



State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness

GRADE 6
Reading

Paper Item Sampler

Read the selection and choose the best answer to each question.

Monarch Magic



I watch with awe as you spring
Free from the prison you enclosed yourself in;
Cracking the capsule of crystal that captures
Your beautiful body and budding wings.
5 You push through, and nature sings.

Like sails catching a sudden gust
Those frail folded flaps unfurl;
The sun toasts them dry of their newborn dew.
They shimmer brightly in a new world;
10 White dots and black stripes on rust.

Before long you enjoy freedom won,
Vitalized with rest from tiresome struggle
You leave behind your chrysalis husk
That kept you safely wrapped in a bundle
15 And race toward the distant sun.

I know just where you will go,
As you ride the breeze to the horizon.
You will meet millions and travel south
In an orange blanket that smothers the sky
20 Destined to find home in Mexico.

You will soon rob this land of your grace
And leave it dull as pale elephant skin
For many months of biting wintry weather
While you dance in warm sun rays
25 Spreading your magic in that new place.

But someday I will meet your kin
That will bring beauty back to my tree,
Sipping sweet nectar from its new blossoms
And hanging crystalline ornaments
30 Like this one clung to its limb.

- 1** Which lines from the poem best support the conclusion that the speaker is familiar with monarch butterfly behavior?

Select **TWO** correct answers.

- White dots and black stripes on rust. (line 10)
- I know just where you will go, (line 16)
- As you ride the breeze to the horizon. (line 17)
- Destined to find home in Mexico. (line 20)
- Spreading your magic in that new place. (line 25)

2 This question has two parts. First, answer Part A. Then, answer Part B.

Part A

In line 12, what does the word vitalized mean?

- Ⓐ Changed in form
- Ⓑ Moved to a new place
- Ⓒ Praised and admired
- Ⓓ Given strength or energy

Part B

Which word from the poem best supports the correct answer to Part A?

- Ⓐ freedom (line 11)
- Ⓑ won (line 11)
- Ⓒ rest (line 12)
- Ⓓ struggle (line 12)

3 Record your answer in the space provided.

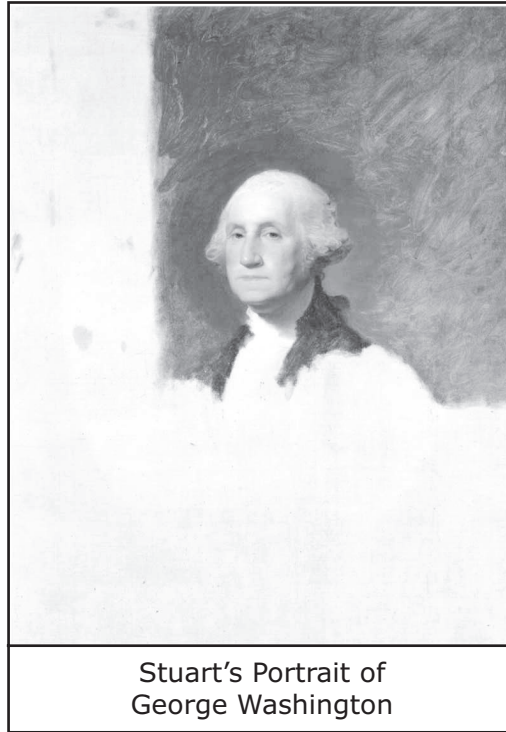
The poet uses (1) -person point of view in this poem.

1 _____

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

George Washington's Portrait

- 1 Many artists have hopes that their creations will become well known. But sometimes a work of art achieves greater recognition than the artist might have ever imagined. And in the case of Gilbert Stuart and George Washington, a work of art may not even be completed but still inspire people long afterward.
- 2 Stuart was a painter who lived from 1755 to 1828. He was known for both his talent as a painter and his charm as a person. He painted the portraits of approximately 1,000 people during his lifetime. Many distinguished and famous people sat for a portrait with him. But instead of making his subjects sit perfectly still, as was commonly practiced at the time, Stuart engaged them in interesting conversation. He wanted his subjects to feel at ease in order to capture their most natural expression and pose. Only then would Stuart paint the person.
- 3 One of Stuart's aspirations was to paint George Washington. Their meeting was not easy to arrange, but Stuart eventually got the opportunity in 1796. Stuart had a difficult time getting Washington to be comfortable. The president finally relaxed when Stuart began to talk about horses. This was one of Washington's favorite topics. The men chatted while Stuart painted the then 64-year-old president. Their time together was limited, however.



- 4 The result was a portrait of just Washington's head and shoulders. The reasons why Stuart never finished the rest of the portrait are uncertain. What is known is that the bottom and left parts of the canvas remained bare, and Stuart persuaded Washington to let him keep the original. Stuart made and sold multiple copies of the portrait in his lifetime—a common practice in the days before cameras.
- 5 Even unfinished, Stuart's original portrait is considered the definitive representation of George Washington. People have always believed that the portrait truly captures this great man's presence. The image was used on the dollar bill beginning in 1869 and has been featured there ever since. This means just about everyone in the United States has seen this work of art. While it is an amazing portrait, surely even Stuart would be amazed by its lasting popularity.

The Story Behind *The Silmarillion*

- 1 J. R. R. Tolkien is best known for the world of fantasy he created in the novel *The Hobbit* and the trilogy *The Lord of the Rings*. Yet for Tolkien, one important work remained unfinished at his death in 1973. This book was *The Silmarillion*.
- 2 Tolkien's novels are based in a fictional world. In that world creatures such as elves and dwarves coexist with ordinary human beings. *The Silmarillion* can be thought of as a prequel to *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings*. It is an account of the history of this fantasy world before *The Hobbit* takes place. This history tells about when the villain of that world battled heroes to claim possession of jewels called Silmarilli.
- 3 But the story of how *The Silmarillion* was created may be just as interesting as the story told on its pages. It was Tolkien's first and last work. He began working on it in 1917 and continued adding to it and revising it for about 56 years. Tolkien was unable to complete the work before he died, so his son Christopher took on the challenge of finishing it. Tolkien had amassed many writings he wished to include in the book. Christopher thought, however, that presenting all the material would lead only to confusion for the reader, so he decided to select and arrange the pieces that together would create the most complete and understandable history of this fantasy world.
- 4 To accomplish this task, Christopher enlisted the aid of a friend. Guy Gavriel Kay had always been interested in writing, particularly fantasy. He worked on *The Silmarillion* with Christopher for approximately a year. This assignment changed Kay's life, and he eventually became a best-selling fantasy writer himself. Kay's work on *The Silmarillion* undoubtedly provided training and valuable experience on his journey to become an author.
- 5 The published version of *The Silmarillion* has five parts, which was what Tolkien wanted. But the parts had not been put together as a whole when Christopher took on the work after his father died. Some stories required organizing, and some parts were still incomplete and needed finishing.

- 6 *The Silmarillion* was published in 1977 to mixed reviews. Some people believed it was too different from what they had come to expect from Tolkien's writing. It had a grim mood and a complicated plot. Others were impressed with the masterful editing Tolkien's son had done. They knew that Christopher had started the task with many incomplete pieces. After *The Silmarillion*, Christopher published more of his father's unfinished writings, including a children's story and a poem about King Arthur. Their publication allowed still more of J. R. R. Tolkien's fantasies to be shared with devoted readers around the world.

- 5** Use “The Story Behind *The Silmarillion*” to answer the following question.

Based on the information in paragraphs 5 and 6 of “The Story Behind *The Silmarillion*,” what can the reader infer about J. R. R. Tolkien’s son Christopher?

Select **TWO** correct answers.

- Christopher had previous experience writing fiction.
- Christopher respected his father’s wishes regarding the writings.
- Christopher was unaffected by the criticism he received.
- Christopher published some of his father’s unfinished writings to make money.
- Christopher blamed his friend for the mixed reviews of the final writings.

- 6 Use "George Washington's Portrait" to answer the following question.

Read the sentence from paragraph 2 of "George Washington's Portrait."

But instead of making his subjects sit perfectly still, as was commonly practiced at the time, Stuart engaged them in interesting conversation.

Record your answer in the space provided.

In this sentence, the word _____ (1) _____ provides a clue to the meaning of engaged.

1 _____

- 7 Use "George Washington's Portrait" to answer the following question.

This question has two parts. First, answer Part A. Then, answer Part B.

Part A

Which statement best expresses the key idea of paragraph 2 in the article "George Washington's Portrait"?

- (A) Stuart wanted to paint more well-known figures than any other artist.
- (B) Stuart ignored rules that portrait painters followed in his day.
- (C) Stuart helped his subjects relax in order to achieve a realistic likeness.
- (D) Stuart gained success because of the number of paintings he produced.

Part B

Which detail from the paragraph best supports the answer to Part A?

- (A) Stuart encouraged lively discussions with his clients.
- (B) Sitters for other artists were usually asked to stay very still.
- (C) Stuart painted about 1,000 people throughout his career.
- (D) Sitters for Stuart's paintings were famous and important people.

- 9 Read the articles “George Washington’s Portrait” and “The Story Behind *The Silmarillion*.” Based on the information in both articles, write a response to the following:

Though *The Silmarillion* and the painting of George Washington were left incomplete by their creators, both are widely known today. Explain how the painting and the novel are different in their journeys from unfinished projects to popular and important works.

Write a well-organized informational essay that uses specific evidence from the articles to support your answer.

Remember to —

- clearly state your controlling idea
- organize your writing
- develop your ideas in detail
- use evidence from both selections in your response
- use correct spelling, capitalization, punctuation, and grammar

Manage your time carefully so that you can —

- review the selections
- plan your response
- write your response
- revise and edit your response

Record your answer in the box provided.

USE THIS PREWRITING PAGE TO
PLAN YOUR COMPOSITION.

MAKE SURE THAT YOU WRITE YOUR COMPOSITION ON
THE LINED PAGE IN THE TEST BOOKLET.

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Written Composition

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A large rectangular box with a thick black border, containing 20 horizontal lines for writing. The lines are evenly spaced and extend across the width of the box.

Gabby wrote this paper about the history of eating utensils. Read Gabby's paper and look for revisions she needs to make. Then answer the questions that follow.

How We Eat

(1) Most people don't pay attention to dining utensils at meals. (2) They care more about the food they are eating than how they eat the food. (3) Yet, the story of how modern-day forks, spoons, and knives developed is an interesting journey through time. (4) If people learn how utensils have changed over the years, they will appreciate them more.

(5) Let's start with a brief history of spoons. (6) In addition, spoons didn't always look the way they do today. (7) Early spoons were longer than modern-day spoons because they were mainly used to dip into and scoop up cooked foods. (8) Shells, wood, and animal horns were the materials used to make the first spoons. (9) Later, durable metals, such as silver and gold, were used to create spoons. (10) These metal spoons were mainly used by wealthy members of society.

(11) The first forks were used for cooking, not for eating. (12) They had two long, sharp metal tines for holding food over a fire. (13) During the Middle Ages, forks were smaller and became more widely used for eating, but not everyone liked the idea of using them. (14) For example, one guest was disgusted when he noticed an emperor's niece using a tiny golden fork at a feast. (15) The guest said that people should simply use the natural tool they were given—their fingers!

(16) Early knives often had elaborate metalwork on their handles. (17) These knives were expensive, so it was common for dinner guests to bring their own knives to dinner to cut and spear their food. (18) Knives at the table made some people nervous, though. (19) For this reason, King Louis XIV signed a decree in 1669. (20) It banned most knives from the table. (21) Other rules about knives soon followed. (22) For example, knives were permitted only if their points were ground down so that they were safer. (23) Additionally, guests turned the blades of their knives toward their dinner plates as a friendly gesture.

(24) Utensils have changed over time and are still changing to meet modern needs. (25) Some restaurants and cafeterias offer sporks, a junction of the spoon and fork, for convenience. (26) In 2003, Joachim Nordwall developed an eating utensil that has a fork on one end and a spoon on the opposite end. (27) These devices, who have bought over 20 million of them, are popular with campers.

(28) Today there are plans for new kinds of eating utensils. (29) From a tiny spear that holds a single morsel of meat to a curved utensil that dangles bacon, inventors are coming up with creative ways to help people eat. (30) These new utensils may seem unnecessary to us today, but remember, so did the fork and knife all those years ago.

Xavier is writing a paper about joining the school orchestra. Read these paragraphs from the beginning of Xavier's paper and look for corrections he needs to make. Then answer the questions that follow.

Joining the Orchestra

(1) I recently joined the Middletown Youth Orchestra. (2) When my friends heard the news they encouraged me to play a sport or participate in the school play instead. (3) They thought that playing the violin would be boring, but they were wrong.

(4) Joining an orchestra allows you to meet kids with the same interests and goals. (5) Friendships form as you rehearse together and push each other to do your best. (6) This support is important when learning to play challenging music written by famous composers such as Beethoven. (7) All of the effort you invest in developing your skills are worth it when you finally perform on stage before an appreciative crowd. (8) It is fun to demonstrate what you've learned and enjoy success together!

14 Xavier has made an error in sentence 2. Select the response that corrects this error.

When

Ⓐ my friends, heard the news they
Ⓑ my friends heard, the news they
Ⓒ my friends heard the news, they
Ⓓ my friends heard the news they,

 encouraged me to play a sport or participate in the school play instead.

15 Select the response that corrects the error in sentence 7.

All of the effort you invest in developing your skills

Ⓐ being
Ⓑ were
Ⓒ have been
Ⓓ is

 worth it when you finally perform on stage before an appreciative crowd.

**STAAR
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