



NMSBA Prep Grade 6 Reading Comprehension

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To the Students

Tips for Answering Multiple-Choice Questions

Multiple-choice questions have a **stem**, which is a question or incomplete sentence followed by four answer choices. You should select only one answer choice. The following are some tips to help you correctly answer multiple-choice questions on the NMSBA test:

- Read each passage carefully.
- Read each question and think about the answer. You may look back to the reading passage as often as necessary.
- Answer all questions on your answer sheet. Do not mark any answers to questions in your test booklet.
- For each question, choose the best answer and completely fill in the circle in the space provided on your answer sheet.
- If you do not know the answer to a question, skip it and go on. You may return to it later if you have time.
- If you finish the section of the test that you are working on early, you may review your answers in that section only. Don't go on to the next section of the test.

Tips for Answering Open-Ended Questions

Remember to:

- Read the question carefully. Be sure you understand it before you begin writing.
- Be sure your essay has a main idea. This should be in your introduction.
- Support your main idea with details, explanations, and examples.
- State your ideas in a clear sequence.
- Include an opening and a closing.
- Use a variety of words and vary your sentence structure.
- Check your spelling, capitalization, and punctuation.
- Write neatly.

“CONFESSIONS OF A SIXTH-GRADE BULLY”

My classmates only think they know
what I'm all about,
why I walk all tall and proud
and why I gross them out.

It's only that I want to show
the people that I see
another version of the guy
they only know as me.

One day my pants will fit,
and the next day they're too small.
In the morning I'll walk through a door
but by lunchtime I'm too tall.

All my clothes seem ugly,
and they're never cool as some,
and just when they get comfortable
I sit in sticky gum.

When it's time to answer questions,
my brain begins to shrink,
but when I'm going beddy-bye
I think and think and think.

Sometimes it seems the other kids
have got it all together,
while I can't seem to get a thing,
so to make myself feel better—

I might be mean, but what's unseen
is how I really feel:
a million nervous butterflies
I'm trying to conceal.

When I'm telling secrets,
what I'd really like to do,
is to have some special thing
that's just for me and you.

When I'm starting arguments,
what I really want to say
is that no matter how I try
I just can't get my way.

But of all the tiny secrets,
the one I mostly hide from you
is that when I do this mean stuff,
I'm real sorry when I'm through.

- 1 With which statement would the author *most* likely agree?
- A There is nothing wrong with being mean to people.
 - B Telling secrets about people is not very kind.
 - C People who start arguments shouldn't have friends.
 - D People who are bullies are usually very honest.

If you were the boy in this poem, with which of these sentences would you agree? In the poem, the boy admits that he doesn't really want to be unkind to people. He knows it's wrong; therefore, answer choice A is not correct. The speaker admits to telling secrets just to make friends; he knows that telling secrets is mean, so answer choice B is a good answer. You can eliminate answer choice C since the speaker in this poem says that even though he is mean to people, he wishes he had friends. Finally, since the speaker explains that bullies don't usually show their true feelings, you can eliminate answer choice D.

- 2 Which word *best* describes the speaker of the poem?
- A Patient
 - B Feeble
 - C Confused
 - D Understood

For this type of question, you might think more than one word describes the speaker, but you have to decide which word best describes him. It's a good idea to make sure you know all of the words' meanings. The word "patient" (answer choice A) means calm, which this speaker is not. The word "feeble" (answer choice B) means weak, but since the speaker is a bully, he is probably pretty tough. To be "confused" (answer choice C) means to be unsure of one's feelings, which describes this speaker well. To be "understood" (answer choice D) means that other people are aware of how you feel, and this speaker says that people are not aware of how he really feels. Answer choice C is best.

- 3 The phrase “why I walk all tall and proud” *most* likely means the speaker—
- A is confident in himself
 - B wishes he were bigger
 - C wants to look strong
 - D is trying to show off

For this question, you must really understand the character. In the beginning of the poem, the speaker says he walks “tall and proud.” Does he do this because he’s confident (answer choice A)? Probably not, since in the poem he is explaining that he is insecure. The speaker never says he wants to be bigger (answer choice B), in fact, he says he is uncomfortable with how he is growing. Does he walk “tall and proud” because he wants to appear strong (answer choice C)? This is a pretty good guess, according to the second stanza. You can eliminate Answer choice D since the speaker says that he is embarrassed by his clothes. Answer choice D is the correct answer.

- 4 Which sentence *best* summarizes the poem?
- A Bullies are not really unkind to others.
 - B Sixth grade students can grow very quickly.
 - C Answering questions can be difficult.
 - D Kids are not always what they seem.

You should eliminate answer choices that only describe small parts of the poem and not the main idea. Answer choice A does not really reflect the meaning of the poem since the speaker says that bullies are really unkind to others. Though the speaker comments on sixth-grade students growing very quickly (answer choice B), that is not what the entire poem is about. The speaker also says that answering questions is difficult for him (answer choice C), but that is not what the entire poem is about either. Answer choice D is a more general statement, and it takes into account everything said in the poem. Answer choice D is the main idea.

- 5 In the poem, the speaker feels “a million nervous butterflies.” What does the poet mean by that phrase?
- A The speaker is uneasy.
 - B The speaker likes butterflies.
 - C The speaker is unkind.
 - D The speaker bothers butterflies.

The speaker is comparing his true feelings to a million nervous butterflies which he is trying to hide within himself. This kind of comparison is called a metaphor. This metaphor shows that the speaker is really uneasy (answer choice A) or nervous, even though he doesn't show it. He does not suggest that he likes butterflies (answer choice B) or bothers butterflies (answer choice D), so these answer choices are incorrect. Though the speaker admits that his actions are unkind (answer choice C), this is not expressed in the metaphor. The speaker is saying that, although he acts mean, he is hiding the fact that he is nervous. Answer choice A is correct.

PELÉ

Edson Arantes do Nascimento was born on October 23, 1940. He was born in a small village in Brazil called Três Corações. He became better known as Pelé. Pelé is the best soccer player ever to play the game.

Pelé was raised in a very poor family. He first learned the game of soccer from his father, who had been professional soccer player. He was a center forward until a fractured leg halted his career.

When Pelé wasn't playing soccer, he shined shoes for pennies. At the age of eleven, Pelé was discovered by one of the country's best players, Waldemar de Brito. Brito brought Pelé to São Paulo when Pelé was fifteen years old.

When Brito brought Pelé to the directors to the professional team in Santos, he declared, "This boy will be the greatest soccer player in the world."

Brito was right! Pelé's impact was immediate! On his first appearance for the team, against the Corinthian Casuals Football Club, he scored a goal right away. He was only sixteen years old.

From there the trip to the summit was fast. In his first league game with the Santos team, he scored four goals. The next season, he was a regular starter. With thirty-two goals, he was the scoring leader of the São Paulo State League.

For ten years, while Pelé played in Santos, their arch-rival—the Corinthian Casuals—did not win a single game against the team.

Not long after Pelé's first season, Brazil's national coach called Pelé to join his squad. Pelé was sixteen, and he played for the first time on the Brazilian national team against Argentina's squad. He scored the one goal for Brazil in their 2–1 loss.

Then the World Cup of 1958 came. The world got to know the "Black Pearl." His dazzling speed and rocketing shots made the jaws of many drop to the floor.

Pelé played in four World Cups. They were: Sweden 1958, Chile 1962, England 1966, and Mexico 1970. He scored twelve goals in fourteen World Cup matches.

- 1 Which sentence *best* states the main idea of the article?
- A Pelé worked hard to help his family.
 - B Pelé's father was forced to give up soccer.
 - C Pelé grew up to become a great soccer player.
 - D Pelé moved to São Paulo to play soccer.
- 2 What did Pelé do before he became a regular starter?
- A He scored 32 goals.
 - B He scored four goals in a game.
 - C He played against Argentina's squad.
 - D He played in four World Cups.
- 3 How did Pelé help his team?
- A He kept the other teams from scoring.
 - B He joined lots of teams to get to know the players.
 - C He was fast and good at scoring goals.
 - D He played for Brazil's national team.
- 4 Why did Brito bring Pelé to São Paulo?
- A To meet the national coach
 - B To put him on a soccer team
 - C To shine his shoes daily
 - D To meet Pelé's parents

- 5 What is *most* likely the meaning of arch-rival as used in the article?
- A Bitter opponent
 - B From the same group
 - C In different leagues
 - D Very friendly
- 6 According to the article, what did Pelé and Waldemar de Brito have in common?
- A They both grew up in poor families.
 - B They were both outstanding athletes.
 - C They were both raised in São Paulo.
 - D They were both the same age.

YOUNG BENJAMIN FRANKLIN

by Nathaniel Hawthorne

When Benjamin Franklin was a boy he was very fond of fishing. Many of his leisure hours were spent on the margin of the mill pond catching flounders, perch, and eels that came up thither with the tide.

The place where Ben and his playmates did most of their fishing was a marshy spot on the outskirts of Boston. On the edge of the water there was a deep bed of clay, in which the boys were forced to stand while they caught their fish.

“This is very uncomfortable,” said Ben Franklin one day to his comrades, while they were standing in the quagmire.

“So it is,” said the other boys. “What a pity we have no better place to stand on!”

On the dry land, not far from the quagmire, there were at that time a great many large stones that had been brought there to be used in building the foundation of a new house. Ben mounted upon the highest of these stones.

“Boys,” said he, “I have thought of a plan. You know what a plague it is to have to stand in the quagmire yonder. See, I am bedaubed to the knees, and you are all in the same plight.

“Now I propose that we build a wharf. You see these stones? The workmen mean to use them for building a house here. My plan is to take these same stones, carry them to the edge of the water, and build a wharf with them. What say you, lads? Shall we build the wharf?”

“Yes, yes,” cried the boys; “let’s set about it!”

It was agreed that they should all be on the spot that evening, and begin their grand public enterprise by moonlight.

Accordingly, at the appointed time, the boys met and eagerly began to remove the stones. They worked like a colony of ants, sometimes two or three of them taking hold of one stone; and at last they had carried them all away, and built their little wharf.

“Now, boys,” cried Ben, when the job was done, “let’s give three cheers, and go home to bed. To-morrow we may catch fish at our ease.”

“Hurrah! Hurrah! Hurrah!” shouted his comrades, and all scampered off home and to bed, to dream of tomorrow’s sport.

In the morning the masons came to begin their work. But what was their surprise to find the stones all gone! The master mason, looking carefully on the ground, saw the tracks of many little feet, some with shoes and some barefoot. Following these to the waterside, he soon found what had become of the missing building stones.

“Ah! I see what the mischief is,” said he; “those little rascals who were here yesterday have stolen the stones to build a wharf with. And I must say that they understand their business well.”

He was so angry that he at once went to make a complaint before the magistrate. His Honor wrote an order to “take the bodies of Benjamin Franklin, and other evil-disposed persons,” who had stolen a heap of stones.

If the owner of the stolen property had not been more merciful than the master mason, it might have gone hard with our friend Benjamin and his comrades. But, luckily for them, the gentleman had respect for Ben’s father. Moreover, he was pleased with the spirit of the whole affair. He therefore let the culprits off easily.

But the poor boys had to go through another trial, and receive sentence, and suffer punishment, too, from their own fathers. Many a rod was worn to the stump on that unlucky night. As for Ben, he was less afraid of a whipping than of his father’s reproof. And, indeed, his father was very much disturbed.

“Benjamin, come hither,” began Mr. Franklin in his usual stern and weighty tone. The boy approached and stood before his father’s chair. “Benjamin,” said his father, “what could induce you to take property that did not belong to you?”

“Why, father,” replied Ben, hanging his head at first, but then lifting his eyes to Mr. Franklin’s face, “if it had been merely for my own benefit, I never should have dreamed of it. But I knew that the wharf would be a public convenience. If the owner of the stones should build a house with them, nobody would enjoy any advantage but himself. Now, I made use of them in a way that was for the advantage of many persons.”

“My son,” said Mr. Franklin solemnly, “so far as it was in your power, you have done a greater harm to the public than to the owner of the stones. I do verily believe, Benjamin, that almost all the public and private misery of mankind arises from a neglect of this great truth,—that evil can produce only evil, that good ends must be wrought out by good means.”

To the end of his life, Ben Franklin never forgot this conversation with his father. We have reason to suppose, that, in most of his public and private career, he sought to act upon the principles which that good and wise man then taught him.

- 1 The author *most* likely wrote this article to—
- A teach readers an important lesson about stealing
 - B inform readers about someone who learned a lesson
 - C convince readers to be good and tell the truth
 - D warn readers that evil can only produce evil
- 2 What is the *most* likely meaning of *plague* as used in this story?
- A Bother
 - B Pleasure
 - C Mystery
 - D Joke
- 3 Why do Benjamin Franklin and his friends want to build a wharf?
- A To help other people
 - B To catch more fish
 - C To get closer to mud
 - D To upset the mason
- 4 The author *most* likely included the last paragraph to—
- A show readers that Ben learned an important lesson
 - B tell readers what Ben did throughout the rest of his life
 - C persuade readers that Ben's father was a good man
 - D summarize for readers what happened in the story

