

**PRACTICE TEST WITH  
SAMPLE TEST ITEMS**

**BASED ON GRADE LEVEL STANDARDS**

**ELA**

**EIGHTH GRADE**

**Directions:** Read the text and answer questions 27 through 30.

excerpt from *Smiles to Go*  
by Jerry Spinelli

1 When I was five or six a high-school kid lived next door. His name was Jim.

2 Jim was always tinkering in his basement. I was welcome, encouraged even, to join him whenever I liked. I would sit on a high stool for hours and just watch him. I think he enjoyed having a dedicated audience of one.

3 He always had a jawbreaker in his mouth, and when he wasn't clacking it against his teeth he kept up a constant mutter about everything he did, as if he were a play-by-play announcer describing a game. "And now Jim is soldering the wire to the whatsits..."

4 More than anything I looked forward to Jim saying, "Whoa!" That's what he said when something surprised or astounded him. It didn't happen often, maybe only one or two "Whoas!" a week on average. When I heard one I would jump down from my stool and nose right in and say, "What, Jim?" And he would explain it to me, and though I couldn't really understand, still I would feel something, a cool fizzing behind my ears, because I was feeding off his astonishment.

5 Then one day I had the real thing, an amazement of my own. That day was a little strange to begin with, because when I came down to the basement, Jim wasn't tinkering—he was reading. Watching a person read isn't the most fascinating thing in the world, even if he has a jawbreaker clacking around in his mouth, and after a minute of that I was ready to leave when Jim barked out a "Whoa!" I jumped down and said my usual, "What, Jim?" but he only warded me off with his hand and kept on reading. Every minute or so another "Whoa!" came out, each one louder than the last. Then came three in a row: "Whoa! Whoa! WWWHOA!"

6 "Jim! What!" I screeched and snatched the book away.

7 He looked at me as if he didn't know me. Young as I was, I understood that he was still back in the book, immersed in his amazement.

8 Finally he said it, one word: "Protons."

9 "What are protons?" I said.

10 He took the book from my hands. His eyes returned to the present. He began talking, explaining. He talked about atoms first, the tiny building blocks of everything, smaller than molecules, smaller than specks. "So small," he said, "millions can fit in a flea's eye." That got my attention.

11 Then he zeroed in on protons. Atoms may be mostly space, he said, but a proton is nothing but a proton. Small as an atom is, a proton is millions of times smaller. "You could squint till your eyeballs pop out and you'll never see one," he said, daring me to try.

12 "And you know what the coolest thing about protons is?" he said.

13 "What?" I said.

14 He clacked his jawbreaker for a while, building the suspense. "You can't do anything to them," he said. "You can't break them. You can't burn them. You can't blow them up. Atoms you can smash, but you can't smash a proton."

15 “Not even with a steamroller?” I said.

16 “Not even with a thousand steamrollers.”

17 And then he hammered home his point. He took out the jawbreaker and put it on the floor. He took a hammer and smashed it to smithereens. He didn't stop there. He kept smashing until there was nothing but white powder. When he stopped, he grinned at me. “Go ahead, stomp on it.” I brought the heel of my shoe down on the tiny pile of powder. “Oh, come on,” he said. “Stomp good.” I did. I jumped up and down until there was nothing on the floor but a pale mist of dust. He got down on his hands and knees and blew it away.

18 I cheered. “We did it!”

19 He stood. “What did we do?” he said.

20 “We smashed the jawbreaker. We made it disappear.”

21 “We sure did,” he said. “But what about the protons that made up the jawbreaker? Where are they?”

22 I looked around. “Gone?”

23 He shook his head with a sly smile. “Nope,” he said. “The jawbreaker is gone, but not its protons. They're still”—he waved his hand about the basement—“here. They'll always be here. They're unsmashable. Once a proton, always a proton. Protons are forever.”

24 The next words just popped from my mouth, no real thought behind them: “Jawbreakers are lucky.”

25 He poked me. “Hey, so are you. You're made of protons, too.”

26 I stared at him. “I am?”

27 “Sure,” he said. “Zillions of them. The protons in you are the same as the protons in that jawbreaker. And in that stool. And in a banana. And a sock monkey. And a glass of water. And a star. Everything”—he threw out his arms—“everything is made of protons!”

28 I was getting woozy with information overload. Me and sock monkeys made of the same stuff? It was too much to digest. So I retreated to the one conclusion I had managed to extract from all this.

“So... Jim... like, I'm unsmashable?”

29 He mussed my hair. “Yeah,” he said, “I guess you could sort of put it that way.” He laughed and waved the hammer in my face. “But don't go trying this on your toe.”

- 27 What does the simile in paragraph 3 suggest about Jim?
- A He wishes he knew someone who shared his passion.
  - B He approaches his work with intense focus.
  - C He is interested in both science and sports.
  - D He usually makes up experiments as they occur to him.

- 28 Read this sentence from paragraph 4.

And he would explain it to me, and though I couldn't really understand, still I would feel something, a cool fizzing behind my ears, because I was feeding off his astonishment.

What does the sensory language in this sentence highlight about the narrator?

- A his optimism
  - B his confusion
  - C his excitement
  - D his discomfort
- 29 Read the dictionary entry below.

**digest**

1. *Verb*: to convert food into absorbable form
2. *Verb*: to think over in order to absorb
3. *Verb*: to arrange in a methodical order; classify
4. *Verb*: to reduce to a summary

Which definition **most closely** matches the way the word digest is used in paragraph 28?

- A definition 1
  - B definition 2
  - C definition 3
  - D definition 4
- 30 Which of these is an important idea expressed in the excerpt?
- A People must start working toward their goals at a young age to achieve their dreams.
  - B Honesty and openness allow deep friendships to develop.
  - C True understanding can take place only through quiet reflection.
  - D Some people influence the lives of others by introducing them to new ideas.

**Directions:** Read the text and answer questions 31 through 35.

### “Reinforcing the Past”

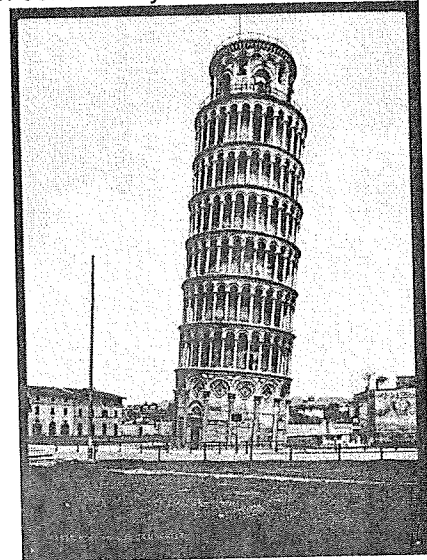
1 The city of Pisa is located in the beautiful region of Tuscany in central Italy. Pisa is famous for its grand white-marble structures. The most famous of these structures is the Leaning Tower of Pisa. Construction of the tower started in 1173 and was finally completed in about 1370. It is an elegant eight-story bell tower. The tower is topped by a bell chamber and has an internal circular staircase of nearly 300 steps. Its arches and columns give the tower a dignified air.

2 By the time construction on the tower had reached the third and fourth floors, it was clear that the tower was going to be a magnificent structure—except for one problem. It had started to tilt. Architects tried to correct the problem as they built the remaining floors of the tower, but the structure continued to lean. The architects even situated the bell chamber toward the north, away from the tower’s southward tilt, in an attempt to balance the tower. But the tower continued to lean.

3 Over the centuries preservation efforts have focused less on correcting the iconic lean and more on figuring out a way to keep the tower from leaning any farther. In 1934 an attempt to **stabilize** the tower included injecting concrete into the stone foundation, but some of the concrete seeped under the foundation, causing the tower to lean even more. Other ideas for maintaining the tower have been quite outlandish. One commission even suggested attaching helium balloons to the tower to hold it up, but the suggestion was never actually attempted.

4 Still the tower kept leaning. In 1990 experts determined that the tower was dangerously close to toppling over, and public entry into the tower was prohibited. An international commission of historians and experts then began an effort to save the tower. They determined that the soil under the south side of the tower was softer than the soil under the north side, and the weight of the marble tower was accelerating the shift. Steel cables and counterweights were installed to slow the movement of the tower. While the cables and weights worked to stabilize the tower, excess soil was removed from underneath the north end to level the ground the tower rests on. These efforts to protect and maintain the tower are not obvious to the untrained eye; the tower still leans about 13 feet.

5 The international commission and the proud citizens of Pisa are hopeful about the latest efforts to halt the lean. Experts believe that the tower should now be stable for another 300 years. If the tower leans significantly more, however, architectural experts and historians will surely once again come to the aid of the magnificent Leaning Tower of Pisa.



- 31 Why did the author **most likely** write this selection?
- A to describe the efforts to prevent the Leaning Tower of Pisa from collapsing
  - B to convince people that the Leaning Tower of Pisa is worth saving
  - C to explain why the earliest attempts to maintain the Leaning Tower of Pisa were unsuccessful
  - D to demonstrate why the Leaning Tower of Pisa is not safe to enter

- 32 This question has **two** parts. First, answer part A. Then, answer part B.

**Part A**

Which sentence from the selection is a claim made by the author?

- A "In 1990 experts determined that the tower was dangerously close to toppling over, and public entry into the tower was prohibited."
- B "One commission even suggested attaching helium balloons to the tower to hold it up, but the suggestion was never actually attempted."
- C "An international commission of historians and experts then began an effort to save the tower."
- D "If the tower leans significantly more, however, architectural experts and historians will surely once again come to the aid of the magnificent Leaning Tower of Pisa."

**Part B**

How does the author support the claim from part A? Choose **all** that apply.

- A by describing all of the times experts have already tried to fix it
- B by providing a timeline of the construction of the tower
- C by including the picture of the tower and its iconic lean
- D by emphasizing the importance of the structure architecturally and historically
- E by paraphrasing testimony of the international committee working to preserve the tower
- F by identifying the cause of the lean in the tower
- G by highlighting the elegance of the original design of the structure

- 33 Read the sentence below

In 1934 an attempt to stabilize the tower included injecting concrete into the stone foundation, but some of the concrete seeped under the foundation, causing the tower to lean even more.

What is the best definition of stabilize as it is used in the sentence?

- A support so as not to fall over or give way
- B take shelter in a structure for animals
- C increase resistance to chemical changes
- D make mentally strong or resistant to change

- 34 Which conclusion is supported by the article?

- A The tower will need to be monitored and maintained for as long as it continues to stand.
- B The tower will be completely straightened using technology that will become available in the future.
- C The tower will become more magnificent as it continues to lean.
- D The tower will help experts solve structural problems with other buildings.

35 Which word could replace halt in paragraph 5 without changing the meaning of the sentence?

- A study
- B reverse
- C close
- D stop

### Part 3: Writing and Research

**Directions:** Answer the items.

- 6 A student is writing a research paper about the Panama Canal. Read the paragraph from the research paper and answer the question that follows.

The Panama Canal cuts through the country of Panama to connect the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans. Before the canal was built, ships going from one ocean to another had to sail around the southernmost point of South America. This route added thousands of extra miles to the journey. The French began building the canal in the 1800s, and it was completed by the United States in 1914.

Which sentence would provide the **best** conclusion for the paragraph?

- A Building the Panama Canal proved to be a very difficult project.
- B The southern tip of South America is known as Cape Horn.
- C The finished canal was hailed as an engineering marvel.
- D Ships that use the Panama Canal carry different types of cargo.

- 7 Read the sentence and answer the question that follows.

Two weeks after Kelsey applied for a summer job bagging groceries, she received a call at the supermarket from the store's hiring manager.

What is the **best** way to rewrite this sentence for clarity?

- A Two weeks at the supermarket after Kelsey applied for a summer job bagging groceries, she received a call from the store's hiring manager.
- B Two weeks after Kelsey applied for a summer job bagging groceries, she received a call at the supermarket from the store's hiring manager at the supermarket.
- C Two weeks after Kelsey applied for a summer job bagging groceries at the supermarket, she received a call from the store's hiring manager.
- D Two weeks after Kelsey at the supermarket applied for a summer job bagging groceries, she received a call from the store's hiring manager.

- 8 Which sentence punctuates coordinating adjectives correctly?

- A They opposed the city's plan to build a public two-lane highway through a park leading to President Jimmy Carter's library.
- B They opposed the city's, plan to build a public two-lane, highway through a park leading to President Jimmy Carter's library.
- C They opposed the city's plan to build a public, two-lane highway through a park leading to President Jimmy Carter's library.
- D They opposed the city's plan to build a, public two-lane, highway through a park leading to President, Jimmy Carter's library.



- 9 Which website would be **most** helpful to a student writing a report about plants that have adapted to thrive in a dry desert environment?

**Search:** Desert Plants

**Results:** 1–4 of 200

- A **Desert Plants Varieties**  
Many people think of cacti when they hear the words “desert plants.” However, the desert is also home to beautiful flowers...
- B **Desert Plants Watering**  
One of the best things about desert plants is that they do not need a lot of attention. Experts recommend...
- C **Desert Plants Landscaping**  
Use desert plants to turn your yard into a one-of-a-kind showplace. Get the most popular ideas and designs for free...
- D **Desert Plants Abilities**  
The desert is a harsh environment. Many desert plants have developed ways to cope with the lack of water...
- E **Desert Plants Transplanting**  
Do you have a cactus that is growing too large for your space. There are a few tricks to help you move...
- 10 Read the portion of a letter from a bank manager to a customer and answer the question that follows.

Thank you for your letter received 14 September 2002. A copy has been sent to company headquarters in addition to a memorandum concerning your financial situation. A meeting has been scheduled for 3 October 2002 at 11 am to discuss your request for a further bank loan. Please let us know if you can come to this meeting at your earliest opportunity.

Which phrase from the letter should be rewritten in order to maintain a formal style?

- A your letter received 14 September 2002  
B in addition to a memorandum  
C discuss your request for a further bank loan  
D please let us know if you can come

- 11 A student found the following entry about singer/actress Beyoncé in an online encyclopedia. Read the information and answer the question that follows.

Beyoncé Giselle Knowles-Carter (September 4, 1981- ) is an American singer, songwriter, dancer, and actress. Born and raised in Houston, Texas, Beyoncé performed in various singing and dancing competitions as a child. She rose to fame in the late 1990s as lead singer of the R&B girl-group Destiny's Child. Managed by her father, Mathew Knowles, the group became one of the world's best-selling girl groups in history. Their hiatus saw Beyoncé's theatrical film debut in *Austin Powers in Goldmember* (2002) and the release of her debut album, *Dangerously in Love* (2003). The album established her as a solo artist worldwide, earned five Grammy Awards, and featured the Billboard Hot 100 number-one singles "Crazy in Love" and "Baby Boy".

What is the **best** paraphrase of the information from the encyclopedia?

- A An American singer, songwriter, actress, and dancer, Knowles-Carter was born and raised in Houston, Texas, where she performed in various competitions as a child. Her work with the group Destiny's Child, managed by her father, brought her fame. In the early 2000s, she appeared in movies and released her debut solo album which had several chart-topping hits.
- B Knowles-Carter was born and raised in Texas where she participated in many singing and dancing competitions as a child. Her father established and managed an R&B girl group in the late 1990s, which Knowles-Carter was a part of. The success of the group brought Carter fame and helped launch her solo career in the early 2000s.
- C Knowles-Carter began her career in the 1990s as lead singer of the successful R&B girl-group Destiny's Child. In the early 2000s, she acted in movies and launched her solo debut album which contained several number-one singles.
- D The success of Destiny's Child in the late 1990s launched the career of American singer/songwriter Beyoncé Giselle Knowles-Carter. Once the group separated, Knowles-Carter went solo. Her debut album *Dangerously in Love* produced multiple number-one hits.
- 12 Read the sentence below.

I handed a fresh piece of bread to the guy beside me that was well-buttered.

How should this sentence be rewritten to eliminate the dangling modifier?

- A I handed a fresh piece of bread to the well-buttered guy beside me.
- B Well-buttered, I handed a fresh piece of bread to the guy beside me.
- C I handed a fresh piece of bread to the guy beside me that was well-buttered.
- D I handed a fresh piece of well-buttered bread to the guy beside me.

- 13 A student found the following **two** sources for his social studies project on ninjas in feudal Japan. Read **both** sources and answer the question that follows.

**Source 1- “Ninja”**

A ninja (忍者) or shinobi (忍び, "to sneak") was a covert agent or mercenary in feudal Japan. The functions of the ninja included espionage, sabotage, infiltration, assassination, and guerrilla warfare. Their covert methods of waging irregular warfare were deemed dishonorable and beneath the samurai-caste, who observed strict rules about honor and combat. The shinobi proper, a specially trained group of spies and mercenaries, appeared in the 15th century during the Sengoku period, but antecedents may have existed in the 14th century, and possibly in the 12th century (Heian or early Kamakura era).

**Source 2- “All You Know About Ninja is Probably ‘Wrong’”**

Ninja most certainly did exist in Japan, but they were more about information—and disinformation—than just assassination. Yes, there were ninja assassins, but as Ninja Attack author and game localizer Matt Alt points out, what percentage of CIA employees are trained assassins?

In Ninja Attack, Alt and co-author Hiroko Yoda examine the historical ninja. “A 15th century ninja would laugh out loud at the sight of a dude in black pajamas running around a modern city,” says Alt. “The whole point of a ninja was to blend in.” Ninja often dressed as farmers so they could do just that as they collected information and scouted enemies.

Which statements are supported by **both** sources?

- A Ninjas operated covertly—undercover—to gather information that they needed.
  - B Early ninjas were considered dishonorable and were rejected from society.
  - C There is record of ninjas operating in Japan as early as the 12<sup>th</sup> century.
  - D There were strict rules about honor and combat that ninjas had to abide by.
  - E Ninjas had more job duties than just being assassins.
- 14 Read the sentence below.

In the end, the state Supreme Court allowed the city to acquire the property through eminent domain.

What is the correct spelling of the underlined word?

- A aquire
- B acquire
- C equire
- D ecquire
- E iquire
- F icquire

- 15 A student has written a paper for her English class about living in a rural area. Read the student's draft and complete the task that follows.

Of the many advantages of country life over city life, my favorite is the opportunity to observe farm animals—especially pigs. Rolling in the mud, I like to watch them play. Myths about pigs abound, including the belief that they aren't very smart. My own observations confirm what scientific research has shown, namely, that pigs are highly intelligent and have very good memories. They can remember where food is hidden, recognize as many as 30 other pigs, and learned their names within a week of birth.

Another myth is that pigs are dirty and love to wallow in mud. They actually prefer water to mud. When people joke about “pigging-out,” they can't be talking about the animal because pigs eat slowly and savor their food. City folks could learn a lot by spending some time in the country.

Choose **two** sentences that contain errors in grammar usage.

- A Of the many advantages of country life over city life, my favorite is the opportunity to observe farm animals—especially pigs.
  - B Rolling in the mud, I like to watch them play.
  - C Myths about pigs abound, including the belief that they aren't very smart.
  - D My own observations confirm what scientific research has shown, namely, that pigs are highly intelligent and have very good memories.
  - E They can remember where food is hidden, recognize as many as 30 other pigs, and learned their names within a week of birth.
  - F Another myth is that pigs are dirty and love to wallow in mud.
  - G They actually prefer water to mud.
  - H When people joke about “pigging-out,” they can't be talking about the animal because pigs eat slowly and savor their food.
  - I City folks could learn a lot by spending some time in the country.
- 16 Read the two sentences below and complete the task that follows.

He singled out a member of the Italian chapter of the environmental group Greenpeace. They had predicted that vast quantities of sewage would be spilled.

Combine the two sentences into one complex sentence.

- A He singled out a member of the Italian chapter of the environmental group Greenpeace; they had predicted that vast quantities of sewage would be spilled.
- B Greenpeace, an environmental group, predicted that vast quantities of sewage would be spilled.
- C He singled out a member of the Italian chapter of the environmental group Greenpeace because they had predicted that vast quantities of sewage would be spilled.
- D Greenpeace was singled out by him, and they predicted that vast quantities of sewage would be spilled.

- 17 A student is writing an argumentative letter to the principal about a plan to have students attend school during the summer months. Read the paragraphs from the draft of the student's letter and complete the task that follows.

I am writing in opposition to your proposal to extend the school year. I also urge you to consider carefully recommendations from everyone who would be affected— staff, parents, the community, and especially students—before making your decision. With so many changes occurring in education, a hasty decision would do more harm than good.

One reason I oppose your plan to extend the school year is that both students and parents are likely to oppose it. The students are the ones affected by this decision, and a survey by our school newspaper found that 76 percent of them like our schedule as it is. I am a member of the newspaper staff, and I helped conduct the survey. These students are likely to influence their parents' views. If that happens, you will be bombarded with hundreds of emails and phone calls, insisting that kids are perfectly capable of learning without an extension of the school year. Your email inbox would fill up in a hurry. Even if parents agree with you, there's still the fact that when students are unhappy, their academic success rate goes down. That could undermine any additional learning achieved during the added time in class.

Choose the **two** sentences that should be removed from the second paragraph because they do not support the underlined sentence.

- A The students are the ones affected by this decision, and a survey by our school newspaper found that 76 percent of them like our schedule as it is.
- B I am a member of the newspaper staff, and I helped conduct the survey.
- C These students are likely to influence their parents' views.
- D If that happens, you will be bombarded with hundreds of emails and phone calls, insisting that kids are perfectly capable of learning without an extension of the school year.
- E Your email inbox would fill up in a hurry.
- F Even if parents agree with you, there's still the fact that when students are unhappy, their academic success rate goes down.
- G That could undermine any additional learning achieved during the added time in class.

18 Read the narrative below.

It was day three of the road trip from Chicago to California, and my friend and I were getting tired. We just couldn't wait to see our best friend when we reached Sacramento, CA. We were already wearing shorts, tank tops, and flip-flops so we would be ready to hit the beach when we arrived. All of a sudden, as our car came around the curve, we saw a sight we couldn't believe! There was white, powdery snow everywhere! Even though we had been driving through the mountains of California for quite some time, we had no idea it could snow in this sunny state. We quickly realized we were not prepared for this type of weather and weren't sure what to do next.

Which word or phrase **best** replaces the underlined words in the paragraph to make it more descriptive? Choose **all** that apply.

- A done
- B dragging
- C exhausted
- D uninterested
- E feeling dull
- F drained
- G gloomy
- H ready to drop