Me?

Reviewed by: Mary L. Gavin, MD

- 1 Lots of kids love video games. In fact, they like them so much that they might hear something like this from Mom or Dad: “Enough! Unplug that thing and find something else to do!”
- 2 It can be good advice, even if you were just about to crash through to the next level. Why? Too much of anything is just too much. It’s true that some studies have shown certain video games can improve hand–eye coordination, problem-solving skills, and the mind’s ability to process information. But too much video-game playing may lead to health problems.
- 3 It’s hard to get enough active play and exercise if you’re always inside playing video games. And without enough exercise, kids can become unhealthy.
- 4 Really overdoing video games also could affect other important stuff, like friendships and how well a kid does in school. And kids who play violent video games might act more aggressively.
- 5 But here’s the good news: Playing video games some of the time can be OK. Just choose quality games and limit screen time—which includes TV, computer, smartphone, tablet, and video game time combined—to no more than two hours a day.
- 6 A good game will be the right one for how old you are. Games are rated like movies, and your mom or dad can help figure out which ones you should use. If you can choose one that gets you up and moving, that’s even better.
- 7 You might challenge your mom, dad—or even your grandma—to swing the bat in a game of baseball or try out some fancy moves in one of the dancing games. Could your grandma be a dancing queen? Time to find out!

Used with permission.

4 Part A

What is a main idea of the passage?

- Ⓐ Video games are a popular activity for children.
- Ⓑ Playing video games with your family is fun, and it teaches teamwork.
- Ⓒ It is important to spend time on other activities, not just on video games.
- Ⓓ Video-game ratings help parents choose games for their children.

Part B

Which sentence from the passage **best** supports the answer to Part A?

- Ⓐ "Lots of kids love video games." (paragraph 1)
- Ⓑ "It's hard to get enough active play and exercise if you're always inside playing video games." (paragraph 3)
- Ⓒ "A good game will be the right one for how old you are." (paragraph 6)
- Ⓓ "Games are rated like movies, and your mom or dad can help figure out which ones you should use." (paragraph 6)

5 Which definition of the word **challenge** matches the way the word is used in paragraph 7 of “Are Video Games Bad for Me?”

- Ⓐ to argue against something unfair
- Ⓑ to refuse to do something bravely
- Ⓒ to ask a person to do something
- Ⓓ to push someone with a task that is too hard

Refer to the passage “Why Do Adults Think Video Games Are Bad?” and the passage “Are Video Games Bad for Me?” Then answer the questions.

6 Which statement **best** describes a main purpose of both passages?

- Ⓐ To show readers that video games can teach children
- Ⓑ To explain why parents are worried about video games
- Ⓒ To tell readers about the kind of video games to play
- Ⓓ To teach readers how video games can be both harmful and helpful

7 Which important point was made in “Are Video Games Bad for Me?” but **not** in “Why Do Adults Think Video Games Are Bad?”

- Ⓐ Video games have ratings.
- Ⓑ Families can play video games together.
- Ⓒ Video games can be played by more than one person.
- Ⓓ Puzzles that ask players to solve problems are good for children.

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8 Continued

Lined area for writing responses.





You have come to the end of Section 2 of the test. Review your answers from Section 2 only.





Maryland Comprehensive
Assessment Program

Grade 3
English Language Arts/Literacy
Practice Test

Large Print

