



**NEW ENGLAND
COMMON ASSESSMENT PROGRAM**

**Released Items
2012**

**Grade 8
Reading**

Reading

1 The prefix *mon-* in the words monarch and monorail means

- A. one.
- B. less.
- C. hand.
- D. bad.

The builder _____ the wall before he built the next story of the building.

2 Which word shows the builder made the wall stronger?

- A. reinforced
- B. promoted
- C. concealed
- D. decorated

Julianna, an eighth grader, loves to spend time with her father while he is painting. Read this passage. Then answer the questions that follow.

Watching Dad

Wendelin Van Draanen Parsons

I love to watch my father paint. Or really, I love to hear him talk while he paints. The words always come out soft and somehow heavy when he's brushing on the layers of a landscape. Not sad. Weary, maybe, but peaceful.

My father doesn't have a studio or anything, and since the garage is stuffed with things that everyone thinks they need but no one ever uses, he paints outside.

Outside *is* where the best landscapes are, only they're nowhere near our house. So what he does is keep a camera in his truck. His job as a mason takes him to lots of different locations, and he's always on the lookout for a great sunrise or sunset, or even just a nice field with sheep or cows. Then he picks out one of the snapshots, clips it to his easel, and paints.

- 4 The paintings come out fine, but I've always felt a little sorry for him, having to paint beautiful scenes in our backyard, which is not exactly picturesque. It never was much of a yard, but after I started raising chickens, things didn't exactly improve.

Dad doesn't seem to see the backyard or the chickens when he's painting, though. It's not just the snapshot or the canvas he sees either. It's something much bigger. He gets this look in his eye like he's transcended the yard, the neighborhood, the world. And as his big, callused hands sweep a tiny brush against the canvas, it's almost like his body has been possessed by some graceful spiritual being.

When I was little, my dad would let me sit beside him on the porch while he painted, as long as I'd be quiet. I don't do quiet easily, but I discovered that after five or ten minutes without a peep, *he'd* start talking.

I've learned a lot about my dad that way. He told me all sorts of stories about what he'd done when he was my age, and other things, too—like how he got his first job delivering hay, and how he wished he'd finished college.

When I got a little older, he still talked about himself and his childhood, but he also started asking questions about me. What were we learning at school? What book was I currently reading? What did I think about this or that?

Then one time he surprised me and asked me about Bryce. Why was I so crazy about Bryce?

I told him about his eyes and his hair and the way his cheeks blush, but I don't think I explained it very well because when I was done Dad shook his head and told me in soft, heavy words that I needed to start looking at the whole landscape.

I didn't really know what he meant by that, but it made me want to argue with him. How could he possibly understand about Bryce? He didn't know him!

But this was not an arguing spot. Those were scattered throughout the house, but not out here.

We were both quiet for a record-breaking amount of time before he kissed me on the forehead and said, "Proper lighting is everything, Julianna."

Proper lighting? What was that supposed to mean? I sat there wondering, but I was afraid that by asking I'd be admitting that I wasn't mature enough to understand, and for some reason it felt obvious. Like I should understand.

3 Dad gets most of his inspiration for his paintings from

- A. views from his backyard.
- B. photographs he has taken.
- C. instructors at art school.
- D. paintings he has seen.

4 Julianna feels sad for her father because he

- A. makes a living as a mason.
- B. paints with so little imagination.
- C. paints in a yard with chickens.
- D. failed to complete his college degree.

5 In paragraph 4, the word picturesque means

- A. easily accessible.
- B. naturally beautiful.
- C. entirely shaded.
- D. safely enclosed.

6 Julianna likes to watch her father paint because she wants to

- A. learn to paint.
- B. listen to him talk.
- C. get some advice.
- D. tell him about Bryce.

7 Explain how the reader knows that painting is important to Dad. Use details from the passage to support your answer.

Read this article about building an igloo. Then answer the questions that follow.

A Lesson in Igloo Building

Larry Pynn

An igloo is a Canadian winter icon: aesthetically pleasing, structurally simple yet highly effective, a common-sense solution to survival in a stark landscape—and with zero carbon footprint to boot.

“People are really excited about igloos,” says backcountry guide Guillaume Otis, scratching his snowflake-patterned toque. But he adds thoughtfully, “People underestimate how hard and complicated it is.”

The first step is to find snow suitable for cutting into building blocks. The four of us begin by digging a trench, which enables us to work comfortably at waist level. Gradually we scrape away the soft upper layer of snow until we reach a denser second layer.

“One-finger snow,” Otis explains. “If you can poke your finger through, it’s too soft.”

- 5** Using small handsaws, we cut individual rectangular blocks from the dense snow. Each measures roughly 70 by 30 by 20 centimetres, and weighs at least 10 kilograms.
- 6** Otis selects a site for the structure and thoroughly stomps down the snow to create a stable base. An igloo is constructed as a rising spiral. The first block laid into place is cut in a wedge shape, so that when the bottom ring is complete, the initial block of the second ring naturally angles up on the first wedge to start the next layer.

Standing inside the igloo with his pruning saw, Otis trims and shapes the blocks to create a wall that leans gently inward. This, and the dome’s spiral shape, ensure that the final blocks neatly fill in the top of the igloo. While blocks should be fitted together as tightly as possible, any gaps can be filled with handfuls of snow at the end.



Figure 1



Figure 2

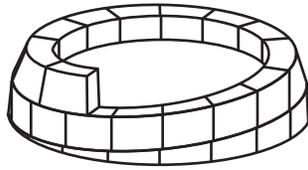
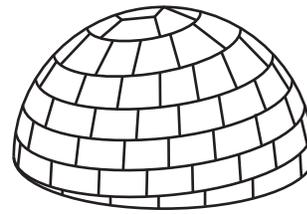
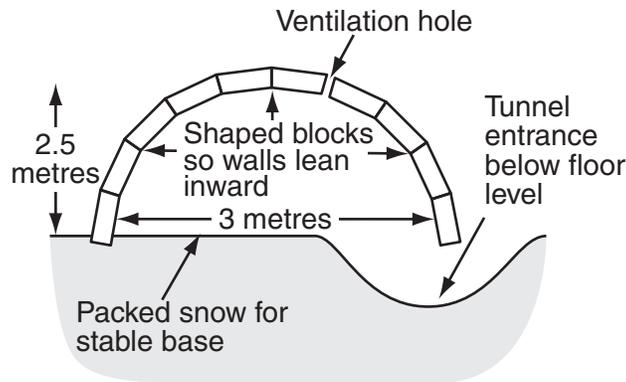


Figure 3



Finished exterior

Figure 4



Finished interior

- 8** To access the igloo, we dig a tunnel at the front—just large enough for us to slither through on our bellies. The finished product is 2.5 metres high with a radius of 1.5 metres—large enough to accommodate three sleeping bags. In all, it has taken four of us six hours, split over two days, to build the igloo. We used 75 blocks in the construction—not counting the many we broke trying to pry them from the snow. A final ventilation hole in the upper wall and it's done.
- 9** “Build an igloo, sure, sounds cool,” Otis taunts. “What were you *thinking*?”
- Sure, it was hard, but it was worth the effort. As we wriggle inside to admire our handiwork, we discover something remarkable. Cold-filtered sunlight seeps in around each block in the concave walls, passing through a prism of snow crystals. The resulting luminous blue hue and mosaic of rounded rectangles are serenely beautiful.

Cool? That's an understatement.

- 8 Based on the article, why is “one-finger snow” avoided when building an igloo?
- A. It creates an unstable base for the igloo.
 - B. It is not suitable to be cut into blocks.
 - C. It does not allow light to shine into the igloo.
 - D. It forms blocks that are too heavy to lift.

- 9 Which paragraph contains information illustrated in **Figure 2**?
- A. paragraph 5
 - B. paragraph 6
 - C. paragraph 8
 - D. paragraph 9

- 10 In paragraph 9, the word taunts means
- A. hints.
 - B. suggests.
 - C. mocks.
 - D. wonders.

- 11 Which statement from the article contains an **opinion**?
- A. “The four of us begin by digging a trench, which enables us to work comfortably at waist level.”
 - B. “Otis selects a site for the structure and thoroughly stomps down the snow to create a stable base.”
 - C. “To access the igloo, we dig a tunnel at the front—just large enough for us to slither through on our bellies.”
 - D. “As we wriggle inside to admire our handiwork, we discover something remarkable.”

- 12 Describe the challenges that must be overcome when making an igloo. Use information from the article to support your answer.

Acknowledgments

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