

PRACTICE TEST

English Language Arts

Grade 6

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Student Name

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School Name

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District Name



# Grade 6 English Language Arts

## PRACTICE TEST

This practice test contains 8 questions.

### **Directions**

Read each passage and question carefully. Then answer each question as well as you can. You must record all answers in your Practice Test Answer Document.

For most questions, you will mark your answers by filling in the circles in your Practice Test Answer Document. 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.

Two questions will ask you to write an essay. Write each essay in the space provided in your Practice Test Answer Document. Only essays written within the provided space will be scored.

Today you will read a passage from the story titled *Magic Elizabeth*. As you read and answer the questions, pay close attention to the characters to help prepare you to write a narrative story.

Read the passage from *Magic Elizabeth*. Then answer the questions.

from *Magic Elizabeth*

by Norma Kassirer

- 1 It all began one rainy night at the end of a summer.
- 2 "As if we didn't have enough troubles!" groaned Mrs. Chipley. "There it goes and rains on us!"
- 3 Sally, clinging to Mrs. Chipley's plump hand, was almost running to keep up with her. The bright feather on Mrs. Chipley's black hat, which had started out so proudly erect, had gradually wilted, and now drooped sadly down the back of that lady's stout neck. Sally's red suitcase, its handle firmly gripped by Mrs. Chipley's other hand, bumped in a steady rhythm against her right leg. But Mrs. Chipley strode purposefully on, as if she had no time to notice small discomforts.
- 4 The two of them had come all the way across the city on the bus, and during the ride the sky had darkened and the street lights had bloomed all at once. High-piling storm clouds snuffed out the light of the round orange moon. As they stepped off the bus, the branches of the tall trees rattled like bones in the wind.
- 5 And now it was raining—a nasty, cold, stinging rain, mixed with wet leaves torn from the groaning trees. It splashed and flew about them as they hurried along the gloomy street, as if the faster they went the more they stirred up the fury of the night. Their coattails snapped behind them. Rain flew into Sally's eyes and even into her mouth, and it dribbled unpleasantly beneath the collar of her coat. Raindrops hitting a large mailbox echoed like drumbeats down the street. Sally's long red hair, fluttering bannerlike behind her, gave their small procession a brave look. And yet Sally, at least, was not feeling brave at all. Quite the contrary.
- 6 "Troubles, troubles," Mrs. Chipley went on, "but it's a lucky thing your Aunt Sarah's come back to town just now when we need her."
- 7 "I don't remember her at all," panted Sally. "I was just a baby when she went away to California."

- 8 "Going back again too, pretty soon, your ma tells me," said Mrs. Chipley. "Only came back here to sell the house. But never you mind, honey," she went on, without slackening her furious pace at all, "she's your own kin, and the only one you have here in town. I'm sure I didn't know what else to do but call her, what with your mom and dad away on that business trip, and we don't want to spoil it for them, and it's not as if you'd have to stay with your aunt forever. A few days, and I'll have my daughter straightened around and come back. And it was your own ma left her name in case of an emergency."
- 9 "I wonder what she's like," Sally said. But Mrs. Chipley did not seem to hear her.

*Magic Elizabeth* by Norma Kassirer. Copyright © 1966 by Norma Kassirer. Reprinted by permission of the Estate of Norma Kassirer.

**1 Part A**

Which option describes the **main** purpose of paragraph 8 in the passage?

- A. to give the reasons Mrs. Chipley and Sally are going to Aunt Sarah's house
- B. to reveal that Sally's Aunt Sarah will be in town only for a short time
- C. to show Sally's confusion about how to handle the situation
- D. to explain that Mrs. Chipley has a daughter who needs help

**Part B**

Which detail from paragraph 8 **best** supports the answer to Part A?

- A. "Going back again too, pretty soon, your ma tells me," said Mrs. Chipley."
- B. "Only came back here to sell the house."
- C. "But never you mind, honey," she went on, without slackening her furious pace at all. . . ."
- D. "I'm sure I didn't know what else to do but call her, what with your mom and dad away on that business trip, and we don't want to spoil it for them. . . ."

**2 Part A**

How does Sally's attitude change during the passage?

- A. At first she is unhappy, but then she becomes satisfied.
- B. At first she is distrustful, but then she becomes confident.
- C. At first she is scared, but then she becomes a little curious.
- D. At first she is angry, but then she becomes slightly daring.

**Part B**

Which **two** sentences from the passage, when taken together, **best** support the answer to Part A?

- A. "Sally, clinging to Mrs. Chipley's plump hand, was almost running to keep up with her."
- B. "As they stepped off the bus, the branches of the tall trees rattled like bones in the wind."
- C. "Rain flew into Sally's eyes and even into her mouth, and it dribbled unpleasantly beneath the collar of her coat."
- D. "And yet Sally, at least, was not feeling brave at all."
- E. "'And it was your own ma left her name in case of an emergency.'"
- F. "'I wonder what she's like,' Sally said."

This question is a text-based essay question. Write your essay in the space provided in your Practice Test Answer Document. Your essay should:

- Present and develop a narrative that uses details from the passage.
- Include correct grammar, spelling, and punctuation.

- 3 In the passage from *Magic Elizabeth*, the author creates a vivid setting and two distinct characters, Mrs. Chipley and Sally. Think about the details the author uses to establish the setting and the characters.

Write an original story about what happens when Sally arrives at Aunt Sarah's house. In your story, be sure to use what you have learned about the setting and the characters as you tell what happens next.

**Matthew Henson was an African American explorer who reached the North Pole in 1909. Read the two passages about Matthew Henson and answer the questions that follow.**

Many believe that in 1909, Matthew Henson became the first man to reach the North Pole, traveling as a member of an expedition organized by the explorer Robert E. Peary. As an African American, Henson had to face the racial prejudice that was common in the United States during that time. Read the informational article about his life.

## Maripaluk

by Ellen Donohue Warwick

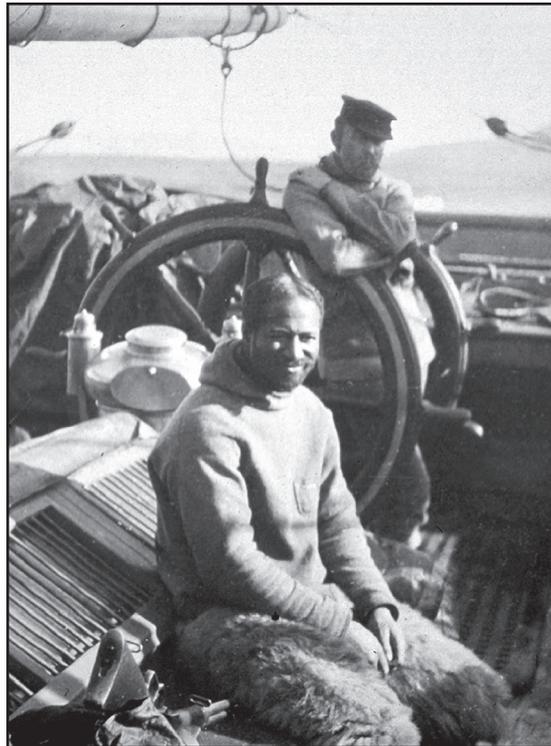


Matthew Henson, dressed for the cold!

- 1 In a hat store in Washington, D.C., history was made in the spring of 1887. The U.S. government wanted to find a way to link the Atlantic and Pacific oceans, and U.S. Navy civil engineer Robert E. Peary was headed to Nicaragua to see whether a canal should be built there. Before he left, Peary went into the Steinmetz and Sons store on G Street to buy a sun helmet. He mentioned to Mr. Steinmetz that he needed not only a hat but also a personal servant to accompany him to the tropics. The store owner suggested one of his African American stockmen, Matthew Henson.
- 2 Henson was 21 years old at the time. His childhood in Charles County, Maryland, had not been easy. Matthew's mother had died when he was an infant, and by the time he was eight years old, he was an orphan. Matthew

supported himself by washing dishes in a restaurant. When he turned 12, he hired on as a cabin boy on a ship. The ship's skipper, Captain Childs, took a special interest in Matthew. He lent him books and helped him learn to read and write. Henson became an able seaman.

- 3 When Childs died, Henson got a job on another ship, but he left because of poor working conditions and racial prejudice. Henson then tried various jobs that were open to African Americans in those days: stevedore,<sup>1</sup> chauffeur, messenger, night watchman, and, finally, stock clerk in Steinmetz's hat store.
- 4 Henson joined Peary on the Nicaragua expedition and he soon became far more than a servant. He was a jack-of-all-trades, helping to construct Peary's headquarters in the jungle and working on the surveying team. His adaptability, strength, and endurance so impressed Peary that he asked Henson to accompany him to a far different part of the world: the Arctic.



Henson found greater equality as a member of Peary's expeditions than was shown to African Americans in the United States at the time.

- 5 Between 1891 and 1909, Peary led several expeditions north. Henson accompanied him on all these trips. Many people of that time were racially

<sup>1</sup>stevedore—someone who loads and unloads ships

prejudiced, and Peary was criticized for taking along a black man and giving him some authority. But Peary's reply was, "I cannot get along without him."

- 6 In describing his Arctic expeditions, Peary wrote that the distinctive feature of his plan was "the adoption of Eskimo methods and costume." The native people knew how to survive in the harsh climate of the north. Peary needed their expertise. Part of his work was to persuade the Inughuit to help him.
- 7 In this task, Henson proved invaluable. He quickly learned the native language and before long spoke it better than anyone else in the expedition. He learned to drive a dog team, hunt and skin a seal, and kill a walrus. Most of all, he won the confidence and friendship of the Inughuit. They called him "Maripaluk," which means "Dear Little Matthew" or "Matthew the Kind One."
- 8 Henson helped in many ways during these expeditions. He once saved Peary's life by shooting an angry musk ox. When Peary's toes were frostbitten in 1901, Henson helped save his feet from gangrene.<sup>2</sup> And frequently he went on ahead to break a trail, risking a fall into one of the treacherous leads that opened in the frozen Arctic Ocean.



Henson (right) and some of the crew relax on a sledge aboard a ship

- 9 After their last polar trip in 1909, Peary and Henson parted ways. Unlike Peary, Henson did not immediately enjoy fame. He wrote a book about his adventure, *A Negro Explorer at the North Pole*, but he found work as a garage attendant. In 1912, Henson became a messenger for the U.S. Customs Department. After 40 years of service, he retired with a small pension.
- 10 Gradually, Henson began to receive some of the credit he was due for his role in polar exploration. Congress awarded him a U.S. Navy medal, the New York Explorers Club made him an honorary member, and the Chicago

<sup>2</sup>gangrene—the death of soft tissue due to infection or disease

Geographic Society also presented him with a medal. In 1954, President Dwight D. Eisenhower received Henson and his wife at the White House. A bronze plaque with his picture was installed in the Maryland State House, and a school in Baltimore was named after him.

- 11 When he died in 1955, Henson was buried in New York City. Then, on April 6, 1988, 79 years after he had stood at the top of the world, Matthew Henson was reinterred<sup>3</sup> with full military honors next to Peary in Arlington National Cemetery. . . . Henson’s descendants were present at the reinterment ceremony and still live in Greenland today.
- 12 In 2000, the National Geographic Society posthumously awarded its highest honor, the Hubbard Medal, to Henson for his role in the Arctic expeditions.

<sup>3</sup>reinterred—reburied

“Maripaluk” by Ellen Donohue Warwick, from *Cobblestone: Journey to the North Pole* (April 2009). Copyright © 2009 by Carus Publishing Company d/b/a Cricket Media. Reprinted by permission of Cricket Media, Inc. Photograph 1 courtesy of the Library of Congress. Photograph 2 courtesy of the National Archives. Photograph 3 courtesy of the Library of Congress.

The following scene from the play *Matthew Henson: Explorer of the Arctic* describes Matthew Henson's first meeting with the explorer Robert E. Peary.

from *Matthew Henson: Explorer of the Arctic*

The story of the African American adventurer who, steps ahead of Robert E. Peary, became the first man to reach the North Pole. . . .

by Scarlett N. Rebman

**Characters**

MATTHEW A. HENSON, *an African American explorer*

ADAM, *Matthew's friend*

MR. STEINMETZ, *Matthew's boss*

ROBERT E. PEARY, *arctic explorer*

**SCENE 1**

**TIME:** *Spring, 1887.*

**SETTING:** *Steinmetz's hat store in Washington, D.C. Cardboard boxes are piled up left, as if in a storage room. A store counter down right has sign in front that*  
5 *reads, STEINMETZ'S HATS. Several hats are on display. Cash register, if available, is also on counter.*

**AT RISE:** *MR. STEINMETZ is standing at*  
10 *the counter, examining an account book. MATTHEW and ADAM enter left, carrying boxes. They pause center.*

**MATTHEW:** *We've received the new*  
15 *shipment of hats, sir. Just arrived on the train from New York.*

**STEINMETZ:** *Splendid! I didn't expect it*  
*for a few more days. Take the boxes to the*  
*store room, please. (MATTHEW and ADAM*  
20 *cross up left. They carefully place their boxes on the others.)*

**MATTHEW** (*Sighing*): I tell you, Adam, I'm growing weary of stocking hats.

**ADAM:** You keep saying that, but Mr. Steinmetz pays a fair wage. You'd be  
25 a fool to give it up.

**MATTHEW:** I know, but I'm restless. When I close my eyes at night, I feel the salty sea breeze upon my face. I see ports in China and North Africa. I remember  
30 the exhilaration of setting sail, of bidding farewell to the States, of seeing how other people live.

**ADAM:** You were a sailor? But you're only twenty-one!

**MATTHEW** (*Sitting on a stool*): Didn't I tell you? I ran away from my aunt's house when I was twelve. I hung around the docks until I met a captain who agreed to take me on board as a cabin boy. Captain Childs  
40 had a beautiful merchant ship, the *Katie Hines*. He didn't know what to make of a scruffy orphan boy in dirty rags that passed for clothes, but for some reason, he took a liking to me and taught me to read and  
45 write, as well as sail.

**ADAM:** Then why did you give it up?

**MATTHEW:** Because most captains don't bother to look past the color of a man's skin to recognize his abilities. When Captain  
50 Childs died, I gave up the sea. Instead, I found jobs like this one. I thought it would be enough, thought about settling down and starting a family. But my imagination is overactive. Every night I dream about the  
55 journeys I might take, the stories I might write down.

**ADAM:** Matthew, don't take this the wrong way, but I think you're plumb crazy. Making a decent wage is all I want out of life. A  
60 decent wage and a decent wife. But you're right, not much out of the ordinary happens at Steinmetz's. (*Bell jingles, as if a door opened, and PEARY enters. He looks around the shop.*)

65 **STEINMETZ:** Good afternoon, sir. Can I help you find something?

**PEARY** (*Distracted*): Yes, a hat, please.

**STEINMETZ:** Then you've come to the right place. Were you looking for a certain  
70 type? Perhaps a bowler for a Sunday walk? Or a top hat for an evening at the opera?

**PEARY:** No, no . . . I need a sun hat.

**STEINMETZ:** Hmmm. That's an unusual request. Let me call one of my boys. He  
75 knows where everything is around here. Matthew! (*MATTHEW crosses up center.*)

**MATTHEW:** Yes, sir?

**STEINMETZ:** This gentleman is looking for a sun hat. Could you be more specific about  
80 your needs, Mr. . . . ?

**PEARY:** Peary—Lieutenant Peary, civil engineer for the United States Navy. I am about to leave for an expedition to Nicaragua,<sup>1</sup> and I hear the sun and heat are  
85 brutal there. Do you have any appropriate head gear?

**STEINMETZ:** Well, Matthew, do we have something to suit the gentleman's needs?

<sup>1</sup>Nicaragua—a country in Central America

90 **MATTHEW:** Yes, I believe we do. Excuse me, I'll be right back. (*MATTHEW goes to storeroom, looks through boxes.*)

**STEINMETZ:** Tell me, Lieutenant, what will you be doing in Nicaragua?

95 **PEARY:** Our expedition is to determine whether a canal could be constructed to connect the Atlantic and Pacific oceans.

**STEINMETZ:** Your work sounds very interesting, Lieutenant. And arduous.

100 **PEARY:** Yes, it is. I traveled to the Arctic last year, so a tropical climate may be a shock to my system. (*Pacing*) There are so many details to keep track of. I really could use an assistant to accompany me. (*MATTHEW returns with a hat in his hands.*)

105 **STEINMETZ:** Ah, here we are! Please, try it on. There is a mirror on the wall if you need one. (*MATTHEW hands PEARY the hat.*)

110 **PEARY:** No need for a mirror. This is exactly what I wanted. I'll take it.

**STEINMETZ** (*Glancing from PEARY to MATTHEW*): You know, Lieutenant, if you are looking for an assistant, Matthew here has had some experience with trips abroad.

115 **PEARY:** Oh?

**MATTHEW:** Yes, sir. I was a sailor for several years.

120 **STEINMETZ:** He is my most reliable and competent worker. I certainly recommend him for your position. I would hate to lose him, but I suspect that Matthew would have left me sooner rather than later anyway.

**PEARY:** Well, what do you say? Would you be willing to travel to Nicaragua with me as  
125 my assistant?

**MATTHEW:** Yes, Lieutenant. I would like that very much. There's only one problem.

**PEARY:** What's that?

**MATTHEW:** We had only one sun hat left  
130 in stock, and I suspect now I'll be needing one as well. (*Blackout*)

*Matthew Henson: Explorer of the Arctic* by Scarlett N. Rebman, from *Plays, The Drama Magazine for Young People* (January/February 2011). Copyright © 2010 by Sterling Partners, Inc. Reprinted by permission of Sterling Partners, Inc./*Plays, The Drama Magazine for Young People*.

- 4 Based on paragraph 7 of “Maripaluk,” what can the reader **most likely** conclude about Henson’s relationship with the Inughuit people?
- A. He became their leader.
  - B. He helped them survive.
  - C. He honored their culture.
  - D. He relied on them for food.
- 5 Based on lines 50–60 of *Matthew Henson: Explorer of the Arctic*, what is the **main** difference between Matthew and Adam?
- A. Matthew wants equality, while Adam wants privacy.
  - B. Matthew wants adventure, while Adam wants a predictable life.
  - C. Matthew wants to make a fortune, while Adam wants a steady income.
  - D. Matthew wants to be an author, while Adam wants to be a storekeeper.

- 6 One difference between “Maripaluk” and *Matthew Henson: Explorer of the Arctic* is that **only** in the play is Henson’s character revealed by
- A. what he says.
  - B. how he behaves.
  - C. how others treat him.
  - D. what others say about him.

- 7 Read the sentence from paragraph 8 of “Maripaluk” in the box.

And frequently he went on ahead to break a trail, risking a fall into one of the treacherous leads that opened in the frozen Arctic Ocean.

Which of the following sentences uses the word *leads* in the same way it is used in the sentence?

- A. After the audition, Tyron and Jessie got the leads in the winter musical.
- B. Near the snow bank, the dog trainer held the three dogs by their leads.
- C. During the cold months, Makai leads the students around the forest.
- D. Looking for food, the seal slid into one of the leads in the ice.

This question is a text-based essay question. Write your essay in the space provided in your Practice Test Answer Document. Your essay should:

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

- 8 Matthew Henson’s characteristics are revealed in the play *Matthew Henson: Explorer of the Arctic*. Write an essay that explains how the article “Maripaluk” helps the reader to understand Henson’s characteristics. Be sure to use information from both passages to develop your essay.

**MASSACHUSETTS COMPREHENSIVE ASSESSMENT SYSTEM**

Grade 6 English Language Arts  
Practice Test Answer Document

School Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
District Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
Last Name of Student: \_\_\_\_\_  
First Name of Student: \_\_\_\_\_

**MARKING INSTRUCTIONS**

- Use a No. 2 pencil only.
- Do not use ink, ballpoint, or felt-tip pens.
- Make solid marks that fill the circles completely.
- Erase cleanly any marks you wish to change.
- Do not make any stray marks on this form.
- Do not fold, tear, or damage this form.

1. Part A (A) (B) (C) (D)

Part B (A) (B) (C) (D)

2. Part A (A) (B) (C) (D)

Part B (A) (B) (C) (D) (E) (F)











