



These new public release items for MSA Reading are practice items only. These items do not represent a full MSA Reading test. In addition, these items do not cover all of the eligible VSC objectives, nor do they reflect all possible types of items for any one particular objective.

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MSA

MARYLAND SCHOOL ASSESSMENT

GRADE

6



READING PUBLIC RELEASE

Release Date: March 2009

PEARSON

DIRECTIONS Read the sentence in the box. Then choose the answer in which the underlined word is used in the same way. Mark the space for the answer you have chosen.

1

My father was not moved by my request for an allowance.

In which sentence does the word moved mean the same as in the sentence above?

- (A) The dark storm clouds moved quickly across the sky.
- (B) Sue moved the chair closer to the fireplace to keep warm.
- (C) Doug's father found a new job, and his family moved away.
- (D) The sad look on my sister's face moved me to buy her a special treat.

2

My teacher asked our group to plot a calendar for finishing the project.

In which sentence does the word plot mean the same as in the sentence above?

- (A) Before my trip I will use a road map to plot the shortest route.
- (B) The play has an unusual plot about the search for a magic cave.
- (C) We had to plot against my sister to get her to her surprise party.
- (D) My aunt has a vegetable garden on a plot of land near her house.

3

My sister's new job as store manager begins an important stage in her business career.

In which sentence does the word stage mean the same as in the sentence above?

- (A) The city will stage a concert at the theater in the park.
- (B) The play will be performed on the stage in the cafeteria.
- (C) A butterfly goes through more than one stage as it grows.
- (D) There are plans to stage a rally for Mayor Tate at city hall.

DIRECTIONS

As you read each sentence, use the other words in the sentence to help you figure out what the underlined word means. Then mark the space for the answer you have chosen.

4

It was a hot day, but I felt cooler after a sudden rain doused my clothes.

Doused means —

- (A) disguised
- (B) drenched
- (C) lightened
- (D) wrinkled

6

My brother needs peace and quiet when he studies for a test, so he shuns other people until he is through with his work.

What does shuns mean?

- (A) avoids
- (B) interrupts
- (C) questions
- (D) watches

5

Jacob is an ardent piano student who practices every day and plans to study music in college.

What does ardent mean?

- (A) devoted
- (B) famous
- (C) helpful
- (D) relaxed

7

Terry had been waiting for her favorite singer's concert for months, so it was hard for her to restrain her excitement when the day of the event finally arrived.

What does restrain mean?

- (A) work out
- (B) look over
- (C) hold back
- (D) forget about





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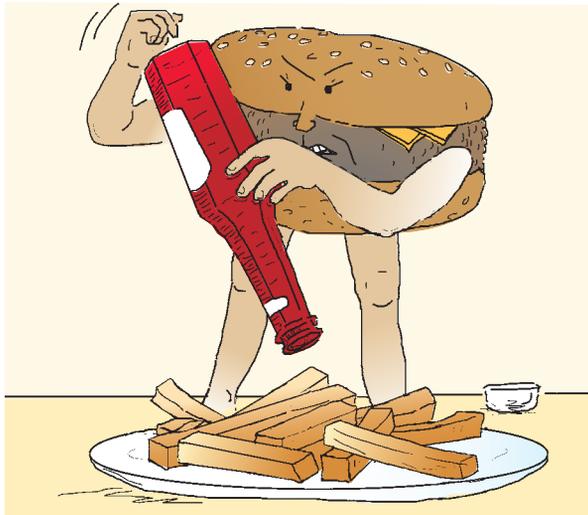


DIRECTIONS

Read this article titled "Why Is It So Hard to Get Ketchup Out of the Bottle?" Then answer Numbers 8 through 15.

Why Is It So Hard to Get Ketchup Out of the Bottle?

by Shawna Stuart Whyte



- 1 The Super Double Cheeseburger Deluxe arrives at your table. You stare at the dripping burger and the tantalizingly crisp, golden French fries. The only thing that's missing is the ketchup, so you grab the bottle and prepare to slather your entire plate. You unscrew the cap, but . . . what's this? Nothing is coming out! Why is ketchup so hard to pour out of the bottle?
- 2 Ketchup is a liquid, right? Not really. A solid? Nope. Actually, ketchup is a type of solution that sometimes acts as a liquid and other times acts as a solid. Ketchup and other solutions that have properties of both a solid and a liquid are called thixotropic solutions. Other thixotropic solutions that you may have in the house include yogurt and margarine. When yogurt sits undisturbed, it is a jellylike solid. When you stir it, it becomes more

like a liquid. Margarine that has been refrigerated can become quite hard, but once it warms up, it becomes softer and more liquid—and much easier to spread on toast!

So why are thixotropic solutions so weird? Why can't they just make up their minds and be one or the other: solid or liquid? The answer is that molecules of a thixotropic substance tend to form in long chains. When these substances are stirred or shaken, the chains of molecules break apart into smaller segments, allowing the margarine, yogurt, or ketchup to act more like a liquid. Imagine that a bottle of ketchup is like a bottle full of string. You can see that pouring string out of a bottle is not going to be easy! But if you shake the bottle, the "strings" break apart into small pieces, which come out of the neck more easily.

Thixotropic solutions are also found in more exotic locations than the kitchen. Quicksand is a thixotropic mixture of sand and water. It looks like any other patch of sand, but once someone steps in it, the loosely packed molecules give way, causing the unlucky adventurer to sink into the quicksand.

Thixotropic mixtures of soil and water can be useful, however. Oil rigs use a thixotropic mix of clay to make "drilling mud." This mixture is pumped down a drilling hole to keep the drill bit cool



and lubricated. Drilling mud remains a liquid when it is being stirred by the drill, but acts as a solid around the sides of the drilling hole, which helps to keep the hole from collapsing.

- 6 Believe it or not, we have thixotropic fluid in our own bodies. This fluid is found in our elbows and knees, where two bones move against one another. It is called synovial fluid and it protects our bones and joints from damage. During normal movement, synovial fluid helps lubricate the joint. But if the joint is hit or suddenly twisted, the fluid immediately becomes thicker. In this

way, synovial fluid helps protect our joints from injury.

Now you know all about the mysterious, helpful, and sometimes frustrating behavior of thixotropic solutions, which, because of their unique molecular structure, have some properties of both solids and liquids. Sometimes this can be helpful, as in the case of drilling mud and synovial fluid. Thixotropy can also be dangerous and deceiving, as in quicksand. Sometimes thixotropy is just plain curious—or irritating. It depends on how badly you want that ketchup out of the bottle.



Reading Comprehension

8

Which of these sentences *most clearly* suggests that this article is nonfiction?

- (A) You stare at the dripping burger and the tantalizingly crisp, golden French fries.
- (B) When yogurt sits undisturbed, it is a jellylike solid.
- (C) Why can't they just make up their minds and be one or the other: solid or liquid?
- (D) It depends on how badly you want that ketchup out of the bottle.



9

In the last paragraph the author says that thixotropic solutions are “mysterious.”

Explain whether the information in the article supports the idea that thixotropic solutions are mysterious. In your response, use information from the article that supports your explanation. Write your answer in the box below.



10

Read this sentence from paragraph 1 of the article.

The only thing that's missing is the ketchup, so you grab the bottle and prepare to slather your entire plate.

The details in paragraph 1 suggest that *slather* means —

- (A) clean
- (B) cover
- (C) pass
- (D) stack

11

Read these sentences from paragraph 2 of the article.

Ketchup is a liquid, right? Not really. A solid? Nope.

Which of these words *best* describes the tone of these sentences?

- (A) serious
- (B) confused
- (C) demanding
- (D) conversational



12

Explain what could be added to help a reader better understand this article. In your response, use information from the article that supports your explanation. Write your answer in the box below.



13

According to this article, which of these statements about quicksand is true?

- (A) Quicksand molecules become thinner over time.
- (B) Animals cannot see through quicksand molecules.
- (C) Motion causes quicksand molecules to break apart.
- (D) Strings of quicksand molecules are usually tightly packed.

14

How is paragraph 6 organized?

- (A) by main idea and supporting details
- (B) by comparison and contrast
- (C) by least to most important idea
- (D) by time order of events



15

Which other title would *best* help a reader understand the main idea of this article?

- (A) Oil Rigs in the Mud
- (B) Understanding Fast Food
- (C) Protecting Bones and Joints
- (D) Two Properties and One Solution



DIRECTIONS

Read this story titled "A Team Full of Reasons." Then answer Numbers 16 through 25.

A Team Full of Reasons

by James M. Janik



"Change teams?"

"Sure. Why not? My team finished second last year. With you hitting cleanup for us, we'd take first place, no sweat."

"But what about my old team?"

"Those losers? I don't know how you can stand playing with those guys. They're terrible!"

Darren was right. We were terrible. Dead last . . . two years in a row. It would be great to make the playoffs or maybe win a league championship with Darren's Pirates. All I had to do was switch teams.

"Come on, Alex. There's nothing to it. Just tell Landstrom you'd rather play with your pals on the Pirates."

Darren was the only one I knew on the Pirates. He seemed all right. He was the best pitcher in the league. But all my real friends were on the Tigers.

"Think about it. You'll have to decide before the coaches' meeting tomorrow night." Darren waved and walked away. He mumbled over his shoulder, "Play with losers or win a championship . . . gee, real tough choice." His laughter faded as he turned the corner for home.

Freddy Garcia, Jerry Catalano, Frank Herman . . . we might be losers, but we had also been friends a long time. We'd played baseball together since the second grade.

Still, I would give anything to have a first-place trophy on my desk.

I pushed in the front door and tossed my backpack on the couch. Dad and Mom huddled over some papers on the dining room table.

"What're you doing home so early?" I asked. Dad's business normally kept him working way past dinnertime. The owner should always be the last one to leave, he liked to say.

"Oh, hi, Alex." Dad pushed away from the table a little too eagerly. "How's it going, Champ?"

"Great. Why are you home?"

"Your mother and I had some . . . er, business to discuss."

16 "Business?" My parents discussing business? That's a first. "Like what?"

Dad glanced at Mom. He took a deep breath. "Well, I've had an offer for my company. A very attractive offer. We were just talking

about selling the business. It could be a great opportunity for us.”

“How would you feel about moving, Alex?” Mom added, sounding overly cheerful.

“Moving! No way. Mom, Dad, all my friends are here. My baseball team. My school. We can’t move. Why would you sell your business, anyhow?” Dad had built it up from nothing. That business was his life, or so I’d thought.

“Alex, if I sell we’d have enough money to live anywhere we want. Any house, anywhere. You’d make new friends. Your mother could live near a city. She could go to movies and plays. You and I could go to big-league ballgames together. How’s that sound?”

I glanced at Mom. Every year she drove two hours just to buy us new clothes at the mall in Austin. And Dad, he’d been driving that old Chevy even though the rust was eating away at the doors. He deserved a new car. “Sounds super, Dad.” Just swell. I grabbed my backpack and moped upstairs.

Sure, moving would be great for everyone . . . everyone except me. I sat at my desk, leaned back, and put my feet up. They expected me to be happy about this? They thought I’d like leaving all my friends behind?

Yeah, right. I gave my desk a solid kick.

Last year’s team picture tumbled from its spot on the shelf. I lunged forward and caught it. Easing back into my seat, I examined the photo.

Jerry Catalano grinned his stupid gapped-tooth smile at me from the front row. He’d let an easy ground ball bounce off his glove at shortstop that cost us the Orioles game last year.

A smirk forced its way onto my face. We’d jokingly checked his glove afterward to see

whether it was made of leather or genuine U.S. steel.

27 Frank Herman had cost us a few ballgames, too. His thick glasses always steamed up during the cooler night games. He’d lost four balls in the lights because of it. We’d razzed¹ him about being the only guy to lose fly balls in his own personal fog.

Freddy Garcia, standing next to Frank in the picture, could play second base with the best of them. Unfortunately, he also had the lowest batting average in the county.

I remembered his 10th birthday party. He’d tried for hours but could not hit that piñata.² I grinned. We should have realized back then he’d never hit worth a lick.

Yeah, we’d blown a lot of ballgames. Maybe it wouldn’t be so bad to move. Maybe I’d hook up with a good ball team, one like Darren’s. A team of guys who knew their way around the bases. A team that won trophies. A team with a shortstop whose glove wasn’t made of titanium.³ I laughed again.

As I set the picture back on the shelf, I noticed Coach Landstrom’s face. Last place, year after year, and still he came out three times a week to hit us ground balls at practice. Worst record in the league and still he took us out for ice cream. He said it was because we’d played our hearts out. I wasn’t so sure about that. We did have fun, though.

I’d miss those guys.

“Did you have a good night’s sleep, Alex?” Mom bustled about the kitchen. Normally she was off to work before I left for school.

¹**razzed** – teased somebody

²**piñata** – a papier-mâché figure filled with candy and other treats

³**titanium** – a strong, lightweight element used in making steel

But today, she hummed a bouncy tune while emptying the dishwasher. She seemed happy. They must have decided to sell.

"Yeah. Aren't you going to be late for work?"

"I thought I'd have breakfast with my men this morning. Work can wait."

She winked and poured some orange juice.

"Morning, Champ," Dad said as he joined us at the table. He looked unusually smiley-faced, too. That did it, we had to be moving.

"Hi, Dad."

"Anything exciting happening at school today?" he asked.

"Naw, but after school I'll have to let Mr. Landstrom know I won't be playing on the Tigers this season. The coaches' meeting is tonight."

Mom stopped and turned. "Why would you do that?"

"Well," I stammered, "if we're going to move, Mr. Landstrom will need to pick up a new player."

Dad scooted his chair near mine. "Alex, we've decided to stay put."

"What! Why? I thought we were going to be rich and move off to the city."

"No one said anything about being rich, Alex," Mom said, pulling up a chair.

"I did some checking after dinner last night," Dad continued. "The company that wants to buy my business intends to move it to Illinois."

"So?"

"Alex, I have some employees who have worked for me since the beginning. Ten years. They can't pick up and move. This is their home. I couldn't let them lose their

jobs after they've been so loyal to me through all the tough times."

"But what about Mom?" I turned toward her. "I thought you wanted out of this town."

"Oh, I don't know. I kind of like the good, honest people around here."

"Seems to me you like Austin way better."

"Austin? Heavens, who'd want to live there?" She laughed. "Traffic, noise. Once a year visits are enough city for me."

"Well, what about the money, Dad? Didn't you want a new car?"

"Alex, I don't need a new car. Wanting is different from needing. Besides, some things are more important than money." Dad put his hand on Mom's. "If it's all right with you, we'd rather stay right here."

"Fine by me." Whew!

I heaved my backpack over my shoulder and started up the walk to school.

"Hey, Alex!"

I turned. Darren trotted up behind me. "What's up?" I said.

"Not much, man. You going to call Landstrom today?"

Coach Landstrom, I'd almost forgotten. The Pirates. Should I switch teams?

"Wait until I tell the guys we've got your bat in our lineup this year. They'll go nuts!"

"Hold your horses,⁴ Darren. I never said I'd make the switch."

"What? You're going to, aren't you?"

"Well . . . I don't know."

Darren stopped and gawked at me. "Are you insane?"

⁴"**Hold your horses**" – an informal expression that means "wait a minute"



I chuckled. "Maybe I am, but I think I'll stick with the Tigers another year."

"Stick with those clowns? Why? You know they'll never win."

I thought of Jerry and Freddy and Coach Landstrom. I thought about what it would feel like playing against my old friends on the Tigers. Beating up on them with the Pirates wouldn't be much fun. I also thought about Dad driving his old Chevy so his employees could keep their jobs.

Things might get better for the Tigers next season. Maybe Jerry oiled his glove once or twice over the winter. Frank could have

gotten contact lenses. Freddy might have learned to bunt.

One thing for sure, Coach Landstrom was willing to do whatever it took to make us winners. I definitely wanted to be there when it happened. Win or lose, I'd play my heart out for any one of those guys.

"You're probably right, Darren. It's just that there are some things more important than winning."

Darren shook his head. "Man, I can't think of a single one."

I laughed. I could think of a team full of reasons.



16

Which of these sentences would be *most* important to include in a summary of this story?

- (A) Alex's father worries about his employees having to pack up and move.
- (B) Alex's father usually gets home from work long past dinnertime.
- (C) Alex's father reads some papers at the dining room table.
- (D) Alex's father has been driving a rusty, old car.

17

Read paragraph 16 of the story.

"Business?" My parents discussing business? That's a first. "Like what?"

Which of these words *best* describes the tone of Alex's thoughts?

- (A) annoyed
- (B) bitter
- (C) concerned
- (D) surprised



18

Explain a lesson that Alex learns from his father. In your response, use details from the story that help to explain this lesson. Write your answer in the box below.



19

Alex's *main* conflict in this story is between his —

- (A) friendship with Darren and his dream of playing for the Pirates
- (B) desire to play for a winning team and his feelings for his friends
- (C) respect for Coach Landstrom and his fear of going to a new school
- (D) concern for his parents and his determination to be a better athlete

20

Which other title would *best* help a reader understand a theme of this story?

- (A) Following the Rules
- (B) Moving to a New Town
- (C) Making the Right Choice
- (D) Moving Away From the Past



21

Explain how you or someone you know is like Alex. In your response, use details from the story that support your explanation. Write your answer in the box below.



22

Read this sentence from paragraph 27 of the story.

We'd razzed him about being the only guy to lose fly balls in his own personal fog.

Details in paragraph 27 suggest that the phrase *personal fog* refers to the —

- (A) coolness of the air
- (B) brightness of the lights
- (C) size of Frank's glasses
- (D) steam on Frank's glasses

23

Details in this story suggest that Alex and his teammates —

- (A) would like to have a different coach
- (B) enjoy playing together on the same team
- (C) are more concerned with winning than having fun
- (D) prefer practicing at night to practicing during the day



24

Explain how Alex’s memories affect his decision *not* to join the Pirates. In your response, use details from the story that support your explanation. Write your answer in the box below.



Reading Comprehension

25

Darren's words and actions in this story suggest that he —

- (A) is probably a selfish person
- (B) is unfriendly to his teammates
- (C) believes that loyalty is important
- (D) tries hard to be a good baseball player





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