

English Language Arts 8

Quarter 2 Benchmark Assessment

Name:

Date:

Class:

1. Read this speech about our 38th president, Gerald Ford.

Upon arriving in the White House, Gerald Ford restored the country's confidence in the presidency. After the resignation of Richard Nixon, the United States needed a strong and stable president. Inheriting a crippled economy ravaged by inflation and unemployment, Ford pursued cautious policies that achieved a partial recovery. He sought accommodations with the Soviet Union and China, and he helped preserve a tenuous Middle Eastern peace.

Which of these is not a supporting detail?

- (a) After the resignation of Richard Nixon, the United States needed a strong and stable president.
- (b) Upon arriving in the White House, Gerald Ford restored the country's confidence in the presidency.
- (c) Inheriting a crippled economy ravaged by inflation and unemployment, Ford pursued cautious policies that achieved a partial recovery.
- (d) He sought accommodations with the Soviet Union and China, and he helped preserve a tenuous Middle Eastern peace.

2. Read the passages and answer the question.

Passage 1

The hills of Appalachia are filled with many myths and legends. One of the most mysterious is the story of a clan of mountain people with dark skin, blue eyes, and European features. They are called the Melungeons (pronounced Mel-un-shuns) and have been reported as early as the 1600s. No one seems to know their ancestry or genetic heritage, or how they came to live there. They have had to face prejudice and discrimination from other people living in their area because of their unclassified status. Many of them disguised their backgrounds.

Passage 2

A formerly mysterious group of people living in Appalachia has found an advocate in a professor at the University of Virginia's College in Wise County, Virginia. Professor N. Brent Kennedy has done research into this group of people after learning of his own Melungeon ancestry. Professor Kennedy wrote a book about his findings that state that the Melungeons may have come from the Portuguese and Spanish settlers cut off from a colony in South Carolina in 1587. There is a Portuguese word, "melungo," that means shipmate. Kennedy has brought pride back to these people and lessened the stigmas that they faced.

What is the key difference between Passage 1 and Passage 2?

- (a) Passage 1 describes the isolation of the Melungeons. Passage 2 discusses the knowledge discovered about the ancestry of the Melungeons.
- (b) Passage 1 describes Kennedy and his research. Passage 2 discusses how Melungeons were discriminated against.
- (c) Passage 1 describes how there has been a restoration of Melungeon pride. Passage 2 discusses how there has been an acceptance of Melungeons in society.
- (d) Passage 1 describes a book on the life of Melungeons. Passage 2 describes the Appalachian Mountains where the Melungeons lived.

3. Read this passage.

¹Our neighborhood should install a basketball hoop in the cul-de-sac at the back, so young residents can play pick-up games. ²When kids have too much time and not enough to do, they tend to stir up trouble. ³A basketball hoop would provide them with an opportunity to channel their energies into a structured activity. ⁴All youths deserve a chance to play in a safe, familiar environment where they can establish and strengthen relationships.

Which of these represents a weakness in the argument?

- (a) Sentence 1: It introduces an irrelevant argument.
- (b) Sentence 2: It is a generalization with no basis in fact.
- (c) Sentence 3: It is a distraction from the issue at hand.
- (d) Sentence 4: It is an illogical conclusion.

4. Carefully read the following paragraph, then select the most appropriate answer to the question.

Early inhabitants of California included more than 100 Native American tribes. These native Californians were considered primitive hunter-gatherers by the European intruders. However, the native peoples had developed a successful system of burning, sowing, weeding, pruning, and harvesting food. This system differed widely from the European idea of plowing a field and then planting. Native Californians had a more varied diet than any other Native American tribe. All of the other Native Americans relied on one staple food, such as buffalo, while the native Californians had over 500 different plants and animals. Europeans considered these Californians lazy and inferior to other Native Americans, like the Aztecs and the Iroquois, because they did not build imperial cities or stone temples. When the Europeans conquered the area, their technologies devastated the carefully balanced environment achieved by the native Californians. The European conquerors exploited California's resources.

Which statement best summarizes the paragraph?

- (a) The native Californians were inferior to their Native American brothers because they did not build temples and cities. The Europeans followed the native peoples farming techniques to the benefit of the land.
- (b) The native Californians farmed in a way that proved advantageous to the environment. Other Native American cultures did not have the same success. The Europeans disregarded this and considered the native Californians to be inferior to their Native American brothers, who built cities and temples.
- (c) The Europeans regarded the native Californians as superior to their Native American brothers because of their advanced farming techniques. Other Native Americans looked to the Californians for guidance.
- (d) Europeans held that the building of cities and temples was more important than agriculture, as did all Native Americans.

Read the following passage to answer questions 5, 6, 7, and 8

Dorothea Lange: A Photographer Who Changed America

A teenager's announcement concerning a career choice is to be expected. What that choice will be, however, sometimes comes as a complete surprise to others. Such was the case with Dorothea Lange. At 18, she announced her plan to become a photographer. Her choice was surprising because Lange did not own a camera and had never taken a photograph; and it occurred in the 1910s, when women did not pursue such careers. Nevertheless, Lange's announcement foretold the boldness and persistence that she would demonstrate as a photographer of America's downtrodden.

Lange began her training in photography by learning portraiture from several New York photographers.



At age 23, she boldly set out across the United States to begin her own business, opening her own photography studio in San Francisco in 1918. Her studio was popular and successful, but after several years, Lange became more interested in people on the crowded streets. In 1933, the time of the Great Depression, streets were filled with people who had lost their jobs because of this severe economic situation. Many didn't have enough money to buy food or clothing.

Her career started in a new direction when she happened upon an old man holding an empty tin cup as he stood in a line to receive free bread. Lange photographed the man to illustrate how it felt to be hungry and forgotten. She hung it on her studio wall, but her customers complained that it was not pleasant to look at. They were used to portraits of men who displayed their finery and position in society. By observing this "real-life" photograph, they were forced to think about an old man who was penniless and starving.

"What are you going to do with this kind of thing?" people asked. Lange could not answer with certainty, but she was satisfied that she had taken the photograph.

Many of Lange's subjects during the Depression were migrant farm workers. They had been forced off their farms in the Great Plains area of the United States, and had driven west in old, broken-down cars. They clung to the hope of finding simple work on the farms and orchards of California. Between 1935 and 1939, approximately 300,000 migrants arrived in search of a livelihood. The need for such workers was far less than the number of people looking for work, resulting in even more disappointment and discouragement for the new poor of the nation.

Lange and her husband, a professor named Paul Schuster Taylor, felt strongly that the migrants needed help on a large scale. They sent reports to the U.S. government, and explained to lawmakers that the

migrants needed food, clothes, medicine, and clean camps with running water. Lange took photographs to illustrate these reports. She showed poor families trying to live normal lives in shacks. Lange and the migrants talked as she photographed them. They shared their feelings with her.

"This is a hard life to swallow," one man told her.

"We're starved, stalled, and stranded," said another.



"If I could get me a piece of land," wished a third, "I'd go to diggin' it with my hands."

Lange believed it was important to record what her subjects said. She noted their exact words whenever she could, and sent them with the accompanying photographs to the government.

One of Lange's best-known photographs is "Migrant Mother." Lange met this woman and her children on a rainy day in March 1936. They were barely surviving in a tent that stood on a wet field. They were cold, hungry, and without much hope, since the crops were frozen. Lange sensed that the mother's face could tell the story of thousands of other mothers with hungry children. She took five photographs of her, each one successively closer to her face, and took the photos to a San Francisco newspaper.

The newspaper printed two of Lange's photos with the news that the U.S. government had decided to send 20,000 pounds of food to the 2,500 migrants at the camp. This was a great victory for Lange because her pictures had helped to prod the government into action.

Lange became part of a team of photographers who captured the essence of rural Americans for the Farm Security Administration. The FSA, as it was called, was an agency established by President Franklin D. Roosevelt to assist the homeless and jobless farmers and farm workers.

Lange's FSA photos appeared in magazines, newspapers, and special exhibits. People became disturbed by the stark images of how the migrants lived. Congress began to pay more attention to the plight of such workers, and eventually their lot improved.

After the Depression, Lange continued taking photographs of people who suffered various misfortunes. Factory workers and shipbuilders were frequent subjects. Lange traveled to Egypt, Ireland, South America, and Asia to capture on film more people whose stories needed to be told.

Although Lange died in 1965, the value of her work remains. The people in her photographs still seem alive. Lange was pleased that she had captured people on film and prompted others in the world to take notice. "There is so much to see, to capture, which might never be there again," she once said. "How can you walk around without taking pictures?"

Used with permission — adapted from *Highlights for Children*.

Use above article, "Dorothea Lange: A Photographer Who Changed America," to answer 5, 6, 7, 8,

5. Read these sentences from the article.

The newspaper printed two of Lange's photos with the news that the U.S. government had decided to send 20,000 pounds of food to the 2,500 migrants at the camp.

What can be inferred about the effect of photographs upon the public?

- (a) They can send a powerful message.
- (b) They can influence people's emotions.
- (c) They are best used only for leisure reading.
- (d) They are disliked by the government.

6. Which sentence from the passage supports the author's opinion that Dorothea Lange helped change the lives of migrant workers?

- (a) Lange was pleased that she had captured people on film and prompted others in the world to take notice.
- (b) Congress began to pay more attention to the plight of such workers, and eventually their lot improved.
- (c) Many of Lange's subjects during the Depression were migrant farm workers.
- (d) People became disturbed by the stark images of how the migrants lived.

7. The information in the article "Dorothea Lange: A Photographer Who Changed America" could best be used for a student research project on the

- (a) techniques of contemporary photographers.
- (b) influences of history upon the arts.
- (c) history of photography.
- (d) development of cameras.

8. Read this sentence from the article.

This was a great victory for Lange because her pictures had helped to prod the government into action.

What does the word *prod* mean?

- (a) start
- (b) change
- (c) nudge
- (d) force

Read the following passage to answer questions 9 and 10

Here is the first part of Gabriella's rough draft.

The Dream of Flight

(1) Every day, all over the world, thousands of people fly from city to city, country to country, even continent to continent. (2) Have you ever wondered what the very first flight was like? (3) If you want the answers to these questions, you will have to go back a little over 100 years to Kitty Hawk, North Carolina, and look into the lives and adventures of Orville and Wilbur Wright. (4) And have you ever stopped to think about when or why people started flying?

(5) In 1900, the Wright brothers rented a building in Kitty Hawk near a beach to experiment with flying. (6) They wanted to do something noteworthy and believed that building a simple flying machine was possible. (7) Over the next three years, they completed more than 1,000 glider flights. (8) Before several mechanical setbacks, the Wright brothers finally were able to attach an engine to one of their planes. (9) They called this new machine the *Wright Flyer*.

9. In sentence 8, the phrase “Before several mechanical setbacks” does not correctly link ideas. Which phrase should be used instead?

- (a) Instead of several mechanical setbacks
- (b) Because of several mechanical setbacks
- (c) Although several mechanical setbacks
- (d) After several mechanical setbacks

10. The order of the sentences in the first paragraph does not support the central idea. How should the sentences be ordered?

- (a) 1, 4, 3, 2
- (b) 2, 1, 3, 4
- (c) 2, 1, 4, 3
- (d) 1, 2, 4, 3

Read this passage taken from www.comptons.com for questions 11, 12, 13.

¹The megamouth shark is one of three known filter-feeding sharks; the others are the whale shark and the basking shark. ²Like other filter feeders, the megamouth probably swims with its mouth open. ³Large quantities of zooplankton and other small organisms, such as small shrimp and fish, are trapped as seawater filters through the teeth and gill rakers. ⁴The shark will periodically close its mouth to swallow the prey. ⁵Scientists believe that the megamouth shark is probably slow moving and not aggressive and, therefore, unlikely to pose a threat to people in the water.

11. Which sentence in the passage is extraneous, or unnecessary?

- (a) 1
- (b) 3
- (c) 4
- (d) 5

12. What type of text is this passage?

- (a) informational
- (b) fictional
- (c) entertainment
- (d) fable

13. Read the sentence below and replace the *italicized word* with a higher-level vocabulary word.

Like other filter feeders, the megamouth *probably* swims with its mouth open?

- (a) negatively
- (b) presumably
- (c) likely
- (d) sporadically

14. Read this portion of the "Declaration of Independence."

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.-- That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed, --That whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their Safety and Happiness.

Which of these best describes the structure of this passage?

- (a) This passage is autobiographical, and it details the lives of our founding fathers.
- (b) This passage is expository, and it outlines the expectation of democratic government.
- (c) This passage is a work of fiction, and it describes a document that doesn't really exist.
- (d) This passage is a parable, and it teaches a lesson about the history of the United States.

15. Read this passage.

Smart athletes have warm-up and cool-down periods. Before strenuous exercise, athletes should do a few minutes of bending and stretching. This will help prevent stiffness and injury to muscles. After a game, athletes need to taper off slowly for a few minutes. Doctors agree that stopping exercise suddenly may cause a dangerous drop in blood pressure. It may also trigger an irregular heartbeat. Most coaches agree that warming up and cooling down are essential. They conduct warm-up sessions before games. After the games, coaches encourage their players to cool down. This practice should be required for all athletes.

What is the author's purpose for writing this article?

- (a) to inform the reader about famous athletes
- (b) to persuade the reader to warm up and cool down when exercising
- (c) to entertain the reader with a humorous anecdote about coaches and athletes
- (d) to explain the difference between stretching and bending exercises

16. Two things that you should avoid when writing in the formal style are _____.

- (a) abbreviations and emotional language
- (b) citations, or quotes, and emotional language
- (c) contractions and citations
- (d) facts and opinions

17. When the two pictures were juxtaposed on the magazine editor's desk, she could compare them and determine that one had been altered.

Which of these best describes the meaning of the underlined word?

- (a) pinned to a wall
- (b) separated by several feet
- (c) held up to the light
- (d) placed side by side

18. You have been assigned a report on the current status of certain endangered animal species.

Which of these resources would be most helpful?

- (a) an encyclopedia article titled "Endangered Species"
- (b) an online database maintained by the group Wildlife Watch
- (c) a book titled How to Do Your Part in Helping Wildlife Survive
- (d) a magazine article titled "Why Animals Become Extinct"

19. Read this passage and answer the question.

The Titanic couldn't be turned in time to avoid the iceberg. _____, the Titanic scraped a submerged portion of the enormous iceberg. The iceberg ripped a gash in the steel hull. The first six compartments began to fill up with water.

Which word or phrase best fills in the blank in the passage?

- (a) As a result,
- (b) In conclusion,
- (c) Simultaneously,
- (d) In addition,

20. The event was interesting. I liked the impressionistic paintings best. Several paintings by Monet were displayed.

Which underlined word needs to be replaced by a more precise word?

- (a) event
- (b) impressionistic
- (c) Monet
- (d) displayed

English Language Arts 8

Quarter 2 Benchmark Assessment

Answer Sheet

Name:

Date:

Class:

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