



# ***New York State Testing Program***

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## **ELA**

## **Common Core Sample Questions**

**Grade 3**

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# The Gray Hare

by Leo Tolstoy

1 A gray hare was living in the winter near the village. When night came, he pricked one ear and listened; then he pricked his second ear, moved his whiskers, sniffed, and sat down on his hind legs. Then he took a leap or two over the deep snow, and again sat down on his hind legs, and looked around him. Nothing could be seen but snow. The snow lay in waves and glistened like sugar. Over the hare's head hovered a frost vapor, and through this vapor could be seen the large, bright stars.

hare = A kind of rabbit

vapor = Mist

2 The hare had to cross the highway, in order to come to a threshing-floor he knew of. On the highway, the runners could be heard squeaking, the horses snorting, and seats creaking in the sleighs.

threshing-floor = Ground or floor space for separating out grain

runners = Long pieces on which a sled or sleigh slides

3 The hare again stopped near the road. Peasants were walking beside the sleighs, and the collars of their caftans were raised. Their faces were scarcely visible. Their beards, moustaches, and eyelashes were white. Steam rose from their mouths and noses. Their horses were sweaty, and the hoarfrost clung to the sweat. The horses jostled under their arches, and dived in and out of snowdrifts. The peasants ran behind the horses and in front of them, and beat them with their whips. Two peasants walked beside each other, and one of them told the other how a horse of his had once been stolen.

caftan = An ankle-length shirt with long sleeves

hoarfrost = Frost

jostled = To come in contact

4 The hare leaped across the road and softly made for the threshing-floor, when the carts passed by. A dog saw the hare from a cart. He began to bark and darted after the hare. The hare leaped toward the threshing-floor over the snowdrifts, which held him back; but the dog stuck fast in the snow after the tenth leap, and stopped. Then the hare, too, stopped and sat up on his hind legs, and then softly went on to the threshing-floor.

5 On his way, he met two other hares on the sowed winter field. They were feeding and playing. The hare played awhile with his companions, dug away the frosty snow with them, ate the wintergreen, and went on. In the village, everything was quiet; the fires were out. All one could hear was a baby's cry in a hut and the crackling of the frost in the logs of the cabins. The hare went to the threshing-floor, and there found some companions. He played awhile with them on the cleared floor, ate some oats from the open granary, climbed on the kiln over the snow-covered roof, and across the wicker fence started back to his ravine.

kiln = An oven, furnace, or heated enclosure

granary = A storehouse for grain

6

The dawn was glimmering in the east; the stars grew less, and the frost vapors rose more densely from the earth. In the near-by village the women got up, and went to fetch water; the peasants brought the feed from the barn; the children shouted and cried. There were still more carts going down the road, and the peasants talked aloud to each other. The hare leaped across the road, went up to his old lair, picked out a high place, dug away the snow, lay with his back in his new lair, dropped his ears on his back, and fell asleep with open eyes.

lair = A place where a wild animal lives

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1

Why does the hare stop at the road?

- A He is afraid of a dog.
- B He is waiting for carts to go by.
- C He cannot remember where he wants to go.
- D He wants to play with other hares.

**Key: B**

**Aligned CCLS:** RL.3.1; additional standards may be added after further development.

**Commentary:** The question aligns to CCLS RL.3.1 because it asks students to refer to the text to answer a question.

**Rationale:** Option B is correct. The hare pauses at the edge of the road to wait for the carts to pass.

**2** Based on the story, which two words best describe the hare?

- A sad and lonely
- B funny and loud
- C careful and playful
- D lazy and unwise

**Key: C**

**Aligned CCLS:** RL.3.3

**Commentary:** The question aligns to RL.3.3 because it asks students to describe a character in the story.

**Rationale:** Option C is correct. *Careful* and *playful* describe how the hare behaves throughout the story as he makes his way through the village, avoiding dangers and playing with his friends.

3

In which scene does the hare reach his goal for the day?

- A when he watches peasants on the road
- B when he plays with other hares in the fields
- C when he eats on the threshing-floor
- D when he outruns the dog

**Key: C**

**Aligned CCLS:** RL.3.5

**Commentary:** The question aligns to RL.3.5 because it asks students to refer to scenes when describing how they build on each other.

**Rationale:** Option C is correct. Going to the threshing-floor is what the hare sets out to do and why he crosses the road and the fields.

4

Read the following sentence from the first paragraph:

*“The snow lay in waves and glistened like sugar.”*

The author uses the word **sugar** to show that

- A the hare was thinking about food
- B the snow looked sparkly
- C sugar was on the snow
- D the snow tasted sweet

**Key: B**

**Aligned CCLS:** RL.3.4

**Commentary:** The question aligns to CCLS RL.3.4 because it asks students to consider non-literal uses of words when determining their meaning.

**Rationale:** Option B is correct. The author compares the snow to sugar to help describe the way it sparkles in the moonlight.

## What's the Scoop on Soil?

1            *It's easy to forget about soil. You have to look down on the ground to see it. Even then, soil may not seem to do very much. But, there's more to soil than you might think. It isn't just dirt that gets on your shoes.*

2            Trees and plants need soil to grow. Very few fruits, vegetables and grains would live without it. Many animals need soil, too. They eat the plants that grow in it. Some animals even live in the soil. Can you imagine a world without soil?

3            Most soil comes from rocks. Over many years, weather causes rocks to break apart. The pieces get smaller and smaller as time goes on. Soil forms when bits of rock mix with things like dead leaves and dead bugs.



*The soil in Arizona, on the left, looks different from the soil from Texas, on the right.  
Credit: GLOBE*

4            Not all soil is the same. Soil comes in many colors. Some soil looks and feels different than other soil. The color and feel of soil often changes as you dig deeper into the ground. You can learn a lot by seeing and touching soil. In a way, soil is like a secret decoder.

decoder = A person who unscrambles a message or code

5            The color of soil can sometimes tell you where you are. For example, red soil can be found in Arizona. Grey soil can be found in Nevada. Black soil can be found in Texas. Water also affects the color of soil. Wet soil is usually darker than dry soil.

6            The feel of soil can tell you about its ingredients. Soil contains different amounts of sand, silt and clay. Soil in a forest might be gritty, which means more sand. Soil in a meadow might be smooth, which means more silt. Soil in a garden might be sticky, which means more clay.

silt = A type of mud



7

Did you know that squeezing soil can tell you about the weather? If soil crumbles between your fingers, then the weather has probably been dry. If soil is wet and sticky—yuck!—then it might have rained not too long ago.

[www.nasa.gov](http://www.nasa.gov)

5

The passage explains all aspects of soil **except**

- A what it feels like
- B how much sand is in it
- C what it smells like
- D what lives in it

**Key: C**

**Aligned CCLS:** RI.3.1; additional standards may be added after further development.

**Commentary:** This question aligns with RL.3.1 because it asks students to answer a question based on details from the text.

**Rationale:** Option C is correct. The passage does not discuss the way soil smells.

**6** According to the text and photos in the passage, what do the photos show about the difference in the soils from Arizona and Texas?

- A** The soils are different depths.
- B** The soils are different colors.
- C** The soils have different plants.
- D** The soils have different ages.

**Key: B**

**Aligned CCLS:** RI.3.7

**Commentary:** This question aligns with RI.3.7 because it asks students to use illustrations and words to demonstrate understanding of a text.

**Rationale:** Option B is correct. The photos show the different colors of the soils in Texas and Arizona, which is supported by the text.

7

Read these two sentences from paragraph 5:

*Soil in a forest might be gritty, which means more sand.*

*Soil in a meadow might be smooth, which means more silt.*

Which statement describes the relationship between these two sentences?

- A The sentences make a comparison.
- B The sentences describe two steps in a process.
- C The first sentence explains the reason for the second.
- D The second sentence gives the cause of the first.

**Key:** A

**Aligned CCLS:** RI.3.8

**Commentary:** The question aligns to CCLS RI.3.8. The question asks students to describe the logical connection between two sentences in the text.

**Rationale:** Option A is correct as the two sentences, put together, present a comparison.

8

According to the passage, by squeezing soil you can tell if

- A it has been raining
- B there are animals living in it
- C someone has been playing with it
- D it comes from Arizona or Texas

**Key:** A

**Aligned CCLS:** RL.3.1; additional standards may be added after further development.

**Commentary:** This question aligns with RI.3.1 because it asks students to answer a question based on details from the text.

**Rationale:** Option A is correct. The passage claims that you can tell if it has recently rained by squeezing the soil.

9

Read this sentence from paragraph 6 of the passage:

*If soil **crumbles** between your fingers, then the weather has probably been dry.*

Based on the text, the word **crumbles** means

- A softens
- B itches
- C washes away
- D falls apart

**Key: D**

**Aligned CCLS:** RI.3.4

**Commentary:** This question aligns with RI.3.4 because it asks students to determine the meaning of a word used in text.

**Rationale:** Option D is correct.

## The Poplar Tree

by Flora J. Cooke

1 Long ago, the poplar used to hold out its branches like other trees. It tried to see how far it could spread them.

2 Once at sunset an old man came through the forest where the poplar trees lived. The trees were going to sleep, and it was growing dark.

3 The man held something under his cloak. It was a pot of gold—the very pot of gold that lies at the foot of the rainbow. He had stolen it and was looking for some place to hide it. A poplar tree stood by the path.

cloak = A loose outer garment

4 “This is the very place to hide my treasure,” the man said. “The branches spread out straight, and the leaves are large and thick. How lucky that the trees are all asleep!”

5 He placed the pot of gold in the thick branches, and then ran quickly away.

6 The gold belonged to Iris, the beautiful maiden who had a rainbow bridge to the earth. The next morning she missed her precious pot. It always lay at the foot of the rainbow, but it was not there now.

7 Iris hurried away to tell her father, the great Zeus, of her loss. He said that he would find the pot of gold for her.

8 He called a messenger, the swift-footed Mercury, and said, “Go quickly, and do not return until you have found the treasure.”

swift-footed = Quick-running

9 Mercury went as fast as the wind down to the earth. He soon came to the forest and awakened the trees.

10 “Iris has lost her precious pot of gold that lies at the foot of the rainbow. Have any of you seen it?” he asked.

11 The trees were very sleepy, but all shook their heads.

12 “We have not seen it,” they said.

13 “Hold up your branches,” said Mercury. “I must see that the pot of gold is not hidden among them.”

14 All of the trees held up their branches. The poplar that stood by the path was the first to hold up his. He was an honest tree and knew he had nothing to hide.

15 Down fell the pot of gold. How surprised the poplar tree was! He dropped his branches in shame. Then he held them high in the air.

16 “Forgive me,” he said. “I do not know how it came to be there; but, hereafter, I shall always hold my branches up. Then everyone can see that I have nothing hidden.”

17 Since then the branches have always grown straight up; and everyone knows that the poplar is an honest and upright tree.

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10

Why is Iris an important part of the story? Use **two** details from the story to support your answer.

Write your answer in complete sentences.

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**Aligned CCLS:** RL.3.3 and RL.3.1

**Commentary:** This item aligns to CCLS RL.3.3 and RL.3.1 because it requires students to demonstrate an understanding of and to refer explicitly to the text when finding details to support their response in describing how a character’s actions contribute to the sequence of events in the story.

**Rationale:** Students will have to identify Iris (the daughter of Zeus) and explain how her loss of gold furthers the plot. After Iris tells her father that her gold was stolen, Zeus undertakes a process to recover it. This process culminates with the poplar holding its branches to the sky.

*Extended Constructed Response for "The Poplar Tree"*

11

Describe the way the poplar grows his branches. Explain why the tree decides to grow them this way and how the actions of the Old Man, Iris, Zeus, and Mercury lead to his decision. Use details from the story to support your answer.

In your response, be sure to include the following:

- the direction in which the poplar tree's branches grow
- the events that made the tree's branches grow this way
- the roles that the Old Man, Iris, Zeus, and Mercury play in the decision
- details from the story to support your answer

Write your answer in complete sentences.

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**CCLS Alignment:** RL 3.2, RL.3.3, W.3.2, W.3.4,

**Commentary:** This item aligns with CCLS RL.3.1, RL.3.3, W.3.2, W.3.4, and W.3.9 because it asks students to explain its central message using key details, including characters and plot.

**Rationale:** The response accurately explains the direction of the poplar branches and the tree's decision. The response recounts the events of the story leading up to the decision including how the Old Man stole the pot of gold from Iris, and how Iris went to Zeus, who sent Mercury to find out what happened. The response recounts how the Old Man hid the gold in the poplar's branches while the poplar slept and how, when the gold is found, the poplar promises to always grow his branches upward to prove that he is honest.



# Grade 3

# ELA

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