

Overview of Item Samplers

Item samplers are one type of student resource provided to help students and educators prepare for test administration. While standardized tests are familiar to almost all students, each assessment has its own layout and ways students interact with it. The item samplers should be used to familiarize students and educators with how the content is assessed by providing examples of the format and item types students could encounter on the MCA.

Other Resources

While this Teacher Guide provides detailed information about the item samplers, the student tutorial is the resource that should be used to familiarize students and educators with the general functionality of the online test, including navigation, tools, and examples of all item types.

For further information about the student tutorial and using student resources, refer to the *Purposes of Student Resources* on the [Item Samplers page](#) of PearsonAccess Next (PearsonAccess Next > Preparing for Testing > Item Samplers). Please contact mde.testing@state.mn.us for any questions about the MCA or resources for testing.

Contents of this Teacher Guide

The Teacher Guides provide supplementary information for the items in the online item samplers, including:

- A detailed answer key for all items in the online item sampler, including: correct answer, item type (multiple choice or technology enhanced), skill domain (benchmark classification based on the academic standards), benchmark, and cognitive complexity (indicated as Depth of Knowledge or DOK) from the test specifications.*
- Passage characteristics, including: substrand, Lexile, and word count.
- Item images that show correct answers followed by: benchmarks to which the sample items align (based on test specifications), DOK, and detailed rationales for correct and incorrect answer options.

For detailed information on benchmarks and cognitive complexity levels, see the [test specifications](#) on the MDE website (Districts, Schools and Educators > Statewide Testing > Test Specifications).

*The answer key for paper item samplers (12-point, 18-point, 24-point and braille test books) is included on the last page of this Teacher Guide. Some items on the paper item samplers appear in the online item sampler and the answer key includes information on where corresponding item information can be found in this guide.

Student Responses

Upon completion of the online item samplers, a report is displayed, which provides student responses for some item types. This report can be printed for use in conjunction with the information in this Teacher's Guide on how the student responded to those items. Note that the overall score on the report is **not** a predictor of performance on the MCA; it is simply a total of correct responses to some items.

**MCA-III Item Sampler Online Answer Key
Grade 6 Reading**

**Section 1
10 Questions**

Item #	Correct Answer	Item Type	Skill Domain	SSB	Depth of Knowledge
1	N/A	TE	Key Ideas and Details	6.4.3.3	II
2	N/A	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	N/A	TE	Key Ideas and Details	6.4.2.2	III
10	N/A	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	N/A	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	N/A	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	N/A	TE	Integration of Knowledge and Ideas	6.5.8.8	III
9	D	MC	Key Ideas and Details	6.5.1.1	II
10	N/A	TE	Key Ideas and Details	6.5.1.1	II
11	D	MC	Craft and Structure	6.5.6.6	II
12	N/A	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	N/A	TE	Craft and Structure	6.4.5.5	II
3	B	MC	Key Ideas and Details	6.4.1.1	II
4	N/A	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	N/A	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	N/A	TE	Key Ideas and Details	6.5.1.1	II
6	A	MC	Craft and Structure	6.5.6.6	II
7	N/A	TE	Key Ideas and Details	6.5.1.1	II
8	N/A	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	N/A	TE	Key Ideas and Details	6.5.1.1	II
13	C	MC	Craft and Structure	6.5.6.6	III
14	N/A	TE	Key Ideas and Details	6.5.1.1	III
15	A	MC	Key Ideas and Details	6.5.3.3	III
16	N/A	TE	Key Ideas and Details	6.5.2.2	III
17	D	MC	Key Ideas and Details	6.5.1.1	III
18	N/A	TE	Key Ideas and Details	6.5.1.1	II
19	N/A	TE	Key Ideas and Details	6.5.2.2	II

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

Section 1: The Trade Fair at Sheshalik

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.

Benchmark: 6.4.3.3

Describe how a particular story's or drama's plot unfolds in a series of episodes as well as how the characters respond or change as the plot moves toward a resolution.

DOK: II

Answer: x

Rationale:

For a full credit response, readers select the three correct groups of words.

Correct Responses

“traveling with us to the trade fair”: Part of the opening line, this phrase immediately sets up the scene by offering readers a description of the primary action—groups traveling together. The term “traveling” shows the movement of the groups, and “trade fair” indicates the destination.

“dogs run along the shore”: In addition to providing a description of the energetic dogs, the image of the shore indicates the events take place near a body of water.

“gliding along in our skin boat”: This descriptive phrase offers strong sensory details that describe the movement and physical appearance of the boat in which the

characters travel. In addition, the description also confirms the setting contains a body of water.

Incorrect Responses

“reindeer skins they have brought”: Although the phrase offers vivid sensory details, the “reindeer skins” are a single object and do not contribute to the development of the setting.

“happy to be free”: Although the phrase helps develop the mood, it lacks sensory details and does not contribute to the development of the setting.

“run for the sheer joy of it”: Although the phrase infers action, running, the individual who runs is not shown. Lacking sensory details, this phrase does not contribute to the development of the setting.

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

Awed by the gathering

Pleased by her heritage

Thrilled summer has arrived

Anxious for the journey to end

Disappointed she must ride with her family

Narrator's Feelings During the Journey

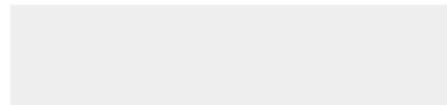


Question 2 Correct Answers

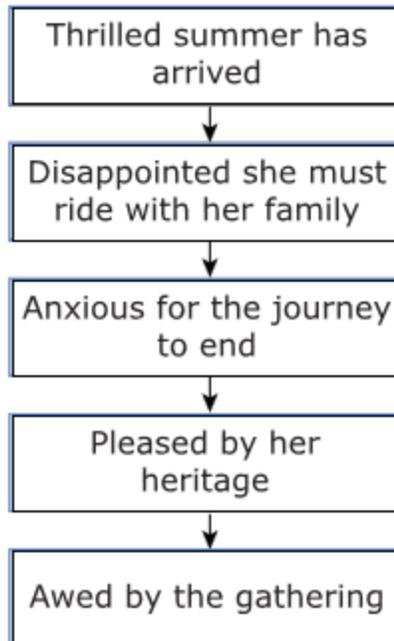
Rearrange the phrases to indicate the order in which the narrator's feelings change from the beginning to the end of the journey.

Drag each phrase into the correct box.

Feelings



Narrator's Feelings During the Journey



Benchmark: 6.4.3.3

Describe how a particular story's or drama's plot unfolds in a series of episodes as well as how the characters respond or change as the plot moves toward a resolution.

DOK: III

Answer: x

Rationale:

For a full credit response, readers drag the narrator's feelings into the correct order as shown.

Correct Responses

1st Thrilled summer has arrived: The narrator proclaims in paragraph 2, "How glorious it is when summer comes again! Glorious to be out on the open water of the summer sea in the nightlong sun...."

2nd Disappointed she must ride with her family: In paragraph 14, after the narrator expresses irritation that she was denied the opportunity to ride in another boat, she says it made her "feel like the lemming..., the one stuck underneath an old sealskin, hollering at the top of his lungs." It is clear the sealskin represents her father's boat when the narrator says, "I want to holler, too, sitting here in my father's boat" (paragraph 15).

3rd Anxious for the journey to end: Later in paragraph 15, the narrator muses, "I had waited so long for this trip to begin, but now, I realize, I'm ready for it to end, for the excitement of the trade fair to start."

4th Pleased by her heritage: Upon hearing her people's song played by the Sheshalik drummers in paragraph 19, the narrator states, "I feel very proud to be from the island, proud to claim such a brave song as the song of my own people, hearing it as if with new ears."

5th Awed by the gathering: In paragraph 21, the narrator expresses amazement when she states, "Sheshalik, at first sight, is too big to believe—all the tents, the caribou-skin tents of our people, stretching out along the edge of the beach and reaching up inland as far as the eye can see." This is her "first impression of the Sheshalik trade fair, that all the people of the world must be here" (paragraph 22).

Incorrect Responses

Any other order presented is incorrect because it will not reflect the order in which the narrator's feelings occurred.

Question 3

Read these sentences from paragraph 13.

Big like a lemming. Aaluk laughed. Tupaaq laughed, too, which made my cheeks grow warm.

Which word best describes how the narrator feels in this excerpt?

- A. Embarrassed
- B. Frightened
- C. Invisible
- D. Upset

Benchmark: 6.4.3.3

Describe how a particular story's or drama's plot unfolds in a series of episodes as well as how the characters respond or change as the plot moves toward a resolution.

DOK: III

Answer: A

Rationale A	Correct: The narrator offers to ride with Tupaaq, and Aaluk suggests she is too little by gently mocking her with the statement, " <i>Big like a lemming</i> " (paragraph 13). Later in the paragraph, the narrator states her "cheeks grow warm." After Aaluk makes the chiding simile in paragraph 13, the narrator feels like a small animal that believes it is in jeopardy but is actually not. The narrator is more embarrassed than upset.
Rationale B	Readers may feel that after Aaluk's statement in paragraph 13, the narrator's reference to being "stuck underneath an old sealskin" (paragraph 14) means she is frightened. However, context does not support this interpretation. She blushes while others tease her in paragraph 13. Their belittling comments embarrass her.
Rationale C	Readers may feel the narrator uses the description of being under the sealskin in paragraph 14 to show she feels invisible, or ignored, after Aaluk's comment in paragraph 13. However, she interacts with her

	sister, Tupaaq, and her parents in paragraphs 8-14. She does not feel unrecognized or invisible.
Rationale D	When the narrator states in paragraph 15 that she wants to holler, readers may interpret this as being upset about Aaluk's comments and Aaluk's and Tupaaq's laughter in paragraph 13. However, the rest of paragraph 15 suggests she is eager for the embarrassing situation to change; she wants to be at the trade fair and away from the teasing she endures.

Question 4

The main reason the author uses italics in the passage is to

- A. signal changes of setting.
- B. indicate important information.
- C. show when a character speaks.
- D. introduce words from other languages.

Benchmark: 6.4.5.5

Analyze how a particular sentence, chapter, scene, or stanza fits into the overall structure of a text and contributes to the development of the theme, setting, or plot.

DOK: II

Answer: C

Rationale A	Paragraph 20 consists of one italicized word: “ <i>Welcoming</i> .” Some readers may feel this indicates a change of setting from the journey to the trade fair. However, it indicates the cumulative sounds of singing from the shore and the boats as the two groups come together. This single word in italics, if signaling changes of setting, would not explain the additional use of italics in the rest of the passage.
Rationale B	Readers may choose this option because the content in italics helps develop the characters, which are important elements in any story. However, the author’s use of italics indicates spoken words, not descriptions, of the characters, as is clearly indicated by the use of dialogue tags (paragraphs 4-14).
Rationale C	Correct: Instead of quotation marks, the author uses italics to indicate when a character speaks, as is evident in the conversations that appear in paragraphs 4-14.
Rationale D	Although the foreign expression “ <i>Aarigaa</i> ” (paragraph 2) is in italics, it is the only appearance in the passage of an italicized foreign word. Thus, if introducing foreign words, this single italicized expression would not explain the additional use of italics in the rest of the passage.

Question 5

Which event signals the arrival of the narrator's family?

- A. People drumming
- B. Flags waving
- C. Babies squealing
- D. Dogs barking

Benchmark: 6.4.1.1

Cite textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

DOK: 1

Answer: A

Rationale A	Correct: In paragraph 19, the narrator states she hears the drummers “begin, at once, to drum one of our own songs, announcing our arrival with our own music.”
Rationale B	Although the “raised...flag, the flag of our whalers” (paragraph 19) identifies the narrator’s people, her father raises the flag to identify his people to the drummers, who then, in turn, announce their arrival to the entire crowd at Sheshalik. In short, the father lifts the flag so the arrival of his people can be announced.
Rationale C	In paragraph 18, the narrator explains the baby “squeals with delight,” and she feels the urge to squeal along with her as the family draws closer to the welcoming group. However, the squeals do not identify the family or announce the family’s arrival.
Rationale D	In paragraph 1, the narrator watches her people’s 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.” However, although the dogs are “happy” and “free” and may be perceived as barking, no actual mention of the dogs barking occurs in the passage.

Question 6

In paragraph 19, why does the narrator describe the song by saying she is “hearing it as if with new ears”?

- A. She has never heard this song before.
- B. The song has more meaning for her this time.
- C. She is unfamiliar with the words in the song.
- D. The song is louder than ever before.

Benchmark: 6.4.4.4

Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the impact of a specific word choice on meaning and tone.

DOK: II

Answer: B

Rationale A	Readers may choose this option because the narrator hears her song “as if with new ears,” or as if hearing it for the first time. However, other context in the paragraph indicates she knows the song well, as she immediately recognizes it as “the song of my own people” (paragraph 19).
Rationale B	Correct: In paragraph 19, the narrator hears her people’s song drummed by the Sheshalik drummers. She states, “Suddenly I feel very proud to be from the island, proud to claim such a brave song as the song of my own people, hearing it as if with new ears.” The term “Suddenly” indicates the narrator has a revelation and experiences a new feeling, one of pride. Her people’s song has acquired richer meaning.
Rationale C	In paragraph 19, the narrator says, “their song changes and they begin, at once, to drum one of our own songs.” Readers may think the use of the word “changes” indicates the drummers and singers on shore are changing the words of the song the narrator knows well. However, the drummers are merely shifting from the song of another tribe to one of her people’s songs.

Rationale D	Readers may think the narrator hears the song differently because the volume of the drums grows “louder and louder” (paragraph 19). However, the volume simply seems to increase as the narrator’s people close the sound-blocking distance between their boats and the shore; the drummers are not actually beginning to drum more loudly. In addition, no text evidence supports the narrator has not heard her song played at this particular volume before.
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Question 7

Why is the narrator forbidden to ride with Tupaaq?

- A. The narrator's grandmother is angry at Tupaaq.
- B. Tupaaq plans to invite the narrator's sister instead.
- C. Tupaaq's boat is too crowded to carry the narrator.
- D. The narrator is too young to ride in Tupaaq's boat.

Benchmark: 6.4.1.1

Cite textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

DOK: II

Answer: D

Rationale A	The narrator's grandmother, Aaka, frowns because her older granddaughter, Aaluk, turns down the invitation to ride in Tupaaq's boat. Aaka favors Tupaaq as a companion for Aaluk, and is therefore angry at Aaluk (paragraph 7). In addition, Aaka does not comment on the narrator's offer to ride in Tupaaq's boat in her sister's place. The narrator is forbidden to ride in the boat because her mother says she is " <i>too little</i> " (paragraph 10).
Rationale B	Although Tupaaq invites the narrator's sister, Aaluk, instead of the narrator (paragraph 7), this does not affect whether the narrator rides with him. When Aaluk refuses Tupaaq's offer, the narrator asks to ride in the boat instead. However, the narrator's mother tells her she is " <i>too little</i> " (paragraph 10), or too young, to ride with Tupaaq.
Rationale C	Readers may choose this option because the traveling party includes many characters. However, text evidence does not indicate the characters travel in a single boat, such as Tupaaq's. In addition, the reason the narrator is not allowed to ride in Tupaaq's boat is because she is " <i>too little</i> " (paragraph 10). No one objecting to her request says it is because the boat is too crowded. In fact, if Aaluk had accepted the invitation, clearly there would have been room for her.
Rationale D	Correct: Although the mother tells the narrator " <i>You're too little</i> " to ride

	<p>in Tupaaq's boat (paragraph 10), it is age, not size, to which the mother refers. In paragraph 11, the narrator states, "I was big, nearly bigger than Aaluk—big enough, certainly, to ride in Tupaaq's well-made boat." Clearly size is not the issue.</p>
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Question 8

In paragraph 15, the narrator says “the women’s voices, clear as water” most likely to reveal that

- A. the sound is perfect and pure.
- B. the words are simple and familiar.
- C. the women sing near the shore.
- D. the women are visible from a great distance.

Benchmark: 6.4.4.4

Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the impact of a specific word choice on meaning and tone.

DOK: II

Answer: A

Rationale A	Correct: The simile “clear as water” to describe the voices of the women indicates true and impeccable enunciation of the notes. This is indicated later, in paragraph 17, where the women’s voices are described as “bright arrows of sound.” Because the narrator hears the voices clearly, the term “arrow” implies a true, certain aim. The term “bright” implies light, which is clear and pure.
Rationale B	Readers might think the narrator understands and recognizes the words the women sing, even from such a long distance. However, the context of paragraph 15 indicates the speaker hears the “note of the women’s voices,” not necessarily the words of the song they sing.
Rationale C	Readers may think the simile is a literal description and choose this option because the family is traveling across “water” (the sea) to the shore of Sheshalik. However, the simile refers to the sound rather than the position of the singers.
Rationale D	Because the narrator vividly describes other sights she sees during the journey—dogs running along the shore (paragraph 1), ocean ice, and a grassy tundra (paragraph 2)—readers may think “clear” suggests the narrator can see the singing women clearly. However, the narrator says she can “hear” (paragraph 15) the voices of the women “when we are still too far away to even see the people” (paragraph 16).

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?

Benchmark: 6.4.2.2

Determine a theme or central idea of a text and how it is conveyed through particular details; provide a summary of the text distinct from personal opinions or judgments.

DOK: III

Answer: x

Rationale:

For a full credit response, readers select the two correct questions.

Correct Responses

Who will likely have a baby soon? The narrator comments, “we ourselves are soon to have a newborn of our own. Nuna, traveling with us, is round as a whale and clumsy in her unaccustomed shape...and often impatient for her time to come” (paragraph 3).

Why are the Siberians going to the trade fair? Traveling with the narrator’s people, the Siberians have “their boats piled high with the reindeer skins they have brought to trade” (paragraph 1).

Incorrect Responses

What is the name of Aaka’s village? Although the Sheshalik drummers know the song of Aaka’s (and the narrator’s) people and the narrator feels “very proud to be from the island” (paragraph 19), Sheshalik is not the name of Aaka’s village. Aaka’s people are “traveling...to the trade fair” (paragraph 1) at Sheshalik, a single village, not an entire

island, which the narrator is seeing for the “first” time (paragraphs 21-22). No other village name is mentioned in the text.

When will the trade fair end? Because the Siberians are traveling with the narrator’s people in “boats piled high with the reindeer skins they have brought to trade” (paragraph 1), it could be assumed trading takes place on the boats while traveling, especially since the narrator says, “I had waited so long for this trip to begin, but now, I realize, I’m ready for it to end” (paragraph 15). However, the trade fair will “start” once they arrive at Sheshalik (paragraph 15). That the trade fair will begin in Sheshalik is also confirmed by the story’s last sentence, “Everyone in the entire world, all here at Sheshalik, preparing to trade.”

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
Owns a well-made boat	<input type="text"/>
Anxious to arrive at the trade fair	<input type="text"/>
Disapproves of Aaluk's behavior	<input type="text"/>
Believes girls can be good hunters	<input type="text"/>
Thinks the family needs another hunter	<input type="text"/>

Question 10 Correct Answers

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

Benchmark: 6.4.1.1

Cite textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

DOK: II

Answer: x

Rationale:

For a full credit response, readers indicate the characters' descriptions by dragging the correct character name into the boxes.

Correct Responses

Narrator

Anxious to arrive at the trade fair: Evidence of the narrator's anxiousness appears in paragraph 15 when the narrator thinks, "I had waited so long for this trip to begin, but now, I realize, I'm ready for it to end, for the excitement of the trade fair to start."

Aaka

Disapproves of Aaluk's behavior: Evidence of Aaka's disapproval appears in paragraph 7 when Aaluk refuses to ride in Tupaaq's boat after Tupaaq has invited her: "...Aaluk said no, muttering to herself how she'd rather run with the dogs. Aaka had frowned at this, because Tupaaq is from Aaka's village, the village of my father's people, and Aaka favors him."

Thinks the family needs another hunter: Evidence for the family's needing another hunter appears in paragraph 5 when Aaka states, "*We need another hunter in this family!*"

Tupaaq

Owens a well-made boat: In paragraph 11, the narrator states, "...big enough, certainly, to ride in Tupaaq's well-made boat."

Believes girls can be good hunters: In paragraph 6, Tupaaq says, "*Girls can be good hunters, too,*" he said, winking at me. "*Girls are good with arrows.*"

Incorrect Responses

The character/description pairings shown are supported by the most specific text evidence. Any other combinations are not well supported by the text.

Section 2: Your Local Desert Food and Drugstore

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.

(To see the entire passage text, refer to the Reading Sampler.)

Benchmark: 6.5.2.2

Determine a central idea of a text and how it is conveyed through particular details; provide a summary of the text distinct from personal opinions or judgments.

DOK: II

Answer: x

Rationale:

For a full credit response, readers select the two sentences from the article that best illustrate the main idea.

Correct Responses

“More than 400 edible plants grow in the Sonoran Desert and many of these plants can be used as medicines”: This sentence from paragraph 4 encompasses the main idea of the article in describing and explaining how the Sonoran Desert is host to a wide variety of edible plants, many of which are used for medicinal purposes. Some examples given in the text are the creosote (paragraphs 7-10), mesquite (paragraph 11), and prickly pear cactus (paragraph 12-13).

“The Sonoran Desert is considered a natural pharmacy because a treatment for almost every illness known to man grows there”: This sentence from paragraph 6 illustrates how the Sonoran Desert is like an outdoor pharmacy that provides medicine for many ailments. The text gives specific examples, such as the creosote plant traditionally being used to “treat diseases the way penicillin is used today” (paragraph 7), that it contains “antibiotic properties” (paragraph 9), and that it is used “as a form of chemotherapy for cancer patients” (paragraph 10). Paragraph 11 cites the mesquite tree as another source of medicine when referring to the tree’s sap that “was used to soothe sore throats.” Paragraph 13 compares the juice from the prickly pear cactus to aloe vera in its use as “a soothing skin lotion for minor rashes and sunburn, just like we use aloe vera today.”

Incorrect Responses

“The Sonoran Desert is an arid region covering 120,000 square miles in southwestern Arizona, southeastern California and parts of Mexico”: Readers might choose this sentence from paragraph 5 as it provides important details about the size and geographical location of the desert. However, this sentence does not illustrate the main idea of the article. The size and geographical details of where the desert is located do not address the main idea that the desert contains a myriad of vegetation with medicinal properties.

“One of the more common Sonoran Desert plants is the creosote bush”: Readers might choose this sentence from paragraph 7 as the author uses paragraphs 7-10 to extensively describe the plant, including traditional and current medicinal uses, and provides many details about the plant itself—smell, chemicals exuded in the soil, roots, drought-resistant properties, etc. However, the sentence focuses specifically on one plant while the main idea of the article is the larger perspective that there are a multitude of plants in the Sonoran Desert used for medicinal purposes.

“Because there are so many medicinal uses for the creosote bush, scientists and botanists are still learning what this plant can do”: Readers might choose this sentence from paragraph 10 as much of the text focuses on the creosote bush. Additionally, the comment about the future potential of the plant as researched by scientists and botanists might give the impression that future possibilities of the plant constitute a main idea of the article. Neither the amount of information on the creosote bush nor its future medicinal potential, however, best illustrate the article’s main idea, which is that the Sonoran Desert provides many natural substances with medicinal purposes.

“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”: Readers might choose this sentence from paragraph 15 thinking this concluding sentence in the text best illustrates the main idea of the article. The main idea of the article, however, is not the legal status of the plants in the Sonoran Desert or where they may be available for sale. Rather, the main idea is that the Sonoran Desert provides many natural substances with medicinal purposes as is evident in the attention to specific plants and their many medicinal purposes throughout the text.

Question 2

The main purpose of paragraphs 1–3 is most likely to

- A. present information that readers need to understand the article.
- B. introduce a problem and solution that help readers visualize the setting.
- C. present an unexpected situation that captures readers' attention.
- D. introduce a relationship between a mother and son that appeals to readers' emotions.

Benchmark: 6.5.6.6

Determine an author's point-of-view or purpose in a text and explain how it is conveyed in the text.

DOK: II

Answer: C

Rationale A	Readers may select this option because paragraph 1 introduces the son's sore throat, and this information helps readers understand the importance of the plants discussed in the rest of the article. However, as paragraph 4 is enough to thoroughly orient readers, the purpose of paragraphs 1-3 is simply to grab readers' attentions. Speaking directly to readers ("Imagine hearing that from your mom!") grabs their attention and hooks them in.
Rationale B	Readers may select this option because paragraph 1 begins with a problem (the son's sore throat), and the mother presents a solution in paragraph 2 ("let's go outside"). In addition, the author poses a rhetorical question, "Go outside to get medicine?" (paragraph 3), which suggests a setting. However, this reference to setting is general rather than specific. The description of the setting (the Sonoran Desert), and the readers' ability to visualize it, does not begin until paragraph 4.
Rationale C	Correct: The mother responds to her son's complaints by offering a strange solution: "grab a bowl and some scissors and let's go outside" (paragraph 2). Paragraph 3 comments on the mother's unusual answer: "Imagine hearing that from your mom! Go outside to get medicine?"

	Paragraphs 1-3 present an unlikely situation that is meant to hook readers into the article.
Rationale D	Readers may select this option because paragraph 2 shows the mom responding to her son's problem, indicating she is taking care of him. However, text evidence does not support this idea because the exchange between them is short and the mother does not offer sympathy, just an enthusiastic solution. Their relationship is not developed because it does not need to be. Paragraphs 1-3 are intended for a different purpose, hooking the reader into the strictly informational remainder of the article.

Question 3

Which sentence best illustrates the author’s opinion?

- A. “One of the more common Sonoran Desert plants is the creosote bush.”
- B. “The most remarkable use for the prickly pear cactus was to control the blood sugar levels in diabetics.”
- C. “There is no part of the mesquite tree that cannot be used as a medicine.”
- D. “Because there are so many medicinal uses for the creosote bush, scientists and botanists are still learning what this plant can do.”

Benchmark: 6.5.6.6

Determine an author’s point-of-view or purpose in a text and explain how it is conveyed in the text.

DOK: II

Answer: B

Rationale A	Readers might select this option because the phrase, “One of the more common...” (paragraph 7) could be read as the author’s personal judgment, that by “common” the author means “ordinary.” This would be a subjective description. However, given the rest of the paragraph, the text indicates the author means exactly what she states; the creosote bush is found in higher proportions than other plants, which is a substantiated fact, not bias or opinion.
Rationale B	Correct: Found in paragraph 13, the author subjectively states that using the plant for diabetes is “The most remarkable use for the prickly pear cactus.” Another individual might find the plant’s most remarkable use to be something else.
Rationale C	Readers might select this option if they think the author is stretching the truth or exaggerating in an effort to persuade readers to think the mesquite tree is more amazing than other desert plants. However, paragraph 11 objectively describes and provides examples for how

	each part of the tree can be used. This confirms the statement, "There is no part of the mesquite tree that cannot be used as a medicine," is also factual.
Rationale D	Readers might select this option from paragraph 10 because it suggests the creosote bush is amazingly useful. The emphasis on the usefulness of the plant might appear as bias, except the wealth of information presented about the many medicinal uses of the creosote bush is strictly factual without interpretation. Many medicinal uses for the bush exist and scientists are still learning about them.

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.

Benchmark: 6.5.1.1

Cite textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

DOK: II

Answer: x

Rationale:

For a full credit response, readers select the three correct statements.

Correct Responses

It is resistant to heat: Paragraph 8 discusses the reasons the creosote bush is a “tough little plant,” a survivor. One reason is the creosote “is resistant to heat, drought, poor soil and competition.”

It has a deep, extensive root system: When competing with other plants for water, “The creosote usually wins because its root systems are deep and extensive” (paragraph 8).

It releases chemicals to keep other plants from growing: To successfully claim territory, “The creosote exudes chemicals in the soil to keep other plants from growing” (paragraph 8).

Incorrect Responses

It has a strong, sweet smell: The information's proximity to paragraph 8, which discusses the creosote's survival tactics, may lead readers to believe the plant's "thick, sweet odor" (paragraph 9) benefits the plant itself. A strong, sweet smell, however, is not a survival tactic of the creosote bush. It is a product of the plant that benefits humans.

Question 5

Which sentence helps support the author’s claim that the Sonoran Desert “is considered a natural pharmacy”?

- A. “Amazingly, the creosote can live up to two years without water.”
- B. “The creosote has been known to help cure colds, stomach cramps and to heal wounds and burns.”
- C. “The creosote is a tough little plant, too.”
- D. “The Spanish explorers who first came to the Sonoran Desert called the creosote ‘Little Stinker’ because of the thick, sweet odor the plants emit after a rain storm.”

Benchmark: 6.5.8.8

Trace and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text, distinguishing claims that are supported by reasons and evidence from claims that are not.

DOK: II

Answer: B

Rationale A	Some readers may choose this option because for a plant to be viable in the desert and then to be valuable as a pharmaceutical, the plant would need to survive the dry environment. However, merely being able to withstand drought does not in itself make a plant medicinally beneficial. The article lists many reasons the creosote is considered the “drugstore of the desert” (paragraph 7).
Rationale B	Correct: A pharmacy is where people get treatments for illnesses and injuries. The statement found in paragraph 7 offers support that a number of illnesses and injuries are treatable by the creosote bush, a plant from the Sonoran Desert. The many treatments of the creosote bush, which are listed in paragraphs 7, 9, and 10, are the reasons the bush is called the “drugstore of the desert” (paragraph 7).
Rationale C	Because the creosote plant is one of the plants discussed as a provider of medicine, readers may think the creosote can only provide medicine because it is tough. However, toughness is not evidence in and of itself that the creosote is considered the “drugstore of the desert” (paragraph 7).

Rationale D	Readers may select this option because the sweet smell from the creosote after a rain storm is actually a medicine itself, similar to “Vicks” (paragraph 9), but that information is found later in the paragraph. In addition, the smell offers help only with sinus congestion, and pharmacies provide more than decongestants.
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Question 6

In the past, how did the native people of the Sonoran Desert determine which plants were safe for humans?

- A. They used trial and error.
- B. They learned from their ancestors.
- C. They tried the plants on animals first.
- D. They studied how the plants affected the environment.

Benchmark: 6.5.1.1

Cite textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

DOK: II

Answer: A

Rationale A	Correct: Paragraph 14 states, “The most probable answer” for how native people discovered which plants were safe for human use was “simply, trial and error.”
Rationale B	This is a plausible option because paragraph 5 states, “The Natives..., and their ancestors, have lived in the Sonoran Desert from roughly 300 B.C.” It is likely the present native peoples’ ancestors would have passed along information about plants to the younger generations. However, this method cannot explain how the original natives learned about the plants.
Rationale C	Readers may select this option because paragraph 14 explains one method used to discover safe medicinal plants “is that the native peoples watched what the animals ate. If it helped them with an ailment then it just might help humans.” However, the native peoples simply watched, rather than experimented on, animals to observe their reactions to the plants.
Rationale D	Paragraph 8 discusses how the creosote bush impacts the environment, and paragraph 14 explains native peoples might have chosen certain plants based on how the plants affected the animals that ate them. Readers might conclude that watching how the plants

	impacted the environment, specifically animals, might help the native peoples determine the plant's safety. Fauna, however, are only a part of the environment. Text evidence does not support that the native peoples observed a plant's impact on the flora of the desert to determine its safety.
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Question 7

Vicks is a strong-smelling medicine currently used to treat colds and congestion.

Read this quotation from paragraph 9.

A pre-historic Vicks!

The author included this quotation most likely to

- A. explain in detail how the plant helps loosen nasal passages.
- B. provide a sensory description of the scent of the creosote bush when boiled.
- C. add humor to maintain interest while relating the material to modern times.
- D. explain a benefit of the creosote bush while providing a distraction from the facts.

Benchmark: 6.5.6.6

Determine an author's point-of-view or purpose in a text and explain how it is conveyed in the text.

DOK: III

Answer: C

Rationale A	Readers might choose this option because paragraph 9 explains the creosote's scent is useful as a decongestant. The proclamation ("A pre-historic Vicks!") supports the explanation, as Vicks is also a decongestant. However, a student must be familiar with Vicks and know exactly how the medicine works in order for the proclamation to serve as an explanation of how the creosote's scent works. Readers should not have to rely on prior knowledge.
Rationale B	Readers might choose this option because the scent of the plant after a rain is described in paragraph 9 as a "thick, sweet odor." However, the

	author does not describe what the smell is like when the plant has been boiled, except to compare it to Vicks. Readers who are familiar with Vicks will have a strong scent memory associated with it, but the passage does not describe the scent of Vicks or state that Vicks and the creosote smell the same, only that they have similar effects on the nasal passages.
Rationale C	Correct: Found in paragraph 9, this line invites readers to laugh, breaks up the information, and makes the creosote bush relevant to something present in the lives of some modern readers—Vicks. Even if readers are not familiar with Vicks, they should understand that “Vicks” is modern because it is deliberately described as “pre-historic,” thus indicating Vicks is the exact opposite of “pre-historic.”
Rationale D	Readers may select this option because paragraph 9 discusses a medicinal benefit of the plant. However, the tag line comparing it to Vicks is not necessary—the same information is provided earlier in the paragraph. The proclamation, therefore, better serves another purpose. Because it is humorous, it lightens the tone of the passage, but that is not the same thing as a distraction from the facts. It actually complements the facts.

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.

Benchmark: 6.5.8.8

Cite textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

DOK: II

Answer: x

Rationale:

For a full credit response, readers select the two correct statements.

Correct Responses

The creosote bush is a plant that pharmacists could benefit from studying:

Paragraph 7 introduces the creosote bush as the “drugstore of the desert.” Examples of the plant’s medicinal attributes follow, including use as a cure and salve (paragraph 7), antibiotic and nasal decongestant (paragraph 9), and possible “chemotherapy for cancer patients” (paragraph 10). As “scientists and botanists are still learning what this plant can do” (paragraph 10), pharmacists could also benefit from studying the plant.

Native people discovered many uses for plants in the desert: The native people, who “have lived in the Sonoran Desert from roughly 300 B.C.” (paragraph 5), sought out

the desert's plants for "food and treatment for their illnesses" (paragraph 4), as well as myriad other uses. For example, the mesquite tree was "known as the desert's 'tree of life' since it had so many uses. Bean pods from the tree were used for food, the wood to build houses and the tree roots for cords and ropes." In addition, "There is no part of the mesquite tree that cannot be used as a medicine" (paragraph 11).

Incorrect Responses

People enjoy finding interesting foods and medicines in the desert: The article's upbeat tone (e.g., "A pre-historic Vicks!") and wealth of information may seem to convey the idea that people enjoy the search for food and medicine in the desert. No text evidence, however, suggests people, past or present, have enjoyed the search. Whether to "cure colds" (paragraph 7), "build houses" (paragraph 11), or discover forms of "chemotherapy for cancer patients" (paragraph 10), the search for desert plants' uses is done out of necessity and survival, not enjoyment.

People value the prickly pear cactus for all its parts: Just as the mesquite tree's "Black gum...was placed on the gums of teething babies to help relieve pain" (paragraph 11), prickly pear cactus "pads were held on gums and cheeks to lessen inflammation from gum infections and mouth sores" (paragraph 13). In addition, both plants were used as food. The mesquite tree and prickly pear cactus's similarities may lead readers to believe the prickly pear cactus is the plant valued for all its parts. However, paragraph 11 states "there is no part of the mesquite tree that cannot be used." No such quality is stated of the prickly pear cactus.

The prickly pear cactus survives in the desert longer than the creosote bush: The prickly pear's hardiness is discussed in paragraph 12, which states, "This 'Mickey Mouse ear' looking cactus grows in the desert where nothing else will." However, "The creosote is a tough little plant, too. It is resistant to heat, drought, poor soil and competition" (paragraph 8). In addition, neither plant's life span is discussed in the article.

Question 9

Why is the mesquite tree known as “the desert’s ‘tree of life’”?

- A. Bean pods of the tree were used as nourishing food.
- B. The tree grows in the desert where nothing else will grow.
- C. Clear sap from the tree was used to relieve sore throats.
- D. The native peoples use all parts of the tree to survive in the desert.

Benchmark: 6.5.1.1

Cite textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

DOK: II

Answer: D

Rationale A	Readers may select this option because edible bean pods are one useful aspect of the mesquite tree (paragraph 11). However, the plant is not called the “tree of life” merely because it grows edible bean pods. There are many reasons, including use as medicine and building materials, that the mesquite is called the “tree of life” (paragraph 11).
Rationale B	Readers may select this option because the phrase will be familiar, as it is stated later in the passage about the prickly pear cactus in paragraph 12: The “cactus grows in the desert where nothing else will.” In addition, the name “tree of life” might imply the mesquite is able to cling to life in even the most intolerable conditions. However, this statement refers to the prickly pear, not to the mesquite. The mesquite is the “tree of life” for other reasons listed in the passage, none of which refer to an ability to thrive where no other plants will.
Rationale C	Readers may select this option because paragraph 11 states, “the tree’s clear sap was used to soothe sore throats.” Soothing sore throats, however, is only one of many reasons, all of which are listed in paragraph 11, that the mesquite tree is called the “tree of life.”
Rationale D	Correct: Paragraph 11 states, “The mesquite tree is another common plant and is known as the desert’s ‘tree of life’ since it had so many uses.” The use of all its parts helped the people survive in an otherwise intolerable desert.

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

Medicinal Purposes

Controls blood sugar levels	Relieves stomach cramps	Soothes sore throats
Clears nasal passages	Cures earaches	Soothes minor rashes

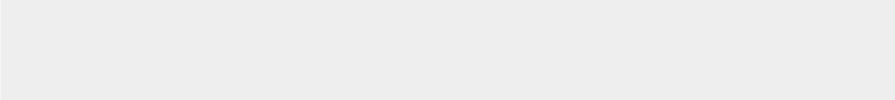
Question 10 Correct Answers

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



(Beneath each category, options may appear in any order.)

Benchmark: 6.5.1.1

Cite textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

DOK: II

Answer: x

Rationale:

For a full credit response, readers identify the medicinal purposes of desert plants by dragging the purpose into the correct box.

Correct Responses

Mesquite Tree

Soothes sore throats: Paragraph 11, which discusses the medicinal uses of the mesquite tree, explains “the tree’s clear sap was used to soothe sore throats.”

Creosote Bush

Relieves stomach cramps: Paragraph 7 states, “The creosote has been known to help cure colds, stomach cramps and to heal wounds and burns.”

Clears nasal passages: After a rain, the creosote bush emits an odor, which “is a medicine itself because it contains antibiotic properties and when the leaves of the bush are boiled the smell helps loosen nasal passages” (paragraph 9).

Prickly Pear Cactus

Controls blood sugar levels: Paragraph 13 reveals “the most remarkable use for the prickly pear cactus was to control the blood sugar levels in diabetics.”

Cures earaches: The prickly pear cactus was used “To cure earaches, a split pad was warmed and placed over the ear” (paragraph 13).

Soothes minor rashes: Paragraph 13 states, “Juice from the prickly pear was used as a soothing skin lotion for minor rashes and sunburn, just like we use aloe vera today.”

Incorrect Responses

No extra responses are offered. Readers who switch purposes have not made associations based on factual statements in the text.

Question 11

The author would most likely agree that

- A. native peoples appreciate living in the desert.
- B. native plants treat illnesses better than modern medicines.
- C. surviving in deserts is difficult without careful study of native plants.
- D. using native plants to treat illnesses is a wise use of natural resources.

Benchmark: 6.5.6.6

Determine an author’s point-of-view or purpose in a text and explain how it is conveyed in the text.

DOK: II

Answer: D

Rationale A	Native peoples’ attitude about life in the desert is not discussed, but readers might select this option because paragraph 14 portrays the native peoples as becoming more familiar with their land and paragraph 15 emphasizes the plants are special enough to warrant a law protecting them. Also, paragraph 5 notes the native peoples have lived in the “Sonoran Desert from roughly 300 B.C.” Readers may conclude if the people have lived in the desert for centuries, they like living there and are grateful for their home.
Rationale B	Readers may select this option because the author provides many examples of how native plants can serve the same or similar functions as modern medicines. For example, the prickly pear cactus is used “just like we use aloe vera today” (paragraph 13), and the creosote bush is comparable to a modern day medicine, Vicks (paragraph 9). However, the author never goes so far as to claim the native plants are better than modern medicine, only that the plants are remarkably useful.
Rationale C	Readers might select this option because in paragraph 8, the creosote bush is described as “tough,” able to live in “poor soil” and survive “drought.” Also, the mesquite tree is known as the “tree of life” (paragraph 11). These details might suggest to readers life is harsh in

	<p>the desert and the key to survival is the careful study of how native plants survive. However, the main idea of the passage does not address the rates of survival in the desert and such a conclusion is not supported by text evidence.</p>
Rationale D	<p>Correct: Paragraph 4 states, "More than 400 edible plants grow in the Sonoran Desert and many of these plants can be used as medicines." The remainder of the passage describes the many ways these desert plants can be used. Paragraph 10 discusses the creosote bush and states, "scientists and botanists are still learning what this plant can do." In paragraph 11, the mesquite tree is called the "tree of life" because all parts of the plant can be used to sustain life. Paragraphs 12-13 discuss the many medicinal uses of the prickly pear cactus. In paragraph 15, the author states, "After gaining a full understanding of how these plants work, the people of the Sonoran Desert had their very own pharmacy in the desert." The author clearly believes it is wise, even today, to make use of medicinally beneficial natural resources.</p>

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

Benchmark: 6.5.3.3

Analyze in detail how a key individual, event, or idea is introduced, illustrated, and elaborated in a text (e.g., through examples or anecdotes).

DOK: II

Answer: x

Rationale:

For a full credit response, readers stack the elements of organization in the correct order as presented in the article.

Correct Responses

1st A narrative scene: The article begins with a narrative scenario where a boy complains his throat hurts and he is hungry. His mother’s remedy for both complaints is to say, “Okay, son, grab a bowl and some scissors and let’s go outside” (paragraphs 1-2).

2nd Background information: Paragraphs 4-6 provide general information on the Sonoran Desert, including the history of the desert (paragraphs 4-5), its geographical location and size (paragraph 5), and information on the native people of the area (paragraphs 4-5).

3rd Descriptions of useful vegetation: Paragraphs 7-13 discuss the properties of specific plants, namely creosote (paragraphs 7-10), mesquite (paragraph 11), and prickly pear cactus (paragraphs 12-13).

4th Theories of discovery: Paragraph 14 considers the question of how people discovered the medicinal qualities of the plants. One theory proposed is “the native peoples watched what the animals ate.” The most likely theory according to the author is “simply, *trial and error*.”

5th Description of current laws: Paragraph 15 outlines the current legal protections on many plants while sharing the information that “with special permission” some of the plants are sold in certain stores.

Incorrect Responses

Any other order presented is incorrect because it will not reflect the order in which the organizational elements were utilized.

Section 3: Catalog

Question 1

What does the speaker say cats do just before they jump?

- A. "wait"
- B. "sneak"
- C. "walk"
- D. "sing"

Benchmark: 6.4.3.3

Describe how a particular story's or drama's plot unfolds in a series of episodes as well as how the characters respond or change as the plot moves toward a resolution.

DOK: 1

Answer: A

Rationale A	Correct: Cats "wait in a lump" (line 7) before they jump.
Rationale B	Cats are said to "sneak" (line 13), but this implies motion. "Cats wait" (line 7), or are motionless, just before jumping.
Rationale C	A cat's walking is mentioned or described in lines 1, 6, and 40, but walking does not precede jumping. To jump, a cat has to stop, hunker to gather its force (i.e., "wait"), and then spring (lines 7-8).
Rationale D	In the fourth stanza, the poet describes a cat singing, but this occurs after the stanza that describes a cat jumping, and singing (making noise) is unlikely to precede springing (movement of the entire body).

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)

Benchmark: 6.4.5.5

Analyze how a particular sentence, chapter, scene, or stanza fits into the overall structure of a text and contributes to the development of the theme, setting, or plot.

DOK: II

Answer: x

Rationale:

For a full credit response, readers select the two sets of lines that contrast quiet and noisy cats.

Correct Responses

“They have technique. / Oh, cats don’t creak, / They sneak”: Lines 11-13 show how quiet cats can be. The cats’ technique is silent stealth. The cats do not make a sound (they “don’t creak”) as they “sneak” and move quietly.

“A cat is apt to sing upon a major scale: / This concert is for everybody, this / Is wholesale”: Lines 23-25 contrast with the quietness expressed in lines 11-13 and indicate how loud cats can be. In these lines, the cat vocalizes (“to sing”) and makes loud noises by indicating the loud concert is broadcast to a wide audience (“for everybody” and “wholesale”). The poet’s choice of words makes it clear that great noise is being projected by the cat over a large area.

Incorrect Responses

“Cats wait in a lump, / Jump in a streak. / Cats, when they jump, are sleek”: Lines 7-9 do not address the issue of noise made by a cat (either quiet or loud). Instead, the lines focus on the appearance and ability of cats as they jump. Readers might choose these lines thinking the cats are making a noise as they jump “in a streak,” but neither noise nor its absence are addressed in these lines.

“You walk around one / As if he were the City Hall / After that”: Lines 19-21 do not address the issue of noise made by a cat (either quiet or loud). Instead, the lines focus on the tendency of cats to stake out a position to sleep that necessitates others to walk around them. Readers might choose these lines thinking a sleeping cat is a quiet cat, but neither noise nor its absence are addressed in these lines.

Question 3

In lines 14–18, to what does the speaker compare comfort?

- A. A refreshing nap
- B. A nice rug
- C. A secret hideaway
- D. A public building

Benchmark: 6.4.1.1

Cite textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

DOK: II

Answer: B

Rationale A	The cats' spreading of "comfort beneath them" (line 15) is presented as an action preparatory to sleeping. Hence, the napping itself, instead of the spreading of the cat's body, might appear comfortable to readers.
Rationale B	Correct: The simile in lines 15-16, "They spread comfort beneath them / Like a good mat," clearly compares comfort to a "good mat," or a nice rug.
Rationale C	Line 17 uses the word "place," which readers might think could be a secret hideaway. However, the place is separate from the cats' bodies, which they comfortably spread "beneath them / Like a good mat" (lines 15-16). The "place" is where cats create comfort.
Rationale D	Although the cat's comfort inspires tiptoeing reverence, "As if he were the City Hall" (line 20), lines 15-16 compare the cat, not the comfort the cat creates, to City Hall.

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

.

Question 4 Correct Answers

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

.

Benchmark: 6.4.4.4

Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the impact of a specific word choice on meaning and tone.

DOK: II

Answer: x

Rationale:

For a full credit response, readers select the word in each dropdown that correctly completes the sentence.

Correct Responses

1st inline choice

uses: The word “uses” demonstrates a similar action to the tested vocabulary word of wields. The cat moves his tail in a similar way to a conductor moving a baton. The cat uses his tail as an instrument to direct his “concert” (line 24).

2nd inline choice

baton: The word “baton” refers to a thin stick used by a music conductor. This metaphorical “baton” is the cat’s tail in the poem. The poet’s use of the word “baton” provides a context clue that allows readers to determine the meaning of wields (line 26). Lines 24-25 also establish this context by creating the imagery of the cat “performing” (“This concert is for everybody, this / Is wholesale”) to prepare for the appearance of the “baton.”

Incorrect Responses

1st inline choice

displays: The word “displays” indicates the cat is merely showing/presenting his tail, whereas it is made clear the cat is actually performing an action with his tail to conduct his concert. “Displays” is more passive in this case than the active motion of using his tail as a baton.

curls: The word “curls” indicates the cat is merely moving his tail into a curled position, whereas it is made clear the cat is actually performing an action with his tail to conduct his concert. Making his tail into a curved shape is not enough to indicate the cat is using his tail as a baton.

2nd inline choice

wholesale: In line 25, the word “wholesale” is used to indicate the concert is open to everyone, not merely to a selected audience. Thus, the poet’s use of the word “wholesale” does not provide a context clue for readers to determine the meaning of wields.

concert: In line 24, the word “concert” is used to mean a musical performance. Thus, the poet’s use of the word “concert” does not provide a context clue for readers to determine the meaning of wields.

Question 5

Which group of readers would probably enjoy this poem the most?

- A. People who have cats
- B. Scientists who study cats
- C. People who are afraid of cats
- D. Veterinarians who take care of cats

Benchmark: 6.4.2.2

Determine a theme or central idea of a text and how it is conveyed through particular details; provide a summary of the text distinct from personal opinions or judgments.

DOK: II

Answer: A

Rationale A	Correct: The poet expresses affection for cats and uses images that would likely be familiar to readers who have or have not had cats.
Rationale B	The poet describes the behavior of cats, but not in scientific language.
Rationale C	The poet portrays cats as likable and entertaining, but the poem's content, tone, or diction is not persuasive or reassuring.
Rationale D	Most veterinarians likely feel some degree of warmth toward their feline patients, but that basic warmth would not necessarily predispose a veterinarian to enjoy a poem about them.

Section 4: Diwali: The Indian Festival of Lights / Celebrate Light in the Dark

Question 1

The author begins the article by mentioning Halloween and Thanksgiving most likely to

- A. explain when Diwali is celebrated.
- B. describe activities that occur during Diwali.
- C. relate Diwali to American holidays.
- D. compare American foods to those eaten during Diwali.

Benchmark: 6.5.6.6

Determine an author's point-of-view or purpose in a text and explain how it is conveyed in the text.

DOK: II

Answer: C

Rationale A	Paragraph 1 lists October and November specifically, which are the months in which Diwali might fall. However, instead of simply stating Diwali is celebrated in October or November, the author draws a more lengthy comparison that involves Halloween and Thanksgiving. Rather than merely establish a time frame, the author relates Diwali to American holidays to appeal to a wide audience (paragraph 2).
Rationale B	Paragraph 1 lists activities that occur during Halloween and Thanksgiving, holidays that take place during the same months in which Diwali might fall. However, Diwali activities are not mentioned in the first or second paragraph. In addition, Diwali activities (paragraphs 5-10) are not the same as those that occur during Halloween and Thanksgiving.
Rationale C	Correct: By mentioning both Halloween and Thanksgiving in paragraph 1, which occur during the same time frame as Diwali (paragraph 2), the author appeals to a primarily American audience who might not know about Diwali. The author makes the holiday more accessible and relatable to a wide audience.

Rationale D	Paragraph 1 mentions the “bags bursting with candy” during Halloween and the “roasted turkey” at Thanksgiving. However, Diwali foods are not mentioned in the first or second paragraph; thus the author is not drawing a comparison between American holiday foods and Diwali foods. In addition, the foods eaten during Diwali (paragraph 8) are not the same as those consumed during Halloween and Thanksgiving.
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Question 2

Which four items are associated with Diwali?

Drag the items that apply into the box.

Diwali

 Tunics	 Spring	 Knowledge
 Chocolate	 Wealth	 Lights

Question 2 Correct Answers

Which four items are associated with Diwali?

Drag the items that apply into the box.

Diwali



(Options may appear in any order.)

Benchmark: 6.5.1.1

Cite textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

DOK: II

Answer: x

Rationale:

For a full credit response, readers drag the correct items into the box.

Correct Responses

Tunics: In paragraph 9, when Esha returns home “from school, she changes into a traditional north Indian dress called a *salwar kameez* (SAL-waar ka-MEES). A salwar kameez is a knee-length tunic spun in Indian silks....”

Knowledge: Paragraph 4 explains, “Diwali celebrates the victory of Rama, symbolizing the triumph of good over evil, light over darkness and knowledge over ignorance.”

Wealth: Paragraph 5 states, “Hindus also believe that Lakshmi, the goddess of wealth, will visit a home lit in sparkling lights and shower it with riches.”

Lights: Much of the article centers on the purpose and use of lights during Diwali. Diwali is a celebration of “the victory of Rama, symbolizing the triumph of good over evil, light over darkness and knowledge over ignorance.” Honoring Rama’s return, Hindus “set up rows and rows of lamps called *diyas*” (paragraph 5) inside and outside the home.

Incorrect Responses

Spring: The article directly states, “Hindus all over India celebrate Diwali, the five-day Festival of Lights, in October or November, decided by the Hindu lunar calendar” (paragraph 2). No direct mention or suggestion of spring occurs in the article.

Chocolate: Although “many Indian sweets” (paragraph 8) are enjoyed by families or placed before “statues of gods and goddesses” (paragraph 10) on Diwali, no mention of chocolate is made in the article.

Question 3

How is celebrating Diwali different in the United States than in India?

- A. The meal is more complex in the United States.
- B. The diya candles burn a shorter time in the United States.
- C. The festival is a shorter length in the United States.
- D. The festival clothing is more formal in the United States.

Benchmark: 6.5.1.1

Cite textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

DOK: 1

Answer: B

Rationale A	Readers may select this option because the meal is discussed at length in paragraph 8 and, with the variety of dishes involved, sounds fairly complex. However, the meal is described as “a traditional Indian dinner,” indicating it is the same as those prepared in India.
Rationale B	Correct: Paragraph 7 states, “here in the U.S., the fickle autumn winds blow the diyas out much more quickly than in India.”
Rationale C	Diyas burn a shorter time in the U.S. (paragraph 7). Readers may therefore think the festival ends when the diyas blow out because Lakshmi visits houses “lit in sparkling lights” (paragraph 5) and because the focus of the celebration is “light over darkness” (paragraph 4). However, text evidence does not support that snuffed diyas mark the celebration’s end. The lighting of diyas is only one of many Diwali rituals.
Rationale D	Although description of the salwar kameez (the festival clothing) is contained in a single paragraph, the clothing is described as “a traditional north Indian dress” (paragraph 9). The colorful, embroidered, and beaded silk tunic, pants, and scarf are not more formal in the U.S. than in India. The clothing is just as elaborate.

Question 4

Which sentence from the article best supports the heading “Traditional Indian Dress”?

- A. “Esha and her mom do many special things to get ready.”
- B. “A long *dupatta* (DOO-pa-ta) or scarf, drapes over the neck in a complementary color and design.”
- C. “After everyone is dressed, the family gathers for the *puja* (POO-ja) or prayers at home.”
- D. “Both Indian and American children perform traditional dances before the entire school body.”

Benchmark: 6.5.1.1

Cite textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

DOK: 1

Answer: B

Rationale A	One of the “special things” (paragraph 6) Esha and her mother do on the day of Diwali is dress in the “traditional north Indian dress” (paragraph 9). However, this statement, which lacks specificity, is not the best support for the heading, “Traditional Indian Dress.” In addition, the statement is located under the heading, “Getting Ready for Diwali.”
Rationale B	Correct: This statement describes an item of clothing that complements the “traditional north Indian dress called a <i>salwar kameez</i> ” (paragraph 9). The statement also appears in paragraph 9, under the proper heading, “Traditional Indian Dress.”
Rationale C	This statement references getting dressed. However, the statement discusses the activities that occur after the celebrants have donned their ritual clothing. In addition, this statement is from paragraph 10, under “A Time for Prayer,” which comes after the author’s description of the clothing.
Rationale D	This statement references traditional dances, which readers may think involves traditional Indian clothing. However, text evidence does not confirm whether the students wear traditional clothing while dancing. In addition, this statement appears under the last heading, “Celebrating Diwali at School,” not under “Traditional Indian Dress.”

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.

Benchmark: 6.5.1.1

Cite textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

DOK: II

Answer: x

Rationale:

For a full credit response, readers select the three true statements.

Correct Responses

They enjoy Indian customs: Their yearly celebration of Diwali, an Indian festival, is testament to the Sharmas's enjoyment of Indian customs. They enjoy doing "many special things to get ready" (paragraph 6), including preparing and buying traditional food (paragraph 8), wearing traditional dress (paragraph 9), and participating in traditional rituals (paragraphs 6 and 10).

They are proud of their culture: The pride the Sharmas have for their culture is clearly evident when "Esha's mom gathered with other Indian parents and asked the school

principal if their children could celebrate Diwali as an important ethnic holiday” (paragraph 11).

They are committed to their beliefs: Esha’s parents, who moved to the United States from India (paragraph 2), continue to practice their beliefs in their American home. Their placement of diyas around the home suggests they continue to honor the return of Rama and the belief “that Lakshmi, the goddess of wealth, will visit a home lit in sparkling lights and shower it with riches” (paragraph 5). Commitment to their beliefs is also exemplified in Esha’s mom’s successful attempt to encourage Esha’s school to celebrate Diwali (paragraph 11).

Incorrect Responses

They value attending Hindu schools: Although Esha’s mom asks her daughter’s American school to celebrate the Hindu celebration of Diwali (paragraph 11), no text evidence supports the notion the Sharmas prefer Hindu over American schools. In fact, the text does not clarify whether Esha’s mom prefers Hindu schools or if she simply wants her daughter’s American school to incorporate Diwali into its standard schedule.

They make their own special clothing: If read as verbs, the terms “spun,” “embroidered,” and “beaded” (paragraph 9) could represent actions taken by the Sharmas to create their own traditional dress. No text evidence, however, exists to support either this notion or the notion the dress was purchased elsewhere. A reading of the text cannot confirm the origin of the dress.

They like to celebrate American holidays: Although paragraph 1 mentions “Halloween in October” and “Thanksgiving in November,” the same months in which Diwali is celebrated, no text evidence exists to confirm whether the Sharmas celebrate American holidays. The text discusses only one holiday, Diwali, celebrated by the Sharmas.

Question 6

Which sentence best reveals the author’s attitude about the celebration of Diwali?

- A. “Diwali is a joyful and colorful holiday.”
- B. “Diwali is also a time to celebrate with food.”
- C. “A salwar kameez is a knee-length tunic spun in Indian silks (or cotton) and embroidered or beaded with colorful designs.”
- D. “For a puja, Esha and her mom put statues of gods and goddesses on the kitchen counter, placing diyas and *mithai* (MEE-tie-e) or sweets as offerings before them.”

Benchmark: 6.5.6.6

Determine an author’s point-of-view or purpose in a text and explain how it is conveyed in the text.

DOK: II

Answer: A

Rationale A	Correct: The words “joyful” and “colorful” (paragraph 6) are both positive descriptions; “joyful” in particular has a strong positive connotation that is unnecessary in a factual description of Diwali. The word choice in this sentence from paragraph 6 reveals the author’s positive slant.
Rationale B	The term “celebrate” (paragraph 8) has positive connotations. However, in this instance, “celebrate” is a factual report of what celebrants do on Diwali. The word is not a reflection of the author’s personal feelings about Diwali.
Rationale C	The description “colorful designs” (paragraph 9) sounds positive and praising. The description, however, is based on fact rather than opinion. No matter how the author feels about the holiday, the tunics are colorful items of clothing.
Rationale D	Readers might think the author perceives the “diyas” and “ <i>mithai</i> ” (paragraph 10) as offerings to the gods and goddesses. However, the account provided is factual, not swayed by the author’s opinion or attitude.

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

Reasons for Use of Light and Heat

To light the house	To honor customs
To remove evil spirits	To play special games
To remain comfortable	To provide light to read

Question 7 Correct Answers

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

(Options may appear in any order.)

Benchmark: 6.5.1.1

Cite textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

DOK: II

Answer: x

Rationale:

For a full credit response, readers identify the four appropriate reasons by dragging the reasons into the boxes.

Correct Responses

To remove evil spirits: Like the ancient Persians who “burned small fires all night, thinking it would chase away the darkness and evil spirits,” Iranians today create the same light by setting fireplaces and candles alight (paragraph 15).

To honor customs: Iranians fill their homes with light during the winter solstice to continue “honoring an ancient ritual” (paragraph 13) that “has been celebrated by Iranians for more than 3,500 years” (paragraph 14). Just as coal ovens and small fires kept ancient Persians warm and their homes lit, “heaters, fireplaces and...candles” (paragraph 15) perform the same roles in the homes of Iranians today.

To remain comfortable: December 21 marks the night of the winter solstice, and “To survive this long and cold night, the first thing Iranians do is warm up their homes” (paragraph 15). On dark, cold nights, light and heat provide comfort.

To light the house: Shab-e-Yalda is a celebration of the “longest night of the year” when children are allowed to “stay up past [their] bedtime” (paragraph 13) and fires are lit to “chase away the darkness” (paragraph 15), implying homes would be dark without the use of light.

Incorrect Responses

To play special games: The telling of “fortunes and stories” and “jokes” (paragraph 18) occurs after the house is lit and warmed. However, celebrating an ancient observance that “symbolizes the victory of the sun over darkness” (paragraph 14) is the reason Iranians light their homes, not the playing of games.

To provide light to read: Paragraph 18 explains, “the oldest family member gathers all the visitors and recites poetry, tells fortunes and stories” and plays “music.” No text evidence, however, exists to support the idea that poetry, fortunes, stories, and music are read. Even if they are read, the ability to read is a product of the light, not the reason for the light.

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.

Benchmark: 6.5.1.1

Cite textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

DOK: II

Answer: x

Rationale:

For a full credit response, readers select the four words that apply.

Correct Responses

mouth-watering

yummy

lush

satisfying

The adjectives “mouth-watering,” “yummy,” “lush,” and “satisfying” subjectively describe the pleasing tastes of the food and make the foods seem alluring.

Incorrect Responses

traditional

chopped

dried

The adjectives “traditional,” “chopped,” and “dried” objectively describe the appearance of the food and do not offer opinions that make the food seem tasty or tempting.

Question 9

Read this sentence from paragraph 18.

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

Which conclusion can readers draw from this sentence?

- A. Iranian people respect elders of the family.
- B. The winter feast involves much laughter.
- C. Iranian people often offer generosity to strangers.
- D. The winter feast requires the family to stay the night.

Benchmark: 6.5.1.1

Cite textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

DOK: II

Answer: A

Rationale A	Correct: In the celebration of Shab-e-Yalda, the oldest member of the family leads the group and is in the spotlight, sharing wisdom and tales (paragraph 18).
Rationale B	Paragraph 18 states, “Families play music, tell jokes and enjoy the extended evening.” This implies laughter is part of Shab-e-Yalda. However, the telling of jokes occurs after “the oldest family member gathers all the visitors and recites poetry, tells fortunes and stories” (paragraph 18). Text evidence does not support whether the poetry, fortunes, and tales told by the elders were humorous.
Rationale C	Iranian families observe Shab-e-Yalda “by opening their homes” (paragraph 13). However, this welcome extends to “families and friends.” The text does not support that strangers are invited in as well. The “visitors” gathered by “the oldest family member” (paragraph 18), therefore, are family and friends, not strangers.

Rationale D	The evening of poetry, fortunes, and stories is described as an “extended evening” (paragraph 18). However, that the readings and recitations last through the night, thus requiring visitors to stay the entire night, is not supported by text evidence.
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Question 10

In paragraph 19, why does the author compare Iranian children to jaguars?

- A. To describe their healthy appetites
- B. To indicate their eager anticipation
- C. To describe their remarkable speed
- D. To indicate their extreme dedication

Benchmark: 6.5.4.4

Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative, connotative, and technical meanings.

DOK: 1

Answer: B

Rationale A	Paragraph 19 states, "Grocery stores display signs advertising watermelon and pomegranates," referencing the "mouth-watering foods" discussed in paragraph 16. Readers might think the children dash home, ravenous "like jaguars," (paragraph 19) in anticipation of their meal. However, the feast is only part of the celebration. In addition, "Shab-e-Yalda is brief but glorious" (paragraph 20), indicating the children speed home because they do not want to miss the fleeting, exciting time.
Rationale B	Correct: Paragraph 19 states, "Iranians grow excited as December 21 creeps up on the calendar," which indicates their eager anticipation for Shab-e-Yalda. Because the celebration "is brief but glorious" (paragraph 20), the children eagerly dash home to "complete their homework and await sundown" (paragraph 19). They do not want to miss the exciting holiday.
Rationale C	The children run quickly, similar to "jaguars" (paragraph 19). However, the emphasis is not that the children are as quick as jaguars, but rather, they are running quickly because they are eager to finish "their homework" (paragraph 19) and be ready for the celebration.
Rationale D	The children run home and complete their homework promptly, before Shab-e-Yalda begins (paragraph 19), which might sound like extreme

	dedication. However, they are eager to “begin the unique celebration” (paragraph 19). It is not dedication, but excitement, that motivates them.
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Question 11

The celebration of Shab-e-Yalda includes

- A. sharing gifts.
- B. dancing together.
- C. reading a newspaper.
- D. lighting many candles.

Benchmark: 6.5.1.1

Cite textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

DOK: II

Answer: D

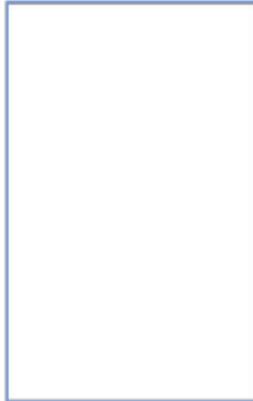
Rationale A	Readers may select this option because “prayers” are said, “thanking God for the previous year’s blessings and for prosperity in the coming year” (paragraph 18). Many holidays and occasions involve sharing gifts to demonstrate thankfulness. However, text evidence does not support that gift exchange is a way families demonstrate thankfulness during Shab-e-Yalda.
Rationale B	Readers may select this option because paragraph 18 states, “Families play music, tell jokes and enjoy the extended evening” together (paragraph 18). However, text evidence does not indicate that dancing occurs.
Rationale C	Readers may select this option because “newspapers print front-page photos of the celebration from past years” (paragraph 19). Although many celebrants may read the newspaper, the newspaper is not part of the celebration itself.
Rationale D	Correct: Paragraph 15 states, “Today, Iranians turn on heaters, fireplaces and light candles” during Shab-e-Yalda.

Question 12

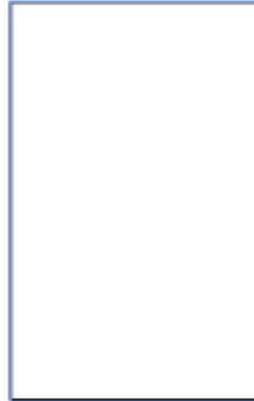
During Shab-e-Yalda, Iranians eat some foods for health and other foods for success. Match the foods with the reasons.

Drag each food into the appropriate box.

Foods for Health



Foods for Success



Dried fruit



Watermelon



Nuts



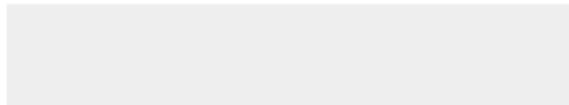
Pomegranate seeds

Question 12 Correct Answers

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	Foods for Success
 Watermelon	 Dried fruit
 Pomegranate seeds	 Nuts



(Beneath each category, options may appear in either order.)

Benchmark: 6.5.1.1

Cite textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

DOK: II

Answer: x

Rationale:

For a full credit response, readers indicate foods for health and foods for success by dragging the foods into the appropriate box.

Correct Responses

Foods for Health

Watermelon

Pomegranate seeds

Paragraph 17 explains “watermelon and ruby-red pomegranate seeds are meant to keep you healthy in the wintertime and bring liveliness and joy.”

Foods for Success

Dried fruit

Nuts

Paragraph 17 states, “Dried fruits and nuts represent prosperity for the days ahead....”

Incorrect Responses

No extra responses are offered. Readers who switch foods have not made associations based on factual statements in the text.

Question 13

How are the purposes of “Diwali: The Indian Festival of Lights” and “Celebrate Light in the Dark” similar?

- A. They entertain with stories of how families celebrate together.
- B. They attempt to persuade readers to celebrate specific holidays.
- C. They describe cultural festivals in which light is important.
- D. They inform readers about ways that people have historically used light.

Benchmark: 6.5.6.6

Determine an author’s point-of-view or purpose in a text and explain how it is conveyed in the text.

DOK: III

Answer: C

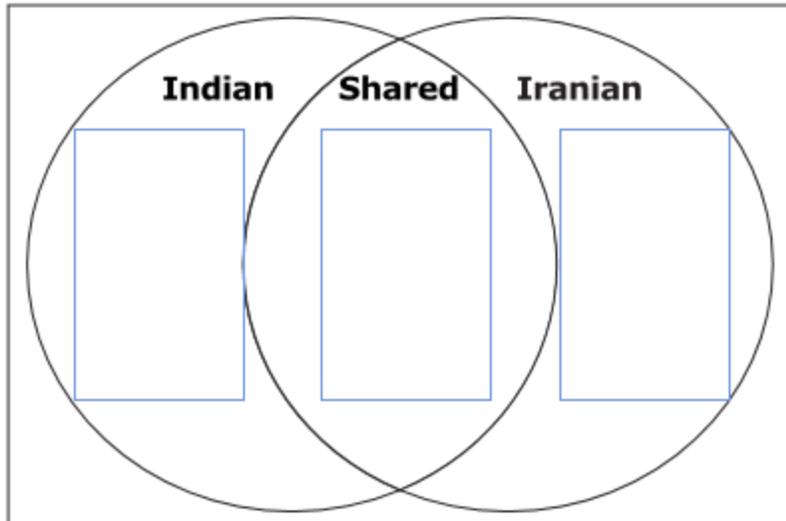
Rationale A	The article about Diwali uses the experiences of a specific family to inform readers, through a combination of narrative and fact, about the celebration of Diwali. However, the article about Shab-e-Yalda does not rely on the experiences of a specific family or tell stories about a specific family. Information about Shab-e-Yalda is stated directly, not through narrative.
Rationale B	The article about Diwali includes a section on how the local school now celebrates this holiday at the request of Esha’s mother (paragraphs 11 and 12), and both articles include positive connotations about each holiday. However, neither text contains evidence indicating the articles were meant to persuade.
Rationale C	Correct: In the article about Diwali, paragraph 3 states, “Diwali...means ‘row of lights.’” Paragraph 4 explains “Diwali celebrates the victory of Rama, symbolizing the triumph of...light over darkness.” Both details illustrate why the Indian festival is called the “Festival of Lights” (paragraph 2). The article about Shab-e-Yalda explains children are allowed to stay up late to “celebrate light” (paragraph 13). Paragraph 14 states the celebration “symbolizes the victory of the sun over darkness

	(the birth of the sun out of the womb of the longest night signifying the victory of light over darkness).”
Rationale D	Both articles discuss how light is used symbolically in each ceremony (paragraphs 4-7 and 10 in “Diwali,” and paragraphs 13-15 in “Celebrate Light”). However, this statement is too broad, as it suggests both articles are about the various ways light was used throughout history, when they are actually each about one specific celebration that uses light as a part of its tradition.

Question 14

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

Drag each detail into the appropriate section.



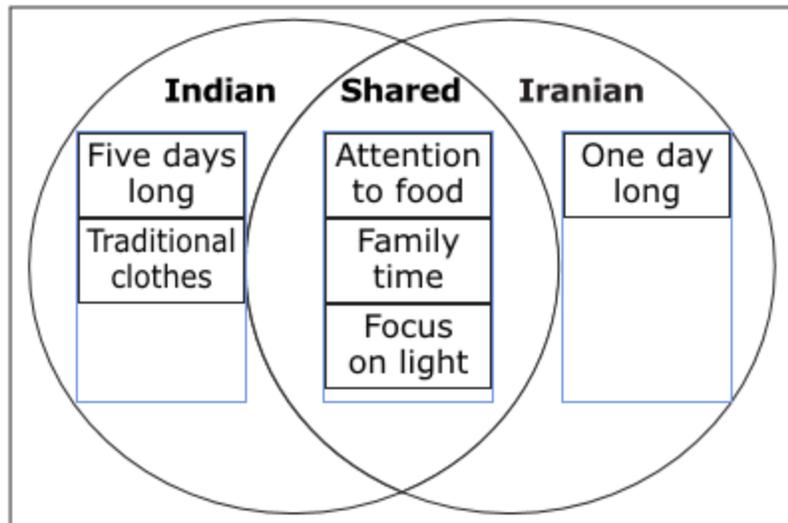
Details

One day long	Attention to food	Family time
Focus on light	Traditional clothes	Five days long

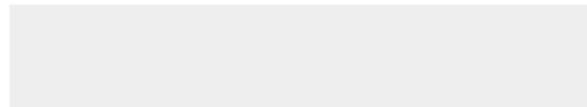
Question 14 Correct Answers

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

Drag each detail into the appropriate section.



Details



(Within each category, options may appear in any order.)

Benchmark: 6.5.1.1

Cite textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

DOK: III

Answer: x

Rationale:

For a full credit response, readers indicate details by dragging the details into the appropriate section.

Correct Responses

Indian

Five days long: While Esha and her family celebrate the Hindu (Indian) festival of “Diwali, the five-day Festival of Lights” (paragraph 2), Iranians celebrate the one “longest night of the year” (paragraph 13) on December 21.

Traditional clothes: During Diwali, “a traditional north Indian dress called a *salwar kameez*” is worn (paragraph 9). No mention of traditional dress occurs in the text discussing Shab-e-Yalda, the Iranian celebration.

Shared

Attention to food: During the Indian festival, participants “celebrate with food” by cooking “a traditional Indian dinner” and enjoying “many Indian sweets” (paragraph 8). Likewise, the Iranian festival wouldn’t be complete “without mouth-watering foods,” some of which are “symbolic” (paragraph 16).

Family time: In addition to preparing for the celebration together (paragraph 6), the Indian “family gathers for the *puja* (POO-ja) or prayers at home” (paragraph 10). Family time is equally important to the Iranians, who celebrate “by opening their homes to families and friends and enjoying a scrumptious feast...” (paragraph 13).

Focus on light: The Indian festival “celebrates the victory of Rama, symbolizing the triumph of good over evil, light over darkness and knowledge over ignorance” (paragraph 4) and incorporates the use of small lit lamps called diyas. Similarly, the Iranian “observance symbolizes the victory of the sun over darkness (the birth of the sun out of the womb of the longest night signifying the victory of light over darkness)...” (paragraph 14) and involves the lighting of fireplaces and candles (paragraph 15).

Iranian

One day long: Iranians celebrate the one “longest night of the year” (paragraph 13) on December 21. Hindus, in contrast, celebrate the Indian festival of “Diwali, the five-day Festival of Lights” (paragraph 2).

Incorrect Responses

No additional responses are offered. Readers who switch details have not made associations based on direct evidence in the text.

Question 15

According to the articles, how do the people of the two cultures compare regarding their use of light during their celebrations?

- A. Indians believe light attracts the goddess of wealth; Iranians believe light chases darkness away.
- B. Indians and Iranians believe light protects them from danger in the darkness.
- C. Indians believe light brings blessings; Iranians believe light improves health.
- D. Indians and Iranians believe light brings knowledge.

Benchmark: 6.5.3.3

Analyze in detail how a key individual, event, or idea is introduced, illustrated, and elaborated in a text (e.g., through examples or anecdotes).

DOK: III

Answer: A

Rationale A	Correct: In the Diwali article, paragraph 5 states, “Hindus also believe that Lakshmi, the goddess of wealth, will visit a home lit in sparkling lights and shower it with riches.” In the Shab-e-Yalda article, paragraph 14 states the holiday “symbolizes the victory of the sun over darkness.” Paragraph 15 states Persians “also burned small fires all night, thinking it would chase away the darkness and evil spirits.”
Rationale B	Both holidays celebrate the victory of light over darkness and incorporate the use of light sources. However, only the Shab-e-Yalda article indicates celebrants feel a need to be protected from “darkness and evil spirits” (paragraph 15) by lighting fires. Indians celebrate Diwali to honor Rama’s defeat of a demon and his “triumph of good over evil” (paragraph 4).
Rationale C	The Diwali article explains that Indians place diyas around their homes because “Lakshmi, the goddess of wealth, will visit a home lit in sparkling lights,” (paragraph 5) which is a form of blessing. Shab-e-Yalda involves eating food that symbolizes improved health (paragraph

	17), but the light in the Iranian holiday does not represent improved health.
Rationale D	The Diwali article states in paragraph 4 that the holiday celebrates “light over darkness and knowledge over ignorance.” However, although Shab-e-Yalda is celebrated to honor the “victory of light over darkness” (paragraph 14), the idea of knowledge is not part of the celebration.

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**.

Benchmark: 6.5.2.2

Determine a central idea of a text and how it is conveyed through particular details; provide a summary of the text distinct from personal opinions or judgments.

DOK: III

Answer: x

Rationale:

For a full credit response, readers select the two groups of words that are similar to the theme of the first sentence.

Correct Responses

“nothing but hope”: Just as the theme of the first sentence (from “Diwali: The Indian Festival of Lights”) embodies the idea that difficult times will end and be succeeded by wholly positive times, the phrase “nothing but hope” implies a moment completely void of despair.

“sun will eventually shine”: The eventual end of difficult times implied in the first sentence is clearly conveyed in the phrase “sun will eventually shine.” Darkness prevails now, but light will soon, inevitably, overcome the darkness.

Incorrect Responses

“Iranians reflect”: Although subject/verb structures match and there is a correlation between the similar actions expressed in each phrase, the phrase “Iranians reflect” does not contribute to the overarching idea expressed in the first sentence. Thus, it does not support the sentence’s theme.

“next time you suffer”: Read entirely on its own, this phrase could mean “the next time this happens, you will suffer.” This idea differs from the theme of the first sentence, which clearly expresses the idea that what follows is goodness, or, in other words: “the next time this happens, you will experience something positive.”

Question 17

The articles are similar because they

- A. include information about traditional dress.
- B. provide details about school celebrations.
- C. include foods that symbolize prosperity.
- D. develop positive attitudes about the culture.

Benchmark: 6.5.1.1

Cite textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

DOK: III

Answer: D

Rationale A	The Diwali article describes the “traditional north Indian dress” (paragraph 9) worn during the festival. However, the Shab-e-Yalda article does not mention any traditional dress.
Rationale B	The Diwali article explains the holiday is celebrated in schools in Norwalk (paragraph 11) and “across the country” (paragraph 12). However, school celebrations are not referenced in the Shab-e-Yalda article.
Rationale C	Paragraph 17 of the Shab-e-Yalda article states, “Dried fruits and nuts represent prosperity for the days ahead.” However, foods symbolizing prosperity are not mentioned in the Diwali article. During Diwali, lights, not food, attract a blessing from the “goddess of wealth” (paragraph 5).
Rationale D	Correct: Both articles portray the holidays as gracious celebrations of the defeat of evil (darkness). Both holidays involve the coming together of family, the sharing of delicious food, and the practicing of prayer. In the Diwali article, this positive perspective is summed up in paragraph 6: “Diwali is a joyful and colorful holiday.” In the Shab-e-Yalda article, it is summed up in paragraph 20: “Shab-e-Yalda is brief but glorious.”

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"/>

Benchmark: 6.5.1.1

Cite textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

DOK: II

Answer: x

Rationale:

For a full credit response, readers select the celebration that demonstrates the associated activities in the Activity column.

Correct Responses

Honors the light of day

Shab-e-Yalda: Iranians “celebrate winter solstice” (paragraph 13) by honoring an ancient observance of the “victory of the sun over darkness” (paragraph 14). The light of day is honored by celebrating the initial victory of the sun’s birth out of the darkness

during the longest day of the year and in acknowledgment that after this night, the days “grow longer and the nights, shorter” (paragraph 14).

Based on an ancient story

Diwali: Although “different origins (and customs) for this holiday” (paragraph 3) exist, the author specifically recounts the Northern Indian legend of Ramayana, where Prince Rama is victorious over the demon Ravana.

Shab-e-Yalda: The celebration honors a ritual that has continued “for more than 3,500 years” and symbolizes “the victory of the sun over darkness” (paragraph 14).

Participation brings wealth

Diwali: Paragraph 5 states, “Hindus also believe that Lakshmi, the goddess of wealth, will visit a home lit in sparkling lights and shower it with riches.” In addition, a statue of Lakshmi is placed on a counter for the puja (prayers with offerings of lights and sweets to honor the goddess of wealth) (paragraph 10).

Occurs after nightfall

Diwali: Several references in the text indicate this festival takes place after sunset so the row of outdoor lights can sparkle. For example, “On the evening of Diwali, just after sunset, Esha’s mom will light each diya until it blows out at nightfall” (paragraph 7).

Shab-e-Yalda: The purpose of this event is to celebrate the longest night of the year, and “To survive this long and cold night, the first thing Iranians do is warm up their homes” (paragraph 15). Traditionally, small fires have been burned all night to “chase away the darkness and evil spirits.” Also, in paragraph 19, the school kids run home to “await sundown to begin the unique celebration.”

Takes place in autumn

Diwali: The festival takes place “in October or November” as determined by the Hindu lunar calendar (paragraph 2). The festival is also celebrated in the U.S. at this traditional time as indicated in paragraph 7, which states that “here in the U.S., the fickle autumn winds blow the diyas out much more quickly than in India.”

Incorrect Responses

Honors the light of day

Diwali: While called the “Festival of Lights” (paragraph 2), the festival does not specifically honor the light of day. In Northern India, the origins of the festival are attributed to “the legend of the *Ramayana*” (paragraph 3) when the people set up “rows

and rows of lamps” (paragraph 5) to celebrate prince Rama’s return after defeating the demon Ravana (paragraph 4). Although part of Rama’s victory over Ravana is “light over darkness” (paragraph 4), this symbolic triumph of good over evil does not require honoring the light of day. Even though readers might think the use of lights and lamps during the festival is a way to honor light, the celebration itself takes place in the evening and overnight and does not have the purpose of honoring the light of day.

Participation brings wealth

Shab-e-Yalda: Although paragraph 17 states, “Dried fruits and nuts represent prosperity for the days ahead,” eating the fruits and nuts represents a hope for future prosperity, not a belief that participation in the observance will lead to wealth.

Takes place in autumn

Shab-e-Yalda: Readers might choose this activity thinking the festival refers to a celebration in autumn for the upcoming winter when certain fruits “are meant to keep you healthy in the wintertime” (paragraph 17), but the activity date of December 21, the winter solstice, is stated directly in the text (paragraphs 14 and 19).

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.”

Benchmark: 6.5.2.2

Determine a central idea of a text and how it is conveyed through particular details; provide a summary of the text distinct from personal opinions or judgments.

DOK: II

Answer: x

Rationale:

For a full credit response, readers select the correct statement and one supporting detail from each article.

Correct Responses

Statement

The Indian and Persian celebrations bring participants together for prayer and enjoyment: Both authors reference prayer as part of the observances. For example, paragraph 10 of the first selection states, “After everyone is dressed, the family gathers for the *puja* (POO-ja) or prayers at home.” Paragraph 10 also states, “They will then recite prayers....” In the second selection, paragraph 18 states, “Afterwards, he or she says prayers, thanking God for the previous year’s blessings and for prosperity in the coming year.” Both authors also share details of how the participants enjoy the celebrations. For example, in the first selection, the author states, “the family enjoyed many Indian sweets” (paragraph 8). The second selection states the ritual is observed “by opening their homes to families and friends and enjoying a scrumptious feast . . .” (paragraph 13).

Supporting Detail 1

“Diwali is a joyful and colorful holiday”: This detail from the first selection supports the authors’ statement as it confirms Diwali is a festival enjoyed by its participants (paragraph 6).

Supporting Detail 2

“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”: This detail from the second selection supports the authors’ statement as it confirms that Shab-e-Yalda is an observance enjoyed by its participants (paragraph 13).

Incorrect Responses

Statement

The Indian and Persian celebrations of light emphasize feasts, costumes, prayer, and wealth for participants: While both celebrations include feasts and prayer (paragraphs 8, 10, 16, and 18), only the Indian celebration of Diwali emphasizes costumes and wealth (paragraphs 9 and 10). Readers might choose this statement

thinking all four items are outlined in each passage, based on an overall reading of the selections. However, while both celebrations involve feasts and prayer, the presence of traditional costumes and anticipated wealth are specific to the Indian celebration.

Supporting Detail 1

“Hindus all over India celebrate Diwali, the five-day Festival of Lights, in October or November, decided by the Hindu lunar calendar”: Readers might choose this detail as it explains the importance of the festival for Hindus. However, the detail is not support for the correct statement, which references prayer and enjoyment, not the extent and time of year of the festival (paragraph 2).

Supporting Detail 2

“The winter feast continues when the oldest family member gathers all the visitors and recites poetry, tells fortunes and stories”: Readers might also choose this detail because an important part of the correct statement is “bring participants together,” and this detail is an example of bringing participants together. However, as prayer and enjoyment is the central and most important focus in the correct statement, this detail does not support it (paragraph 18).

**MCA-III Item Sampler Paper Answer Key
Grade 6 Reading**

**Segment 1
6 Questions**

Item #	Correct Answer	Item Type	Online Sampler Location	Skill Domain	SSB	Depth of Knowledge
1	A	MC	Sec. 1, #3	Key Ideas and Details	6.4.3.3	III
2	C	MC	Sec. 1, #4	Craft and Structure	6.4.5.5	II
3	A	MC	Sec. 1, #5	Key Ideas and Details	6.4.1.1	I
4	B	MC	Sec. 1, #6	Craft and Structure	6.4.4.4	II
5	D	MC	Sec. 1, #7	Key Ideas and Details	6.4.1.1	II
6	A	MC	Sec. 1, #8	Craft and Structure	6.4.4.4	II

**Segment 2
8 Questions**

Item #	Correct Answer	Item Type	Online Sampler Location	Skill Domain	SSB	Depth of Knowledge
7	C	MC	N/A	Key Ideas and Details	6.5.2.2	II
8	C	MC	Sec. 2, #2	Craft and Structure	6.5.6.6	II
9	B	MC	Sec. 2, #3	Craft and Structure	6.5.6.6	II
10	B	MC	Sec. 2, #5	Integration of Knowledge and Ideas	6.5.8.8	II
11	A	MC	Sec. 2, #6	Key Ideas and Details	6.5.1.1	II
12	C	MC	Sec. 2, #7	Craft and Structure	6.5.6.6	III
13	D	MC	Sec. 2, #9	Key Ideas and Details	6.5.1.1	II
14	D	MC	Sec. 2, #11	Craft and Structure	6.5.6.6	II

**Segment 3
5 Questions**

Item #	Correct Answer	Item Type	Online Sampler Location	Skill Domain	SSB	Depth of Knowledge
15	A	MC	Sec. 3, #1	Key Ideas and Details	6.4.3.3	I
16	C	MC	N/A	Key Ideas and Details	6.4.3.3	II
17	B	MC	Sec. 3, #3	Key Ideas and Details	6.4.1.1	II
18	C	MC	N/A	Craft and Structure	6.4.4.4	II
19	A	MC	Sec. 3, #5	Key Ideas and Details	6.4.2.2	II

**Segment 4
10 Questions**

Item #	Correct Answer	Item Type	Online Sampler Location	Skill Domain	SSB	Depth of Knowledge
20	C	MC	Sec. 4, #1	Craft and Structure	6.5.6.6	II
21	B	MC	Sec. 4, #3	Key Ideas and Details	6.5.1.1	I
22	B	MC	Sec. 4, #4	Key Ideas and Details	6.5.1.1	I

23	A	MC	Sec. 4, #6	Craft and Structure	6.5.6.6	II
24	A	MC	Sec. 4, #9	Key Ideas and Details	6.5.1.1	II
25	B	MC	Sec. 4, #10	Craft and Structure	6.5.4.4	I
26	D	MC	Sec. 4, #11	Key Ideas and Details	6.5.1.1	II
27	C	MC	Sec. 4, #13	Craft and Structure	6.5.6.6	III
28	A	MC	Sec. 4, #15	Key Ideas and Details	6.5.3.3	III
29	D	MC	Sec. 4, #17	Key Ideas and Details	6.5.1.1	III

Passage Characteristics

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