

**VIRGINIA
STANDARDS OF LEARNING ASSESSMENTS**

Spring 2001 Released Test

**GRADE 8
ENGLISH: WRITING**

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DIRECTIONS

Read the passage in each shaded box. Read each question after the passage. Choose the best answer. Then mark the space in the answer booklet for the answer you have chosen.

SAMPLE A

A Special Person

In English class, Sarah has been asked to write a description of someone special to her. Sarah wants to write about her older brother.

Which of these would *best* help Sarah write her description of her older brother?

- A Calling his friends and telling them about him
- B Thinking about all the things she likes about him
- C Making a list of things she wants him to do for her
- D Asking him to take her to the library

SAMPLE B

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

(1)A special person in my life is my big brother, his name is Ben. (2)He is tall and thin.

How should sentence 1 be written?

- F A special person in my life is Ben, my big brother.
- G A special person in my life is Ben, he is my big brother.
- H In my life a special person is my big brother, his name is Ben.
- J My big brother Ben, he is a special person in my life.

SAMPLE C

Here is the next part of Sarah's rough draft.

(3)He help me with my homework.
(4)He is a good student.

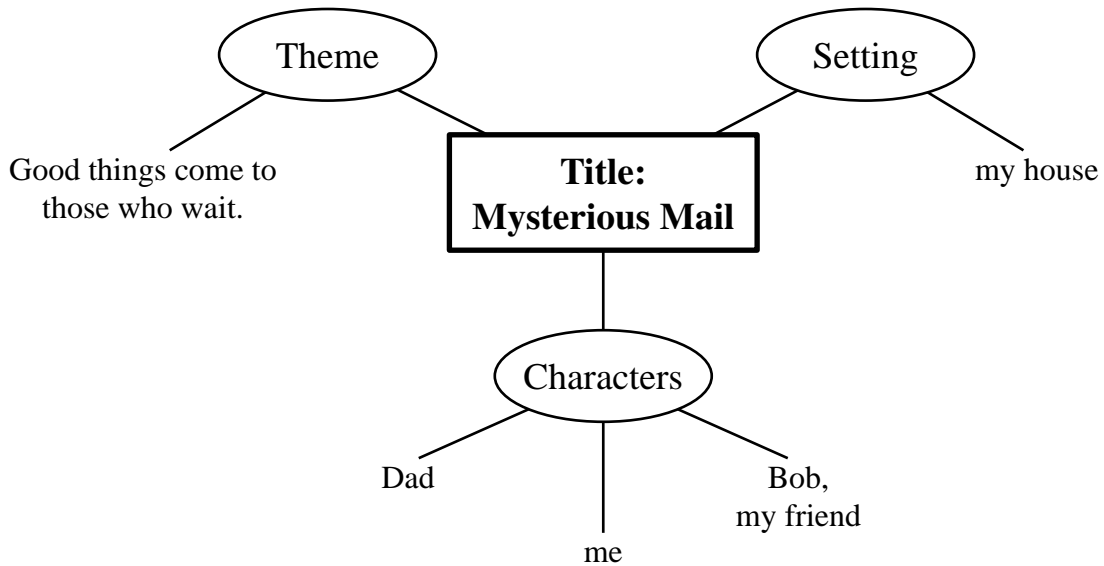
In sentence 3, He help should be written —

- A He were helping
- B He have helped
- C He helps
- D as it is

Mysterious Mail

Chris's English teacher has asked the students to write a short story based on a personal experience.

After thinking about his story, Chris made this web. Use it to answer question 1.



1 Which of these would be the *most* helpful for Chris to add to his web?

- A The names of people who will read his story
- B The short stories he has read in his English class
- C The way he came up with the idea for his story
- D The events that take place in the story

Here is Chris’s rough draft of the first part of his story. Use it to answer questions 2–5.

(1)I always thought it would be cool to be a detective. (2)I finally got my chance. (3)I learned that solving a mystery is a lot tougher than I thought. (4)Just waiting for clues, this is what you have to do sometimes.

(5)It all started when I checked the mail one day after school. (6)Buried among the bills and magazines addressed to my parents, there was a small white card included with the other mail. (7)In big letters, “SOMETHING GOOD is coming soon.” (8)That was all it said. (9)It had been postmarked in Cheyenne, Wyoming. (10)I was pretty sure we didn’t know anyone from there. (11)There was no signature or return address.

(12)When I showed the strange card to my friend Bob, he said, “Maybe someone’s sending you a present.”

(13)“No, that couldn’t be it,” I said. (14)“Maybe I won something! (15)Or maybe it’s just a joke.”

2 How can Chris *best* combine sentences 2 and 3 without changing their meaning?

- F I finally got my chance, I learned that solving a mystery is a lot tougher than I thought.
- G When I finally got my chance, I learned that solving a mystery is a lot tougher than I thought.
- H Got my chance finally, and learned that solving a mystery is a lot tougher than I thought.
- J I learned that solving a mystery is a lot tougher than I thought and I finally got my chance.

3 How is sentence 4 *best* rewritten?

- A Sometimes you just have to wait for clues.
- B Sometimes just waiting, this is what you have to do for clues.
- C Just waiting sometimes for clues, this is what you have to do.
- D For clues sometimes, you just have to wait for them.

4 Which of these is *not* a complete sentence?

- F 1
- G 7
- H 10
- J 13

5 Which of these underlined phrases repeats an idea already expressed in that sentence?

- A I always thought it would be cool to be a detective.
- B It all started when I checked the mail one day after school.
- C Buried among the bills and magazines addressed to my parents, there was a small white card included with the other mail.
- D When I showed the strange card to my friend Bob, he said, "Maybe someone's sending you a present."

Read the next part of Chris’s rough draft and use it to answer questions 6–10. This section has groups of underlined words. The questions ask about these groups of underlined words.

(16)Nothing happened for the next few days. (17)Then, on Thursday, I checked the mail again. (18)Sure enough, there was another white card. (19)The card’s message, written in big letters, was “SOMETHING GOOD is on the way.”

(20)By now I was eager to know what the good thing was. (21)But no more cards came.

(22)Then, one morning at breakfast, dad asked, “What do you think of this new cereal? (23)I think it tastes real good.”

(24)I said, “It’s okay, but there’s too much stuff in it. (25)I like the nuts fruit, and cornflakes, but not the oat clusters.”

(26)Dad said, “The company that makes the cereal sent us a free sample package in yesterday’s mail. (27)The name of the cereal is ‘SOMETHING GOOD,’ ” he added.

(28)I couldn’t beleive it. (29)All this time, I had been excited about a cereal!

6 In sentence 19, The card’s message, written in big letters, is correctly written —

- F The card’s message written in big letters,
- G The cards’ message, written in big letters,
- H The cards’s message, written in big letters
- J as it is

7 In sentence 22, at breakfast, dad asked, “What is correctly written —

- A at breakfast, Dad asked, “What
- B at breakfast, dad asked, What
- C at breakfast, dad asked, “what
- D as it is

8 In sentence 23, it tastes real good. is correctly written —

- F it taste real good.”
- G it tastes really good.”
- H it tastes really well.”
- J as it is

9 In sentence 25, nuts fruit, and cornflakes, is correctly written —

- A nuts fruit and cornflakes,
- B nuts fruit, and cornflakes
- C nuts, fruit, and cornflakes,
- D as it is

10 In sentence 28, couldn't beleive is correctly written —

- F could'nt believe
- G couldn't believe
- H couldn't beleave
- J as it is

Transcontinental Railroad

Reggie's history teacher has asked the class to write research papers on topics of their choice. Reggie wants to write about the Transcontinental Railroad, which was built to help travelers cross the United States.

11 Which of these would *best* help Reggie carry out his research?

- A Asking classmates about their topics
- B Writing out questions about his topic
- C Writing a catchy introduction for his paper
- D Reviewing papers he has written in the past

Here are two drafts of the first part of Reggie’s paper. Use both rough drafts to answer questions 12–15.

DRAFT A

At one time, there were few travel choices for people who wanted to cross the country. All of them were slow, uncomfortable, and often treacherous. There had to be a better way, didn’t there?

Then trains came along, and people like President Lincoln began to think about building a transcontinental railroad. The railroad could take passengers all the way across the country. The Pacific Railroad Act of 1862 said that one company could lay tracks going east, while another one could lay them going west. The two sets of tracks would be joined in the middle of the country.

No one bothered to say *where* the tracks would join. Since the greedy railroad companies got paid for each mile of track they laid, this gave them an excuse to make themselves rich. Instead of cooperating with each other as they should have, each rushed to lay down as much track as possible.

DRAFT B

In the mid-1800s, it was very hard for people to cross the United States. Travelers who wanted to go from the East Coast to the West Coast had few choices. They could sail around South America and back up the California coast, or they could join a wagon train. Both ways, travel was slow and uncomfortable.

That's when trains came along. Some people dreamed of building a transcontinental railroad. But many others thought this was a ridiculous plan. President Abraham Lincoln was one of the dreamers. In 1862, he signed the Pacific Railroad Act. This act said that California's Central Pacific Company could lay tracks going east. Another company called the Union Pacific Railroad Company could lay tracks west. Union Pacific's tracks would start at the Mississippi River. The two sets of tracks would later be joined.

It was not specified *where* the tracks would join. The railroad companies were paid for each mile of track they laid, so it was to their benefit to delay the joining of the tracks.

12 What is the main difference between Draft A and Draft B?

- F Draft A contains more descriptive vocabulary.
- G Draft A provides more elaboration.
- H Draft B contains more relevant, specific information.
- J Draft B contains information that does not belong in Reggie's paper.

13 In Draft B, the *best* way to improve the rhythm of paragraph 2 would be to —

- A put the information in chronological order
- B add more technical language
- C discuss how trains were invented
- D vary the sentence structure

14 In both drafts, paragraph 2 focuses mainly on —

- F** describing the Pacific Railroad Act
- G** providing details about Lincoln’s presidency
- H** comparing two different railroad companies
- J** explaining the importance of travel by railroad

15 In both drafts, which of these transitions could *best* be added to the beginning of paragraph 3?

- A** Unfortunately,
- B** In addition,
- C** Because of this,
- D** Meanwhile,

Read this next section of Reggie’s rough draft and use it to answer questions 16–20. This section has groups of underlined words. The questions ask about these groups of underlined words.

Even getting paid by the mile, both railroad companies constantly complained about not having enough money. At first, both had trouble finding workers. Nothing was harder and more dangerous than railway work, which consisted of such tasks as carving tunnels out of steep mountains. It did not help that workers has been expected to keep laying track even during winter snowstorms! Getting building supplies was also a problem. Wood and iron for the tracks has to be hauled across rivers and up mountains.

After six years of starts and stops, the rails were finally joined. This historic event took place on May 10, 1869, in Promontory summit, Utah, a town so small it had only one street and tents instead of buildings. Hundreds of people showed up to watch railroad officers’ attempts to hammer the last spike into place. Then the whole country burst into joyful celebration. Many workers had contributed to making the dream of the Transcontinental Railroad a reality. Now, thanks to them, travelers’ ventures across the United States could be made in only a week.

16 How is complained about not having enough money correctly written?

- F complained about not having enuff money
- G complained about not having enough money
- H complained about not having enuff money
- J As it is

17 How is workers has been expected correctly written?

- A workers was expected
- B workers were expected
- C workers are exspected
- D As it is

18 How is has to be hauled correctly written?

- F has to be halled
- G have to be hauled
- H had to be hauled
- J As it is

19 How is This historic event correctly written?

- A These historic event
- B This Historic event
- C This Historic Event
- D As it is

20 How is Promontory summit, Utah, correctly written?

- F promontory summit, Utah,
- G Promontory summit Utah,
- H Promontory Summit, Utah,
- J As it is



Grade 8 English: Writing

Direct Writing Component

In the direct writing component, students write a composition about a topic presented to them in a writing prompt. The writing prompt page also includes a “Checklist for Writers” that lists points for students to keep in mind as they write. Writing compositions are scored in each of the domains:

- Composing
- Written Expression
- Usage/Mechanics

Scores in the Composing and Written Expression domains are reported as part of the Reporting Category called **Plan, Compose, and Revise Writing in a Variety of Forms for a Variety of Purposes**. Scores in the Usage/Mechanics domains are reported as part of the Reporting Category called **Edit for Correct Use of Language, Capitalization, Punctuation, and Spelling**. A writing prompt from the Spring 2001 administration is on the following page.

ENGLISH: WRITING

PROMPT No. 820

Former First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt said, “. . . You must do the thing you think you cannot do.” Based on your experience, do you think Eleanor Roosevelt is right? Write about a time when you did something you thought you could not do. Be sure to be specific.

CHECKLIST FOR WRITERS

- I planned my paper before writing it.

- I revised my paper to be sure that
 - the introduction captures the reader’s attention;
 - the central idea is supported with specific information and examples that will be interesting to the reader;
 - the content relates to my central idea;
 - ideas are organized in a logical manner;
 - my sentences are varied in length;
 - my sentences are varied in the way that they begin; and
 - the conclusion brings my ideas together.

- I edited my paper to be sure that
 - correct grammar is used;
 - words are capitalized when appropriate;
 - sentences are punctuated correctly;
 - words are spelled correctly; and
 - paragraphs are clearly indicated.

- I checked my paper.

Answer Key

Test Sequence	Correct Answer	Reporting Category	Reporting Category Description
1	D	003	Plan, compose, and revise in a variety of forms for a variety of purposes.
2	G	003	Plan, compose, and revise in a variety of forms for a variety of purposes.
3	A	003	Plan, compose, and revise in a variety of forms for a variety of purposes.
4	G	003	Plan, compose, and revise in a variety of forms for a variety of purposes.
5	C	003	Plan, compose, and revise in a variety of forms for a variety of purposes.
6	J	004	Edit for correct use of language, capitalization, punctuation, and spelling.
7	A	004	Edit for correct use of language, capitalization, punctuation, and spelling.
8	G	004	Edit for correct use of language, capitalization, punctuation, and spelling.
9	C	004	Edit for correct use of language, capitalization, punctuation, and spelling.
10	G	004	Edit for correct use of language, capitalization, punctuation, and spelling.
11	B	003	Plan, compose, and revise in a variety of forms for a variety of purposes.
12	H	003	Plan, compose, and revise in a variety of forms for a variety of purposes.
13	D	003	Plan, compose, and revise in a variety of forms for a variety of purposes.
14	F	003	Plan, compose, and revise in a variety of forms for a variety of purposes.
15	A	003	Plan, compose, and revise in a variety of forms for a variety of purposes.
16	G	004	Edit for correct use of language, capitalization, punctuation, and spelling.
17	B	004	Edit for correct use of language, capitalization, punctuation, and spelling.
18	H	004	Edit for correct use of language, capitalization, punctuation, and spelling.
19	D	004	Edit for correct use of language, capitalization, punctuation, and spelling.
20	H	004	Edit for correct use of language, capitalization, punctuation, and spelling.