

# MCAS Prep



## Grade 3

# English Language Arts

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Edited by Patricia F. Braccio and Jonathan D. Kantrowitz

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## **Acknowledgements**

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## UNIT 2-C: Reading Selection

**Directions:** Read the passage and then answer the questions that follow.

### Introduction

*Many people enjoy watching magic shows. Have you ever wondered how magicians do their tricks? This passage describes some of the things magicians do when they perform their tricks.*

### The Magic Show

People of all ages love to watch a magic show. It has humor, excitement, and suspense. Audiences see things that seem impossible. Rabbits are pulled from an empty hat or pieces of string are made into one long rope. Everyone knows that what they are seeing is not possible, yet they enjoy every minute of the show.

The modern magic show began in the mid-1850s with Robert-Houdin. He brought magic tricks to theaters. Before Houdin, magicians performed their tricks before small crowds of people outside. These early shows were usually short. When the show was over, the magicians moved to the next town. Houdin, however, put together an entire evening of magic tricks.

The people loved these magic shows. They were so successful that other magicians began to imitate Houdin's shows. Large magic shows became popular in both Europe and America. Each magician did something different. Harry Houdini performed many daring escapes as part of his show. Percy Tibbles walked through brick walls on stage. Harry Blackstone made horses disappear. Due to the popularity of these shows, books on how to do magic tricks soon appeared. The modern magic show was here to stay.

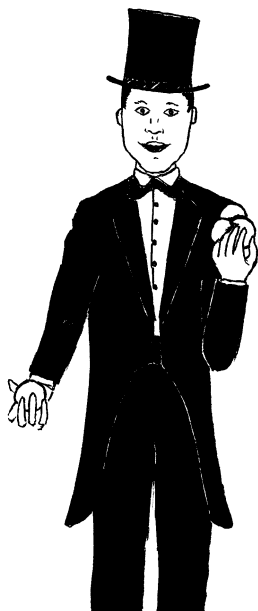


An audience watching magic shows knows that what they see is not real. Cut string does not become a rope again, people do not disappear and reappear, and rabbits do not live in hats. Even though people know these tricks are not real, they cannot explain how the tricks are done.

Many people think magic tricks use special props or equipment. Yes, many magic tricks do require special props. However, the most important part of any trick is the magician. He or she is an actor who pretends to do the impossible. His or her key job is to keep people from noticing what is being done on stage. This is called the “psychology of deception.”

Good magicians talk the entire time they are on stage. This magician talk is called “patter.” Patter draws people’s attention away from what the magician is doing to complete the trick. Often, magicians will explain things in great detail. When they do this, people think they are explaining the trick. However, that is not true.

A magician talks for two reasons. The first is to control what people look at during the trick. Through speaking, the magician causes people to look at the wrong things. This prevents them from noticing what is actually being done. For example,



the magician may say, “Remember, you need to keep your eyes on the cup with the ball under it.” The magician then moves the cups rapidly around the table. People try to follow the cup with the ball. However, that cup will move only once or twice. It will be the other cups that are moved many times. The people will not be able to find the ball because they have been following all the other cups. This causes them to lose track of which cup the ball is actually under.

The second reason for talking is to confuse people. People become so involved in what the magician is saying that they forget to look carefully at what is actually happening and they miss what is being done.

Timing is also important in magic shows. There are two reasons magicians focus on timing. The first is to build suspense. Each time the magician does something during the trick, the suspense builds. This leads people to anticipate what will be done next. Some tricks take a long time to complete. Good magicians build suspense during each part of the trick.

The second purpose of timing is to confuse people. For example, sleight-of-hand tricks must be done slowly. However, the magician will speak of the quickness of the hand while doing this type of trick. This makes the people look for quick hand movements. They then miss the slow easy motions by which the trick is done. Good magicians are masters at using timing to mask what they are doing.

Magic tricks used in today’s shows fall into five groups. “Sleight-of-hand tricks” involve the skillful use of hands. Things appear and disappear from the magician’s

hands during these tricks. One example of this type of trick involves small balls. The magician will make these balls appear, disappear, and change size. He does this while putting them under inverted cups or dishes.

Close-up magic is a second group of tricks. These tricks are usually done on a table, with people standing close to the magician. Making coins appear under objects on a table is an example of this type of trick.

Illusions are a third type of magic trick. This is where large objects seem to change or disappear. An example is sawing a person in half. A person is placed in a box with his or her head and feet sticking out. Then, the magician saws the person in half. After he is finished sawing, he opens the box. The person just sawed in half steps onto the stage. These tricks involve special equipment.

Making impossible escapes is a fourth type of magic trick. Here a magician escapes from what looks like an escape-proof place. He is first placed in an escape-proof cell. Then someone makes sure the ropes or chains are secure. The cell is then covered. The magician proceeds to free himself or herself from the ropes and/or chains.

The last group involves mind-reading tricks. In these tricks, the magician reveals to people what they are thinking.

The success of magic lies in the ability to do things that appear real. Most people know the tricks are not real. Yet, they enjoy watching the magician perform tricks because of the excitement and mystery surrounding the show.

1. What **best** explains the phrase, “enjoy every minute of the show”?
  - a. The audience thinks the show is poor.
  - b. The audience enjoys the entire show.
  - c. The audience felt the magician was quite good.
  - d. The audience thinks the show might be worth seeing again.
2. What is **not** mentioned as something that can be found in a magic show?
  - a. sadness
  - b. humor
  - c. suspense
  - d. excitement

3. What was different about the way Robert-Houdin did magic tricks from other magicians of his time?
- a. He put his magic shows on in country parks.
  - b. He developed a special wagon to serve as a stage.
  - c. He developed an entire evening of magic tricks.
  - d. He was the first magician to talk about his tricks.
4. What does “psychology of deception” mean in paragraph 5?
- a. the process of telling people what will happen in the future
  - b. the process of helping people understand something you will do
  - c. the process of confusing or deceiving people
  - d. the process of telling only part of the story
5. Who does “they” refer to in the beginning of paragraph 6?
- a. the magicians doing the trick on stage
  - b. people participating in the show
  - c. people who are in the audience
  - d. the tricks magicians use
6. Why is the example of what the magician says included in paragraph 6?
- a. to explain what all magicians actually say during a magic trick
  - b. to explain how the cups might be moved during the trick
  - c. to explain how magicians practice for this type of trick
  - d. to explain how magician talk influences what people see during a magic trick
7. What is the meaning of “patter” in paragraph 7?
- a. what magicians use to perform their tricks
  - b. the practice magicians do to learn a magic trick
  - c. the talk that goes on among audience members
  - d. what magicians say when they are doing magic tricks
8. Which statement is correct based on the second picture in the story?
- a. The balls help keep the magician’s hand loose.
  - b. The balls are props for a sleight-of-hand trick.
  - c. The magician is going to swallow the balls.
  - d. The magician is juggling the balls.



## UNIT 3-B: Reading Selection

**Directions:** This passage tells about a place of great natural beauty, the Great Barrier Reef. Read the selection and then answer the questions that follow.

### The World's Largest Natural Wonder

There are several ways you can see the Great Barrier Reef, the world's largest natural wonder. You can fly by plane overhead, travel by boat, or visit up close by snorkeling or scuba diving. Whichever you choose, you will have to go halfway around the world to see it. The reef extends from Papua, New Guinea, one thousand two hundred miles south along the east coast of Queensland, Australia.

The Great Barrier Reef is easy to see through the lovely blue-green water. It is huge, spreading over more than eighty thousand square miles. The reef is made of tiny hard coral polyps. These tiny living marine animals are the reef builders. Their skeletons form the limestone structures that make reefs.

**polyps:** *part of the life cycle of marine animals*

In addition to the hard coral, there are soft coral. These do not have a hard outer body. They are not reef builders. These coral are usually found in moving water on the edge of the reef. Unlike the hard coral, soft coral do not have tentacles to trap their food. Flowing water brings their food—"plankton"—to them.

There are four hundred different types of coral in the Great Barrier Reef. Some are called "organ pipe," "staghorn," "elkhorn," and "brain." Their names reflect their shapes. These types are formed over time by colonies of coral.

Coral polyps need special conditions in which to grow. Coral need a water temperature of about sixty-four degrees. So, you will not find coral reefs where waters are cold. Moreover, coral require clear, unpolluted salt water. Coral cannot grow without sunlight. Sunlight shines down about one hundred feet in water. That is why coral are in shallow water.

The Great Barrier Reef is home to more than just living coral. It is a marine animal universe. Within this reef, there are about one thousand five hundred types of tropical fish. There are about four thousand types of clams, snails, and other mollusks. Other inhabitants include starfish, sea urchins, and sea cucumbers. Many kinds of shrimp, sponges, and anemones also call the reef home. Two larger species enjoy the waters around the reef as well. They are sea cows and humpback whales. The whales come to the reef from Antarctica to breed.

The reef seems hard and indestructible. However, it is actually quite fragile. People and animals can do great harm to it. Collisions can kill hundreds of coral polyps and other small creatures. Damage to the reef can cause countless animals to lose their homes. In order to protect and preserve the reef, the government of Queensland passed the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Act of 1975.

1. How would most people get the **best** closeup view of the animals in the reef?
  - a. scuba diving
  - b. snorkeling
  - c. from a boat
  - d. in a plane
  
2. Which of these animals might be found near the reef, but was **not** mentioned in the story?
  - a. whales
  - b. starfish
  - c. sharks
  - d. sponges
  
3. Which of these statements is **true**?
  - a. The Great Barrier Reef is made up of only one kind of coral.
  - b. Both hard and soft corals are reef builders.
  - c. The reef is home to only a few types of creatures.
  - d. There are many types of coral on the Great Barrier Reef.
  
4. Why aren't coral reefs found in all parts of the world?
  - a. The water is not warm enough.
  - b. The water is too crowded with boats.
  - c. The water is very shallow.
  - d. The water is too clear.
  
5. Which of these is an opinion?
  - a. The Great Barrier Reef is found near Australia.
  - b. Sunlight is needed to help in the building of the reef.
  - c. The Great Barrier Reef is the best place to study marine animals.
  - d. Clear, unpolluted salt water is needed for corals to live.
  
6. What **best** describes the author's views about the Great Barrier Reef?
  - a. It is the home of many different kinds of animals.
  - b. It is a natural wonder that deserves to be protected and preserved.
  - c. It is a place that contains many different kinds of coral formations.
  - d. It is a place people would like to visit.

