

Name: _____



New York State Testing Program

2018 English Language Arts Test Session 1

Grade 6

April 11–13, 2018

Released Questions

Excerpt from “Last Regrets” by Paige Hook. Reprinted from CICADA Magazine—May/June 2009, Vol. 11, Issue 5, p. 45. Copyright © 2009 by Carus Publishing Company. Used with permission.

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Session 1



TIPS FOR TAKING THE TEST

Here are some suggestions to help you do your best:

- Be sure to read all the directions carefully.
- Most questions will make sense only when you read the whole passage. You may read the passage more than once to answer a question. When a question includes a quotation from a passage, be sure to keep in mind what you learned from reading the whole passage. You may need to review both the quotation and the passage in order to answer the question correctly.
- Read each question carefully and think about the answer before making your choice.

Directions
Read this story. Then answer questions 1 through 7.

Excerpt from *Last Regrets*

by Paige Hook

- 1 I sat in my pink-flowered swimsuit on the hot concrete of the driveway, my legs stretched out in front of me, my chipped pink toenails pointing to the sky. I was reflecting on the brilliant defeat the boys had just suffered in yet another water fight with the neighborhood girls.
- 2 Looking down the driveway to the road, I felt the ground beneath me rumble. My legs began to shake, the leaves on the trees trembled, and I could swear that a flowerpot tumbled over on my neighbor's front porch. The intense rattling increased with every passing second.
- 3 I got up and started to run, my bare feet smacking against the scalding pavement. I had to hide until I found an excuse. Something, anything, to get me out of it.
- 4 "Paige," I heard my mom call from the front door, "come inside. Your grandparents just pulled up."
- 5 "Rats," I whispered. Slowly, I turned around and walked back with my head down, looking at the pavement.
- 6 When I got to my driveway, I looked up and saw the familiar sight. It was a monster, a big white monster, complete with an "I Love Fishing" bumper sticker. The shadow it made almost covered the entire driveway. But the real problem sat behind the white monster. It looked harmless at first, but I had already spent too many boring afternoons in it this summer. It was a little red fishing boat, my grandpa and grandma's pride and joy.
- 7 I walked inside the house where my grandparents and my mom were standing around the island in the kitchen. I gave both of my grandparents a hug and proceeded to the cupboard for a glass.
- 8 "How 'bout some fishing, Paige?" my grandpa asked. "Your two brothers are raring¹ to go."
- 9 This is what I'd been dreading. "I don't know, Grandpa. It's pretty hot out."

GO ON

- 10 “It’s never too hot to fish. I brought the boat and everything. It’s all hitched up behind the RV. I know how much you love riding in the boat.”
- 11 He was wrong. I hated that boat. I liked riding in boats when they were going fast. I liked riding in boats that I could water-ski behind. I’d even settle for tubing if skiing wasn’t an option. But fishing boats hardly even moved.
- 12 “We’ll have to buy you a new fishing pole first. Your mom said you lost your last one,” said Grandpa.
- 13 I seemed to lose a lot of fishing poles, but my grandpa never minded. He would just take me to Target to buy another one.
- 14 In twenty minutes, I found myself walking into the mouth of the monster, complete with pink interior from the dirt-covered floor mats to the darker pink seats. Behind the seats nestled a small kitchenette, littered with what was surely last month’s breakfast: two plates covered with syrup, an old waffle box, an empty carton of eggs, and a basket filled with rotten fruit. Across from the kitchenette stood the bathroom, which contributed to the monster’s bad case of morning breath. Beyond this was a small bed, piled high with pink blankets, resembling a tongue that could lash out at any time and swallow me whole.
- 15 Hanging neatly on hooks above the kitchenette counter were Grandpa’s hats, white with stains, like teeth that hadn’t been brushed in a while. They all had sayings like “#1 Grandpa” and “King of the Sea.” Before he sat down in the driver’s seat, Grandpa plucked the nearest hat off a hook and put it on over his bald spot to avoid burning his head in the hot summer sun.
- 16 My grandpa maneuvered the large RV and boat out of our neighborhood, and in ten minutes, we were at Raccoon River, placing the red fishing boat in the water. I was going to borrow an extra pole that my grandpa kept “just in case.” Great.
- 17 In minutes, all three of us kids had our lines in the water. The sweat running down my body was already stinging my eyes and turning the fake leather seat beneath me into a wet, slippery mess. The breeze that may have made the summer heat bearable was nonexistent on the small lake surrounded by tall trees. It was going to be a long afternoon.



- 18 Three hours later, everybody else had caught at least two fish. The boat was once again attached to the back of the RV, and we were on our way home, a waste of another Saturday afternoon.
- 19 “Wasn’t that fun, kids?” asked my grandpa as he peeked back at us through the rear-view mirror.
- 20 My brothers both responded enthusiastically and then began arguing about who had caught the biggest fish. I continued to stare out of the RV window without answering Grandpa’s question.

¹**raring:** eager

GO ON

1

What does paragraph 5 reveal about Paige?

- A She fears going out on the lake.
- B She wants to avoid her grandparents.
- C She prefers the outdoors to coming inside.
- D She wants to play with the neighborhood girls.

2

How do paragraphs 8 through 10 develop the plot of the story?

- A They give background information about Paige.
- B They illustrate Paige's internal conflict.
- C They explain why Paige admires her Grandpa.
- D They show how Paige and her brothers are alike.

3

Read the sentence from paragraph 14 below.

Across from the kitchenette stood the bathroom, which contributed to the monster's bad case of morning breath.

What does the metaphor mean in the sentence?

- A The RV had a rotten smell.
- B People slept poorly inside the RV.
- C The RV was a cramped place.
- D People made a mess inside the RV.

GO ON

4

Which detail signals a change in the direction of the story?

- A Grandpa loans Paige a fishing pole.
- B Paige warns her family about the heat.
- C Grandpa and Grandma arrive in their RV.
- D Paige and the girls beat the boys in a water fight.

5

How does the author **most** develop Grandpa's point of view in the story?

- A by having the narrator describe Grandpa
- B by sharing Grandpa's thoughts with the reader
- C by including dialogue between Grandpa and the kids
- D by showing how Grandpa acts with Paige's brothers

6

Which detail would be **most** important to include in a summary of the story?

- A Paige loses a lot of fishing poles.
- B Grandpa owns many different hats.
- C Paige enjoys water-skiing and tubing.
- D Grandpa wants to take the kids fishing.

GO ON

7

Which sentence **best** expresses the theme of the story?

- A** People usually change as they grow older.
- B** Sometimes people are embarrassed by family.
- C** People often cherish their childhood memories.
- D** Sometimes people make choices to please others.

GO ON

***D*irections**

Read this story. Then answer questions 22 through 28.

10-year-old Rakhee Singh and her mother have flown to India from Minnesota to visit her mother's childhood home for the summer.

Excerpt from *The Girl in the Garden*

by Kamala Nair

- 1 We had to board a second plane, smaller and bumpier than the last, which carried us south, along the western coast of the country. My heartbeat quickened as I peered out the window, down through the clouds at the blue waves tossing and turning below us. My first glimpse of the ocean.
- 2 “Your grandmother will be so pleased to see you, Rakhee. Do you remember her—your Muthashi?” Amma asked over the whirl of the engine.
- 3 I did remember Muthashi, my grandmother. She had come to stay with us in Minnesota when I was around three or four. I could not recall the exact details of her face, but I had a vague mental picture of a slight woman draped in white who used to sit me on her knee and sing a song in Malayalam about ants.
- 4 I used to run out onto the driveway humming the ant song, and guide a string of the black insects into my palm. Weaving my fingers together and making a delicate cup with my hands, I would transport them into the house, giggling as the ants tickled inside their little cage. Muthashi would always act so pleased when I proudly deposited the squirming ants into her outstretched hand, although I’m sure she would let them out the back door as soon as I wasn’t looking.
- 5 “Rakhee,” continued Amma. “I haven’t told you much about our family, have I?”
- 6 I shook my head.
- 7 “Well, the Varmas are the most prominent, respected family in the village. My father was a doctor, and he started a hospital across the street from our home. He died a long time ago, so now my younger brother, Vijay, is in charge. You’ll also meet my big sister, Sadhana, and her three daughters. One of them is about your age. And Vijay’s wife, Nalini, who I have never met, recently had a baby boy. Everybody lives together at Ashoka—that’s the name of the house where I grew up. You see, in India families stick together under one roof. It’s not the same as it is in America.”

GO ON

- 8 This airport was not as crowded or chaotic as the one in Bombay, and the people seemed neater and more subdued. In the bathroom Amma changed into a buttercup-yellow sari and painted a red raindrop on her forehead¹ with a bottle that she produced from her purse. “I can’t show up at home dressed like an American,” she explained.
- 9 I loved seeing that transformation, from my regular mother who took the trash out every morning with a bulky coat flung over her nightgown to this wondrous creature. From the moment she put on the sari and released her hair from its bun so that it streamed down her back in a lustrous river, she appeared younger and somehow more natural.
- 10 “How do I look?” she asked, as she ran a comb through her hair.
- 11 “You look beautiful, Amma,” I told her honestly.
- 12 A compact man with a bushy mustache and a symmetrical crescent of sweat under each arm met us outside the airport, holding a sign with “Mrs. Chitra Varma Singh and daughter” printed across it in block letters. He led us through the thick heat toward a white car and loaded all our suitcases into the trunk. Amma and I both slid into the backseat. My legs stuck to the synthetic leather.
- 13 “Are you hungry, molay?” Amma asked me. “We’ll be home soon.” But she sounded absent, as if my hunger was hardly her main concern.
- 14 I stared out the window as we drove. Unlike the gray, arrow-straight highways I was accustomed to, here the roads were red and twisty. In the distance I could see groves of coconut trees, their green fronds waving against the sky like pinwheels. We passed forests of rubber trees and stretches of lime-green grassland that Amma told me were rice paddy fields. Wiry, mustachioed men with protruding rib cages spiraling down their torsos and white cloths knotted around their waists (“Those cloths are called mundus,” explained Amma) were scattered here and there in the treetops, tapping the trunks and collecting sap in metal buckets.
- 15 At one point the driver stopped the car abruptly. I leaned over the seat and was shocked to see a cow blinking her long black lashes at me. The driver honked the horn and she took her sweet time ambling out of the way.
- 16 Soon after, I heard a dull thud and a hulking elephant rounded the corner, heading toward us, the tough black ripples of its trunk swaying to and fro.
- 17 “Amma!” I cried.

18 But Amma only laughed. “It’s normal for elephants to walk around on the street here, don’t worry.”

19 A man wearing a faded blue turban and carrying a gnarled stick was riding atop the great animal. I waited for either the turbaned man to steer his charge out of the way or for the car to slow down, but neither thing happened. The driver pushed forward with alarming speed, straight toward the elephant. I gasped, but at the last second he swerved, and both he and the man nodded politely to one another, as if this were perfectly normal. The elephant lumbered past the car window so close that I could have reached out and brushed my fingers against its sagging hide.

¹**Painted a red raindrop on her forehead:** known as a bindi, which is a red dot painted on the forehead, commonly worn by Hindu women

22 How do paragraphs 3 and 4 contribute to the story?

- A** They help show Rakhee's kindness and ease around creatures in the outdoors.
- B** They help the reader understand Rakhee's concern of whether her grandmother will remember her.
- C** They provide evidence for Rakhee's love of singing Indian songs as a child.
- D** They give the reader insight into Rakhee's memories of her grandmother.

23 Which important idea does the author develop in paragraphs 7 through 9?

- A** Rakhee has lived a very exciting life.
- B** Rakhee wishes she had grown up in India.
- C** Rakhee has much to learn about her family's culture.
- D** Rakhee's family is typical of Indian families.

24 Which statement **best** describes how the narrator reacts to the events in paragraphs 8 and 9?

- A** She becomes more appreciative of her mother.
- B** She is uneasy about the change in her mother.
- C** She becomes confused by her mother.
- D** She admires the change in her mother.

25 In paragraph 9, what is the meaning of the phrase “it streamed down her back in a lustrous river”?

- A** her long hair was flowing and shiny
- B** her long hair was damp from being in a bun
- C** her long hair seemed heavier than normal
- D** her long hair moved steadily in one direction

26 What does paragraph 9 **most** reveal about the narrator’s mother?

- A** that she is more talkative when she is in India
- B** that she follows customary traditions when she is in India
- C** that she is more self-conscious when she is in India
- D** that she visits many people when she is in India

27 Which statement **best** states a theme of the story?

- A** Families can be surprising.
- B** Beauty can be found in most things.
- C** Traveling to new places can be tiring.
- D** New experiences can change how we see the world.

GO ON

How does the author **most** develop Rakhee's point of view?

- A** by comparing Rakhee's experience to her mother's
- B** by having Rakhee describe her impressions of India
- C** by showing Rakhee's alarm during the scene with the elephant
- D** by including Rakhee's reaction to Amma's changed appearance

***D*irections**

Read this article. Then answer questions 29 through 35.

Lightning Strikes

by Charlene Brusso

- 1 The only difference between a lightning bolt and the small spark that jumps between your hand and a metal doorknob after you scuff across a rug is size. Both happen when electrical charge builds up and suddenly discharges.

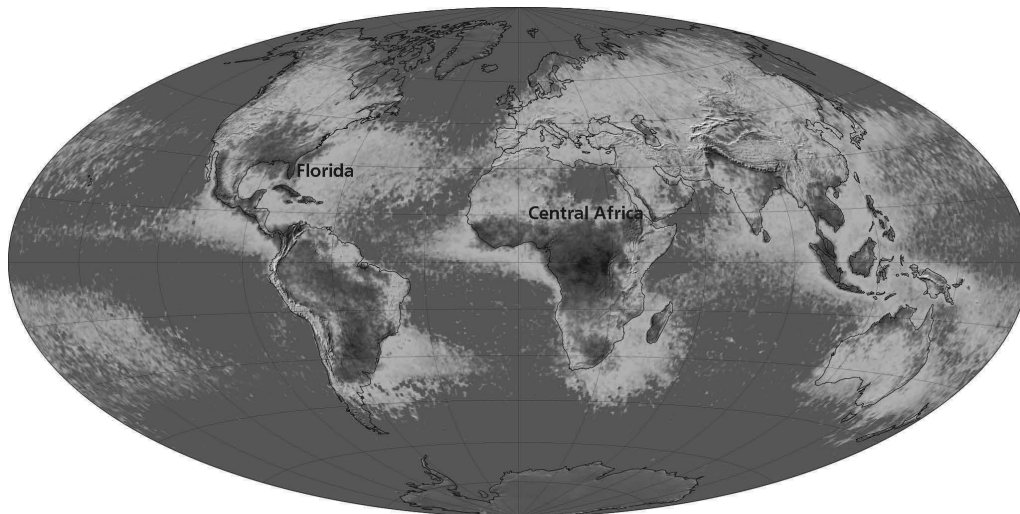
What Is Lightning?

- 2 Lightning begins inside thunderstorms. Updrafts of air lift raindrops from the bottom of the cloud into freezing air at the top. Downdrafts move ice particles lower, into warmer air. Negatively charged electrons build upon the falling ice as it passes the water droplets. In time, the storm cloud becomes negatively charged on the bottom and positively charged on top.
- 3 When the negative charge builds up enough, a huge number of electrons jump through the air, looking for something that conducts electricity: the ground, a tree, a lightning rod. We see that discharge as a flash of lightning.
- 4 Lightning zips along at 40 miles (64 kilometers) a second. The center of the lightning bolt is only about as thick as a pencil, but it packs so much energy that it can melt rock or metal and set wood ablaze. An average lightning bolt has enough electricity to run the appliances in your house for a couple of days. But all that electricity arrives at once, at 54,000 degrees Fahrenheit (30,000 Celsius)—six times hotter than the surface of the sun. It would melt anything you tried to use to collect it.
- 5 Thunder is the sound of lightning. Each bolt super heats the air around it to 18,000 degrees Fahrenheit (9,980 Celsius) in less than a second. The superhot air instantly expands, sending out a shock wave that we hear as thunder. The farther away lightning strikes, the deeper the sound of the thunder—and the longer it takes to get to you. That's because light travels much faster than sound. In fact, if you count the delay between the lightning and the thunder, you can tell approximately how far away the lightning is (about a mile for every five seconds).

GO ON

Lightning around the World

- 6 Between 1,500 and 2,000 thunderstorms are crackling and booming around the world at this very moment—scientists estimate that lightning strikes somewhere on Earth about 100 times every second. Where does it strike the most often? Lightning zaps the remote mountain village of Kifuka, in central Africa, nearly every day. There, air masses from the Atlantic Ocean collide with cooler mountain air, making lots of thunderstorms. The Himalayas are another lightning hotspot. In the United States, the best place to spot lightning is Florida. Warm air from the Gulf of Mexico banging into cool air from the Atlantic Ocean creates lightning almost daily across the Sunshine State.
- 7 Places with very stable weather get the least lightning. The Arctic and Antarctica have almost no thunderstorms because their air is about the same temperature everywhere. Lightning is also uncommon far out over the ocean, away from land, for the same reason.



This map shows how often lightning strikes different places around the world (darker areas get more).

Lightning Safety

- 8 Because of its unpredictability and power, lightning can be extremely dangerous. If you're caught outside during a lightning storm, don't stand under a tree or lie flat in the open. Instead, crouch down with your hands and your head tucked close (but not touching the ground) and your feet close together. This makes you less of a conductor for any bolts that strike near you. Rubber-soled shoes are no protection—if lightning can zap through miles of air, which is an excellent insulator, your favorite trainers¹ won't stop it either.

- 9 If you can, try to get inside a car or building. You're safe inside the car because electricity will travel over the metal surface instead of through the interior. In buildings, stay away from metal faucets and telephones connected to the wall—lightning can travel through pipes and wires. Then, once you're safe inside, look out and enjoy the awesome beauty of Earth's electricity!

¹**trainers:** British term for “sneakers”

GO ON

29

How is the idea “Lightning begins inside thunderstorms” (paragraph 2) developed in the article?

- A by comparing a lightning bolt to a small spark
- B by describing how lightning occurs in different types of weather
- C by explaining how air at different temperatures creates a charge in clouds
- D by providing examples of how much electricity is produced by electrons jumping through air

30

Read this quotation from paragraph 6.

Between 1,500 and 2,000 thunderstorms are crackling and booming around the world at this very moment . . .

Why does the author use the words “crackling and booming” instead of “occurring”?

- A to help the reader experience the speed of lightning
- B to help the reader imagine the sounds of thunderstorms
- C to be clear about the electrical nature of lightning
- D to be accurate about how common thunderstorms are

31 How does the illustration support the author’s claims in the section “Lightning around the World”?

- A** by highlighting the size of lightning strikes in particular areas
- B** by providing evidence of why lightning strikes in some areas
- C** by illustrating which areas are more affected by lightning strikes
- D** by showing the limited areas in the world where lightning strikes occur

32 How does the section “Lightning Safety” connect to the section “What is Lightning?”

- A** “Lightning Safety” summarizes the effects of lightning described in “What is Lightning?”
- B** “Lightning Safety” contrasts different types of lightning described in “What is Lightning?”
- C** “Lightning Safety” elaborates on the cause of the powerful lightning described in “What is Lightning?”
- D** “Lightning Safety” describes ways to avoid the powerful lightning explained in “What is Lightning?”

33 Which sentence **best** expresses a central idea in the article?

- A** Lightning strikes are only about as thick as a pencil.
- B** Lightning strikes are uncommon far out over the ocean.
- C** Lightning strikes are due to unstable weather conditions.
- D** Lightning strikes are able to travel through pipes in a building.

GO ON

34

What does paragraph 9 suggest about the author's point of view in the article?

- A The author has great respect for lightning.
- B The author has difficulty understanding lightning.
- C The author believes that lightning can be useful.
- D The author believes that it is impossible to avoid lightning.

35

Which idea would be **most** important to include in a summary of the article?

- A "The farther away lightning strikes, the deeper the sound of the thunder . . ." (paragraph 5)
- B "Lightning zaps the remote mountain village of Kifuka, in central Africa, nearly every day." (paragraph 6)
- C "Because of its unpredictability and power, lightning can be extremely dangerous." (paragraph 8)
- D "You're safe inside the car because electricity will travel over the metal surface instead of through the interior." (paragraph 9)

STOP

Grade 6
2018
English Language Arts Test
Session 1
April 11–13, 2018

Name: _____



New York State Testing Program

2018 English Language Arts Test Session 2

Grade 6

April 11–13, 2018

Released Questions

Excerpt from “The Story of Urashima Taro, The Fisher Lad,” by Yei Theodora Ozaki, from *Japanese Fairy Tales*. Auckland: The Floating Press, 2014.

“The Thirst for First Is the Worst,” by Reilly Blum: *WABE/Youth Radio Atlanta*, May 29, 2015.
<<https://youthradio.org/news/article/the-thirst-for-first-is-the-worst/>>.

Excerpt from “The Importance of Winning,” by Andy Jobanek and Billy Low: *whitmanpioneer.com*; *The Whitman Pioneer*, March 12, 2009.
<<http://whitmanpioneer.com/sports/full-court-press-sports/2009/03/12/the-fullcourtpress-the-importance-of-winning/>>.

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Session 2



TIPS FOR TAKING THE TEST

Here are some suggestions to help you do your best:

- Be sure to read all the directions carefully.
- Most questions will make sense only when you **read the whole passage**. You may read the passage more than once to answer a question. When a question includes a quotation from a passage, be sure to keep in mind what you learned from reading the whole passage. You may need to review **both** the quotation and the passage in order to answer the question correctly.
- Read each question carefully and think about the answer before writing your response.
- In writing your responses, be sure to
 - clearly organize your writing and express what you have learned;
 - accurately and completely answer the questions being asked;
 - support your responses with examples or details from the text; and
 - write in complete sentences using correct spelling, grammar, capitalization, and punctuation.
- For the last question in this test book, you may plan your writing on the Planning Page provided, but do NOT write your final answer on this Planning Page. Writing on this Planning Page will NOT count toward your final score. Write your final answer on the lined response pages provided.

***D*irections**

Read this story. Then answer questions 36 through 38.

In this Japanese fairy tale, Urashima Taro, a young fisherman, has saved the life of a tortoise. The tortoise then offers to take him to the underwater Rin Gin, the Palace of the Dragon King of the Sea. Urashima is willing to go, but tells the tortoise that he cannot swim to the bottom of the sea.

Excerpt from *The Story of Urashima Taro, The Fisher Lad*

by Yei Theodora Ozaki

- 1 “What? You need not swim yourself. If you will ride on my back I will take you without any trouble on your part.”
- 2 “But,” said Urashima, “how is it possible for me to ride on your small back?”
- 3 “It may seem absurd to you, but I assure you that you can do so. Try at once! Just come and get on my back, and see if it is as impossible as you think!”
- 4 As the tortoise finished speaking, Urashima looked at its shell, and strange to say he saw that the creature had suddenly grown so big that a man could easily sit on its back.
- 5 The tortoise, with an unmoved face, as if this strange proceeding were quite an ordinary event, said:
- 6 “Now we will set out at our leisure,” and with these words he leapt into the sea with Urashima on his back. Down through the water the tortoise dived. For a long time these two strange companions rode through the sea. Urashima never grew tired, nor his clothes moist with the water. At last, far away in the distance a magnificent gate appeared, and behind the gate, the long, sloping roofs of a palace on the horizon.
- 7 “Ya,” exclaimed Urashima. “That looks like the gate of some large palace just appearing! Mr. Tortoise, can you tell what that place is we can now see?”
- 8 “That is the great gate of the Rin Gin Palace, the large roof that you see behind the gate is the Sea King’s Palace itself.”
- 9 “Then we have at last come to the realm of the Sea King and to his Palace,” said Urashima.

GO ON

- 10 “Yes, indeed,” answered the tortoise, “and don’t you think we have come very quickly?” And while he was speaking the tortoise reached the side of the gate. “And here we are, and you must please walk from here.”
- 11 The tortoise now went in front, and speaking to the gatekeeper, said:
- 12 “This is Urashima Taro, from the country of Japan. I have had the honor of bringing him as a visitor to this kingdom. Please show him the way.”
- 13 Then the gatekeeper, who was a fish, at once led the way through the gate before them. The red bream, the flounder, the sole, the cuttlefish, and all the chief vassals of the Dragon King of the Sea now came out with courtly bows to welcome the stranger.
- 14 “Urashima Sama, Urashima Sama! Welcome to the Sea Palace, the home of the Dragon King of the Sea. Thrice welcome are you, having come from such a distant country. And you, Mr. Tortoise, we are greatly indebted to you for all your trouble in bringing Urashima here.” Then, turning again to Urashima, they said, “Please follow us this way,” and from here the whole band of fishes became his guides.
- 15 Urashima, being only a poor fisher lad, did not know how to behave in a palace; but, strange though it was all to him, he did not feel ashamed or embarrassed, but followed his kind guides quite calmly where they led to the inner palace. When he reached the portals a beautiful Princess with her attendant maidens came out to welcome him. She was more beautiful than any human being, and was robed in flowing garments of red and soft green like the under side of a wave, and golden threads glimmered through the folds of her gown. Her lovely black hair streamed over her shoulders in the fashion of a king’s daughter many hundreds of years ago, and when she spoke her voice sounded like music over the water. Urashima was lost in wonder while he looked upon her, and he could not speak. Then he remembered that he ought to bow, but before he could make a low obeisance the Princess took him by the hand and led him to a beautiful hall, and to the seat of honor at the upper end, and bade him be seated.
- 16 “Urashima Taro, it gives me the highest pleasure to welcome you to my father’s kingdom,” said the Princess. “Yesterday you set free a tortoise, and I have sent for you to thank you for saving my life, for I was that tortoise. Now if you like you shall live here forever in the land of eternal youth, where summer never dies and where sorrow never comes, and I will be your bride if you will, and we will live together happily forever afterwards!”

Read this sentence from paragraph 6.

Urashima never grew tired, nor his clothes moist with the water.

What effect does the sentence have on the tone of the story? Use **two** details from the story to support your response.

GO ON

37

How does paragraph 15 help develop Urashima's point of view? Use **two** details from the story to support your response.

38

Read this sentence from paragraph 16.

“Yesterday you set free a tortoise, and I have sent for you to thank you for saving my life, for I was that tortoise.”

How does this sentence contribute to the structure of the story? Use **two** details from the story to support your response.

This image shows a blank sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and extend across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

Directions

Read this article. Then answer questions 39 and 40.

The Thirst for First Is the Worst

by Reilly Blum

- 1 About a decade ago, I swam competitively. It was serious stuff. We 6-year-olds had a lot to remember like keeping track of all the strokes, but most importantly, we had to swim faster than everyone else.
- 2 I cultivated quite the collection of ribbons, even a few for first and second place. But winning was not my ultimate goal.
- 3 Instead, I wanted a ribbon of every color. Blue, red, orange, white, green, pink—One day I was furious after winning a first place blue ribbon. I already had a few of those, and what I really needed was a green one. I should have finished in sixth place.
- 4 I didn't understand the competitive aspect of the team—I swam fast so I could exit the chilly pool, not so I could win. I worked to improve my times, but I completely ignored the competition to focus on my own personal goals.
- 5 For someone focused on winning, losing can be hard to stomach. In my experience, it is far more fulfilling to enjoy the work, game or swim meet than to constantly compare myself to others.
- 6 Here's a case in point. Last summer I tried being more competitive in cross-country. It wasn't very fun, and I didn't run any faster. Many of my times were slower when I set out to run against my teammates (and my competitors) than when I was running with them.
- 7 My experience is fairly typical. One study published in the *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* highlights this. It grouped children in three ways: two kids competing *against* each other, two players working for a high combined score, and two kids *cooperating* to land more free throws than another team.
- 8 The kids cooperating to beat another team got the highest scores.
- 9 While winning can be gratifying, it certainly isn't everything. For some people, extreme competition may be conducive to excellence, and that's perfectly OK. For me, however, it just leads to stress.

GO ON

- 10 My 6-year-old self didn't see the value in winning. Sure, I may have won a few first-place blue ribbons, but that doesn't mean much. I was far more satisfied to finally get the sixth-place ribbon that rounded off my rainbow collection.
- 11 Though I have certainly evolved from my preadolescent self, I retain that spirit.

GO ON

39

In “The Thirst for First Is the Worst,” how do paragraphs 1 through 4 develop a central idea of the article? Use **two** details from the article to support your response.

40

In “The Thirst for First Is the Worst,” how was the author affected by attempting to become more competitive? Use **two** details from the article to support your response.

GO ON

Directions
Read this article. Then answer questions 41 and 42.

Excerpt from *The Importance of Winning*

by Andy Jobanek and Billy Low

- 1 The way sports are watched, the way sports are played, the uniforms athletes wear and the money athletes make all change over time. But sports' nature as competition, whether recreational or serious, remains constant. The whole point of shooting the basketball at the basket or running fast in a race is to improve chances of winning. So how important is winning in sports? More specifically, to what extent should winning be emphasized at the many levels of organized sports?
- 2 For those who see sports as outlets for recreation and exercise, the answer is fairly straightforward: winning should take a backseat as long as participants enjoy playing the game.
- 3 But for athletes, coaches and parents who see sports as more than a casual hobby, the answer is less clear. Let's think in terms of parents who would very much like to see their child reach the highest levels of sport. My argument is that beginning levels should develop in youths a genuine passion for sports that fosters, at the high school level and above, the necessary emphasis on winning.
- 4 Few will deny that fun is more important than winning in youth leagues. But to focus on developing enthusiasm for sports requires more than turning off the scoreboard. Kids will have fun running around carefree anywhere. Organized sports will create real interest in sports if they show a youth athlete how much he or she can learn about playing sports.
- 5 However, once an athlete reaches the high school level, winning should be a priority. It should be assumed that high school athletes have developed that passion that draws them to spend so much time playing their sport.

- 6 A league title may pale in comparison to the self-discipline and work ethic athletes gain from competitive sports, but such qualities develop out of a commitment to winning. If athletes only value having a good time and “bonding with teammates,” why should they bother to wake up early to lift weights or choose to get rest instead of partying? Emphasis on winning points an athlete or team to a goal they must continue to chase until their game or season or career ends.
- 7 That emphasis does not mean throwing a chair in response to a loss. It means an athlete puts in the work to turn a “good try” into a made basket or completed pass. It means a player shows up to practice on time and ready to play. In short, a desire to win pushes an athlete to be his or her best.

41

What is the central idea of “Excerpt from *The Importance of Winning*”? Use **two** details from the article to support your response.

Planning Page

You may PLAN your writing for question 42 here if you wish, but do NOT write your final answer on this page. Writing on this Planning Page will NOT count toward your final score. Write your final answer on Pages 15 and 16.



GO ON

42

The authors of “The Thirst for First Is the Worst” and “Excerpt from *The Importance of Winning*” have different opinions about whether athletes should be committed to winning. What are the authors’ different points of view about this topic? How is this point of view revealed in each article? Use details from **both** articles to support your response.

In your response, be sure to

- describe the authors' different opinions about whether athletes should be committed to winning
- explain how this point of view is revealed in each article
- use details from **both** articles to support your response

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Handwriting practice lines consisting of 20 horizontal lines.

STOP