



**NEW ENGLAND  
COMMON ASSESSMENT PROGRAM**

**Released Items  
2013**

**Grade 6  
Reading**

# Reading

The pace of the play was so slow that the entire audience started yawning.

- 1 What does the word pace mean as it is used in the box?
- A. way a horse moves
  - B. rate of speed
  - C. number of steps
  - D. way of walking

*Use the definitions below to answer the question.*

**address** v **1.** to speak **2.** to make a speech  
**3.** to make right **4.** to direct one's efforts to

- 2 Which is the **best** definition of the word address as it is used in this sentence?
- We finished the housework, but now it's time to address the yard work.
- A. definition 1
  - B. definition 2
  - C. definition 3
  - D. definition 4

Read this passage about how to become a good cartoonist. Then answer the questions that follow.

## What's So Funny?

Art Roche

### Writing Jokes

A good cartoonist, much like a good writer, walks around all day looking for things that would make a cool story or an awesome idea. Your job is to keep your sketchpad with you at all times. Jot down ideas; make little sketches that record the world around you. You're looking for what's funny. The million-dollar question is: What does "funny" mean? Let's take a look, shall we?

### What Is Humor, Anyway?

- 2 Because you're the writer, the things you'll be looking for are the things that make you laugh. Did you laugh today or yesterday? Try and remember what it was that made you laugh . . . or even smile. Most people laugh at things that contain a portion of the three magical ingredients of humor: surprise, exaggeration, and the pairing of unlike objects or ideas. That sounds pretty technical, so I'll break it down a bit.

### Surprise

People laugh at the unexpected. Many cartoons simply show a situation that is very unexpected, such as slipping on a banana peel or dropping a birthday cake. Try taking a normal situation and turning it around. How about a dog sitting in an armchair reading the newspaper while a man fetches the dog's slippers? Look for situations at home or school that can be turned around like this. That is surprise.

### Exaggeration

- 4 With exaggeration, you start with a normal situation and embellish something to a ridiculous degree. Does your school backpack ever feel too heavy? Then draw it as big as a house, with you as a tiny little figure

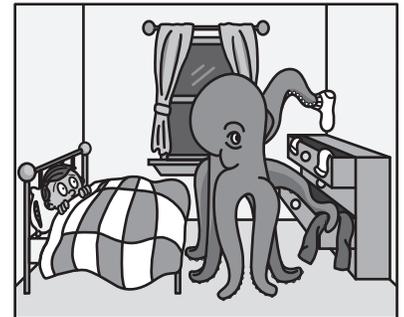


Picture 1

underneath the enormous weight. Have fun and use your imagination. Be silly. When the weather is hot, draw yourself melting. When it's cold, draw yourself as an ice cube. Does your little sister cry a lot? Draw a cartoon showing her flooding the entire house with tears . . . and you, waist deep in the water.

### The Pairing of Unlike Objects or Ideas

Take two ideas that would never go together and . . . put them together. Start with a very serious environment, such as the operating room in a hospital. Then draw a clown in place of a surgeon.



Picture 2

- 6 You'd never expect to see a clown there. Practically any punch line you write will be funny. This idea is closely related to using surprise, except that you're combining two unrelated ideas to get the surprise. How about an octopus showing up in your bedroom? Or the President of the United States roller-skating down the hall?

Start with something you think is funny. Then try to use one of these three methods to come up with an idea. Sometimes a combination of these techniques works best of all.

### The Un-funny Life

I've had people tell me that their life isn't funny. I have to admit that I've felt that way myself. Everyone does. But looking for funny is an attitude.

You have to open yourself up to the world around you. It takes practice to tune your funny-seeking radar. Don't get discouraged if you have trouble at first. Everyone does. Just keep trying and you'll soon start seeing everything through different eyes.

All I can offer is one simple clue:

People are funniest when they're being human. They're most human when things go wrong. That means that you might find humor when simple, little things are wrong or out of place. That happens every day, right?

Here are a few common examples:

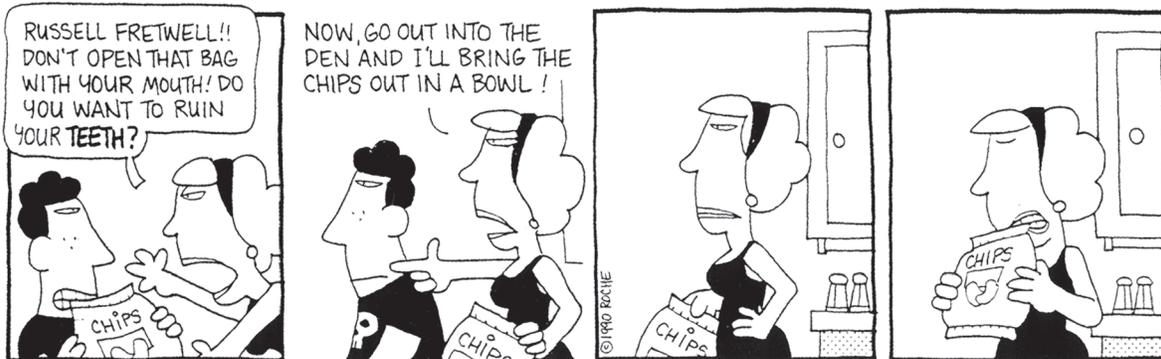
- An overgrown front yard
- A homemade cake gone wrong
- A bad hair day
- A leak in the plumbing
- A doomed science project
- A really messy room
- A new kitten destroying furniture
- Losing the TV remote
- Jumping on the bed
- A dog that's too fat

Look for little things like this in your own life. Look for the weird, the out-of-place, the ridiculous. Start thinking about what a book of your cartoons would look like if you put all those funny little moments on paper.

Now, think of all the unique characters you know. Take funny situations, mix in your one-of-a-kind family and friends, and add a dash of exaggeration. You may end up with more cartoon ideas than you could ever draw.



The cartoon above shows a common scene in most homes: a messy bedroom. Most of us think of our dirty laundry by category. I just took that idea and added a bit of exaggeration. I also think it's funny to see the kid trying to talk his way out of cleaning up. I do this all the time.



This is a classic example of Mom saying one thing and doing another. It happens all the time. Most people like to see the silly things they do reflected in cartoons. If a similar situation has happened to them, it's even funnier.

- 3 According to the passage, what do cartoonists and writers have in common?
- A. Both use their fans as characters in their stories.
  - B. Both write down questions to prepare themselves.
  - C. Both think about the people who will read their work.
  - D. Both look for new ideas through their surroundings.

- 4 Which sentence **best** summarizes paragraph 2?
- A. There are different ways to laugh.
  - B. Laughing and smiling are similar actions.
  - C. There are reasons why people laugh.
  - D. Laughing will make people forget things.

- 5 Based on the passage, what is an example of surprise?
- A. A horse rides in a cart while the owner pulls it down the road.
  - B. A cat chases a string around the room until it is tired.
  - C. A person notices that there is a long line at the movie theater.
  - D. A farmer finds that all his chickens have laid eggs.

- 6 In paragraph 4, the word embellish means
- A. add extra details.
  - B. look at closely.
  - C. attempt to copy.
  - D. search for proof.

You have to open yourself up to the world around you.

- 7 Explain how following this advice helps a person become a good cartoonist. Use information from the **entire** passage to support your answer.

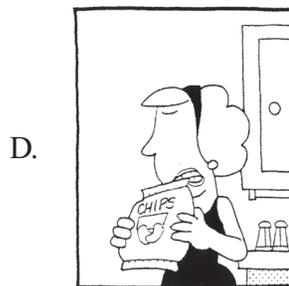
8 In **Picture 1**, which part of the picture **mainly** represents exaggeration?

- A. the look on the boy's face
- B. the height of the bus stop pole
- C. the size of the backpack
- D. the clothes on the boy

9 In paragraph 6, the word unrelated means

- A. not repeated.
- B. not defined.
- C. not allowed.
- D. not connected.

10 Based on the passage, which picture is the **best** example of surprise?



- 11 In which sentence of the cartoons is the writer trying to be humorous?
- A. “Russell, what are all these piles of clothes on your floor?”
  - B. “They’re either dirty or almost dirty.”
  - C. “Do you want to ruin your teeth?”
  - D. “Now, go out into the den and I’ll bring the chips out in a bowl!”

- 12 Explain how the author both informs **and** entertains the reader. Use information from the passage to support your answer.

# Acknowledgments

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