

GRADE 8
Reading

Administered April 2013

RELEASED

READING

Read the selection and choose the best answer to each question. Then fill in the answer on your answer document.

High school student Mary Elizabeth Cep, known to her friends as Lola (and to her family as the Drama Queen), recently moved with her mother and twin sisters from New York City to Dellwood, New Jersey. Lola, who aspires to be an actress, hates living in the suburbs, where she believes everyone looks and acts the same. She decides to try out for the lead role in the school play—a role that Carla Santini, the most popular girl in school, believes should be hers. When Lola wins the lead role, Carla persuades most of the student body to ignore Lola, and Lola decides to quit the play. In the following excerpt, Lola is confronted by her best friend Ella, who is disappointed by Lola’s decision.

from
**Confessions of a Teenage
Drama Queen**

by Dyan Sheldon

- 1 I heard my mother get up and go into the kitchen. I heard the twins erupt into consciousness. I heard the radio go on. The weather was going to be mild and sunny. I’d been hoping for rain. Rain’s always so comforting when you’re unhappy. And then I heard the front bell. I looked at my clock. It was too early for the mailman with a package, or even for the UPS man, come to take some boxes of dinnerware away.
- 2 Pam tripped over something and fell, so Paula reached the door first.
- 3 “She’s sick!” shouted Paula. “She isn’t going to school today. So now we don’t have to go to her boring play.”
- 4 “Now nobody has to go to the boring play,” said Ella.
- 5 This was not Ella-like behavior, this coming to the house at seven-thirty in the morning. She hadn’t been able to bring me my homework the afternoon before because she had to do something with her mother at the last minute, but I’d figured she’d wait till the weekend to come. I had the thought to jump up and lock the door, but before I could, it opened and Ella Marjorie Gerard, the girl once destined to be picked as Most Shy in our high-school yearbook, marched in.
- 6 “I want to talk to you,” said Ella, and she slammed the door in Pam and Paula’s faces.
- 7 “Not now,” I said. I rubbed my eyes sleepily. “I just woke up.”

- 8 Ella threw her book bag on the foot of my bed. "Oh, sure you did," said Ella.
- 9 "I really don't feel well—" I began.
- 10 "You can cut the act," said the most polite and well-mannered teenager in New Jersey. "I know what you're doing." She grabbed the blanket and yanked it off me. "And I'm not going to let you get away with it. Get up now and get dressed for school."
- 11 I stared at her, agog. I'd never heard Ella talk to anyone like that. I didn't think she was capable of it.
- 12 "I'm telling you I'm sick," I said. I pulled the blanket back around me, shivering slightly. "I have a fever," I told her. "Ask my mother."
- 13 "What do you think I am, stupid?" asked Ella. "You're not sick. You're bailing out of the play." She folded her arms in front of her and set her jaw. She looked like she was in a play herself. "You're giving up," said Ella.
- 14 Admitting defeat was getting easier and easier.
- 15 "All right," I snapped. "So what if I am?" I glared at her. "I wish I'd done it when you wanted me to. I could have saved myself a lot of time and trouble."
- 16 "Well, I don't want you to now," said Ella. She dropped her arms and sat down on the bed. "You can't do this, Lola. Everybody's depending on you."
- 17 Sure they were. Depending on me to play the fool.
- 18 "Hah hah," I said. "Nobody will even notice the difference."
- 19 "Of course they will," said Ella. "What about your parents? And your grandparents? And me? And Sam?¹ Sam's never been to a school function before in his life. He's only going for you."
- 20 "Maybe he can get a refund." I fluffed up my pillow and leaned back. "Maybe all of you can."
- 21 "I can't believe I'm hearing this," said Ella. "This isn't like you at all. What happened to the person who never gives up? What happened to the person who told me her motto was 'never say die'?"
- 22 "I don't know," I said. Which was true. "I guess she bailed out, too."
- 23 Ella gazed at me in silence for several seconds.

¹Sam is a friend of Lola's who admires the way Lola stood up to Carla Santini.

- 24 "So that's it?" she said at last. "All that stuff you told me about passion and art and putting your work before yourself, that was just more of your lies?"
- 25 "Of course not," I said. "That's what's important. It's just that I—"
- 26 "You're just the same as Carla, aren't you?" Ella stood up. "It's all me, me, me, and I, I, I. Nobody else counts for anything, do they?"
- 27 I stood up, too.
- 28 "That's not true and you know it!" I felt like I was falling apart inside.
- 29 "No, I don't know it!" Ella screamed back. "You haven't given one thought to anybody else in all this. It's all been about you." She flung her arms wide, appealing to the gods themselves. "What about me?" she demanded. "I was miserable until you came to Dellwood. Totally miserable. I thought that everybody's life was like mine, just doing all the things you're supposed to do when you're supposed to do them, and never questioning anything. I thought that when I grew up, all I could expect was a life like my parents'." She was trembling with rage. "And then I met you. You gave me courage, Lola. You taught me that you can make life what you want."
- 30 I reached out to touch her shoulder. I'd never seen Ella cry before. "Ella, I—"
- 31 She jumped back as though I'd threatened her with a saber. "Don't touch me!" She wiped her eyes with the sleeve of her shirt. "You're a sham, Lola Cep; that's what you are. I thought being the best Eliza Doolittle you could be was what mattered to you. But it isn't. Because if it was, you'd go on tonight and you'd be the best Eliza Doolittle, no matter what Carla Santini says or does." Ella's face was red and blotchy from crying. "Don't you get it, Lola? That's the one thing she can't do anything about. The one thing nobody can do anything about! And you're just going to hand it to her."
- 32 By now, I was crying, too.
- 33 "What's going on in there?" called my mother. She started banging on the door. "Mary? Ella?"
- 34 I snuffed back a few million tears. "Nothing," I shouted back through my sobs. "I've had a miraculous recovery."

CONFESSIONS OF A TEENAGE DRAMA QUEEN. Copyright © 1999 by Dyan Sheldon. Reproduced by permission of Candlewick Press, Somerville, MA on behalf of Walker Books, London.

- 1** The reader can conclude that when Ella arrives at Lola’s house, Ella is —
- A** envious of Lola for getting a role in the school play
 - B** grateful to Lola for helping her become more confident
 - C** timid about confronting Lola for pretending to be sick
 - D** furious with Lola over her decision to quit

-
- 2** Which statement best expresses the main theme of the excerpt?
- F** It is important for people to accept their friends’ decisions.
 - G** People should be true to their own goals.
 - H** It is best to avoid problems rather than try to solve them.
 - J** Friends who have overcome obstacles give useful advice.

3 Read these sentences from paragraph 34.

"Nothing," I shouted back through my sobs. "I've had a miraculous recovery."

These sentences show that Lola —

- A** hopes her mother does not realize she is angry
- B** plans to continue to cry with Ella
- C** has decided to perform in the play
- D** has agreed to let Carla have the lead role in the play

4 The author included paragraph 15 in order to —

- F** explain why Lola has decided she does not want to perform in the play
- G** let the reader know that at one time Ella did not want Lola to act in the play
- H** show the reader that Lola is no longer interested in being in the play
- J** demonstrate that Ella is upset with Lola for not following her earlier advice about being in the play

- 5 What effect does Ella’s uncharacteristic behavior have on the resolution of the excerpt?
- A It reminds Lola of what is most important to her.
 - B It makes Lola question her friendship with Ella.
 - C It forces Lola to think about revising her motto.
 - D It helps Lola accept the fact that she is not as talented as Carla.

-
- 6 Which sentence best explains why Lola is surprised by Ella’s actions?

- F *She hadn’t been able to bring me my homework the afternoon before because she had to do something with her mother at the last minute, but I’d figured she’d wait till the weekend to come.*
- G *Ella’s face was red and blotchy from crying.*
- H *Ella gazed at me in silence for several seconds.*
- J *I had the thought to jump up and lock the door, but before I could, it opened and Ella Marjorie Gerard, the girl once destined to be picked as Most Shy in our high-school yearbook, marched in.*

- 7** The author included paragraph 28 to —
- A** demonstrate how upset Lola is about quitting the play
 - B** convey how hurt Lola is by Ella’s words
 - C** reveal how unhappy Lola is about living in the suburbs
 - D** illustrate how sad Lola feels about the way her classmates are treating her

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- 8** Which event triggers the main problem in the excerpt?
- F** Lola getting the role Carla Santini wanted in the play
 - G** Lola moving to a new school in the suburbs
 - H** Lola pretending to be sick on the day of the play
 - J** Lola arguing with Ella about her decision

- 9** Which of these best expresses Ella’s admiration for Lola?
- A** *“You taught me that you can make life what you want.”*
 - B** *“What happened to the person who never gives up?”*
 - C** *“Everybody’s depending on you.”*
 - D** *“This isn’t like you at all.”*

10 Which statement best expresses the main conflict in the excerpt?

- F** Lola is upset that her best friend Ella has come to her house so early in the morning.
- G** Carla Santini, the most popular girl in school, wants the lead role in the school play.
- H** Ella respects Lola and wants her to talk to Carla Santini and her classmates.
- J** Lola tries to avoid performing in a play because of the negative reaction she has received at school.

Read the selection and choose the best answer to each question. Then fill in the answer on your answer document.

Midnight

by Sara Holbrook

When it's Sunday
and it's midnight,
the weekend
put back in its chest,
5 the toys of recreation,
party times
and needed rest.

When I lie in wait
for Monday
10 to grab me by the ear,
throw me at the shower,
off to school
and when I hear
the train at midnight
15 from so many miles away . . .
when it's Sunday . . .
and it's midnight . . .
the train
in passing brays and boasts
20 it's steel-track-straight,
on schedule,
arrival times to keep.
And I meander to its rhythm,
flopping like a fish.
25 Why can't I get to sleep?
Why can't I get to sleep?

"Midnight" from *Walking on the Boundaries of Change* by Sara Holbrook. Copyright © 1998 by Sara Holbrook. Published by Wordsong, an imprint of Boyds Mills Press. Used by permission.

11 How are the train and the speaker similar?

- A** Like the train that has a schedule to keep, the speaker has an approaching responsibility.
 - B** Like the train that brays and boasts, the speaker acts in an overly proud manner.
 - C** Like the train that travels at midnight, the speaker prefers to work during the night.
 - D** Like the train that stays on a straight course, the speaker avoids change.
-

12 Which line from the poem best expresses the speaker's sense of dread?

- F** Line 2: and it's midnight,
 - G** Line 7: and needed rest.
 - H** Line 8: When I lie in wait
 - J** Line 15: from so many miles away . . .
-

13 The metaphor in the first stanza is used to emphasize that the —

- A** speaker behaves like a small child on the weekend
- B** speaker's weekend of fun and relaxation is over
- C** speaker uses the weekend to organize things
- D** speaker's time is wasted during the weekend

14 The poet uses a simile in lines 23 and 24 to reveal that the speaker —

- F** wants to be outside
- G** cannot get comfortable
- H** does not like fishing
- J** might be having a dream

15 Dividing the poem into two stanzas allows the poet to —

- A** compare the speaker's schedule with the train's schedule
- B** ask questions to keep the reader guessing about what will happen
- C** contrast the speaker's feelings about weekends and Mondays
- D** incorporate reminders for the reader about where the action takes place

16 The train is important to the poem because it represents —

- F** reflecting on the past
- G** visiting distant places
- H** following a planned routine
- J** interrupting peaceful memories

17 The poet likely intends for the last two lines to express the speaker's —

- A** regret over the experiences of the weekend
- B** concern about doing well in school
- C** fear of the arriving train
- D** anxiety about the coming day

Read the selection and choose the best answer to each question. Then fill in the answer on your answer document.

Marching to Different Drummers

by Charles Boisseau

- 1 Imagine flying over Texas on some warm Friday night this autumn.
- 2 Look down from your window seat and you could easily spot a most interesting phenomenon: all those blazing stadium lights and the buzzing of all the crowds attending hundreds of high school football games simultaneously under way across the Lone Star State. At halftime, you'll see a real spectacle: uniformed marchers fanning across green fields, forming patterns, drumming beats, blaring horns, flashing flags and twirling batons.
- 3 As you hover, consider this: Every Friday night during the fall, an estimated 140,000 young people from more than 850 Texas high schools dress up in crisp uniforms, tall hats with fancy plumes and gawky white shoes, and march and make music for countless fans, family members and townspeople.
- 4 We all know that Texans are mad about football, and the players usually get the attention. But what's a football game without the marching band?
- 5 "Yes, you can say that Texas has more high school bands and more participants than any other state. That's pretty much a 'no brainer' when you consider the size of the state and the number of bands," said Richard Floyd. He's state director of music for the University Interscholastic League (UIL), the governing body that oversees extracurricular academic, athletic and music contests in the state's public school system.
- 6 Floyd and a chorus of other educators cite numerous national studies showing a link between studying music and improved cognitive skills, higher scores on standardized tests and lower dropout rates.
- 7 Texas not only has the most marching bands, but it also has earned a reputation for having some of the nation's best, with many bands touring the country, winning national awards and sending graduates on to music careers. To be sure, most band members don't make music their life and may seldom play after they graduate, but band alumni will likely tell you that it was there they learned the skills and habits for success.
- 8 With the football season well under way, it's an ideal time to tune in and learn more about high school marching bands.

Bands in All Sizes

- 9 Texas marching bands range in size from Class 5A Allen High School’s approximately 650 members, including a drill team and color guard, to numerous Class 1A schools, and others, with 20 or fewer members.
- 10 Known as the Allen Eagle Escadrille (French for “squadron”), Allen’s band is considered the largest in the country—high school or college. It’s larger than The University of Texas or Texas A&M University bands, each of which has fewer than 400 members. The Allen band is so large that when it takes the field, it stretches from end zone to end zone. So loud, it can create a wall of sound that has factored in the outcome of games.
- 11 When playing at away games, the band requires 20 buses and a team of nearly 100 parent volunteers to help with logistics and other chores, such as moving equipment, chaperoning, handing out snacks and water bottles, and carefully managing plumes that go with marchers’ hats, said Tim Carroll, spokesman for the high school and also a band parent.
- 12 The band, still growing in a district with a single 5,000-student high school, has more members than the U.S. House of Representatives. Last year’s band had 59 trombones, and Band Director Charles Pennington has promised if it reaches 76 he’ll add the show tune “Seventy-Six Trombones” to the playlist.
- 13 In contrast, Kenneth Griffin, executive secretary of the Texas Association of Small School Bands, said some of the smallest bands have about a dozen members. Griffin’s organization was formed in 1991 to better represent small schools at band competitions.
- 14 At some small schools, roughly half of the student body is in the band. Last year, Sundown High, on the South Plains near Lubbock, won the UIL Class 1A marching band title with 117 band members, including some eighth-graders. The high school’s entire student body was 188, said Assistant Band Director Zane Polson. It was Sundown’s sixth state marching band title, more than any other school in any classification.
- 15 Polson said the community’s strong support and high expectations motivate band students. “In some places, being in the band is not the *in* thing; it’s not cool. It’s cool to be in the band in Sundown,” he said.

Geeks and Nerds

- 16 At some places, band members are labeled “geeks” or “nerds.” Usually good-natured ribbing, such teasing may help members rally around each other to form one of the strongest subcultures within high schools.
- 17 “You have your preps, your jocks and your band nerds,” said Jolynn Harwell, 24, who played clarinet and served as drum major for two years at

Stephenville High School. She now teaches English at North Garland High School, where she also serves as unofficial adviser to clarinet players. "We always called ourselves 'band nerds.' I don't think it's derogatory or anything. It doesn't bother me one bit."

18 Band kids bond by hanging out together in the band hall; enduring seemingly endless rehearsals, particularly during the grueling summer band camp; engaging in all sorts of fundraising activities; and sharing many experiences outside the classroom on long bus trips to games and competitions.

19 "It's like camaraderie," Harwell said. "For four years, it's your family."

20 Of course, none of this means there isn't plenty of friendly competition among players in different sections. Carroll, of Allen High, remembered his son, John, a horn player, coming home from his first day of summer band camp and having already been indoctrinated by the upper-class horn players in his section. He blurted out gleefully: Flutes stink!

"Marching to Different Drummers," by Charles Boisseau. Reprinted with permission, *Texas Co-op Power*, October 2010 issue.

- 18** The author included paragraph 4 most likely to —
- F** emphasize that football players in Texas deserve more attention than they receive
 - G** imply that football should not be the most popular sport in Texas
 - H** suggest that marching bands are as important as football players
 - J** show that marching in a band is as demanding as playing football

19 In paragraph 11, the word logistics means the —

- A** raising of funds
- B** supervising of details
- C** recruiting of members
- D** scheduling of practices

- 20** By presenting the ideas included in paragraphs 1 through 3, the author is able to —
- F** explain why students join marching bands in Texas
 - G** describe the equipment required by Texas marching bands
 - H** emphasize that marching bands in Texas are a common sight
 - J** identify the most popular instruments in Texas marching bands

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- 21** The author chose the title of this selection to highlight the idea that —
- A** Texas marching band members are talented
 - B** there is variety among Texas marching bands
 - C** Texas marching band members are dedicated
 - D** there are a large number of Texas marching bands

22 Which sentence from the selection is a commonplace assertion?

- F** *We all know that Texans are mad about football, and the players usually get the attention.*
- G** *Known as the Allen Eagle Escadrille (French for "squadron"), Allen's band is considered the largest in the country—high school or college.*
- H** *At some small schools, roughly half of the student body is in the band.*
- J** *Griffin's organization was formed in 1991 to better represent small schools at band competitions.*

23 Which of these supports the idea that band members form strong bonds with one another?

- A** *"We always called ourselves 'band nerds.' I don't think it's derogatory or anything. It doesn't bother me one bit."*
- B** *"It's like camaraderie," Harwell said. "For four years, it's your family."*
- C** *"In some places, being in the band is not the in thing; it's not cool. It's cool to be in the band in Sundown," he said.*
- D** *"You have your preps, your jocks and your band nerds," said Jolynn Harwell, 24, who played clarinet and served as drum major for two years at Stephenville High School.*

- 24** What are paragraphs 6 and 7 mainly about?
- F** The results of studies about Texas high school marching bands
 - G** The high quality of Texas high school marching bands
 - H** The benefits of being in a high school marching band
 - J** The popularity of being in a high school marching band

25 What does the word alumni mean in paragraph 7?

- A** Former participants
- B** Parent supporters
- C** College applicants
- D** Competition judges

26 What is the best summary of the section titled "Bands in All Sizes"?

- F** There are many marching bands in the state of Texas. Some of the bands are very small, consisting of as few as a dozen members. Kenneth Griffin's organization, the Texas Association of Small School Bands, represents some of these small high school bands at competitions.
- G** With 5,000 students, Allen High School is a very large school. Its marching band has 650 members, which makes it larger than the bands at the University of Texas and Texas A&M University. On the other hand, the Sundown High School marching band has only 117 members.
- H** Class 5A Allen High School has the largest marching band in the United States. It is larger than any other high school marching band or any college marching band. This band's 650 members fill an entire football field when they are playing. It takes 20 buses to transport the members to away games.
- J** Texas boasts the largest high school marching band in the nation, the Allen Eagle Escadrille, which has 650 members. There are also many small, award-winning marching bands in Texas, such as Sundown High School's 117-member marching band, which has won many marching band titles.

27 With which statement would the author most likely agree?

- A** More band members should pursue careers in music.
- B** It is possible for a school of any size to have a successful band program.
- C** Band camps would be more effective if they didn't occur during the summer.
- D** Large schools should consider including middle school students in marching band.

Read the next two selections. Then choose the best answer to each question.

Dear Fellow Writer

by Pat Mora

Dear Fellow Writer,

- 1 A blank piece of paper can be exciting and intimidating. Probably every writer knows both reactions well. I know I do. I wanted to include a letter to you in this book because I wish I could talk to you individually. I'd say: Listen to your inside self, your private voice. Respect your thoughts and feelings and ideas. You—yes, you—play with sounds. With language(s), explore the wonder of being alive.
- 2 Living hurts, so sometimes we write about a miserable date, a friend who betrayed us, the death of a parent. Some days, though, we're so full of joy we feel like a kite. We can fly! Whether we write for ourselves or to share our words, we discover ourselves when we truly write: when we dive below the surface. It's never easy to really reveal ourselves in school, but remember that writing is practice. Without practice, you will never learn to hear and sing your own unique song.
- 3 I have always been a reader, which is the best preparation for becoming a writer. When I was in grade school in El Paso, Texas (where I was born), I read comic books and mysteries and magazines and library books. I was soaking up language.
- 4 I've always liked to write, too—but I was a mother before I began to create regular time for my writing. Was it that I didn't think that I had anything important to say? Was it that I didn't believe that I could say anything that well? Was it that when I was in school we never studied a writer who was like me—bilingual, a Mexican American—and so somehow I decided that "people like me" couldn't be writers?
- 5 I have a large poster of an American Indian storyteller right above my desk. Children are climbing all over her, just as my sisters and my brother and I climbed over *nuestra tía*, our aunt, Ignacia Delgado, the aunt we called Lobo. She was our storyteller. Who is yours? Would you like to be a storyteller? Would you like to write or paint or draw or sing your stories?
- 6 I became a writer because words give me so much pleasure that I have always wanted to sink my hands and heart into them, to see what I can create, what will rise up, what will appear on the page. I've learned that some writers are quiet and shy, others noisy, others just plain obnoxious. Some like enchiladas and others like sushi; some like rap and others like *rancheras*. Some write quickly, and some are as slow as an elderly man struggling up a steep hill on a windy day.

- 7 I'll tell you a few of our secrets.
- 8 The first is that we all read. Some of us like mysteries and some of us like memoirs, but writers are readers. We're curious to see what others are doing with words, but—what is more important—we like what happens to us when we open a book, how we journey into the pages.
- 9 Another secret is that we write often. We don't just talk about writing. We sit by ourselves inside or outside, writing at airports or on kitchen tables, even on napkins.
- 10 We're usually nosy and very good at eavesdropping. Just ask my three children! And writers are collectors. We collect facts and phrases and stories: the names of cacti, the word for *cheese* in many languages.
- 11 In the last twenty years, I've spent more and more time writing my own books for children and adults. I have received many rejections and will probably receive many more, darn it. I just keep writing—and revising. Revising is now one of my favorite parts of being a writer, though I didn't always feel that way. I enjoy taking what I've written—a picture or a book or a poem—and trying to make the writing better, by changing words or rhythm. Sometimes by starting over!
- 12 Writing is my way of knowing myself better, of hearing myself, of discovering what is important to me and what makes me sad, what makes me different, what makes me *me*—of discovering my own true name. And writing makes me less lonely. I have all these words in English and Spanish whispering or sometimes shouting at me, just waiting for me to put them to work, to combine them so that they leap over mountains on small hooves or slip down to the sandy bottom of the silent sea.
- 13 And you? Maybe these poems—taken from my collections *Chants*, *Borders*, and *Communion*, along with some new poems written for this book, for you—will tempt you to write your own poems about a special person or a special place, about a gray fear or a green hope. What are your blooms, your thorns, your roots?
- 14 Remember, my friend, never speak badly of your writing. Never make fun of it. Bring your inside voice out and let us hear you on the page. Come, join the serious and sassy family of writers.

"Dear Fellow Writer" is used with permission from the publisher of "My Own True Name" by Pat Mora (© 2000 Arte Público Press–University of Houston)

What the Page Says

Here it is again,
that ghostly blank page
staring me down,
glaring at me in defiance.

- 5 "Here," the page says, "place your words *here*.
Fill my lines. Crowd me with words,
all kinds of words—
happy, joyous words,
angry, jangled words,
10 burdened words, sad words,
any words.
Just write," it says.

"Start with any scribble,
and soon the ideas will form.

- 15 Words will come marching up the walls,
little soldiers bearing ideas,
pacing all around you.
They will become your clever companions,
your fine and famous friends.

- 20 "In lush gardens,
the words will bloom up all around you,
flowering your thoughts,
coloring your world
with myriad ideas in brilliant hues."

- 25 But what does the page know
of that secret, silent soul
sitting in the center of me—
that frozen-up one,
that defiant little imp who refuses to speak?
30 Does that smug, sassy sage—
that demanding page
with all its bald and boring blankness—
know how to find the key
to unlock, inside me, that treasure chest
35 chock full of brilliant words and thorny thoughts?

But wait . . . what is this?
Here it comes! An idea!
Quickly marching words,
all in a line,

- 40 stepping, stepping forward

with order and with grace.
And now there forms in my mind
a sentence screaming for the page,
urgent to leap onto that first line
45 like a runner at the start of the race,
charged with excitement,
ready to join the pace,
fully certain of a job well done.
Hello, words.
50 Hello, victory!

**Use “Dear Fellow Writer” (pp. 24–25) to answer questions 28–32.
Then fill in the answers on your answer document.**

- 28** Based on her letter, how has the author’s Hispanic heritage influenced her message?
- F** She wants to encourage people to write about what makes their culture unique.
 - G** She wants to communicate the idea that a person from any culture can become a writer.
 - H** She wants to celebrate the accomplishments of Hispanic authors.
 - J** She wants to emphasize the importance of storytelling in Hispanic culture.

-
- 29** How does the author organize paragraphs 8 through 10?
- A** By listing common practices used by writers
 - B** By comparing strategies writers use to develop their ideas
 - C** By stating reasons writers avoid trying different techniques
 - D** By identifying problems writers encounter while revising their work

- 30** The author uses the questions in paragraph 4 to —
- F** suggest that her opinions were not accepted by others
 - G** prove that maturity has enhanced her ability to write
 - H** show that there are benefits to being able to speak two languages
 - J** explain how false assumptions kept her from pursuing her interest in writing
-

- 31** Which sentence from the letter best supports the author’s claim that reading helps writers develop their skills?
- A** *Without practice, you will never learn to hear and sing your own unique song.*
 - B** *Revising is now one of my favorite parts of being a writer, though I didn’t always feel that way.*
 - C** *We’re curious to see what others are doing with words, but—what is more important—we like what happens to us when we open a book, how we journey into the pages.*
 - D** *In the last twenty years, I’ve spent more and more time writing my own books for children and adults.*
-

- 32** In paragraph 1, the word intimidating means —
- F** encouraging
 - G** confident
 - H** fearless
 - J** frightening

**Use “What the Page Says” (pp. 26–27) to answer questions 33–37.
Then fill in the answers on your answer document.**

33 Which lines from the poem reflect a lesson that the speaker learns?

- A** “In lush gardens,/the words will bloom up all around you,”
- B** Quickly marching words,/all in a line,
- C** “Start with any scribble,/and soon the ideas will form.”
- D** Hello, words./Hello, victory!

34 In the poem, the speaker’s mood changes from —

- F** uncertain to discouraged
- G** frustrated to joyous
- H** lonely to peaceful
- J** relaxed to excited

35 In stanza 2, the poet’s use of a metaphor suggests that —

- A** words help writers generate ideas
- B** ideas can overwhelm writers
- C** exercise helps writers develop their thoughts
- D** writers depend on others to complete their work

36 Read these lines from the poem.

Here it is again,
that ghostly blank page
staring me down,
glaring at me in defiance.
“Here,” the page says, “place your words *here*.”

These lines highlight the speaker’s discomfort because they show that —

- F** the page does not provide the speaker with useful ideas
- G** the speaker does not feel like writing at that particular moment
- H** the page appears to be taunting the speaker
- J** the speaker is unsure where to write his thoughts

37 Based on the last stanza, the reader can conclude that the speaker —

- A** wants to write about winning a race
- B** hopes to finish writing soon
- C** has begun expressing ideas freely
- D** hopes to learn organizational skills

Use “Dear Fellow Writer” and “What the Page Says” to answer questions 38–42. Then fill in the answers on your answer document.

38 Both the author of the letter and the speaker in the poem would most likely consider a blank page to be a —

- F** distraction
- G** challenge
- H** mystery
- J** commitment

39 Read lines 6 through 10 from the poem.

Fill my lines. Crowd me with words,
all kinds of words—
happy, joyous words,
angry, jangled words,
burdened words, sad words,

Which sentences from the letter express the same idea as these lines from the poem?

- A** *We don't just talk about writing. We sit by ourselves inside or outside, writing at airports or on kitchen tables, even on napkins.*
- B** *I've learned that some writers are quiet and shy, others noisy, others just plain obnoxious. Some like enchiladas and others like sushi; some like rap and others like rancheras.*
- C** *When I was in grade school in El Paso, Texas (where I was born), I read comic books and mysteries and magazines and library books. I was soaking up language.*
- D** *Living hurts, so sometimes we write about a miserable date, a friend who betrayed us, the death of a parent. Some days, though, we're so full of joy we feel like a kite.*

- 40** How does the author’s purpose for writing in “Dear Fellow Writer” differ from the poet’s purpose in “What the Page Says”?
- F** Mora persuades people to start writing, while the poet describes a writer’s effort.
 - G** Mora provides information about writing strategies, while the poet encourages a writer to use a specific strategy.
 - H** Mora describes the writing process for readers, while the poet does not.
 - J** Mora entertains readers with a story about writing, while the poet does not.

-
- 41** Read these excerpts from the letter and the poem.

Writing is my way of knowing myself better, of hearing myself, of discovering what is important to me and what makes me sad, what makes me different, what makes me me—of discovering my own true name.

— “Dear Fellow Writer,” paragraph 12

*know how to find the key
to unlock, inside me, that treasure chest
chock full of brilliant words and thorny thoughts?*

— “What the Page Says,” lines 33–35

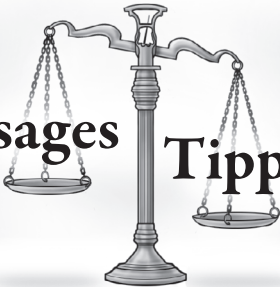
Based on these excerpts, the reader can conclude that both the author and the poet share a similar belief that —

- A** searching for ideas in various places improves writing
- B** expressing thoughts orally is easier than writing
- C** writing develops a person’s sense of self
- D** writing helps others resolve their conflicts

42 What is one difference between the author of the letter and the speaker in the poem?

- F** The author gets her inspiration to write from her feelings, while the speaker is inspired by others.
- G** The author expresses a willingness to begin writing, while the speaker has difficulty transforming thoughts into words.
- H** The author is content with her first attempt at writing, while the speaker continuously edits and revises.
- J** The author prefers reading more than writing, while the speaker enjoys both reading and writing.

Read the selection and choose the best answer to each question. Then fill in the answer on your answer document.



How Secret Messages Tipped the Scales

The History ArchiveJuly 2010

- 1 If someone asked you to name three things about George Washington, chances are that one of them would be that he did not tell lies. *That, in fact, is not true.* During the Revolutionary War, when Washington commanded the Continental army, he used many deceptive tactics to give his forces an advantage over the stronger British forces.

- 2 Washington had good reason to consider new strategies. In August 1776 the Continental army was defeated at the Battle of Long Island, and the British occupied New York City. Washington decided to change his army's strategy. Rather than fighting a war by pitting forces frequently and repeatedly, Washington opted for a strategy of learning British plans—their troop movements, the size of their forces, and their times of attack. His chosen method to achieve this advantage was espionage.

- 3 Washington managed his own information-gathering agency. He regularly used such tricks as secret agents, double agents, and codes. One of the most useful methods he employed was the passing of information using invisible ink. This simple yet clever tactic provided Washington the advantage he needed to ultimately win the war against the British.

- 4 Even in the eighteenth century, there were a number of ways to use invisible ink to write messages. The simplest and most accessible method involved using a mild acid such as lemon juice to write a message on white paper. The acid in the juice caused the fibers in the paper to weaken. When the paper was exposed to a candle flame, the weaker fibers darkened more quickly, revealing the message. One had to be careful, however, not to hold the paper to the flame for too long, because the entire sheet would darken and the message would be lost.

- 5 Another, more sophisticated method was developed by Dr. James Jay. Although Dr. Jay lived in England, he sympathized with the Americans. As the Revolutionary War approached, Dr. Jay developed an invisible-ink technique that was more difficult to detect than the lemon-juice method. First a colorless ink, which the Americans called a "stain," was applied to paper. When the message reached its intended receiver, he or she brushed another chemical, called the "sympathetic stain," over the paper, and the writing became visible.

6 The Culper Ring, one of the most successful groups of American spies, used Dr. Jay's invisible ink to send messages to General Washington. Washington is said to have named the ring after Culpeper County in Virginia. Two central spies in the ring were Robert Townsend and Abraham Woodhull. Townsend, a merchant in New York City, wrote for a local newspaper, which provided him with opportunities to interview British officials without raising suspicions. He often met British soldiers at social events and asked them questions for the newspaper.

7 Townsend used Dr. Jay's invisible ink to convey information he had gathered from British officers to New York tavern-keeper Austin Roe. Roe then traveled to Long Island and left the messages in a meadow near the farm of Abraham Woodhull. Woodhull retrieved the messages and had them delivered to a Major Tallmadge in Connecticut, just across the Long Island Sound. Tallmadge then gave the messages to couriers, who carried them to General Washington.

8 Sometimes the spies wrote their secret messages between the lines of a letter to a friend or business partner. Other times they wrote the message on a blank piece of paper, which they would then package with a bundle of other blank papers. They predetermined the place in the bundle where the message lay concealed. This was the Culpers' favorite method, while General Washington preferred the first method.

9 The Culper Ring operated for six years in and around New York City. They are credited with having delivered information crucial to the Continental army's success on at least two occasions. In July 1780 they warned General Washington of a British plan to attack a fleet of French ships approaching Newport, Rhode Island. And in November 1780, based on information from Woodhull, Major Tallmadge led a successful raid on Fort St. George on Long Island.

Give It a Try!

- 1. Create the invisible ink.**
Squeeze juice from a lemon into a bowl.
- 2. Find an invisible-ink writing tool.**
To write your invisible message with the lemon juice, use a tool such as a toothpick, small paintbrush, or feather.
- 3. Dip the tip of your writing tool in the lemon juice.**
Make sure not to use too much, or the message may still be visible.
- 4. Write your message.**
Use a blank piece of paper or write between the lines of a letter.
- 5. Allow the lemon juice to dry completely.**
- 6. Reveal your secret message.**
To read (or decode) the message, heat the paper by holding it near a lightbulb. Be careful not to burn the paper. As the paper heats up, the lemon juice will darken, allowing the message to be read.

10 If not for these secret messages, the Revolutionary War may have turned out differently. As one old proverb states, "the pen is mightier than the sword." In the case of the Revolutionary War, it was the pen with invisible ink that gave a much-needed advantage to the Continental army in its struggle to secure independence for a new nation.

- 43** The author wrote this article most likely to —
- A** reveal a little-known factor that influenced the outcome of the Revolutionary War
 - B** argue that British people sympathized with Americans during the Revolutionary War
 - C** teach readers how to prepare the invisible ink that members of the Continental army used
 - D** question whether Washington was as honest as many Americans believe

44 Which words from paragraph 2 help the reader understand what opted means?

- F** *pitting forces frequently*
- G** *decided to change*
- H** *army was defeated*
- J** *times of attack*

- 45** The Culper Ring used Dr. Jay's invisible ink rather than lemon juice because Dr. Jay's ink was —
- A** more difficult for an enemy to discover
 - B** Washington's preferred way to send a message
 - C** suitable for writing between the lines of a letter
 - D** a symbol of British support for the Americans

-
- 46** What can the reader conclude about the author's opinion of Washington's strategy for information-gathering?
- F** The author thinks Washington should have been more selective in choosing the Culper Ring.
 - G** The author admires Washington's resourcefulness.
 - H** The author believes that Washington should have been more careful about sending messages.
 - J** The author believes that Washington's patience helped him perfect his methods.

- 47** Which statement from the article describes a positive result of Washington’s military strategy?
- A** *And in November 1780, based on information from Woodhull, Major Tallmadge led a successful raid on Fort St. George on Long Island.*
 - B** *He regularly used such tricks as secret agents, double agents, and codes.*
 - C** *The Culper Ring operated for six years in and around New York City.*
 - D** *Sometimes the spies wrote their secret messages between the lines of a letter to a friend or business partner.*

-
- 48** The reader can conclude that the spies who made up the Culper Ring —
- F** were each assigned a specific job
 - G** all fought in the Continental army
 - H** all came from Culpeper County in Virginia
 - J** were the first to use lemon juice for secret messages

49 In paragraph 5, the word sophisticated means —

- A risky
- B expensive
- C attractive
- D elaborate

50 What is the best summary of this article?

- F Invisible ink, which helped George Washington win the Revolutionary War against the British, can be easily made out of lemon juice. Another way to write with invisible ink is to use chemicals called “stain” and “sympathetic stain.”
- G The Culper Ring was a group of American spies that operated around New York City during the Revolutionary War. The spies included Robert Townsend, Abraham Woodhull, Austin Roe, and Major Tallmadge.
- H During the Revolutionary War, George Washington established a network of spies that provided him with information about the British forces. One group, the Culper Ring, sent him many valuable messages written in invisible ink, a technique that helped Washington defeat the British.
- J Although many people believe that George Washington never lied, he did use deceptive tricks such as secret agents, double agents, and codes against the British during the Revolutionary War. He found that using invisible ink to send secret messages was especially useful.

- 51** In "Give It a Try!," how are Steps 3 and 6 similar?
- A** Both reveal the content of the message.
 - B** Both contain suggestions for producing a successful message.
 - C** Both identify the tool used to write the message.
 - D** Both explain how to read the message.

-
- 52** According to the article, why did Washington want his own information-gathering agency?
- F** He trusted only friends to bring him accurate information.
 - G** He was fascinated with the idea of spies and invisible ink.
 - H** He thought the British were spying on his Continental forces.
 - J** He was unable to defeat British forces by traditional methods.

BE SURE YOU HAVE RECORDED ALL OF YOUR ANSWERS
ON THE ANSWER DOCUMENT.



**STAAR
GRADE 8
Reading
April 2013**