



**RIDE** Rhode Island  
Department  
of Education

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*Release of Spring 2022*

*RICAS Test Items*

*from the*

*Grade 8 English Language Arts  
Paper-Based Test*

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**June 2022**

**Rhode Island Department of Education**

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This document was prepared by the  
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# Overview of Grade 8 English Language Arts Test

The spring 2022 grade 8 English Language Arts (ELA) test was a next-generation assessment that was administered in two primary formats: a computer-based version and a paper-based version. The vast majority of students took the computer-based test. The paper-based test was offered as an accommodation for students with disabilities who are unable to use a computer, as well as for English learners who are new to the country and are unfamiliar with technology.

Most of the operational items on the grade 8 ELA test were the same, regardless of whether a student took the computer-based version or the paper-based version. In places where a technology-enhanced item was used on the computer-based test, an adapted version of the item was created for use on the paper test. These adapted paper items were multiple-choice or multiple-select items that tested the same ELA content and assessed the same standard as the technology-enhanced item.

**This document displays released items from the paper-based test**, along with associated reading passages. Released items from the computer-based test are available on the MCAS Resource Center website at [ricas.pearsonsupport.com/released-items](https://ricas.pearsonsupport.com/released-items).

The Scoring Guides can be found at [www.doe.mass.edu/mcas/student/](http://www.doe.mass.edu/mcas/student/). They provide the released constructed-response questions, a unique scoring guide for each question, and samples of student work at each score point.

## Test Sessions and Content Overview

The grade 8 ELA test was made up of two separate test sessions. Each session included reading passages, followed by selected-response questions and essay questions. On the paper-based test, the selected-response questions were multiple-choice items and multiple-select items, in which students select the correct answer(s) from among several answer options.

## Standards and Reporting Categories

The grade 8 ELA test was based on grades 6–12 learning standards in three content strands of the *Massachusetts Curriculum Framework for English Language Arts and Literacy* (2017), listed below.

- Reading
- Writing
- Language

The *Massachusetts Curriculum Framework* is strongly aligned with Rhode Island’s English Language Arts/literacy standards: the Common Core State Standards (CCSS). The RICAS ELA assessment tables articulate this alignment and are available on the RIDE website at [www.ride.ri.gov/ricas](http://www.ride.ri.gov/ricas). The *Massachusetts Curriculum Framework for English Language Arts and Literacy* is available on the Department website at [www.doe.mass.edu/frameworks/current.html](http://www.doe.mass.edu/frameworks/current.html).

ELA test results are reported under three MCAS reporting categories, which are identical to the three framework content strands listed above.

The tables at the conclusion of this document provide the following information about each released and unreleased operational item: reporting category, standard(s) covered, item type, and item description. The correct answers for released selected-response questions are also displayed in the released item table.

## Reference Materials

During both ELA test sessions, the use of bilingual word-to-word dictionaries was allowed for current and former English learner students only. No other reference materials were allowed during any ELA test session.

# Grade 8 English Language Arts

This session contains 19 questions.

## **Directions**

Read each passage and question carefully. Then answer each question as well as you can. You must record all answers in this Test & Answer Booklet.

For most questions, you will mark your answers by filling in the circles in your Test & Answer Booklet. Make sure you darken the circles completely. Do not make any marks outside of the circles. If you need to change an answer, be sure to erase your first answer completely.

Some questions will ask you to write a response. Write your response in the space provided. Only responses written within the provided space will be scored.

## English Language Arts

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**Read the passages from a novel and a novel in verse. Then answer the questions that follow.**

In this passage from the novel *Starfish*, Kiko is visiting her childhood friend Jamie in Los Angeles, California, where she hopes to attend art school. She and Jamie have gone to an art gallery to see the work of a famous painter.

### from *Starfish*

by Akemi Dawn Bowman

- 1 Hiroshi Matsumoto doesn't look anything like his photo in the magazine. He looks like he's been electrocuted, for one. His black hair is wild and points in every direction, like someone who drove for hours with all the windows down. His warm ivory skin is free from a single imperfection, like a porcelain doll behind a glass case. And he's shorter than the average person, but not short enough to be considered "short." Like me.
- 2 I'm also pretty sure he's wearing a dress. Or the longest shirt in the world. I can't quite decide.
- 3 Pacing back and forth like a ghost haunting a museum, Hiroshi never makes eye contact with any of the people here to appreciate his paintings. He simply floats by them with peculiar disinterest.
- 4 It makes me nervous. If he isn't interested in his adoring fans, he isn't going to want a single thing to do with me.
- 5 I don't have to look far for Jamie—he's one step behind me, admiring a large painting of a flock of black swans pulling a carriage through the air. Inside the carriage is a voluptuous woman spilling over the edges with her hands up in the air like she's on a roller coaster.
- 6 "These paintings are hilariously random," Jamie notes.
- 7 "They're amazing," I correct with my head dipped low and my voice quiet. I'm afraid someone will hear me.
- 8 "Did you see the frog one?" Jamie asks with a grin. "It's just a giant green frog—I'm not kidding—wearing a top hat."
- 9 "*But they're so good,*" I gush dizzily.
- 10 "What are you supposed to call this kind of art?" Jamie looks genuinely curious, even if he does think the paintings are silly.

## English Language Arts

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- 11 "Pop surrealism<sup>1</sup> is what the art people keep calling it." His voice is mellow and soft, but it sounds like the only noise in the room. Hiroshi blinks at the painting on the wall like he's not entirely satisfied with it. When he leans toward me, I can smell vanilla and smoke. "I'm not sure it's supposed to be called anything though, really. It's just my own brand of nonsense."
- 12 Oh my God, Hiroshi Matsumoto from the magazine is talking to me.
- 13 "Oh, hey, you're the artist," Jamie says with blissful innocence. "Really cool gallery. I liked the frog."
- 14 My face is burning—literally burning—and I think I'm going to pass out when I watch Jamie and Hiroshi shake hands.
- 15 "And your name?" Hiroshi watches me with small eyes the color of cocoa powder.
- 16 "Kiko," I manage to whisper. My breath hiccups nervously.
- 17 "Ah, a cousin of mine," he says with a mischievous smile. "I thought you looked part Japanese."
- 18 "My dad's side," I tell him.
- 19 "Mine too. And my mother's." He's chuckling slowly. Everything he does seems slower, like he's in complete control of time and makes it match his pace instead of the other way around. He looks back at Jamie. "What about you?"
- 20 Jamie laughs easily. "I'm the odd one out, I'm afraid. My mom's family is German, and I think my dad's family was Scottish or something, but it was so long ago nobody knows for sure."
- 21 "And do you speak German?" Hiroshi bounces on his toes.
- 22 "I can barely speak English." Jamie scratches his head with a grin.
- 23 Hiroshi's laugh is like a song. "I always ask, because people always ask me if I can speak Japanese. I try to beat them to it." He looks over his shoulder at some of the other people waiting to speak with him. I get the feeling he's trying to avoid them. "Do you both go to school around here?"
- 24 I shake my head like a frightened rabbit.

<sup>1</sup>pop surrealism—a type of art that depicts realistic objects in fantastical situations

## English Language Arts

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- 25 Jamie nods at me—he’s trying to be encouraging, but it’s not working. I don’t know how to talk to strangers, and especially not ones I admire. He pulls Hiroshi’s attention from me to break the silence. “I do, but Kiko lives in Nebraska.” He pauses thoughtfully. “She’s actually here visiting to look at art schools for the fall.”
- 26 Panic floods my body. He wasn’t supposed to tell him that. Now Hiroshi’s going to think I’m an artist. He’s going to wonder if I’m any good. He’s probably going to assume I’m better than I am. And I’m a complete amateur compared to him.
- 27 This is so embarrassing.
- 28 “Art school, eh? And what’s your flavor?” Hiroshi presses his lips together in a tight smile.
- 29 “Acrylics,” I say meekly. “But not like this. I mean, I’m not as good. As you, I mean. I’m not as good as you. At all.” Oh my God, I can’t speak English either. I look at Jamie, my eyes begging for him to save me, but he doesn’t seem to understand that I’m drowning.
- 30 “We all start at the same place, but you’re completely in charge of where you finish,” Hiroshi says. “You can be as good an artist as you want to be. You just have to practice and work hard. I’m sure your parents have told you this, yes?”
- 31 I’m frozen. My parents don’t talk to me about art. Will he know this without me saying it? His serious eyes tell me he does.
- 32 Hiroshi presses his hands together like he’s praying and rests his chin on the tips of his fingers. “My parents told me art was what lazy people did when they just wanted to work on the side of the street. They wanted me to be a doctor. So when I had two daughters, I told them they could be anything they wanted, even if it was a painter on the side of the street. And do you know what? One of them is in medical school and the other wants to be a surfer.” He laughs. “We all have to dream our own dreams. We only get one life to live—live it for yourself, not anyone else. Because when you’re on your deathbed, you’re going to be wishing you had. When everyone else is on theirs, I guarantee they aren’t going to be thinking about your life.”
- 33 Jamie pulls his phone out. “She’s *really* good. She just doesn’t realize it. Here, look.”

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- 34 I don't know what's going on. Hiroshi is leaning in to Jamie, looking down at the brightly lit screen while Jamie swipes again and again and again. Each time, Hiroshi stares thoughtfully, grunting to himself the way a dog does when it's having a dream.
- 35 *What are you doing?* I manage to mouth. Seriously, Jamie, *what are you doing?*
- 36 Jamie shakes his head at me like he doesn't want me to ruin whatever moment they're having. I make the mistake of leaning forward and looking at his phone.
- 37 They're pictures of my paintings. Pictures of my portfolio. *On Jamie's phone.*
- 38 And Hiroshi Matsumoto is looking at them.
- 39 Can I please die now?
- 40 I feel my body shrinking and shrinking. I've shriveled up into a small, frightened child. Why would Jamie show him those photos? Why did he even have them on his phone to begin with? Has he completely lost his mind?
- 41 I hold my breath and try not to vomit while I wait for Hiroshi to look back at me. I'm sure he will, eventually, to say something along the lines of, "Good effort. Just keep working hard." Something to confirm I'm nowhere near as good as I'd like to be. Words to remind me I'm not good enough for Prism and their superstar art program.
- 42 When Hiroshi looks back at me, a black strand of hair hanging at his temple, he doesn't say anything. He just stares at me like he's only just noticed me, even though we've been talking for at least five minutes.
- 43 A tall woman with a short bob taps Hiroshi's shoulder. "Sorry to interrupt, but there's a Mr. Bolton here to see you."
- 44 Hiroshi nods. "Okay, I'm coming." He looks at me and Jamie and gives a wrinkled smile. And then, just to me, he says, "You should bring your portfolio to my studio sometime. Those art schools like their recommendations. I'll see what I can do."
- 45 I think my brain might actually blow up. I nod frantically, like a bobble-head strapped to a rock crawler.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup>rock crawler—a vehicle designed to travel across uneven ground



## English Language Arts

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- 46 Hiroshi floats away like a phantom, the hem of his white dress trailing behind him.
- 47 “Oh my God, what just happened?” I hiss in Jamie’s direction.
- 48 A smirk appears. “I think he was impressed.”
- 49 I blush. “Why did you take photos of my portfolio?”
- 50 “Because I wasn’t sure if you’d ever let me see it again. You’re so private about your art—you panic if you think anyone is watching you draw in your sketchbook.”
- 51 “Well, that was super embarrassing.” And a huge violation of my privacy, I want to add, but I don’t because my tongue is fighting with my brain and really I’m just hearing Hiroshi’s words on a continuous loop. I clear my throat, and then I’m unable to contain my happiness. “And awesome. And seriously the coolest thing that’s ever happened to me in my life.” Hiroshi Matsumoto wants to see my portfolio. And write me a recommendation. And help me get into art school.
- 52 Jamie doesn’t hesitate—he takes my hand in his and squeezes. “You deserve it, Kiko.”

*Starfish* by Akemi Dawn Bowman. Copyright © 2017 by Akemi Dawn Bowman. Reprinted by permission of Simon Pulse, an imprint of Simon & Schuster Children’s Publishing Division.

# English Language Arts

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Read the passage from *The Poet X*, a novel in verse about Xiomara Batista, a high-school student in New York City.

from *The Poet X*

by Elizabeth Acevedo

*Monday, September 17*

## **The Flyer**

“Calling all poets!”

The poster is printed  
on regular white computer paper.  
The bare basics:

5     **Spoken Word Poetry Club**  
          **Calling all poets, rappers, and writers.**  
          **Tuesdays. After school.**  
          **See Ms. Galiano in room 302 for details.**

10    It’s layered behind other more colorful  
      and bigger-lettered announcements  
      but it still makes me stop  
      halfway down the staircase,  
      as kids late to class  
      try their best to accidentally  
15    make me topple down the stairs.  
      But I’m rooted to the spot,  
      a new awareness buzzing over the noise.

20    This poster feels personal,  
      like an engraved invitation  
      mailed directly to me.

# English Language Arts

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## After the Buzz Dies Down

I crumple the flyer in my backpack.  
Balled and zipped up tight.  
Tuesdays I have confirmation class.<sup>1</sup>

25 Not a chance Mami's gonna let me out of that.  
Not a chance I want anyone hearing my work.

Something in my chest flutters like a bird  
whose wings are being gripped still

by the firmest fingers.

\* \* \*

## What Twin<sup>2</sup> Be Knowing

30 As I'm getting ready for sleep, I'm surprised  
to see the crumpled poetry club flyer  
neatly unfolded and on my bed.  
It must have fallen out of my bag.

Without looking up from the computer screen,  
Twin says in barely a whisper,

35 "This world's been waiting  
for your genius a long time."

My brother is no psychic, no prophet,  
but it makes me smile,  
this secret hope we share,  
40 that we are both good enough  
for each other and maybe the world, too.

But when he goes to brush his teeth,  
I tear the flyer into pieces before Mami can find it.  
Tuesdays, for the foreseeable future,  
45 belong to church. And any genius I might have  
belongs only to me.

<sup>1</sup>confirmation class—a course of study in the basics of a particular religion

<sup>2</sup>Twin—Xiomara's nickname for her twin brother, Xavier

### Sharing

Although Twin and I are super different,  
people find it strange how much we share.  
We shared the same womb, the same cradle,  
50 and our whole lives the same room.

Mami wanted to find a bigger apartment,  
told Papi we should move to Queens,  
or somewhere far from Harlem,  
where we could each have our own room.

55 But apparently, although Papi had changed  
he still stood unmoved.  
Said everything we could want was here.  
And sharing a room wouldn't kill us.

And it hasn't.  
60 Except. I once heard a rumor  
that goldfish have an evolutionary gene  
where they'll only develop as big as the tank they're put into.

They need space to stretch. And I wonder if  
Twin and I are keeping each other small.  
65 Taking up the space that would have let the other grow.

### Questions for Ms. Galiano

I'm one of the first students in English class the next day.  
And although I promised myself I would keep my lips  
stapled together when Ms. Galiano asks me how I'm doing,  
the words trip and twist their ankles  
70 trying to rush out my mouth: "Soyourunthepoetryclubright?"

She doesn't laugh. Cocks her head, and nods.  
"Yes, we just started it this year. Spoken Word Poetry Club."

And my face must have been all kinds of screwed-up confused  
because she tries to explain how spoken word is performed poetry,  
75 but it all sounds the same to me . . . except one is memorized.

## English Language Arts

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"It might be easier if I showed you.  
I'll pull a clip up as today's intro to class.  
Are you thinking of joining the club?"

80 I shake my head no. She gives me that look again,  
when someone who doesn't know you is sizing you up  
like you're a broken clock and they're trying to translate the ticks.

### Spoken Word

When class starts Ms. Galiano projects a video:  
a woman onstage, her voice quiet,  
then louder and faster like an express train picking up speed.

85 The poet talks about being black, about being a woman,  
about how beauty standards make it seem she isn't pretty.  
I don't breathe for the entire three minutes

while I watch her hands, and face,  
feeling like she's talking directly to me.  
90 She's saying the thoughts I didn't know anyone else had.

We're different, this poet and I. In looks, in body,  
in background. But I don't feel so different  
when I listen to her. I feel heard.

95 When the video finishes, my classmates,  
who are rarely excited by anything, clap softly.  
And although the poet isn't in the room

it feels right to acknowledge her this way,  
even if it's only polite applause;  
my own hands move against each other.

100 Ms. Galiano asks about the themes and presentation style  
but instead of raising my hand I press it against my heart  
and will the chills on my arms to smooth out.

*It was just a poem, Xiomara, I think.*

But it felt more like a gift.

### Wait—

105 Is this what Ms. Galiano thinks  
I'm going to do in her poetry club?  
She mentioned competition,  
and I know slam is just that,  
but she can't think that I,  
110 who sits silently in her classroom,  
who only speaks to get someone off my back,  
will ever get onstage  
and say any of the things I've written,  
out loud, to anybody else. . . .

### Holding a Poem in the Body

115 Tonight after my shower  
instead of staring at the parts of myself  
I want to puzzle-piece into something else,  
I watch my mouth memorize one of my poems.

Even though I don't ever plan on letting anyone hear it,  
120 I think about that poetry video from class. . . .

I let the words shape themselves hard on my tongue.  
I let my hands pretend to be punctuation marks  
that slash, and point, and press in on each other.  
I let my body finally take up all the space it wants.

125 I toss my head, and screw up my face,  
and grit my teeth, and smile, and make a fist,  
and every one of my limbs  
is an actor trying to take center stage.

And then Mami knocks on the door,  
130 and asks me what I'm in here reciting,  
that it better not be more rap lyrics,  
and I respond, "Verses. I'm memorizing verses."  
I know she thinks I mean Bible ones.

I hide my notebook in my towel before heading to my room  
135 and comfort myself with the fact that I didn't actually lie.

## English Language Arts

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- 1 Which contrast between Kiko and Jamie is **mainly** developed in paragraphs 12–24 of *Starfish*?
- Ⓐ Kiko is curious, while Jamie is bored.
  - Ⓑ Kiko is anxious, while Jamie is relaxed.
  - Ⓒ Kiko is irritated, while Jamie is forgiving.
  - Ⓓ Kiko is thoughtful, while Jamie is careless.

- 2 Read paragraph 14 of *Starfish* in the box.

My face is burning—literally burning—and I think I’m going to pass out when I watch Jamie and Hiroshi shake hands.

What is the **main** purpose of the dashes in the paragraph?

- Ⓐ to show that the words inside the dashes are an opinion
- Ⓑ to suggest that a thought is being interrupted
- Ⓒ to emphasize the words inside the dashes
- Ⓓ to reveal the definition of a phrase

## English Language Arts

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- 3 What is the **most likely** reason the author uses a series of short sentences in paragraph 26 of *Starfish*?
- Ⓐ to demonstrate the extent of Kiko’s surprise
  - Ⓑ to emphasize the severity of Kiko’s resentment
  - Ⓒ to illustrate the rush of Kiko’s negative thoughts
  - Ⓓ to suggest the certainty of Kiko’s hopes for her life
- 4 Which quotation from *Starfish* indicates a turning point in the passage?
- Ⓐ ““These paintings are hilariously random,’ Jamie notes.” (paragraph 6)
  - Ⓑ “He pauses thoughtfully. ‘She’s actually here visiting to look at art schools for the fall.’” (paragraph 25)
  - Ⓒ ““Okay, I’m coming.’ He looks at me and Jamie and gives a wrinkled smile.” (paragraph 44)
  - Ⓓ “I blush. ‘Why did you take photos of my portfolio?’” (paragraph 49)



## English Language Arts

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- 5 Based on *The Poet X*, what does the reference to the goldfish in lines 60–63 **most likely** represent?
- Ⓐ Xiomara’s jealousy of the success of those around her
  - Ⓑ Xiomara’s feeling that she is too eager to please those around her
  - Ⓒ Xiomara’s annoyance about how much of their room Twin occupies
  - Ⓓ Xiomara’s concern that her close relationship with Twin is limiting their potential
- 6 In *The Poet X*, what do lines 121–123 **mainly** reveal?
- Ⓐ Xiomara is practicing her poem with great expression.
  - Ⓑ Xiomara is recalling her day with extreme displeasure.
  - Ⓒ Xiomara is staging a performance with her classmates.
  - Ⓓ Xiomara is preparing for a confrontation with her mother.

## English Language Arts

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- 7 In *The Poet X*, what do lines 132–135 **mainly** suggest about Xiomara?
- Ⓐ She is sorry for upsetting her mother.
  - Ⓑ She is happy to have the trust of her mother.
  - Ⓒ She feels uneasy about deceiving her mother.
  - Ⓓ She respects the rules established by her mother.

- 8 Read the quotations from *Starfish* and *The Poet X* in the box.

- I clear my throat, and then I'm unable to contain my happiness. (paragraph 51 of *Starfish*)
- I let my body finally take up all the space it wants. (line 124 of *The Poet X*)

Which statement **best** describes how the quotations reflect a similar experience for Kiko and Xiomara?

- Ⓐ Both quotations show that Kiko and Xiomara will no longer try to avoid challenging circumstances.
- Ⓑ Both quotations suggest that Kiko and Xiomara are relieved to no longer be withholding a part of themselves.
- Ⓒ Both quotations show that Kiko and Xiomara have a new appreciation for the importance of teachers in their lives.
- Ⓓ Both quotations illustrate that Kiko and Xiomara will become happier by ignoring the advice of those around them.

## English Language Arts

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- 9 Which sentence states a **main** theme of both *Starfish* and *The Poet X*?
- Ⓐ True friends stay loyal during the hardest times in life.
  - Ⓑ Taking advantage of opportunities requires self-control.
  - Ⓒ Religion may be the most significant influence on a person.
  - Ⓓ People must overcome self-doubt before following their dreams.

## English Language Arts

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### 10 Part A

Read lines 35 and 36 from *The Poet X* in the box.

“This world’s been waiting / for your genius a long time.”

Based on the lines, which word **best** describes Twin’s attitude toward his sister?

- Ⓐ intolerant
- Ⓑ supportive
- Ⓒ controlling
- Ⓓ sympathetic

### Part B

Which quotation from *Starfish* **best** shows that Jamie has a similar attitude to the answer to Part A?

- Ⓐ ““What are you supposed to call this kind of art?”” (paragraph 10)
- Ⓑ ““I’m the odd one out, I’m afraid.”” (paragraph 20)
- Ⓒ ““She’s *really* good. She just doesn’t realize it.”” (paragraph 33)
- Ⓓ “A smirk appears. ‘I think he was impressed.’” (paragraph 48)

## English Language Arts

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- 11 In both passages, one character pauses to look more closely at another. Select the phrases that **best** complete the sentences.

In paragraph 42 of *Starfish*, Hiroshi looks at Kiko in a way that suggests that he

- Ⓐ is satisfied by her outlook.
- Ⓑ realizes the extent of her talent.
- Ⓒ has questions about her training.
- Ⓓ recognizes her from another meeting.

In lines 79–81 of *The Poet X*, Ms. Galiano looks at Xiomara in a way that suggests that she

- Ⓐ wants to reassure Xiomara.
- Ⓑ feels disappointed by Xiomara.
- Ⓒ is trying to be patient with Xiomara.
- Ⓓ is attempting to understand Xiomara.

## English Language Arts

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For this question, you will write an essay based on the passage(s). Write your essay in the space provided on the next two pages. Your writing should:

- Present and develop a central idea.
- Provide evidence and/or details from the passage(s).
- Use correct grammar, spelling, and punctuation.

- 12 Based on *Starfish* and *The Poet X*, write an essay that compares the importance of art in Kiko’s and Xiomara’s lives. Be sure to use information from **both** passages to develop your essay.

Write your answer on the next two pages.

*You have a total of two pages on which to write your response.*

**12**

Blank writing area with horizontal lines.

A large rectangular box containing 25 horizontal lines for writing.



**Read the excerpt and the poem about the *Apollo 11* mission to land people on the moon. Then answer the questions that follow.**

Astronauts Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin are famous for having been the first people to land on the moon. The excerpt from *The Man Who Went to the Far Side of the Moon* describes the experiences of Michael Collins, the third member of the team, who orbited the moon while the other two astronauts landed on it.

from *The Man Who Went to the Far Side of the Moon*:

### *The Story of Apollo 11 Astronaut Michael Collins*

by Bea Uusma Schyffert

- 1 Astronaut Neil Armstrong's heart is beating 156 times per minute as he lands the lunar module on the moon with only 45 seconds left of fuel. He opens the hatch. He climbs down the ladder, slowly. One-fifth of the Earth's population are sitting in front of their TV sets, holding their breath, as Neil Armstrong carefully sets the first footprint in the lunar dust.
- 2 Meanwhile—on the other side of the moon—a small spacecraft orbits in the darkness. Inside the silvery craft sits Michael Collins. He will never walk on the moon. His task is to maneuver the capsule and wait while Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin land the lunar module. He can't even hear Neil and Buzz over the radio. No one is farther away from Earth than he is. For 14 lonely turns, Michael Collins circles the moon. Each time he reaches the far side of the moon he spends 48 minutes without radio communication. The only thing between him and outer space is some insulation and a thin sheet of metal.
- 3 As he disappears into the shadow of the far side of the moon, Michael Collins thinks to himself that he sees a new color. The darkness outside the windows of the capsule can't be described by any earthly name. "Black" is not enough. Because there is no light, he can no longer see the surface of the moon, but he knows it's there because in that part of the sky there are no stars. They are blocked by the moon.
- 4 Circling the moon, turn after turn, he waits for Neil and Buzz to finish up down there. The windows of the capsule have misted over. The walls are squeaking a little. He has brought a camera. He takes pictures of his stubbled face. He talks into a tape recorder. He thinks about his family. He says his children's names aloud, slowly. Kate. Ann. Michael.

*I am alone now, truly alone, and absolutely isolated from any known life. I am it.*

*If a count were taken, the score would be three billion plus two over on the other side of the moon, and one plus God only knows what on this side. I feel this powerfully—not as fear or loneliness—but as awareness, anticipation, satisfaction, confidence, almost exultation.*

*I like the feeling.*

Michael Collins

- 5 Before Neil and Buzz can take off from the moon and return to the capsule, Michael has to make 850 computer commands. Surrounding him on the walls of the capsule are more than 700 switches, levers, alarm buttons, gauges, warning lights, and computer keys. There are sensors that should never, ever, point to red. There are yellow-and-black-striped buttons with functions so important that they are covered with plastic lids to prevent a tired, lonely astronaut from pushing them by mistake.
- 6 The president calls Neil and Buzz on the moon. No one calls Michael. When he is on the far side of the moon, radio transmission from Earth is not even possible.

*The Man Who Went to the Far Side of the Moon: The Story of Apollo 11 Astronaut Michael Collins* by Bea Uusma Schyffert. Copyright © 1999 by Bea Uusma Schyffert. Reprinted by permission of Chronicle Books LLC, San Francisco.

The poem "First Men on the Moon" is about Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin, the first astronauts to set foot on the moon.

### First Men on the Moon

by J. Patrick Lewis

Due to copyright restrictions, the text of "First Men on the Moon" cannot be released to the public over the internet. The copyright citation is presented below.

For further information, contact Student Assessment Services at [mcas@doe.mass.edu](mailto:mcas@doe.mass.edu).

"First Men on the Moon" by J. Patrick Lewis, from *Lives: Poems About Famous Americans*. Copyright © 1999 by J. Patrick Lewis. Reprinted by permission of Curtis Brown Ltd.

## English Language Arts

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- 13 In paragraph 1 of the excerpt, what is the **main** effect of the author's use of the present tense?
- Ⓐ It creates the feeling of the passage of time.
  - Ⓑ It confirms the accuracy of the information.
  - Ⓒ It reflects the suspense of the experience.
  - Ⓓ It suggests the clumsiness of the landing.
- 14 How does paragraph 2 contribute to the main idea of the excerpt?
- Ⓐ by illustrating Collins's skill as a pilot
  - Ⓑ by emphasizing Collins's feeling of isolation
  - Ⓒ by suggesting the astonishment that Collins felt
  - Ⓓ by showing the great distance that Collins traveled
- 15 What is the **most likely** reason that Collins's own words are included in the excerpt?
- Ⓐ to emphasize the seriousness of his concerns
  - Ⓑ to reveal the unrecognized skills of an astronaut
  - Ⓒ to show the spirit of teamwork among astronauts
  - Ⓓ to give insight into the uniqueness of his experience

## English Language Arts

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- 16 In the quotations before the poem, what is the **most likely** reason Aldrin used the contrasting words “magnificent desolation” to describe the moon?
- Ⓐ to capture the vast emptiness of the landscape
  - Ⓑ to represent the rocky appearance of the moon
  - Ⓒ to suggest his anxiety about the loneliness he felt
  - Ⓓ to convey his excitement about walking on the moon
- 17 In line 3 of the poem, what does the word *ballooning* **most likely** suggest about the moon?
- Ⓐ It has an unusually bright color.
  - Ⓑ It looks like it is growing larger.
  - Ⓒ It appears as if it will burst.
  - Ⓓ It has a smooth surface.
- 18 Which sentence **best** describes how the excerpt and the poem differ in their perspectives on the astronauts’ experiences?
- Ⓐ The excerpt includes personal opinions, while the poem develops a strictly factual account.
  - Ⓑ The excerpt illustrates a participant’s reflections, while the poem highlights what viewers were able to observe.
  - Ⓒ The excerpt provides the government’s official record, while the poem uses information that is generally known.
  - Ⓓ The excerpt presents interpretations of events that are debated, while the poem emphasizes points of agreement among people.

## English Language Arts

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- 19 Based on the excerpt and the poem, determine whether each description applies to Michael Collins, Neil Armstrong, or both people.

performed actions that were broadcast to a large audience

- (A) Michael Collins
- (B) Neil Armstrong
- (C) both people

saw sights that no one had seen before

- (A) Michael Collins
- (B) Neil Armstrong
- (C) both people

found comfort in personal memories

- (A) Michael Collins
- (B) Neil Armstrong
- (C) both people

was responsible for the safety of the other astronauts

- (A) Michael Collins
- (B) Neil Armstrong
- (C) both people

**Grade 8 English Language Arts  
Spring 2022 Released Operational Items**

<b>PBT Item No.</b>	<b>Page No.</b>	<b>Reporting Category</b>	<b>Standard</b>	<b>Item Type*</b>	<b>Item Description</b>	<b>Correct Answer (SR)**</b>
1	13	<i>Reading</i>	RL.8.3	SR	Analyze a difference between characters in a passage.	B
2	13	<i>Language</i>	L.8.2	SR	Analyze the purpose of dashes in a sentence in a passage.	C
3	14	<i>Language</i>	L.8.3	SR	Determine the purpose of short sentences in a passage.	C
4	14	<i>Reading</i>	RL.8.1	SR	Identify a quotation that marks a turning point in a passage.	B
5	15	<i>Reading</i>	RL.8.4	SR	Analyze a symbolic image in a passage.	D
6	15	<i>Reading</i>	RL.8.3	SR	Analyze how a section of a passage develops a character.	A
7	16	<i>Reading</i>	RL.8.3	SR	Make an inference about a character from a section of a passage.	C
8	16	<i>Reading</i>	RL.8.3	SR	Analyze how two characters in different passages have a similar experience.	B
9	17	<i>Reading</i>	RL.8.2	SR	Determine a shared theme of two passages on similar topics.	D
10	18	<i>Reading</i>	RL.8.3	SR	Determine one character's attitude based on a quotation from a passage and identify a quotation from another passage that expresses a similar attitude.	B;C
11	19	<i>Reading</i>	RL.8.6	SR	Compare the behavior of characters in two different passages on similar topics.	B;D
12	20	<i>Language, Writing</i>	L.8.1, L.8.2, L.8.3, W.8.2, W.8.4	ES	Write an essay that analyzes characters in two passages on similar topics; use information from both passages to support the analysis.	
13	26	<i>Reading</i>	RI.8.4	SR	Analyze the effect of verb tense in an excerpt.	C
14	26	<i>Reading</i>	RI.8.2	SR	Explain how a paragraph contributes to the main idea of an excerpt.	B
15	26	<i>Reading</i>	RI.8.6	SR	Analyze the purpose of quoting a primary source in an excerpt.	D
16	27	<i>Reading</i>	RL.8.4	SR	Analyze descriptive language used as a preface to a poem.	A
17	27	<i>Language</i>	L.8.4	SR	Use context to determine the meaning of a word used figuratively in a poem.	B
18	27	<i>Reading</i>	RI.8.6	SR	Analyze a difference in perspective between an excerpt and a poem on similar topics.	B
19	28	<i>Reading</i>	RI.8.3	SR	Use information from an excerpt and a poem on similar topics to compare the experiences depicted in each text.	B;C;A;A

\* ELA item types are: selected-response (SR) and essay (ES).

\*\* Answers are provided here for selected-response items only. Sample responses and scoring guidelines for any essay items will be posted to the Department's website later this year.

**Grade 8 English Language Arts  
Spring 2022 Unreleased Operational Items**

<b>PBT Item No.</b>	<b>Reporting Category</b>	<b>Standard</b>	<b>Item Type*</b>	<b>Item Description</b>
20	<i>Language</i>	L.8.4	SR	Use context to determine the meaning of a word in an excerpt.
21	<i>Reading</i>	RI.8.6	SR	Identify the purpose of a parenthetical statement in an excerpt.
22	<i>Reading</i>	RI.8.5	SR	Analyze the effect of a sentence in an excerpt.
23	<i>Reading</i>	RI.8.5	SR	Make an inference from a paragraph in an excerpt.
24	<i>Language</i>	L.8.4	SR	Use context to determine the meaning of a word in an excerpt and identify a quotation from the excerpt that supports the meaning.
25	<i>Reading</i>	RL.8.3	SR	Determine the purpose of paragraphs in a passage.
26	<i>Reading</i>	RL.8.1	SR	Analyze how the details in two paragraphs contribute to the reader's understanding of a passage.
27	<i>Reading</i>	RL.8.3	SR	Analyze how a character's actions in a passage reveal a character trait.
28	<i>Reading</i>	RL.8.4	SR	Determine the tone of a character's dialogue in a passage.
29	<i>Reading</i>	RI.8.2	SR	Make a comparison between an excerpt and a passage on similar topics.
30	<i>Reading</i>	RL.8.3	SR	Identify a difference in individuals' attitudes in an excerpt and a passage on similar topics.
31	<i>Language, Writing</i>	L.8.1, L.8.2, L.8.3, W.8.2, W.8.4	ES	Write an essay that explains the benefits and challenges of a particular topic based on an excerpt and a passage; use information from both texts to support the analysis.

\* ELA item types are: selected-response (SR) and essay (ES).