

## Grade 6 Reading MCA Item Sampler Key Guide

### An Introduction to the MCA

The Minnesota Comprehensive Assessments are reading, mathematics, and science tests that help schools and districts measure student progress toward the state's academic standards. The grades 3-8 mathematics assessments became operational in 2011 as the Minnesota Comprehensive Assessments-Series III (MCA-III) and are aligned to the 2007 Minnesota Academic Standards. In 2012, the science assessments became operational as the Minnesota Comprehensive Assessments-Series III (MCA-III) and are aligned to the 2009 Minnesota Academic Standards. In 2013, the grades 3-8 and 10 reading assessments are aligned to the 2010 Minnesota Academic Standards as the Minnesota Comprehensive Assessments-Series III (MCA-III). In 2014, the grade 11 mathematics assessments are aligned to the 2007 Minnesota Academic Standards as the Minnesota Comprehensive Assessments-Series III (MCA-III).

### The Purpose of the MCA Item Samplers

An item sampler is not a complete test. It contains a smaller number of the items than students will see on a full-length test in the spring. The MCA Item Samplers were developed to familiarize students and teachers with the format of the MCA and the kinds of items that will appear on them.

The MCA Item Sampler is not a real test. It should not be used to predict how well students will do on the tests. However, students may feel more comfortable with the tests if they have reviewed the Item Samplers prior to the test.

### How the MCA Item Samplers Were Created

The Item Samplers mirror the format of the MCA. The functionality, navigation and how students answer items reflect the way the test will look in the spring, except that the Item Sampler is shorter than the actual test. As with all MCAs, the reading passages and the math and reading questions have been thoroughly review by Minnesota teachers prior to testing. Minnesota students have answered these questions on previous tests.

The distribution of question types and their aligned content selected for the Item Sampler generally reflects a range of items from each strand in the Minnesota Academic Standards. Whenever possible, the Item Samplers have the following designs:

**Reading:**

- Four segments
- Three passages
  - Literature passages, informational passages and text sets will be used if available and aligned for test specifications for that grade level.
- Multiple-choice items
  - Five to eleven multiple-choice items for single passages
  - Ten to fifteen multiple-choice items for text sets
- Technology-enhanced items
  - Four to six technology-enhanced items for single passages
  - Five to ten technology-enhanced items for text sets
- Appropriate Lexile of passages for the test specifications of the grade

## **The Contents of This Teacher's Guide**

The Answer Key identifies the answers to the questions. The key also identifies the strand/sub-strand/standard/benchmark from the Minnesota Academic Standards to which each question is aligned.

## **State Standards and Test Specifications**

The Item Samplers are primarily intended to familiarize teachers and students with the format of the MCA. The best preparation for the content of the MCA is done as a part of your curriculum planning. When doing that, reference the Minnesota Academic Standards and the test specifications for the MCA. For further questions about the MCAs, email us at [mde.testing@state.mn.us](mailto:mde.testing@state.mn.us).

**Grade 6 Teacher's Guide**  
**MCA-III Item Sampler Answer Key**  
**Grade 6 Reading**

**Section 1**  
**10 Questions**

Item #	Correct Answer	Item Type	Skill Domain	SSB	Depth of Knowledge
1	*TE key guide	TE	Key Ideas and Details	6.4.3.3	II
2	*TE key guide	TE	Key Ideas and Details	6.4.3.3	III
3	A	MC	Key Ideas and Details	6.4.3.3	III
4	C	MC	Craft and Structure	6.4.5.5	II
5	A	MC	Key Ideas and Details	6.4.1.1	I
6	B	MC	Craft and Structure	6.4.4.4	II
7	D	MC	Key Ideas and Details	6.4.1.1	II
8	A	MC	Craft and Structure	6.4.4.4	II
9	*TE key guide	TE	Key Ideas and Details	6.4.2.2	III
10	*TE key guide	TE	Key Ideas and Details	6.4.1.1	II

**Section 2**  
**12 Questions**

Item #	Correct Answer	Item Type	Skill Domain	SSB	Depth of Knowledge
1	*TE key guide	TE	Key Ideas and Details	6.5.2.2	II
2	C	MC	Craft and Structure	6.5.6.6	II
3	B	MC	Craft and Structure	6.5.6.6	II
4	*TE key guide	TE	Key Ideas and Details	6.5.1.1	II
5	B	MC	Integration of Knowledge and Ideas	6.5.8.8	II
6	A	MC	Key Ideas and Details	6.5.1.1	II
7	C	MC	Craft and Structure	6.5.6.6	III
8	*TE key guide	TE	Integration of Knowledge and Ideas	6.5.8.8	III
9	D	MC	Key Ideas and Details	6.5.1.1	II
10	*TE key guide	TE	Key Ideas and Details	6.5.1.1	II
11	D	MC	Craft and Structure	6.5.6.6	II
12	*TE key guide	TE	Key Ideas and Details	6.5.3.3	II

**Section 3**  
**5 Questions**

Item #	Correct Answer	Item Type	Skill Domain	SSB	Depth of Knowledge
1	A	MC	Key Ideas and Details	6.4.3.3	I
2	*TE key guide	TE	Craft and Structure	6.4.5.5	II
3	B	MC	Key Ideas and Details	6.4.1.1	II
4	*TE key guide	TE	Craft and Structure	6.4.4.4	II
5	A	MC	Key Ideas and Details	6.4.2.2	II

**Section 4**  
**19 Questions**

Item #	Correct Answer	Item Type	Skill Domain	SSB	Depth of Knowledge
1	C	MC	Craft and Structure	6.5.6.6	II
2	*TE key guide	TE	Key Ideas and Details	6.5.1.1	II
3	B	MC	Key Ideas and Details	6.5.1.1	I
4	B	MC	Key Ideas and Details	6.5.1.1	I
5	*TE key guide	TE	Key Ideas and Details	6.5.1.1	II
6	A	MC	Craft and Structure	6.5.6.6	II
7	*TE key guide	TE	Key Ideas and Details	6.5.1.1	II
8	*TE key guide	TE	Key Ideas and Details	6.5.1.1	II
9	A	MC	Key Ideas and Details	6.5.1.1	II
10	B	MC	Craft and Structure	6.5.4.4	I
11	D	MC	Key Ideas and Details	6.5.1.1	II
12	*TE key guide	TE	Key Ideas and Details	6.5.1.1	II
13	C	MC	Craft and Structure	6.5.6.6	III
14	*TE key guide	TE	Key Ideas and Details	6.5.1.1	III
15	A	MC	Key Ideas and Details	6.5.3.3	III
16	*TE key guide	TE	Key Ideas and Details	6.5.2.2	III
17	D	MC	Key Ideas and Details	6.5.1.1	III
18	*TE key guide	TE	Key Ideas and Details	6.5.1.1	II
19	*TE key guide	TE	Key Ideas and Details	6.5.2.2	II

\*Answers for TEs can be found in the *Grade 6 Key Guide for Technology Enhanced Items*.

## Passage Characteristics

Segment	Title	Type	Lexile	Word Count
1	The Trade Fair at Sheshalik	L	1160	821
2	Your Local Desert Food and Drugstore	I	1120	746
3	Catalog	L	N/A	200
4	Diwali: The Indian Festival of Lights/ Celebrate Light in the Dark	I/I	1120/1160	1102

## **Legend:**

**Correct Answer** — Answers to multiple-choice questions are listed.

**Item Type** — Multiple Choice **(MC)**

**Skill Domain** — The Skill Domain to which the item is aligned. The Skill Domains are the following:

- Key Ideas and Details
- Craft and Structure
- Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

**SSB** — The SSB includes the grade, sub-strand, standard and benchmark to which an item is aligned.

**Depth of Knowledge (DOK)** — A classification of the complexity of an item based on Norman L. Webb's Depth of Knowledge. See the test specifications for an explanation of DOKs.

- Level I: Recall
- Level II: Skill/Concept
- Level III: Strategic Thinking

**Passage Characteristics** — Each passage has several characteristics that are used when constructing the MCAs:

- Type: The reading MCAs use literature passages, informational passages and text sets.
- Lexile: Lexile is a readability measure used on the MCAs to determine text difficulty. (Lexile does not apply to poems.)
- Word Count: The total number of words in the passage, not including the introduction contained before the title.

## Grade 6 Key Guide for Technology-enhanced Sampler Items

### Section 1

#### 10 Questions

#### Question 1

Read paragraph 1 from the passage. Identify the groups of words that give readers the best understanding of the setting.

Select the three groups of words that apply.

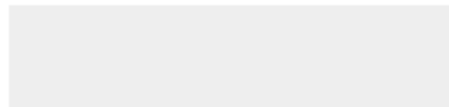
The Siberians are **traveling with us to the trade fair**, traveling along the coast, their boats piled high with the **reindeer skins they have brought** to trade. Our **dogs run along the shore** like shadows, their packs bouncing against their ribs—happy to be out in the late night sun, **happy to be free**. I am happy, too, **gliding along in our skin boat**, watching them run, wishing I could stretch my limbs and run with them, **run for the sheer joy of it**, as they do.

## Question 2

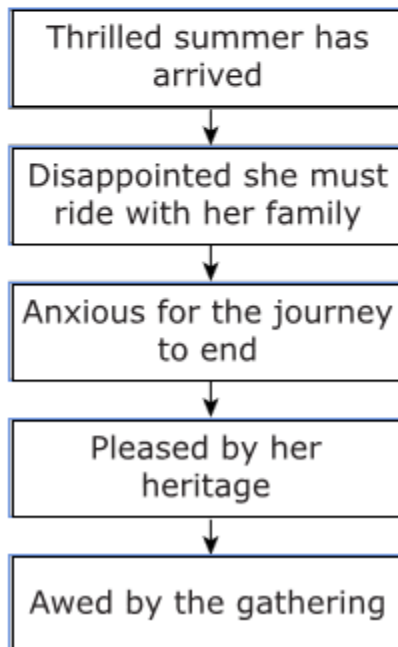
Rearrange the phrases to indicate the order in which the narrator's feelings change from the beginning to the end of the journey.

Drag each phrase into the correct box.

### Feelings



### Narrator's Feelings During the Journey



### Question 9

Which questions does the passage answer?

Select the two questions that apply.

- ☐ What is the name of Aaka's village?
- ☒ Who will likely have a baby soon?
- ☐ When will the trade fair end?
- ☒ Why are the Siberians going to the trade fair?

### Question 10

The passage describes a group of native Alaskans traveling to a trade fair.

Drag the character's name into the box that matches the character's description from the passage to complete the diagram.

Narrator

Aaka

Tupaaq

Description	Character
Owens a well-made boat	Tupaaq
Anxious to arrive at the trade fair	Narrator
Disapproves of Aaluk's behavior	Aaka
Believes girls can be good hunters	Tupaaq
Thinks the family needs another hunter	Aaka



## Section 2

### 12 Questions

#### Question 1

In the Sonoran Desert, natives use plants as medicine. Read the article. Then answer the questions. Some questions may ask you about certain paragraphs. The paragraphs are numbered on the left side.

#### Your Local Desert Food and Drugstore

by Carrie A. Greer

- 1 "Mom, my throat hurts and I'm hungry!"
- 2 "Okay, son, grab a bowl and some scissors and let's go outside."
- 3 Imagine hearing that from your mom! Go outside to get medicine?
- 4 Well, for thousands of years that's what the native people of the Sonoran Desert did—they went outside to find food and treatments for their illnesses. More than 400 edible plants grow in the Sonoran Desert and many of these plants can be used as medicines.
- 5 The Sonoran Desert is an arid region covering 120,000 square miles in southwestern Arizona, southeastern California and parts of Mexico. The Natives, known as the Tohono O'odham (means the
- 6 The Sonoran Desert is considered a natural pharmacy because a treatment for almost every illness known to man grows there.
- 7 One of the more common Sonoran Desert plants is the creosote bush. This plant is considered to be the oldest plant in the world and is sometimes called the "drugstore of the desert." The creosote was traditionally used to treat diseases the way penicillin is used today. The creosote has been known to help cure colds, stomach cramps and to heal wounds and burns.
- 10 Because there are so many medicinal uses for the creosote bush, scientists and botanists are still learning what this plant can do. Some scientists are even finding ways to use the creosote bush as a form of chemotherapy for cancer patients.
- 15 After gaining a full understanding of how these plants work, the people of the Sonoran Desert had their very own pharmacy in the desert. It is illegal to go out and gather these natural plants today because many of them are protected by the Arizona Native Plant Law; however, with special permission, many of these plants are now sold in ethnic grocery stores in Arizona.

What is the main idea of the article?

Scroll through the entire article on the left and select two sentences from the article that best illustrate the main idea.

## Question 4

Which statements describe how the creosote bush survives?

Select the three statements that apply.

- ☒ It is resistant to heat.
- ☐ It has a strong, sweet smell.
- ☒ It has a deep, extensive root system.
- ☒ It releases chemicals to keep other plants from growing.

## Question 8

Which statements are supported with evidence in the article?

Select the two statements that apply.

- ☒ The creosote bush is a plant that pharmacists could benefit from studying.
- ☐ People enjoy finding interesting foods and medicines in the desert.
- ☒ Native people discovered many uses for plants in the desert.
- ☐ People value the prickly pear cactus for all its parts.
- ☐ The prickly pear cactus survives in the desert longer than the creosote bush.

## Question 10

According to the article, many plants in the Sonoran Desert can be used for medicinal purposes.

Drag each medicinal purpose into the correct box.

Mesquite Tree	Creosote Bush	Prickly Pear Cactus
Soothes sore throats	Relieves stomach cramps	Controls blood sugar levels
	Clears nasal passages	Cures earaches
		Soothes minor rashes

### Medicinal Purposes

## Question 12

The article is organized by different elements.

Drag the elements of organization into the correct order with the first element at the top.

**A narrative scene**

**Background information**

**Descriptions of useful vegetation**

**Theories of discovery**

**Description of current laws**

## Section 3

### 5 Questions

#### Question 2

In the poem, cats are described as quiet and noisy in different lines.

Select two sets of lines from the poem that contrast quiet and noisy cats.

"Cats wait in a lump,  
Jump in a streak.  
Cats, when they jump, are sleek"  
(lines 7-9)

"They have technique.  
Oh, cats don't creak,  
They sneak."  
(lines 11-13)

"You walk around one  
As if he were the City Hall  
After that."  
(lines 19-21)

"A cat is apt to sing upon a major scale:  
This concert is for everybody, this  
Is wholesale,"  
(lines 23-25)

#### Question 4

Read line 26 from the poem.

For a baton, he wields a tail.

Select the words that complete the sentence.

In line 26, wields means  , based on the previous word clue

.

## Section 4

### 19 Questions

#### Question 2

Which four items are associated with Diwali?

Drag the items that apply into the box.

#### Diwali

			
<b>Tunics</b>	<b>Knowledge</b>	<b>Wealth</b>	<b>Lights</b>

		
<b>Spring</b>	<b>Chocolate</b>	

### Question 5

Based on the article, which statements about Esha's family members are true?

Select the three statements that apply.

- ☒ They enjoy Indian customs.
- ☐ They value attending Hindu schools.
- ☐ They make their own special clothing.
- ☒ They are proud of their culture.
- ☒ They are committed to their beliefs.
- ☐ They like to celebrate American holidays.



## Question 7

According to the article, why do Iranians use light and heat in their homes on this special night?

Drag the four appropriate reasons into the boxes.

### Use of Light and Heat

To remove evil spirits

To honor customs

To remain comfortable

To light the house

### Reasons for Use of Light and Heat

To play special games

To provide light to read

## Question 8

Read paragraph 16 from the article. Identify the four words that make the food appear tasty and tempting.

Select the four words that apply.

No Persian celebration is ever complete without **mouth-watering** foods. The **traditional** table spread for Shab-e-Yalda includes **yummy** eggplant stew with **lush** saffron rice, chicken and yogurt. After dinner, Iranians continue to please their appetites by eating **chopped** watermelon, pomegranates, **dried** fruits and nuts. Some families serve the sweet *halva*. The food items are not only **satisfying** but symbolic.

## Question 12

During Shab-e-Yalda, Iranians eat some foods for health and other foods for success. Match the foods with the reasons.

Drag each food into the appropriate box.

### Foods for Health



**Watermelon**



**Pomegranate seeds**

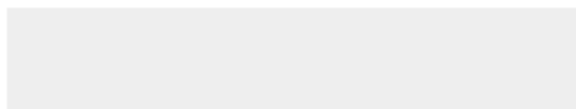
### Foods for Success



**Dried fruit**



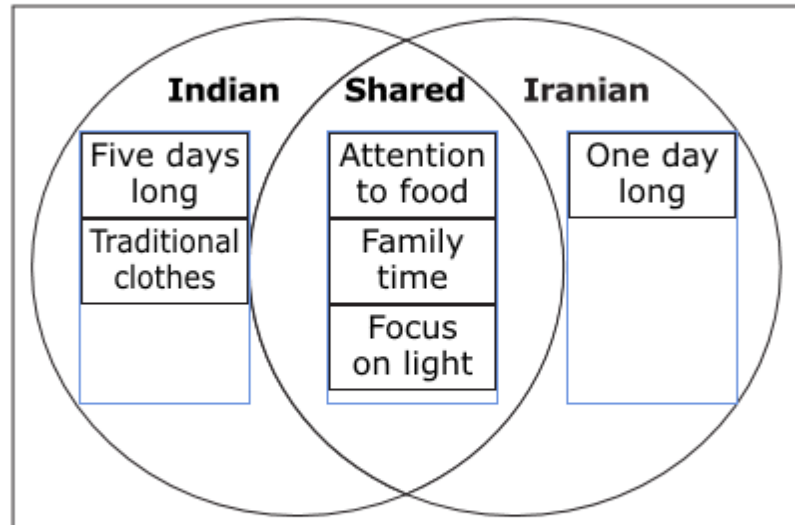
**Nuts**



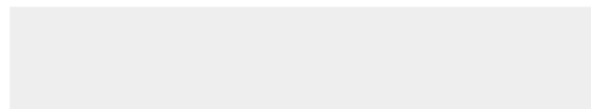
### Question 14

Complete the Venn diagram to indicate which details belong to each group of people.

Drag each detail into the appropriate section.



**Details**



## Question 16

Read this sentence from paragraph 4 in “Diwali: The Indian Festival of Lights.”

Diwali celebrates the victory of Rama, symbolizing the triumph of good over evil, light over darkness and knowledge over ignorance.

In the following quotation from paragraph 20 of “Celebrate Light in the Dark,” identify the two groups of words that are most similar to the theme of the sentence above.

Select the two groups of words that apply.

It is a time when **Iranians reflect** on the previous year and share **nothing but hope** for the days to come. So the **next time you suffer** from the winter blues, just light a candle and know that the **sun will eventually shine**.

## Question 18

The celebrations of Diwali and Shab-e-Yalda have activities that are similar and different.

Select the activities that apply to either Diwali, Shab-e-Yalda, or both.

Activity	Diwali	Shab-e-Yalda
Honors the light of day	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Based on an ancient story	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Participation brings wealth	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Occurs after nightfall	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Takes place in autumn	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

## Question 19

With which statement would the authors of the articles most likely agree?

Select a statement with which both authors would agree.

Then, select a detail from each article for support.

### Statement

The Indian and Persian celebrations of light emphasize feasts, costumes, prayer, and wealth for participants.

The Indian and Persian celebrations bring participants together for prayer and enjoyment.

### Supporting Details: "Diwali: The Indian Festival of Lights"

"Hindus all over India celebrate Diwali, the five-day Festival of Lights, in October or November, decided by the Hindu lunar calendar."

"Diwali is a joyful and colorful holiday."

### Supporting Details: "Celebrate Light in the Dark"

"Iranian families celebrate winter solstice, or the longest night of the year, by opening their homes to families and friends and enjoying a scrumptious feast, while honoring an ancient ritual."

"The winter feast continues when the oldest family member gathers all the visitors and recites poetry, tells fortunes and stories."