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TIME
FOR KIDS

Practicing for Today's Tests

Level

4

Language
Arts



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Today's Next Generation Tests

“To be college and career ready, students must now read across a broad range of high-quality texts from diverse cultures and times in history.”

—Delia E. Racines, Ph.D.

Education is currently undergoing a dramatic shift when it comes to the ways we measure and assess for learning. Educational standards across the nation are designed to provide clear and meaningful goals for our students. These standards serve as a frame of reference for educators, parents, and students and are most critical when decisions must be made about curriculum, textbooks, assessments, and other aspects of instructional programs (Conley 2014). Part of the disconnect with standards in the recent past has been the vast differences and lack of consistency in expectations that became a major concern for the quality of education students were receiving across the country (Conley 2014; Wiley and Wright 2004).

Standards in education in the United States are not a new concept. However, the role of educational standards has recently shifted to not only ensure that all students have access to equitable education no matter where they live, but also to ensure a more consistent national expectation for what all students should know to be successful in a rapidly changing economy and society (Kornhaber, Griffith, and Tyler 2014).

Scales, scores, and assessments are absolutely necessary to ascertain the current status of students. This kind of data is vital for teachers to understand what is missing and what the next steps should be. The real question about assessment isn't whether we should assess but rather what kinds of assessments should be used. Along with the current shift to more consistent and rigorous standards, states now measure student progress with assessments that require higher-order thinking skills necessary for preparation for college and/or careers.

So, what is this new yardstick that is being used? How is it better than yardsticks of the past? And how do we best prepare students to be measured with this yardstick in a way that tells the whole story? The next generation tests intend to provide results that are comparable across all states and will use more performance-based tasks as well as technology-enhanced items. This is very different in comparison to the standardized testing that teachers, students, and parents are used to (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices 2010; Rothman 2013).

The following descriptions serve as explanations of how the three most prominent next-generation tests are different from assessments of the past.

Categories of Questions

In order for students today to be better prepared for college and/or careers, they must be able to read widely and deeply across a range of informational and literary texts (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices 2010). In today's standards, there are often three categories of reading standards. On assessments, these categories are represented by three categories of questions. The questions include new terminology that defines specific skills and understandings that all students must demonstrate. **Note:** See *Appendix B* (pages 100–103) for how these categories are represented in each practice exercise in this book.

Overall, today's college and career readiness reading standards depict the picture of what students should be able to exhibit with increasing proficiency and on a regular basis. To be college and career ready, students must now read across a broad range of high-quality texts from diverse cultures and times in history. The reading standards emphasize the skills necessary to critically read and continuously make connections among ideas and texts. Students also learn to distinguish poor reasoning as well as ambiguities in texts. The following explanation of the terms related to each of the three reading categories will better prepare educators and parents for today's tests.

Key Ideas and Details

This category stresses the importance of understanding specific information in various texts. Overall, students must be able to identify specific details and then gain deeper meaning from what is read. Specifically, this category requires students to be able to do the following things.

Students should be able to . . .	To show how they know this, students must . . .
read text closely to really understand what it says.	identify specific details from the text.
make conclusions based on what they identify from a text.	say or write specific details to support their conclusions.
determine the main idea or theme from a text and analyze its development.	identify and summarize key supporting details that support the theme or main idea.
figure out how and why individuals, events, or ideas develop and interact over the course of a text.	explain details about how characters and/or the story develop at different times throughout the text from the beginning to the end.

Name: _____ Date: _____

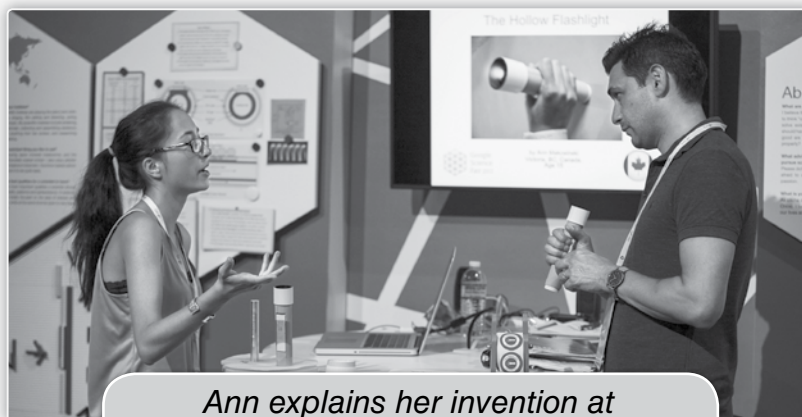
Lighting the Way

Directions: Read this text and respond to the questions on pages 22–24.

- 1 Ann Makosinski is a smart young woman—and she has an award to prove it! The teenager from British Columbia, Canada, invented a flashlight that works without batteries. Ann entered her invention in the 2013 Google Science Fair. It won the top prize for her age group. “This experience was life-changing,” Ann told TIME For Kids. “I feel so inspired.”

A Simple Solution

- 2 Inventors often create things to solve problems. That’s the case with Ann. Her bright idea was sparked by a desire to help friends living in the Philippines. Their families could not afford electricity. This meant that they had no lights to study by at night. The kids had trouble doing their homework. Ann wanted to solve this dilemma. “People radiate so much energy,” Ann says. “Why not capture and use some of it?”
- 3 Here’s how her invention works. The flashlight has a hollow aluminum tube in its center. The flashlight’s handle has tiles on it. The tiles draw heat from your hand and also from the surrounding air. The heat makes energy. It powers the flashlight’s bulbs.
- 4 There is still work to be done on these “hollow flashlights.” Ann would like them to become available to people who live in poor countries. She also wants to put the finishing touches on her flashlight’s design.
- 5 What’s next for Ann? The busy teen is working on another project. It is hands-free headlamps for kids. “So many people face problems with something we take for granted,” Ann says. “I want to provide a solution.”



Ann explains her invention at the Google Science Fair.

Name: _____ Date: _____

Lighting the Way *(cont.)*

Directions: Fill in the bubble of each correct answer choice.

1. What is Ann's reason for creating her flashlight?

- Ⓐ She is interested in winning a science fair.
- Ⓑ She knows that her invention could make her a lot of money.
- Ⓒ She wants to help people in places that lack electricity.
- Ⓓ She wants to solve a problem she has while reading at night.

2. Which two questions might the man in the photograph ask Ann?

- Ⓐ What inspired this idea?
- Ⓑ Where do the batteries go in your flashlight?
- Ⓒ Can you tell me about the feet lamps you are working on?
- Ⓓ How does it feel to compete in the science fair?

3. Which sentence from the article helps the reader to understand the meaning of the word *radiate*?

- Ⓐ "The flashlight's handle has tiles on it."
- Ⓑ "The tiles draw heat from your hand and also from the surrounding air."
- Ⓒ "The heat makes energy."
- Ⓓ "It powers the flashlight's bulbs."

Name: _____ Date: _____

Lighting the Way *(cont.)*

Directions: Fill in the bubble of each correct answer choice.

4. Read these sentences from paragraph 1: “‘This experience was life-changing,’ Ann told TIME For Kids. ‘I feel so inspired.’” These sentences help predict why Ann might . . .
- (A) be satisfied with winning the contest.
 - (B) want to take some time off from working.
 - (C) show off her award to her classmates.
 - (D) continue creating inventions.
5. Which details support Ann’s statements from number 4? There is more than one correct choice.
- (E) She wants to finish the flashlight’s design.
 - (F) She is a very intelligent girl.
 - (G) She hopes her flashlight will help people in poor countries.
 - (H) She is working on a hands-free headlamp for kids.
6. This article is mainly about a young woman who . . .
- (A) hopes to win top prize at the Google Science Fair.
 - (B) wants to create as many inventions as possible.
 - (C) creates a solution to a problem in another part of the world.
 - (D) explains how her flashlight operates without batteries.

Name: _____ Date: _____

Lighting the Way *(cont.)*

Directions: Answer the questions.

7. Number the events from the passage in order.

- _____ Ann enters the flashlight in the 2013 Google Science Fair.
- _____ Poor families do not have enough money to pay for electricity.
- _____ Ann decides to create a flashlight that does not need batteries.
- _____ Students have a difficult time completing their homework.

8. At the end of the article, Ann says, “So many people face problems with something we take for granted. I want to provide a solution.” Explain what you think she means by this statement.
