



**NEW ENGLAND
COMMON ASSESSMENT PROGRAM**

**Released Items
2011**

**Grade 11
Reading**

Reading

1 An **antonym** for the word fluster is

- A. recline.
- B. prevent.
- C. soothe.
- D. deceive.

2 Which word **most** clearly indicates that Stan's expression displays his shock?

When Stan found out how much his groceries cost, his mouth fell open as he _____ at the receipt.

- A. stared
- B. gaped
- C. sneered
- D. frowned

This passage is about a type of dwelling that has been used in Mongolia for thousands of years and still offers advantages today. Read the passage to find out about yurts. Then answer the questions that follow.

Yurts

Heidi Hunt

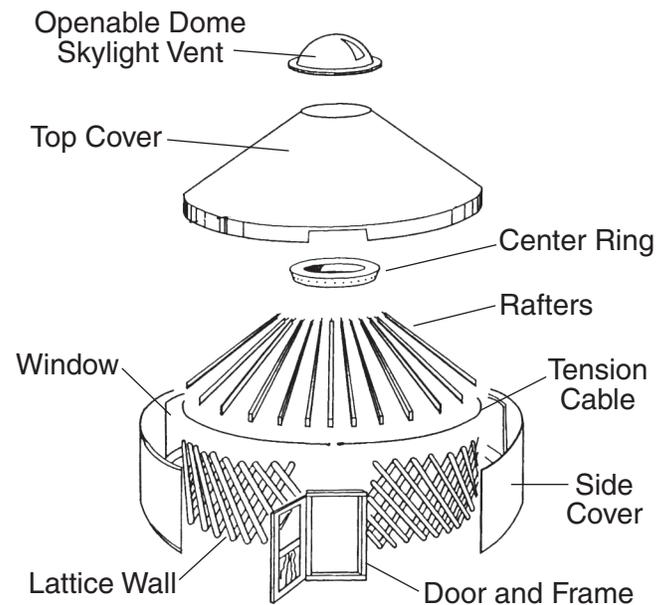
Yurts may not be as familiar to Americans as tipis, but these sturdy, spacious dwellings are equally appealing. Inexpensive, easy-to-assemble and comfortable even in cold weather, yurts suit a variety of housing needs.

For eons, nomads following herds of yak and sheep have used flexible saplings, such as willow, as framework for their portable homes, called yurts. The coverings for traditional yurts, known as gers (rhymes with “hairs”) in Mongolia, are made of wool felt; as many as eight covers may be piled on top of each other to combat the 50-degree-below-zero winter weather.

- 3 Although a yurt has more structural pieces than a tipi and its engineering principles are more complicated (see the exploded view of a yurt at right), a yurt large enough for a family of four can be transported to the site in a pickup and can be erected in less than a day.

The strength of most modern yurt frames comes from a tension cable that encircles the trellislike frame of the walls, holding it to the desired diameter. The roof rafters push down and out on the cable, creating a balance of tensions, which holds the whole structure together. A round compression roof ring attaches to the roof rafters. In a traditional yurt, the framework is covered with felt mats and tied down with hair ropes to prevent the mats from blowing off in stiff winds. A yurt’s door can be wooden and attached to the framework, or it can be a hanging felt mat or woven rug.

The modern yurt made its North American debut in 1962 when Bill Coperthwaite, a California high-school mathematics teacher, led his class in a study of roof design. (For more about Coperthwaite’s Yurt Foundation and the wood-sided yurt building plans they offer, visit www.yurtinfo.org/the-yurt-foundation.php.)



Forty years later, several U.S. companies make and sell yurts. The style has remained much like those found on the Asian plains. Gone are the heavy, felt mats and sapling frames; in their place are engineered roof trusses, NASA-inspired insulation and lightweight, fire-and-water-resistant canvas.

Most yurt manufacturers recommend building a foundation floor or deck for the yurt. Some include plans to build the floor for specific yurt sizes.

8 Some models of canvas-covered yurts, including the decking, can be moved from site to site with relative ease. “We moved our yurt a number of times while our children were young,” says Jessica Tenhass of Homer, Alaska. “The move was less traumatic because the house remained the same.”

A yurt can be ready for habitation in a week, deck included. You don’t need to be a master carpenter, but some basic carpentry skills are required. People have erected permanent yurts, sometimes even in communities where there are building code

standards. Pacific Yurts paved the way for this by designing their yurts to conform to the Uniform Building Code. If you plan to use your yurt as a permanent residence, be sure to check local building codes and zoning restrictions before you buy.

Insulation packages can be purchased from the manufacturers of most yurts. The insulation allows the dwelling, heated by a wood or oil stove, to stay comfortable even during Alaskan winters.

Tenhass says she brought both of her January-born infants home from the hospital to her yurt. “It felt like being in a cozy nest, a very centering family experience.”

3 A synonym for the word nomad is

- A. wanderer.
- B. citizen.
- C. carpenter.
- D. ancestor.

4 What characteristic of yurts does paragraph 3 describe?

- A. their suitability for harsh climates
- B. an advantage of their design
- C. their historical significance
- D. the materials used to build them

5 The most important principle of a yurt's structure is

- A. weight.
- B. tension.
- C. gravity.
- D. space.

6 In paragraph 8, the quotation from Jessica Tenhass supports the idea that yurts

- A. should remain in one place.
- B. are too fragile to be practical.
- C. make the moving process easy.
- D. are warm even in cold climates.

7 Explain how traditional and modern yurts are similar **and** different. Use information from the passage to support your answer.

The narrator of this passage is renting a cottage while finishing her thesis, a long paper she needs to write to receive her degree. She realizes that a mouse is living somewhere under the kitchen sink. One evening she puts some bread under the sink for the mouse. Read the passage to learn what happens next. Then answer the questions that follow.

Amnesty

Ilse Lieve Ackerman

The next morning I found, with a thrill of generosity and relief, that the bread had completely vanished. The next night I picked a miniature china bowl out of the cupboard and shook oatmeal flakes into it. It was shiny empty in the morning.

And then I realized—the tiny gnawing sounds at night had stopped. I worked at the dining room table in quiet. And that was the last I heard.

Winter came, and I didn't hear or see a thing. But every morning the food dish was polished clean. I began to feel a tender responsibility toward sustaining this creature's life.

When Christmas holidays came, I worried about its welfare during my weeks away, but couldn't quite imagine finding a willing mouse-sitter. Instead, I left a whole heel of bread under the cabinet, hoping to tide the mouse over. When I returned two weeks later to find all the bread gone, I fretted over small-animal metabolism: had that not been enough? Had it exhausted its food early on and then starved?

5 But the next morning I found that a fresh offering of sunflower seeds had vanished from the bowl, reassuring me that I hadn't failed at seeing my new charge through the winter. I wondered how it spent its life, week in and week out. Sleeping all day and rising at night for a single excursion to the food dish? I wondered if it would make it until the weather was warm enough to relocate outdoors. If it would get desperate first, and be swiftly caught by the cat.

I was making progress on my thesis and by late spring beginning to arrange my departure from the house. I purchased a small-animal trap, a metal cage with a bait tray that triggered the doors shut. But I was busy and rushed, and maybe a little reluctant for the mouse to leave, and so I delayed setting the trap. Finally I placed it under the kitchen sink and stayed awake that night to listen for the sound of

metal doors snapping shut. I felt a curious sense of anticipation. After living so close and providing for its needs for so many months, to finally meet! But I heard nothing all night, and the next morning I was disappointed to find the trap empty. Not only was there no mouse, but no food. It had entered and left, and the trap door had never triggered.

7 I went on to try different configurations with the trap. But each morning I found the food gone and the trap door open wide. What a cautious and tiny creature, I marveled.

Meanwhile I was struggling with my thesis. As the due date neared, I discovered new data that I should have included. I spent long days reconfiguring, redoing the results. The mouse weighed heavily on my mind and vainly on my to-do list the following weeks as I went through the final steps of thesis preparation.

But then one day in July, revisions were done, signatures gathered, and that afternoon I turned my thesis in to the graduate school. With my mind finally free, I could focus on the next most pressing thing. In a few more days I'd be moving out and a new tenant would be moving in. So I took extra care resetting the trap, rummaging through the cabinets to find something special for the mouse's last supper in confinement. I settled on pumpkin seeds and raisins, and then I went out for dinner to celebrate. I went dancing. I had a friend over late, and we talked even later. It wasn't until five in the morning that I crawled into bed, exhausted and also happy. The long quiet year at the dining room table was behind me. Life was moving on. Half of summer remained.

10 Those thoughts almost carried me off to sleep, but suddenly my eyes opened wide in the dark. The mouse—if it was finally caught—was spending its first moments of my carefree post-thesis life trapped in a cage.

I could go check on it later, around noon, when I woke up. After I had slept. I had never managed to catch it before, so what was the urgency this time? But while I tried to reason with myself, I felt an insistent certainty that I'd finally captured my houseguest.

12 I sat up on the edge of the bed, foggy and trying to think. Find the camera, I thought, and something to cover the cage. I picked a soft T-shirt. In the kitchen, it was dark and silent, as usual. I pulled the sink light down in front of the cabinet and paused, wondering what I would see. Had the mouse had enough to eat? Would it be skinny? Was it crippled from whatever injuries it had sustained from the cat? Was it not a mouse after all? Had I caught anything?

What I saw when I opened the door was a still, tiny, golden-colored mouse. He was beautiful: sleek fur, big dark eyes, and a fat white underbelly.

I allowed myself one photo, not sure if he would be visible through the grid of the cage. I wrapped the cage in my shirt and carried it to the car.

I drove out the west side of town and along the lake to the nearest park. The mouse sat quietly in the cage in the passenger's seat. I felt breathless with responsibility.

It was just beginning to get light, and the park was deserted. I left the car and took the cage with me, walking past a playground, a marina, and farther. Past boats, mowed barbecue areas, and a grove of trees, until I saw a meadow with grasses three or four feet tall, in seed. I set the cage down facing the meadow, uncovered it, lifted the cage door, and sat down to watch.

The mouse appeared in the open door and lifted his nose in the air. For minutes he stood there, right inside the cage door, his head nodding up and down, inhaling the air, sniffing, sniffing. Finally, he stepped out and gave an irrepressible leap into the air. Three leaps, and he had vanished into the wall of grasses.

He was gone. Nine months after he had joined me. November to July. I sat a little while longer. I took pictures of what was left: my shirt and an empty cage on the park grass. I gathered the things together. And, with nothing else to do, I got up to leave. I heard a squeaky, rapid chatter in the grass, but I don't know if it was a mouse feeling freedom or a startled bird.

- 8 Why does traveling during the holidays present a problem for the narrator?
- A. She suspects the mouse will leave.
 - B. She thinks the mouse depends on her for food.
 - C. She wonders whether the mouse will raid her kitchen.
 - D. She worries that the mouse is becoming sick.

- 9 In paragraph 5, the word charge means
- A. responsibility.
 - B. expense.
 - C. control.
 - D. accusation.

- 10 What leads to the narrator's decision to catch the mouse?
- A. She realizes her time in the house is limited.
 - B. She thinks the mouse should be outside in the spring.
 - C. She is tired of being distracted from her thesis.
 - D. She decides it is unhealthy to have a mouse in the house.

- 11 In paragraph 7, the word configurations means
- A. emotions.
 - B. predictions.
 - C. arrangements.
 - D. attractions.

- 12 Explain what the narrator reveals about her personality in the passage. Use details from the passage to support your answer.

13 What is the **most likely** reason the author includes details about writing the thesis?

- A. to provide the central problem the narrator must solve
- B. to establish a subplot that frames the story of catching the mouse
- C. to introduce events that provide the falling action in the plot
- D. to serve as a symbol of the narrator's difficulties with life

14 How does the narrator react when she finishes her thesis?

- A. She is uncertain about what to do next.
- B. She realizes that she needs quiet time to relax.
- C. She thinks she has wasted much of the summer.
- D. She is eager to move on with her life.

15 What do the narrator's actions in paragraphs 10 through 12 demonstrate?

- A. She is concerned about the fate of the mouse.
- B. She is reluctant to end her writing routine.
- C. She regrets that she has tried to capture the mouse.
- D. She worries about the success of her thesis.

16 Which event is the climax of the passage?

- A. The narrator finds the trap empty after the first attempt to catch the mouse.
- B. The narrator discovers that her thesis needs to be revised.
- C. The narrator opens the cabinet and sees the mouse in the trap.
- D. The narrator hears a squeaking in the grass in the park.

17 Explain how the mouse is both a source of comfort **and** a source of anxiety for the narrator. Use details from the passage to support your answer.

Acknowledgments

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