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TIME
FOR KIDS

Practicing for Today's Tests

Level

2

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.

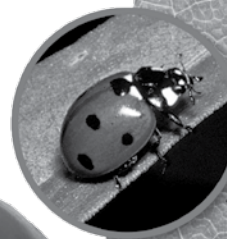
Name: _____ Date: _____

Lost and Found

Directions: Read this text and respond to the questions on pages 36–38.

- 1 Some kinds of ladybugs used to be common. Now, they are hard to find. You can help look for them!
- 2 Ladybug lovers, get out your cameras! That's what the people of the Lost Ladybug Project (LLP) are saying. They want you to take pictures of these insects. Look for ladybugs in gardens, fields, and other places. When you see one, take a picture! It's getting hard to find ladybugs. The pictures will help scientists learn why.

Ladybugs help the environment. They eat aphids (ay-fids) and other insects that harm plants.

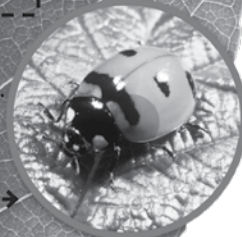


Have
You Seen
Me?

The LLP was started after these kinds of ladybugs became hard to find:

The **nine-spotted** ladybug. It has four spots on each wing. There is one spot in the middle. The front part of its body is black. There are also white marks.

The **transverse** ladybug. It has markings on its back. They look like ink drops.



The **two-spotted** ladybug. This is usually bright red. It has two spots on its wings.

FROM LEFT: ALFRED SCHAUBER—ALAMY; JEFF MARCH—ALAMY; TOM BRANCH—PHOTO RESEARCHERS

Lost and Found *(cont.)*

- 3 John Losey helped start the LLP. Three kinds of ladybugs were once common in the United States. There were lots of them. But now there are fewer. Losey wants to find out the reason.
- 4 People have sent in thousands of pictures. The photos help Losey and his team. They use them to figure out where ladybugs live. “We love ladybugs,” Losey said. So do farmers. Ladybugs eat the insects that harm plants.

Looking for Ladybugs

- 5 The nine-spotted ladybug is rare. There aren’t many left. But thanks to the LLP, it is making a comeback.
- 6 A person in New York found one on a farm. Losey and a team went there. They took away 22 bugs. Now, hundreds of these insects live in his lab. Scientists are studying them.
- 7 Losey says kids are great volunteers. Volunteers work for free. Kids send pictures of many ladybugs. That really helps. Losey has two sons, Ben and Daniel, who volunteer, too. Where is Daniel’s favorite place to look? “In my own yard,” he says.



Name: _____ Date: _____

Lost and Found *(cont.)*

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

1. What sentence from the text tells readers how scientists use the photographs volunteers send in?

- Ⓐ “They want you to take pictures of these insects.”
- Ⓑ “They use them to figure out where ladybugs live.”
- Ⓒ “When you see one, take a picture!”
- Ⓓ “People have sent in thousands of pictures.”

2. What sentence from the text tells the readers why farmers love ladybugs?

- Ⓐ “Ladybugs eat the insects that harm plants.”
- Ⓑ “They want you to take pictures of these insects.”
- Ⓒ “It’s getting hard to find ladybugs.”
- Ⓓ “Ladybug lovers, get out your cameras!”

3. Why is the information included in the section titled, Have You Seen Me? Pick two answers.

- Ⓐ It helps the reader to understand why the Lost Ladybug Project was founded.
- Ⓑ It helps the reader to know where to look for the ladybugs.
- Ⓒ It tells the reader the reasons why ladybugs are rare.
- Ⓓ It helps the reader to identify the ladybugs they may see.

Name: _____ Date: _____

Lost and Found *(cont.)*

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

4. Which meaning of the word *rare* is used in paragraph 5?

- Ⓐ not thick or dense
- Ⓑ very fine
- Ⓒ very uncommon
- Ⓓ not fully cooked

5. Which two sentences from the text supports the answer to number 4?

- Ⓔ “People have sent in thousands of pictures.”
- Ⓕ “Ladybugs eat the insects that harm plants.”
- Ⓖ “Now, they are hard to find.”
- Ⓗ “There aren’t many left.”

6. What can the reader conclude about John Losey?

- Ⓐ He thinks that the ladybugs cannot be helped.
- Ⓑ He wants to know why the ladybugs are hard to find.
- Ⓒ He knows why the ladybugs are rare today.
- Ⓓ He does not think that ladybugs are important.

Name: _____ Date: _____

Lost and Found (cont.)

Directions: Answer the questions.

7. Number these events in order based on the article.

_____ The ladybugs multiplied to hundreds.

_____ John Losey took 22 nine-spotted ladybugs to his lab.

_____ Scientists study them to learn how to help them.

_____ Someone found a nine-spotted ladybug in New York.

8. Explain why John Losey started the Lost Ladybug Project. Use at least one quote from the text in your answer.
