

2014 TEXAS STAAR TEST – GRADE 8 - READING

Total Possible Score: 52
Needed Correct to Pass: 26
Advanced Performance: 44

Time Limit: 4 Hours

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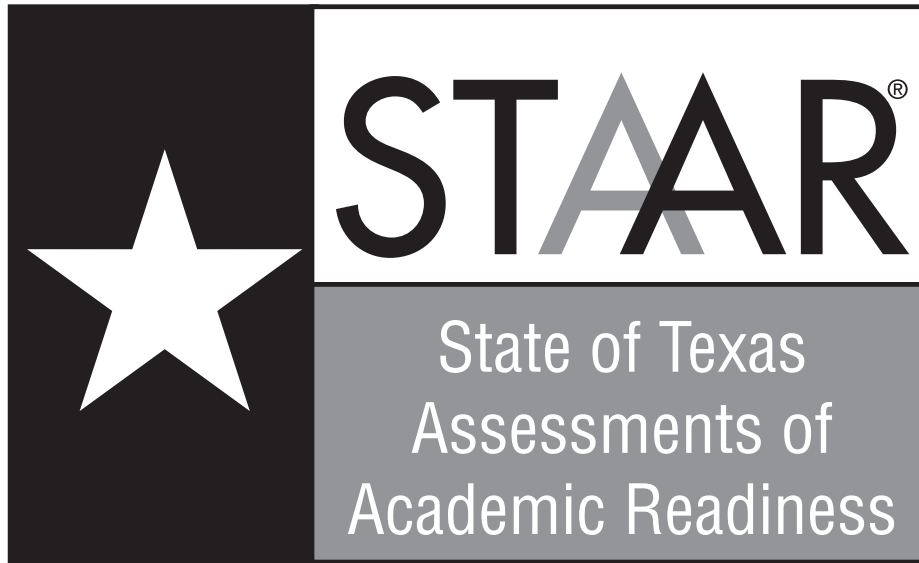
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GRADE 8

Reading

Administered April 2014

RELEASED

READING

Read the selection and choose the best answer to each question. Then fill in the answer on your answer document.

It is September 1918, and 16-year-old Hattie Brooks appears in front of Mr. Ebgard, a land official, to save the homestead she inherited from her uncle Chester. Traft Martin wants Hattie's property for his own, and Hattie is afraid she will lose it.

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1 The language in paragraph 42 is used to emphasize —

- A** the intensity of Hattie’s anxiety about the hearing
 - B** Hattie’s physical strength
 - C** Hattie’s confusion about the decision
 - D** the extent of Hattie’s gratitude
-

2 Because the story is written from a first-person point of view, the reader is better able to understand —

- F** Hattie’s assessment of Traft Martin
 - G** Hattie’s shift from being anxious to feeling relieved
 - H** Traft Martin’s motivation for trying to get Hattie’s land
 - J** Mr. Ebgaard’s intentions during the hearing
-

3 In paragraph 41, the reader can tell that something that takes precedence is —

- A** pleasant
- B** more important
- C** accessible
- D** more interesting

- 4** Paragraphs 8 through 10 help build tension in the story by —
- F** showing Traft Martin’s refusal to acknowledge Mr. Ebgard’s authority
 - G** suggesting that Mr. Ebgard is unfamiliar with the law
 - H** contrasting Traft Martin’s personality with Mr. Ebgard’s
 - J** revealing that Traft Martin believes the outcome of the meeting should be obvious

-
- 5** Based on the story, what can the reader conclude about homestead laws in the early 1900s?
- A** Women could not file a homestead claim.
 - B** Homestead laws favored men over women.
 - C** Homestead claims could not be passed from one family member to another.
 - D** Land officials had some freedom in interpreting homestead laws.

6 Paragraph 32 is important to the story because it —

- F** explains that Hattie does not understand why Mr. Ebgard is asking her questions
- G** illustrates that Mr. Ebgard is intentionally prolonging the hearing
- H** foreshadows Mr. Ebgard’s decision to uphold Hattie’s homestead claim
- J** conveys that Hattie is uncomfortable discussing the loss of her parents

7 Which of these is the best summary of the excerpt?

- A** Hattie Brooks is nervous before a hearing to determine her right to claim a homestead. However, in the end the land official decides that Hattie is entitled to keep her claim.
- B** Hattie Brooks holds a homestead claim inherited from her uncle, but Traft Martin would like to stake a claim to Hattie’s property. A hearing is held to determine whether Hattie can continue working the homestead land left to her by her uncle.
- C** Hattie Brooks has inherited a homestead claim from her uncle, but Traft Martin would like to have it. The land official takes his time, asks Hattie many questions, and determines that she is unlike most other girls her age.
- D** Traft Martin would like to have Hattie Brooks’s homestead claim and has filed a challenge to her ownership. In spite of Martin’s interruptions, the land official maintains control of the proceedings and determines that Hattie has a legal right to the claim.

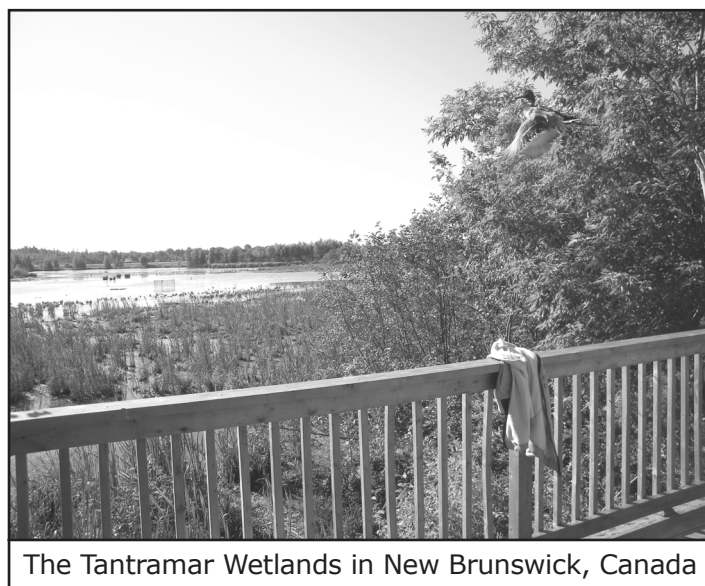
- 8** Which of these best demonstrates the moment when Traft Martin realizes he will lose the hearing?
- F** *"See!" Traft closed his eyes to do the math. "That makes her sixteen. Nowhere near old enough."*
- G** *He turned on his heel and slammed out the door.*
- H** *Traft jumped up. It looked as if he'd figured out where Mr. Ebgard was going too.*
- J** *Traft shifted in his chair and smirked at me.*

-
- 9** In paragraph 10, which words does the author use to create a tense mood?
- A** *slammed, jerked*
- B** *admitted, witnesses*
- C** *empty, thumb*
- D** *down, toward*

Read the selection and choose the best answer to each question. Then fill in the answer on your answer document.

Wetlands and Wetheads

- 1 Wetlands are areas where water covers the soil or is near the surface of the soil all year. They are sometimes referred to as marshes, swamps, or bogs. Many wetlands, which provide a home for a variety of plants and animals, are disappearing at an alarming rate. Yet one group of Canadian high school students is having a major impact on the promotion of wetland conservation.
- 2 One day while walking his dog near Tantramar Regional High School in New Brunswick, retired biologist Al Smith noticed a substantial area of abandoned farmland behind the school. Concerned about the loss of freshwater wetlands, Smith thought it would be a great place for creating a man-made wetland. His idea came to fruition in 1997 when a nonprofit organization committed to conserving Canada's wetlands provided both the financing and labor for the project. The resulting 35-acre marsh became known as the Tantramar Wetlands. Today the Tantramar Wetlands Centre located on the site offers research and education programs year-round.
- 3 The real heroes of this project have turned out to be the students of Tantramar Regional High School. Every year more than 100 high school volunteers, known as Wetheads, learn about the value of wetlands. They learn how to paddle canoes, give oral presentations, and identify the plants, birds, and mammals that make the wetlands their habitat. There are probably more than 600 species, including ducks and muskrats, that thrive in the marshes. Wetheads are also trained how to place bands on the legs of birds. These bands assist conservationists with gathering information that can be used to track the birds and protect their habitats.



The Tantramar Wetlands in New Brunswick, Canada

© 2011 Tantramar Wetlands Centre

- 4 Not only do the Wetheads help protect local ecosystems and wildlife, but they also teach other students about the importance of conserving the wetlands. With the Wetheads' help, each year the program reaches more than 4,000 students from all grades, as well as their teachers, and provides them with tangible experiences in nature. Volunteers show visitors the wetland and make sure that guests experience its sights, sounds, and smells. Children participate in hands-on activities and educational games. These young visitors are able to touch some of the wildlife and sometimes even get dirty while learning all about the ecological significance of wetland conservation.
- 5 The Tantramar Wetlands Centre depends on Wetheads to educate the community and has recognized that the goal of promoting wetland conservation cannot be achieved without them. Through their enthusiasm and dedication, these high school students have done more to change how people think about wetlands than any other youth group in Canada. Their passion for the wetlands center is obvious, and they pass their positive attitude on to others.
- 6 The enthusiastic efforts of the Wetheads have earned them awards both nationally and internationally. In 2008 they were finalists in Earth Day Canada's Hometown Heroes award for the promotion of wetlands conservation. In 2011 the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands held a contest for schools to demonstrate how they could promote the wise use of wetlands. One of Tantramar Regional High School's biology teachers, Nancy MacKinnon, submitted a proposal outlining the Wetheads' work and the school's educational programs at the Tantramar Wetlands Centre. The group received the top award at the Ramsar Convention in Mexico during World Wetlands Day. The students were especially honored to receive this award. To them it meant that the world recognized the value of their work.
- 7 The student volunteers gain no academic or monetary reward for their work. As one Wethead commented, "The wetlands center is the most happening place in the school. I love working here." If her words and the Wetheads' hard work mean anything, the future of both the group and the wetlands looks very promising.

- 10** Why does the author begin this selection by explaining what wetlands are?
- F** To describe the various aspects of a wetland area near a high school
 - G** To offer reasons that readers should be committed to wetland conservation
 - H** To give important background information about wetlands
 - J** To encourage readers to become involved in wetland conservation
-

- 11** What is paragraph 2 mostly about?
- A** How the Tantramar Wetlands were created
 - B** Why preserving freshwater wetlands is important
 - C** Why a nonprofit group works to conserve wetlands
 - D** How the Tantramar Wetlands Centre was constructed
-

- 12** What do the words came to fruition mean in paragraph 2?
- F** Became a reality
 - G** Grew in importance
 - H** Influenced others
 - J** Drew attention

- 13** What is the most likely reason the author wrote this selection?
- A** To inform readers about the importance of wetlands
 - B** To advocate for more programs designed to preserve wetlands
 - C** To encourage young people to learn more about wetlands
 - D** To highlight a group of volunteers who help maintain wetlands

-
- 14** How does the author support the idea that Wetheads enjoy volunteering at the Tantramar Wetlands Centre?
- F** By describing the type of work students do at the center
 - G** By including a quote from a student who works at the center
 - H** By explaining the importance of the students' work at the center
 - J** By mentioning an award that the students won for their work at the center

15 Which of these is the best summary of the selection?

- A** Al Smith, a retired biologist, was concerned about the loss of freshwater wetlands. In 1997 he had the idea to turn an area of abandoned farmland into a man-made wetland. With the help of a nonprofit organization, he founded the Tantramar Wetlands Centre. High school students called Wetheads volunteer at the center and teach others about the importance of wetlands.
- B** The Tantramar Wetlands Centre was founded in 1997 and now educates more than 4,000 visitors each year. Wetheads, high school students who volunteer at the center, have received national and international awards for their work. These students are not paid for the time they spend at the center, but they gain valuable knowledge and experience through the work they do.
- C** In 1997 retired biologist Al Smith had the idea to create a man-made wetland and helped found the Tantramar Wetlands Centre. Today high school students who volunteer at the center help with research and lead educational programs for thousands of visitors. These students, who are known as Wetheads, have received recognition for their efforts to teach others why wetlands need to be preserved.
- D** Retired biologist Al Smith had the idea to create a man-made wetland when he noticed a piece of abandoned property near a high school. He worked with a nonprofit organization to turn 35 acres of unused farmland into a marsh. The Tantramar Wetlands Centre now welcomes more than 4,000 students each year to its educational programs. High school students who volunteer there are known as Wetheads.

16 The author emphasizes the idea that wetlands —

- F** are an important source of freshwater
- G** should be studied in high school
- H** require maintenance by nonprofit organizations
- J** will disappear if people don't work to preserve them

- 17** Which sentence shows that the author believes that the Wetheads are doing exceptional work at the Tantramar Wetlands Centre?
- A** *Every year more than 100 high school volunteers, known as Wetheads, learn about the value of wetlands.*
 - B** *They learn how to paddle canoes, give oral presentations, and identify the plants, birds, and mammals that make the wetlands their habitat.*
 - C** *Through their enthusiasm and dedication, these high school students have done more to change how people think about wetlands than any other youth group in Canada.*
 - D** *Wetheads are also trained how to place bands on the legs of birds.*

Read the next two selections. Then choose the best answer to each question.

Finally Home

- 1 "If you can't make friends in a small high school, how do you think you'll make friends once you go to college?" my father had asked. I sighed and picked up my drumsticks as I pondered yesterday's conversation with my father. "Maybe Dad is right," I thought. "Maybe there is something wrong with me, and I'll never have real friends."
- 2 I closed my eyes and began playing a steady rhythm, calming the turmoil in my brain. I loved that vacant garage. It was the perfect place to practice my drumming without anyone bothering me or judging me.
- 3 The year before, my parents had relocated our family to the minuscule town of De Monde, where my sophomore class contained exactly 15 students. Most of the other girls were already paired off as best friends, and I was uncertain about how to begin making a friend. This was because I had never been part of any particular group. I simply wasn't that interested in fashion, gossip, or reality television shows, although I occasionally wished I would get invited to parties and other social activities.
- 4 Thinking about my social life made me irritated and restless. I hopped off my drum stool and headed over to Dot's Restaurant for a snack.
- 5 On the walk over I heard the sharp twang of an electric guitar that halted abruptly.
- 6 "I think we should begin the song with the chorus chords," a male voice said, and then someone counted off, "One, two, three, four!" The music started again.
- 7 Overwhelmed with curiosity, I followed the sound down a narrow cobblestone walkway. A green wooden door was slightly ajar, and I peeked inside. Two boys and a girl sat on metal folding chairs. One boy was strumming his guitar and singing, while the other played bass. The girl was playing keyboards, and a trumpet rested beside her. I recognized the guitar player.
- 8 "Hey, I recognize you—you're Cassie from my class!" The guitarist's voice startled me.
- 9 "I'm sorry," I apologized quickly. "I just haven't heard any live music in this town before! You sound terrific—did you guys write that song?"

- 10 "Yeah—well, we're still working on it. I'm Matt." The guitarist hopped up and held out his hand. "We've been practicing for three months, and now we're getting ready for our first performance next Friday night at the park."
- 11 I shook Matt's hand and then met Jorge, the bass player. I said hello to Janis, the keyboardist. She smiled but seemed a little distant. "Maybe I'm too young," I thought. "Maybe my clothes are lame." I slid my hands into my pockets and attempted to smile confidently.
- 12 "Mind if I listen in?" I asked.
- 13 "Not at all," Matt said, grinning. "Maybe you can offer some feedback!"
- 14 I sat against the wall and listened. The song was actually pretty good. In my head I could hear drum rhythms that would probably improve the song, but I felt hesitant to mention my drumming skills. Behind my drum set was the one place I felt completely like myself. I wasn't sure I wanted to open that door to the world.
- 15 "Hey, do you play drums?" Matt inquired suddenly.
- 16 My mouth gaped open. How did he know? And then I followed his eyes to my hands, which had been beating a rhythm on the floor beside me. I attempted to shrug nonchalantly, but my heart was jackhammering. Finally I said, "Sure, I've been playing for a few years."
- 17 "Oh, wow! You've got to join us!" Jorge exclaimed. "I have some drums over here."
- 18 I glanced at Janis, who was quietly studying me. Suddenly she smiled shyly and asked, "Will you play? That would be fantastic."
- 19 I exhaled slowly. Janis had seemed so confident, but she was just as self-conscious as me. I wasn't too young, too unfashionable, or too weird. "Absolutely. I would love to play!" I said, hopping to my feet.
- 20 "One, two, three, four!" Jorge counted, and I set a solid rhythm as the band joined in. Matt winked at me and began singing, and I knew I was finally home.

Thumbprint

by Eve Merriam

On the pad of my thumb
are whorls, whirls, wheels
in a unique design:
mine alone.

5 What a treasure to own!
My own flesh, my own feelings.
No other, however grand or base,
can ever contain the same.
My signature,

10 thumbing the pages of my time.
My universe key,
my singularity.
Impress, implant,
I am myself,

15 of all my atom parts I am the sum.
And out of my blood and my brain
I make my own interior weather,
my own sun and rain.
Imprint my mark upon the world,

20 whatever I shall become.

From IT DOESN'T ALWAYS HAVE TO RHYME by Eve Merriam. Copyright © 1964 Eve Merriam. Copyright renewed 1992 Eve Merriam. Used by permission of Marian Reiner.

**Use “Finally Home” (pp. 17–18) to answer questions 18–21.
Then fill in the answers on your answer document.**

18 In paragraph 16, the word nonchalantly means —

- F** happily
- G** slightly
- H** casually
- J** thoughtfully

19 Cassie’s thoughts in paragraph 14 show that she —

- A** wants to take a risk to make new friends
- B** is trying too hard to impress the others
- C** has a false sense of pride
- D** is reluctant to let people get to know her

20 The story reaches its climax when —

- F** Cassie hears the sound of an electric guitar
- G** Matt asks whether Cassie plays drums
- H** Matt recognizes Cassie as a girl from his class
- J** Cassie sits against the wall and listens to the band

21 Which sentence from the story provides the best evidence that Cassie feels insecure?

- A** *Overwhelmed with curiosity, I followed the sound down a narrow cobblestone walkway.*
- B** *I slid my hands into my pockets and attempted to smile confidently.*
- C** *A green wooden door was slightly ajar, and I peeked inside.*
- D** *I glanced at Janis, who was quietly studying me.*

**Use “Thumbprint” (p. 19) to answer questions 22–25.
Then fill in the answers on your answer document.**

22 The repetition of the words “my” and “my own” emphasizes the speaker’s desire to —

- F** show appreciation for something that is personal and unique
- G** express opinions that challenge accepted wisdom
- H** argue that people share some similar characteristics
- J** make a distinction between scientific facts and personal beliefs

23 The poet chose an irregular and unpredictable rhyme scheme most likely to —

- A** highlight the speaker’s actions
- B** provide a sense of playfulness
- C** emphasize the poem’s message
- D** suggest that the speaker is confused

- 24** What does line 6 suggest about the “whorls,” “whirls,” and “wheels” on the pad of the speaker’s thumb?
- F** They are evidence of her intelligence and emotional depth.
 - G** They represent more than physical identity.
 - H** They reveal her genetic characteristics.
 - J** They symbolize a link to the past.

-
- 25** The last two lines of the poem suggest that the thumbprint referred to in the title is a symbol for —
- A** a person’s individuality
 - B** an important clue to life’s timeless mysteries
 - C** a prediction about the future
 - D** an anticipation of change

**Use “Finally Home” and “Thumbprint” to answer questions 26–30.
Then fill in the answers on your answer document.**

- 26** Read these lines from the poem.

What a treasure to own!
My own flesh, my own feelings.

Which sentence from the story relates a similar idea?

- F** *Janis had seemed so confident, but she was just as self-conscious as me.*
- G** *This was because I had never been part of any particular group.*
- H** *Behind my drum set was the one place I felt completely like myself.*
- J** *It was the perfect place to practice my drumming without anyone bothering me or judging me.*

-
- 27** Unlike the speaker in “Thumbprint,” Cassie in “Finally Home” expresses —

- A** pride in her physical appearance
- B** a desire for personal change
- C** a strong sense of self-worth
- D** a fear of being judged

28 Cassie in “Finally Home” and the speaker in “Thumbprint” both —

- F** expect to achieve greatness
- G** recognize their own uniqueness
- H** want to be accepted by others
- J** feel disconnected from the world

29 Which line from the poem best expresses Cassie’s feelings at the end of the story?

- A** I am myself,
- B** my own sun and rain.
- C** My signature,
- D** Impress, implant,

30 One difference between Cassie in the story and the speaker in the poem is that the speaker —

- F** is uncomfortable letting others know who she really is
- G** embraces the qualities that make her different from everyone else
- H** is aware of her feelings
- J** questions the importance of her contribution

Read the selection and choose the best answer to each question. Then fill in the answer on your answer document.



- 1 Samantha sits on her couch with her laptop and headphones. It's Saturday morning, and she is completing an assignment for her online astronomy class. After viewing an interactive video about the electromagnetic spectrum, she joins a couple of her classmates in an online chat room to complete a virtual lab assignment that they will e-mail to the instructor. Samantha's parents, amazed, watch from a distance. This "classroom" experience is far different than anything they did in school. Thanks to current technology, Samantha is just one of many students who have benefited from online learning.
- 2 Online courses offer many benefits that help public schools meet the educational needs of today's students. Through online schools, students can access a variety of courses, including college prep courses, that may not be available to them at their local public schools. Enrollment in these courses also allows students access to virtual laboratories and the finest libraries in the country, no matter where they live.
- 3 Online courses provide flexibility in student schedules. Students can log on anywhere at any time to complete their class work. Students involved in extracurricular activities, those who have been hospitalized, or those who are behind in earning required credits can meet their educational needs through enrollment in online classes.
- 4 Students in traditional schools can fall behind if they have difficulty understanding concepts the rest of the class easily grasps. Virtual schools, on the other hand, offer a pace that meets every student's needs, allowing more time to master a difficult algebra concept or the opportunity to interact with an engineer applying scientific principles in the workplace.
- 5 U.S. Education Secretary Arne Duncan believes so strongly in virtual education that he helped budget \$500 million for the development of online precollege and college courses over the next 10 years. He is joined by Bill Gates, who calls online education one of the top priorities of his foundation. The Gates Foundation funds innovative education projects across the nation and around the world.

- 6 Still, some remain skeptical about online education. They worry that online classes will not be rigorous enough to prepare students as well as traditional classrooms do. They should not worry. A 2009 Department of Education report suggests that students enrolled in online classes performed better than those in traditional schools. In fact, Florida Virtual School, the nation's largest virtual high school, boasts higher scores in its advanced-placement courses than many traditional public schools.
- 7 Today's technology provides multiple avenues for students to become better prepared for college and to pursue careers in today's global economy. Let's be willing to give online classes a chance to show how constructive they can be in helping today's students receive the best education possible.

31 How do paragraphs 4 through 6 support the author’s position about online learning?

- A** By explaining how online classes have become part of the educational system
- B** By providing information about U.S. Education Secretary Arne Duncan
- C** By explaining why Bill Gates supports the development of online schools
- D** By providing evidence that online classes are valuable to students’ education

32 Which sentence best refutes the critics’ concerns about online education?

- F** *After viewing an interactive video about the electromagnetic spectrum, she joins a couple of her classmates in an online chat room to complete a virtual lab assignment that they will e-mail to the instructor.*
- G** *Enrollment in these courses also allows students access to virtual laboratories and the finest libraries in the country, no matter where they live.*
- H** *Thanks to current technology, Samantha is just one of many students who have benefited from online learning.*
- J** *In fact, Florida Virtual School, the nation’s largest virtual high school, boasts higher scores in its advanced-placement courses than many traditional public schools.*

- 33** The author supports the article's premise by providing —
- A** testimonials from students who have had success with online education
 - B** examples of how online classes are improving education
 - C** statistics from various schools that offer online classes
 - D** quotations from people who have been involved in organizing online classes

34 What does the word constructive mean in paragraph 7?

- F** Necessary for the future
- G** Useful for answering questions
- H** Effective for anticipating problems
- J** Beneficial for achieving an outcome

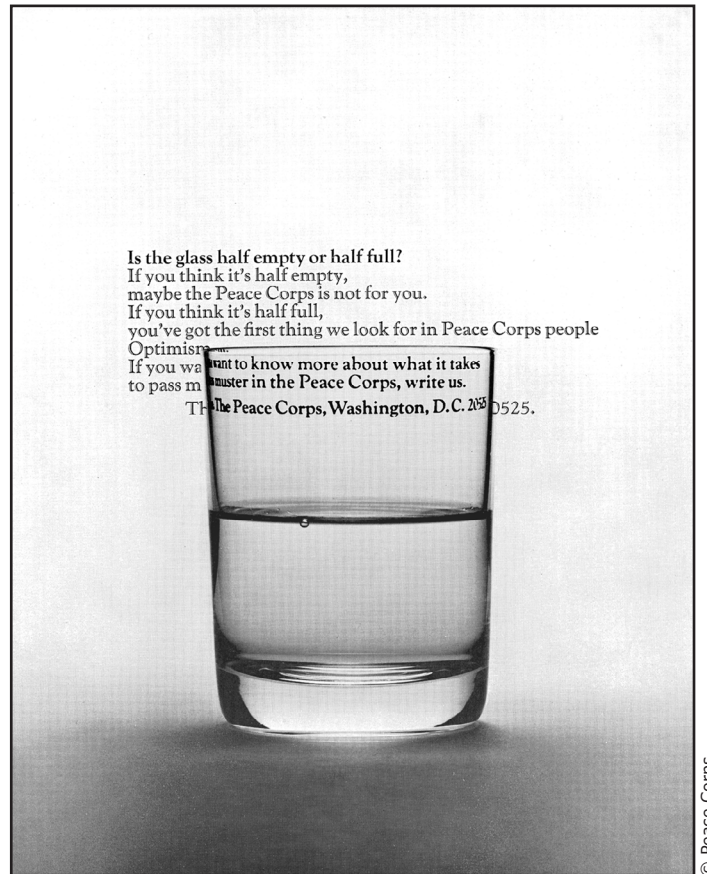
- 35** Which sentence supports the belief that online education will be more widespread in the future?
- A** *Students involved in extracurricular activities, those who have been hospitalized, or those who are behind in earning required credits can meet their educational needs through enrollment in online classes.*
 - B** *U.S. Education Secretary Arne Duncan believes so strongly in virtual education that he helped budget \$500 million for the development of online precollege and college courses over the next 10 years.*
 - C** *A 2009 Department of Education report suggests that students enrolled in online classes performed better than those in traditional schools.*
 - D** *This "classroom" experience is far different than anything they did in school.*

-
- 36** The author includes the description of Samantha working on her laptop in paragraph 1 most likely to —
- F** provide an example for readers who are unfamiliar with online classes
 - G** explain to readers the process of logging on to online classes
 - H** illustrate the steps involved in completing an online assignment
 - J** suggest that interactive videos are an important part of online assignments

Read the selection and choose the best answer to each question. Then fill in the answer on your answer document.

The Peace Corps: Service to the World

- 1 On March 1, 2011, the United States celebrated the fiftieth anniversary of the Peace Corps. This special agency sends American volunteers to other countries to provide aid in the fields of education, agriculture, health, technology, and community development. Its mission is to promote world peace and friendship.
- 2 To achieve its mission, the Peace Corps has three goals. The first is to assist countries interested in developing skilled workers. The second is to help people of other cultures better understand Americans. The third goal is to help Americans better understand other cultures.



Peace Corps Origins

- 3 The Peace Corps came into being as a result of a 1960 presidential campaign stop made by John F. Kennedy. Kennedy arrived at the University of Michigan on October 14 at 2:00 A.M. He was scheduled to speak later that day, but

10,000 students, stirred by his candidacy, were waiting to meet him. Rather than disappoint the students, Kennedy gave an impromptu speech. He asked the crowd whether they would be willing to serve their country and the cause of peace by living and working in the developing world.

- 4 Young people quickly and enthusiastically responded to the challenge. Within weeks the students had gathered 1,000 signatures in support of the idea. Many more letters of support arrived at Kennedy's campaign headquarters. Kennedy did not forget about the idea. He created the Peace Corps less than six months after meeting the Michigan students. On August 30, 1961, the first group of 51 volunteers arrived in Ghana, a country in western Africa.

Service Through the Decades

- 5 Since then, more than 200,000 Americans have served in the Peace Corps. Volunteers currently serve in 76 countries in Africa, Latin America, Eastern Europe, Asia, the Caribbean, and the Pacific Islands. The agency truly has a global impact.
- 6 The world has changed since 1961, and the focus of the Peace Corps has evolved with it. While many volunteers continue to teach children, train adults in agricultural techniques, and bring clean water to communities, others are addressing needs that have emerged in recent years. In response to the development and spread of information technology, volunteers now provide technical training and support to groups that want to make better use of computers and the Internet.



A Peace Corps Volunteer Working with Children in Nepal

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Service to Others

- 7 On the fiftieth anniversary of the Peace Corps, President Barack Obama issued a proclamation in which he honored the “volunteers who have collectively given over a half-century of service to the cause of peace.” These volunteers take satisfaction in building schools or constructing water purification systems, but they often say that their real reward is intangible.
- 8 Mike Roman is a teacher on an island in Kiribati, a country in the Pacific. He chose to serve “because it’s the ‘right thing’ to do. After some time you learn what the ‘right thing’ is in any situation—it’s the voice inside your head; you just have to learn to listen to it.”
- 9 Another volunteer, Christian Deitch, teaches English in the Kyrgyz Republic in central Asia. When asked about his work with the Peace Corps, Deitch commented, “I know the students I worked with got a lot out of our time together, but I felt like I was the lucky one. It’s hard to explain, but it made me realize that working for others . . . was the best paycheck I ever got.”
- 10 In his inaugural address in 1961, President Kennedy issued a challenge: “Ask not what your country can do for you—ask what you can do for your country.” More than 50 years later, many Americans continue to respond to this challenge each year by joining the Peace Corps.

- 37** What is the most likely reason the author wrote this selection?
- A** To inform the reader about the history and work of the Peace Corps
 - B** To provide information about an influential president
 - C** To challenge the reader to create programs that are similar to the Peace Corps
 - D** To explain the benefits of serving in the Peace Corps
-

- 38** Because the Latin root *tangere* means “to touch,” the reader can tell that the word intangible in paragraph 7 refers to something that —
- F** is passed on from one person to another
 - G** does not consist of a physical substance
 - H** is not physically strong
 - J** is handled often
-

- 39** A recent change in the kind of work done by Peace Corps volunteers is the result of —
- A** advances in technology
 - B** new agricultural techniques
 - C** greater cultural awareness
 - D** increased health needs

40 In paragraphs 1 and 2, the author presents the idea that —

- F** people who volunteer for the Peace Corps must be skilled in several areas in order to help others
- G** the purpose of the Peace Corps is to identify problems faced by other countries
- H** the Peace Corps is focused on building mutual respect between the United States and other countries
- J** a Peace Corps volunteer must follow three important steps while working in a foreign country

41 The author of the selection includes paragraphs 8 and 9 most likely to —

- A** illustrate the kind of work Peace Corps volunteers do in central Asia
- B** provide examples of how actual volunteers feel about the Peace Corps
- C** introduce volunteers who have completed various assignments in the Peace Corps
- D** describe what the Peace Corps expects from its volunteers

- 42** The author begins and ends the selection by bringing together the idea that —
- F** 2011 marked a milestone in the history of the Peace Corps
 - G** President Kennedy’s 1961 address was the foundation on which the Peace Corps was built
 - H** the young people of America show good citizenship by joining the Peace Corps
 - J** the Peace Corps is still a success 50 years after its founding

-
- 43** Why does the advertisement begin with a question?
- A** To provide readers with an example of an activity in which Peace Corps volunteers participate
 - B** To cause readers to evaluate their own suitability for the Peace Corps
 - C** To show readers the feelings of uncertainty experienced by Peace Corps volunteers
 - D** To evaluate readers’ knowledge of the Peace Corps’ mission

44 Paragraphs 3 and 4 are mainly about —

- F** Kennedy's popularity with students at the University of Michigan
- G** the creation of the Peace Corps in the early 1960s
- H** Kennedy's campaign stop at the University of Michigan
- J** the first group that committed to serving in the Peace Corps

45 Which statement best expresses an opinion found in the section "Service to Others"?

- A** President Barack Obama issued a proclamation to honor volunteers on the fiftieth anniversary of the Peace Corps.
- B** Mike Roman serves in the Peace Corps as a teacher on an island in Kiribati.
- C** Christian Deitch volunteers as an English teacher in the Kyrgyz Republic in central Asia.
- D** Americans should ask what they can do for their country instead of asking what the country can do for them.

Read the selection and choose the best answer to each question. Then fill in the answer on your answer document.

My Wandering Horse

by John Bird

- 1 Wrangler was my companion before I met my wife. Not having been in South Texas long, I didn't know many people; all of my family lived in North Texas, and I wasn't very social anyway. So when I wasn't teaching agriculture and science at Lytle Middle School in Lytle, southwest of San Antonio, I was spending time with Wrangler.
- 2 I bought the little gelding when he was 3. Day after day, Wrangler and I traveled the rights-of-way along irrigation canals. Medina County had black, flood-irrigated farmland. Small canals that ran across the back of each field were fed from the main canal that went for miles to Medina Lake, north of Castroville. When a farmer needed to irrigate, he or she ordered water from the local water district. The water was directed to the farmer's canal by other canals, and the water flow was controlled by a series of dams. When the water arrived, the farmer opened the stops on his canal, and the property was flooded.
- 3 The canal rights-of-way made an open path to roam and explore. We went through miles of corn, grain sorghum and warm-season vegetables in the summer. During the winter there were cabbage, carrots and wheat. Along the canals there was always something new to see. Wrangler had a long, smooth running walk; we could cover a lot of ground.
- 4 When I was at work, Wrangler was turned out with the Barbados sheep. Sometimes he pinned his ears and tried to herd them; sometimes the lambs followed Wrangler when they couldn't find their mother. Mr. Salinas, my landlord, didn't mind the horse being with his sheep—he made a fine guard dog.
- 5 But being the young horse that he was, Wrangler had a mischievous side. When we left his pasture to start out on a ride, I'd drop the reins when I opened the gate. He would follow me with his nose right at my shoulder. Where I turned, he turned. Once through, Wrangler would stand facing me until I latched the gate, took the reins and swung onto his back; I thought I was a regular horse whisperer.
- 6 One day we went through our normal gate routine. Wrangler stood facing me with a sleepy and innocent look as I turned to latch the gate. But this time, as soon as I took my eyes off of him, he bolted out of the yard and down the road—saddle, reins and all. When he had a half mile or so

between us, he stopped, turned and waited until I got to him, as if he were showing me that he could get away when he wanted to.

7 Another time, it had been a long day at work when I drove down the lane to home. Wrangler wasn't in his normal place. I looked in the back pasture, and then in the barn, but no horse. The fences were up and the gates were closed; he must have been stolen, I thought.

8 A Medina County sheriff's deputy asked me to describe my horse. "He's a little sorrel gelding," I said, "with a freeze brand of a rising sun on his left hip."

9 "Your horse is here in Hondo," the deputy said. "You can pick him up at the stockyards along with his citation."

10 With trailer in tow, I made the 30-mile trip to the stockyards where my horse was in custody. It seemed that he had jumped the fence, traveled a mile down the road and run my neighbor's yearlings through the one-line electric fence that was holding them in. When a sheriff's deputy found him, he was herding the calves down the highway toward LaCoste. The deputy wasn't pleased with either of us. I accepted my scolding and headed for home with a ticket and a troublemaking horse.

11 I'm not the type to appeal a ticket, but this one said that my offense was "allowing livestock to roam on (the) highway." There wasn't any doubt that the horse was on the highway—I wasn't contesting that, but he certainly wasn't allowed to be there.

12 My court date arrived; I appeared in Hondo before the proper authorities and pled my case as they listened patiently. It was my luck that the district attorney had horses of his own. He said he knew that when "a horse had a mind to go somewhere, he would go." Wrangler got off with 90 days probation, but the fee would be doubled if he were found roaming the highway again during that time. I assured the authorities that he would stay put.



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13 The days of testing passed, and my little friend stayed out of trouble. After that, the only time he ran off was when I decided that he didn't need a bridle and tried to ride him with just a halter and lead rope, or when someone else rode him and ignored my warning to keep him at a walk.

14 After a year or two, it was time for me to go back to college for more schooling. Knowing that I couldn't afford to take care of Wrangler and pay tuition, I sold him to a junior barrel racer from Castroville. It was rumored that he became a good rodeo horse. I never saw him again, but I'll always remember my little troublemaking gelding.

John Bird lives with his wife and three children in Eastland, where he works for the USDA Farm Service Agency.

"My Wandering Horse" by John Bird. Reprinted with permission, *Texas Co-op Power* magazine, November 2009 issue.

46 What can the reader conclude about Bird's relationship with Wrangler?

- F** Wrangler was the only horse Bird will ever own.
 - G** Bird wished that he had never sold Wrangler.
 - H** Bird hoped to see Wrangler again.
 - J** Wrangler made a lasting impression on Bird.
-

47 Bird uses paragraph 10 to convey to the reader —

- A** the anger displayed by the sheriff's deputy
 - B** the dangers Wrangler experienced on the highway
 - C** the chaos Wrangler's actions caused
 - D** the frustration felt by the neighbor
-

48 The reader can best identify this selection as a memoir because it —

- F** focuses solely on the author's emotions
- G** describes meaningful events in the author's past
- H** contains a vivid description of the setting
- J** has a well-developed character that encounters a problem

- 49** Bird was fortunate that the district attorney had horses of his own because the district attorney —
- A** was able to offer Bird advice on how to better understand horses
 - B** recognized Bird's ability to handle Wrangler well
 - C** understood how costly raising Wrangler was for Bird
 - D** was sympathetic toward Bird's situation

-
- 50** Bird includes paragraphs 11 and 12 in the selection most likely to illustrate that —
- F** people often try to shirk their responsibilities
 - G** owners cannot always control their animals
 - H** authority figures usually respond to crises in a positive manner
 - J** horses cause more highway accidents than any other animal

51 Bird wrote this selection most likely to —

- A** explain why horses can be difficult to control
- B** express his regret about selling his horse
- C** celebrate the bond he shared with his horse
- D** provide useful advice to first-time horse owners

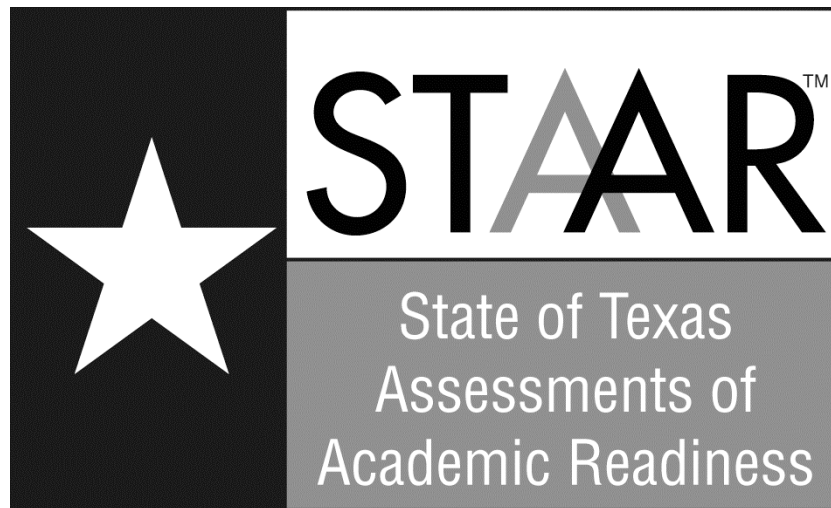
52 The author organizes this selection by —

- F** listing the challenges that horse owners experience
- G** contrasting the actions of Wrangler with those of other animals
- H** describing episodes from the period of time he owned Wrangler
- J** comparing his experience of owning a horse with the experiences of others



**STAAR
GRADE 8
Reading
April 2014**

Item Number	Reporting Category	Readiness or Supporting	Content Student Expectation	Correct Answer
1	2	Readiness	8.8 Fig. 19(D)	D
2	2	Supporting	8.6(C)	G
3	1	Readiness	8.2(B)	B
4	2	Readiness	8.6(A)	J
5	2	Readiness	8.3 Fig. 19(D)	D
6	2	Readiness	8.6(A)	H
7	2	Readiness	8.6 Fig. 19(E)	D
8	2	Readiness	8.6(A)	H
9	2	Readiness	8.8 Fig. 19(D)	A
10	3	Readiness	8.10(C)	H
11	3	Readiness	8.10(A)	A
12	1	Readiness	8.2(B)	F
13	3	Readiness	8.9 Fig. 19(D)	D
14	3	Readiness	8.10(D)	G
15	3	Readiness	8.10 Fig. 19(E)	C
16	3	Readiness	8.10 Fig. 19(D)	J
17	3	Supporting	8.10(B)	C
18	1	Readiness	8.2(B)	H
19	2	Readiness	8.6(B)	D
20	2	Readiness	8.6(A)	G
21	2	Readiness	8.6(B)	B
22	2	Supporting	8.4(A)	F
23	2	Supporting	8.4(A)	C
24	2	Supporting	8.4 Fig. 19(D)	G
25	2	Supporting	8.8 Fig. 19(D)	A
26	1	Readiness	8.19(F)	H
27	1	Readiness	8.19(F)	D
28	1	Readiness	8.19(F)	G
29	1	Readiness	8.19(F)	A
30	1	Readiness	8.19(F)	G
31	3	Supporting	8.11 Fig. 19(D)	D
32	3	Supporting	8.11 Fig. 19(D)	J
33	3	Supporting	8.11 Fig. 19(D)	B
34	1	Readiness	8.2(B)	J
35	3	Supporting	8.11 Fig. 19(D)	B
36	3	Supporting	8.11 Fig. 19(D)	F
37	3	Readiness	8.9 Fig. 19(D)	A
38	1	Readiness	8.2(A)	G
39	3	Readiness	8.10(A)	A
40	3	Readiness	8.10(A)	H
41	3	Readiness	8.9 Fig. 19(D)	B
42	3	Readiness	8.10(D)	J
43	3	Supporting	8.13(C)	B
44	3	Readiness	8.10(A)	G
45	3	Supporting	8.10(B)	D
46	2	Supporting	8.7 Fig. 19(D)	J
47	2	Supporting	8.7 Fig. 19(D)	C
48	2	Supporting	8.3 Fig. 19(D)	G
49	2	Supporting	8.7 Fig. 19(D)	D
50	2	Supporting	8.7 Fig. 19(D)	G
51	2	Supporting	8.7 Fig. 19(D)	C
52	2	Supporting	8.7 Fig. 19(D)	H



Grade 8 Reading Assessment

Eligible Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills

STAAR Grade 8 Reading Assessment

Genres Assessed:

Literary

- Fiction (Readiness)
- Literary Nonfiction (Supporting)
- Poetry (Supporting)
- Drama (Supporting)
- Media Literacy (Embedded)

Informational

- Expository (Readiness)
- Persuasive (Supporting)
- Procedural (Embedded)
- Media Literacy (Embedded)

Reporting Category 1: Understanding and Analysis Across Genres

The student will demonstrate an ability to understand and analyze a variety of written texts across reading genres.

- (2) **Reading/Vocabulary Development.** Students understand new vocabulary and use it when reading and writing. Students are expected to
- (A) determine the meaning of grade-level academic English words derived from Latin, Greek, or other linguistic roots and affixes;
Readiness Standard
 - (B) use context (within a sentence and in larger sections of text) to determine or clarify the meaning of unfamiliar or ambiguous words or words with novel meanings; **Readiness Standard**
 - (E) use a dictionary, a glossary, or a thesaurus (printed or electronic) to determine the meanings, syllabication, pronunciations, alternate word choices, and parts of speech of words. **Readiness Standard**
- (3) **Reading/Comprehension of Literary Text/Theme and Genre.** Students analyze, make inferences and draw conclusions about theme and genre in different cultural, historical, and contemporary contexts and provide evidence from the text to support their understanding. Students are expected to
- (A) analyze literary works that share similar themes across cultures;
Supporting Standard
 - (B) compare and contrast the similarities and differences in mythologies from various cultures (e.g., ideas of afterlife, roles and characteristics of deities, purposes of myths). **Supporting Standard**

- (9) **Reading/Comprehension of Informational Text/Culture and History.** Students analyze, make inferences and draw conclusions about the author's purpose in cultural, historical, and contemporary contexts and provide evidence from the text to support their understanding. Students are expected to

(A) analyze works written on the same topic and compare how the authors achieved similar or different purposes. **Supporting Standard**

- (11) **Reading/Comprehension of Informational Text/Persuasive Text.** Students analyze, make inferences and draw conclusions about persuasive text and provide evidence from text to support their analysis. Students are expected to

(A) compare and contrast persuasive texts that reached different conclusions about the same issue and explain how the authors reached their conclusions through analyzing the evidence each presents. **Supporting Standard**

(Figure 19) **Reading/Comprehension Skills.** Students use a flexible range of metacognitive reading skills in both assigned and independent reading to understand an author's message. Students will continue to apply earlier standards with greater depth in increasingly more complex texts as they become self-directed, critical readers. The student is expected to

(F) make intertextual links among and across texts, including other media (e.g., film, play), and provide textual evidence. **Readiness Standard**

Reporting Category 2: Understanding and Analysis of Literary Texts

The student will demonstrate an ability to understand and analyze literary texts.

- (3) **Reading/Comprehension of Literary Text/Theme and Genre.** Students analyze, make inferences and draw conclusions about theme and genre in different cultural, historical, and contemporary contexts and provide evidence from the text to support their understanding. Students are expected to
- (C) explain how the values and beliefs of particular characters are affected by the historical and cultural setting of the literary work.
Supporting Standard
- (4) **Reading/Comprehension of Literary Text/Poetry.** Students understand, make inferences and draw conclusions about the structure and elements of poetry and provide evidence from text to support their understanding. Students are expected to
- (A) compare and contrast the relationship between the purpose and characteristics of different poetic forms (e.g., epic poetry, lyric poetry). **Supporting Standard**
- (5) **Reading/Comprehension of Literary Text/Drama.** Students understand, make inferences and draw conclusions about the structure and elements of drama and provide evidence from text to support their understanding. Students are expected to
- (A) analyze how different playwrights characterize their protagonists and antagonists through the dialogue and staging of their plays.
Supporting Standard
- (6) **Reading/Comprehension of Literary Text/Fiction.** Students understand, make inferences and draw conclusions about the structure and elements of fiction and provide evidence from text to support their understanding. Students are expected to
- (A) analyze linear plot developments (e.g., conflict, rising action, falling action, resolution, subplots) to determine whether and how conflicts are resolved; **Readiness Standard**
- (B) analyze how the central characters' qualities influence the theme of a fictional work and resolution of the central conflict;
Readiness Standard
- (C) analyze different forms of point of view, including limited versus omniscient, subjective versus objective. **Supporting Standard**

- (7) **Reading/Comprehension of Literary Text/Literary Nonfiction.** Students understand, make inferences and draw conclusions about the varied structural patterns and features of literary nonfiction and provide evidence from text to support their understanding. Students are expected to
- (A) analyze passages in well-known speeches for the author's use of literary devices and word and phrase choice (e.g., aphorisms, epigraphs) to appeal to the audience. **Supporting Standard**
- (8) **Reading/Comprehension of Literary Text/Sensory Language.** Students understand, make inferences and draw conclusions about how an author's sensory language creates imagery in literary text and provide evidence from text to support their understanding. Students are expected to
- (A) explain the effect of similes and extended metaphors in literary text. **Supporting Standard**
- (13) **Reading/Media Literacy.** Students use comprehension skills to analyze how words, images, graphics, and sounds work together in various forms to impact meaning. Students will continue to apply earlier standards with greater depth in increasingly more complex texts. Students are expected to
- (A) evaluate the role of media in focusing attention on events and informing opinion on issues; **Supporting Standard**
 - (C) evaluate various techniques used to create a point of view in media and the impact on audience. **Supporting Standard**
- (Figure 19) **Reading/Comprehension Skills.** Students use a flexible range of metacognitive reading skills in both assigned and independent reading to understand an author's message. Students will continue to apply earlier standards with greater depth in increasingly more complex texts as they become self-directed, critical readers. The student is expected to
- (D) make complex inferences about text and use textual evidence to support understanding; **Readiness Standard** (Fiction) / **Supporting Standard** (Literary Nonfiction, Poetry, Drama)
 - (E) summarize, paraphrase, and synthesize texts in ways that maintain meaning and logical order within a text and across texts. **Readiness Standard** (Fiction) / **Supporting Standard** (Literary Nonfiction, Poetry, Drama)

Reporting Category 3: Understanding and Analysis of Informational Texts

The student will demonstrate an ability to understand and analyze informational texts.

(10) Reading/Comprehension of Informational Text/Expository Text.

Students analyze, make inferences and draw conclusions about expository text and provide evidence from text to support their understanding. Students are expected to

- (A) summarize the main ideas, supporting details, and relationships among ideas in text succinctly in ways that maintain meaning and logical order; **Readiness Standard**
- (B) distinguish factual claims from commonplace assertions and opinions and evaluate inferences from their logic in text; **Supporting Standard**
- (C) make subtle inferences and draw complex conclusions about the ideas in text and their organizational patterns; **Readiness Standard**
- (D) synthesize and make logical connections between ideas within a text and across two or three texts representing similar or different genres and support those findings with textual evidence. **Readiness Standard**

(11) Reading/Comprehension of Informational Text/Persuasive Text.

Students analyze, make inferences and draw conclusions about persuasive text and provide evidence from text to support their analysis. Students are expected to

- (B) analyze the use of such rhetorical and logical fallacies as loaded terms, caricatures, leading questions, false assumptions, and incorrect premises in persuasive texts. **Supporting Standard**

(12) Reading/Comprehension of Informational Text/Procedural Texts.

Students understand how to glean and use information in procedural texts and documents. Students are expected to

- (B) evaluate graphics for their clarity in communicating meaning or achieving a specific purpose. **Supporting Standard**

(13) **Reading/Media Literacy.** Students use comprehension skills to analyze how words, images, graphics, and sounds work together in various forms to impact meaning. Students will continue to apply earlier standards with greater depth in increasingly more complex texts. Students are expected to

(A) evaluate the role of media in focusing attention on events and informing opinion on issues; **Supporting Standard**

(C) evaluate various techniques used to create a point of view in media and the impact on audience. **Supporting Standard**

(Figure 19) **Reading/Comprehension Skills.** Students use a flexible range of metacognitive reading skills in both assigned and independent reading to understand an author's message. Students will continue to apply earlier standards with greater depth in increasingly more complex texts as they become self-directed, critical readers. The student is expected to

(D) make complex inferences about text and use textual evidence to support understanding; **Readiness Standard** (Expository) / **Supporting Standard** (Persuasive)

(E) summarize, paraphrase, and synthesize texts in ways that maintain meaning and logical order within a text and across texts. **Readiness Standard** (Expository) / **Supporting Standard** (Persuasive)