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MSA

MARYLAND SCHOOL ASSESSMENT

GRADE

8



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

Before you choose to do business with a bank, you should make sure it has a sound reputation.

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

- (A) Although the house is old, it has a sound foundation and an excellent roof.
- (B) We should sound out our teacher before we decide on a topic for our report.
- (C) I was startled out of a sound sleep by bright lightning and a crash of thunder.
- (D) The emergency crews will sound the alarm if the floodwaters rise any higher.

2

Susan lodged with her grandparents during her first year of college.

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

- (A) A splinter lodged in Ann's foot when she stepped on an old board.
- (B) Our family lodged at a fishing camp during our trip to the seacoast.
- (C) Mr. Ames lodged a complaint with the city about the overgrown lot.
- (D) The archer aimed carefully and lodged an arrow in the distant target.

3

I tried pulling up the dandelion, but its roots held it fast in the soil.

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

- (A) Terry fell fast asleep as soon as his head hit the pillow.
- (B) The front tires of my new car were stuck fast in the mud.
- (C) I arrived early for the concert because my watch was fast.
- (D) The two children were neighbors and became fast friends.

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

I carefully scrutinized my report one more time before I turned it in just to make sure that it was free of any errors.

What does scrutinized mean?

- (A) inspected
- (B) outlined
- (C) printed
- (D) rewrote

6

Although it was true that my baby sister ruined my social studies project, my teacher was skeptical of my explanation until I showed her the smeared poster.

Skeptical means the teacher is —

- (A) doubtful
- (B) interested
- (C) irritated
- (D) uneasy

5

Even though the water in the creek was cold, the children found it tolerable for swimming.

Tolerable means —

- (A) bearable
- (B) livable
- (C) reliable
- (D) valuable

7

Zoe's friends climbed into the roller coaster, but she watched the ride from the ground since nothing they said could induce her to join them.

What does induce mean?

- (A) appoint
- (B) confront
- (C) persuade
- (D) remind





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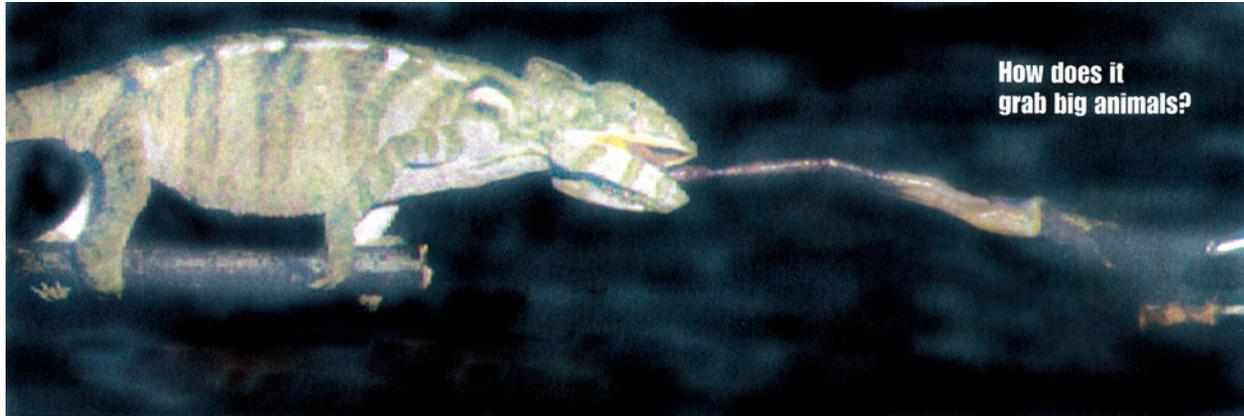


DIRECTIONS

Read this article titled "This Tongue Gets a Grip." Then answer Numbers 8 through 15.

This Tongue Gets a Grip

by Mariana Relós



- 1 Chameleons may look grumpy and their skin may feel bumpy, but scientists can't take their eyes off them. Why? Because chameleons are such interesting lizards.
- 2 Not only do chameleons have an amazing talent for changing colors, they also have one of the fastest and most powerful tongues in the animal kingdom.
- 3 Chameleons spend a great deal of their lives sitting still. But they are experts at catching fast moving insects for food. And chameleons are unusual in the way they get their food. They don't use jaws or claws to catch their prey, as many animals do. Chameleons use their fast and powerful tongues.

An Extraordinary Tongue

When a chameleon is hungry, it sits still on a tree branch. With one eye it looks back over its shoulder, and with the other eye it checks the branches ahead. There it is—lunch!

When a chameleon finds something tasty, such as a cricket, the lizard fixes both eyes on it. Then the chameleon opens a gap in its mouth and *slap!* In one-fiftieth of a second, the lizard's tongue shoots out, catches the prey, and snaps back into the mouth.

Chameleons can perform this amazing trick because they have an extraordinary tongue. It is not short like ours. It is about one-and-a-half times as long as the chameleon's body.

One of the first questions scientists asked about chameleons was, "How do they move their tongues so fast?" And the answer is, powerful muscles. Two strong muscles inside the tongue move it in and out of the mouth. One of these muscles makes the tongue shoot out of the chameleon's mouth with lightning speed. And when the other muscle contracts, it brings the tongue back into the mouth. Scientists call this second muscle a "supermuscle" because it can pull much harder than a normal muscle.

Sticky Tongues

But how does the tongue grab the prey? Two things give the tongue its super grip. The first is a sticky kind of mucus, a goo that covers the tongue. The second is a rough surface. The chameleon's tongue has a lot of tiny bumps, pits, and ridges. A rough tongue, covered in sticky mucus, can easily grab the crickets and flies that small chameleons eat.

Little crickets and flies seem to be enough lunch for a small chameleon. But large chameleons, which are as big as small cats, can eat bigger prey. Scientists have seen large chameleons trap and eat birds and lizards that weigh as much as 15 percent of the chameleon's weight. This would be like an 80-pound kid snapping up a 12-pound beef roast using only his tongue!

- 10 Even a rough, sticky tongue cannot hold on to such big prey, and yet some chameleons can do it. One team of scientists decided to find out how. The group was led by Dr. Anthony Herrel at the University of Antwerp in Belgium and Dr. Jay Meyers at Northern Arizona University.
- 11 The scientists closely watched chameleons eat. But the chameleon's tongue catches food too fast for a person to see how it is done.

Discovering the Secret

How could the scientists slow down the action? They used high-speed film to take moving pictures of chameleons feeding. Then they watched the movie in slow motion.

The movie showed that just before the tongue touches the prey, muscles on each

side of the chameleon's tongue pull inward on the tongue's tip. This pulling makes a small bag or pouch on the tip that works like a suction cup. Mucus and the tongue's rough surface help seize the prey while the pouch surrounds it. Finally, the tongue yanks the prey into the mouth.

The scientists figured that about 70 percent of the tongue's holding power comes from the suction-cup effect. The rest of the power in the grip comes from the rough surface of the tongue and the sticky mucus.

Why is suction power useful to a chameleon? Dr. Herrel explains: "The suction power lets the animals capture much larger prey than would be possible using sticky forces alone." Instead of hunting for many small meals to calm its appetite, a hungry chameleon can fill its empty stomach with one big meal, using the power of suction.

Where Do Chameleons Live?

Scientists have found more than one hundred kinds, or *species*, of chameleons. Most of them live in Africa, Asia, Madagascar, and southern Spain. Chameleons don't live wild in North America, Central America, or South America. Chameleon expert Jay Meyers says: "The so-called American chameleons, or *anoles*, are not true chameleons. They are a different family of lizards, although they can change their body color between brown and green. Instead, the true chameleons undergo striking color changes."

Reading Comprehension

8

To support the accuracy of the information in this article, the author includes —

- (A) a series of questions people have asked about chameleons
- (B) a description of the physical appearance of chameleons
- (C) a detailed list of areas where chameleons can be found
- (D) a quotation from a scientist who studied chameleons



9

Explain the author’s opinion of chameleons. In your response, use words and information from the article that support your explanation. Write your answer in the box below.



10

Which of these statements from paragraphs 1 through 3 *best* identifies the focus of this article?

- (A) Chameleons may look grumpy and their skin may feel bumpy, but scientists can't take their eyes off them.
- (B) Because chameleons are such interesting lizards.
- (C) Chameleons spend a great deal of their lives sitting still.
- (D) And chameleons are unusual in the way they get their food.

11

Which of these details is **NOT** directly related to the main idea of paragraphs 10 and 11?

- (A) the speed of the chameleon's tongue
- (B) the stickiness of a chameleon's tongue
- (C) the location of the University of Antwerp
- (D) the activities of Dr. Herrel and Dr. Meyers



12

What other title would help a reader understand an important idea in this article? In your response, use information from the article that explains why this title would help a reader understand an important idea. Write your answer in the box below.



Reading Comprehension

13

According to this article, what characteristic of the chameleon's tongue is *most* helpful when catching very large prey?

- (A) the long length
- (B) the sticky mucus
- (C) the suction effect
- (D) the rough surface



14

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



Reading Comprehension

15

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

- (A) A chameleon’s skin feels bumpy.
- (B) Many animals use jaws or claws when catching prey.
- (C) Scientists watch movies in slow motion to study lizards.
- (D) A chameleon’s tongue has a supermuscle.





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DIRECTIONS

Read this passage from *O Pioneers!*, a novel by Willa Cather. Then answer Numbers 16 through 22.

O Pioneers!

by Willa Cather

Excerpt from Chapter 1

PART 1: The Wild Land

1 One January day, thirty years ago, the little town of Hanover, anchored on a windy Nebraska tableland, was trying not to be blown away. A mist of fine snowflakes was curling and eddying about the cluster of low drab buildings huddled on the gray prairie, under a gray sky. The dwelling-houses were set about haphazard on the tough prairie sod; some of them looked as if they had been moved in overnight, and others as if they were straying off by themselves, headed straight for the open plain. None of them had any appearance of permanence, and the howling wind blew under them as well as over them. The main street was a deeply rutted road, now frozen hard, which ran from the squat red railway station and the grain “elevator” at the north end of the town to the lumber yard and the horse pond at the south end. On either side of this road straggled two

uneven rows of wooden buildings: the general merchandise stores, the two banks, the drug store, the feed store, the saloon, the post-office. The board sidewalks were gray with trampled snow, but at two o’clock in the afternoon the shopkeepers, having come back from dinner, were keeping well behind their frosty windows. The children were all in school, and there was nobody abroad in the streets but a few rough-looking countrymen in coarse overcoats, with their long caps pulled down to their noses. Some of them had brought their wives to town, and now and then a red or a plaid shawl flashed out of one store into the shelter of another. At the hitchbars along the street a few heavy workhorses, harnessed to farm wagons, shivered under their blankets. About the station everything was quiet, for there would not be another train in until night.



On the sidewalk in front of one of the stores sat a little Swede boy, crying bitterly. He was about five years old. His black cloth coat was much too big for him and made him look like a little old man. His cap was pulled down over his ears; his nose and his chubby cheeks were chapped and red with cold. He cried quietly, and the few people who hurried by did not notice him. He was afraid to stop anyone, afraid to go into the store and ask for help, so he sat wringing his long sleeves and looking up a telegraph pole beside him, whimpering, "My kitten, oh, my kitten! Her will fweeze!" At the top of the pole crouched a shivering gray kitten, mewling faintly and clinging desperately to the wood with her claws. The boy had been left at the store while his sister went to the doctor's office, and in her absence a dog had chased his kitten up the pole. The little creature had never been so high before, and she was too frightened to move. Her master was sunk in despair. He was a little country boy, and this village was to him a very strange and perplexing place where people wore fine clothes and had hard hearts. He always felt shy and awkward here, and he wanted to hide behind things out of fear someone might laugh at him. Just now, he was too unhappy to care who laughed. At last he seemed to see a ray of hope: his sister was coming, and he got up and ran toward her in his heavy shoes.

3 His sister was a tall, strong girl, and she walked rapidly and resolutely, as if she knew exactly where she was going

and what she was going to do next. She wore a man's long ulster¹ (not as if it were an affliction, but as if it were very comfortable and belonged to her; carried it like a young soldier), and a round plush cap, tied down with a thick veil. She had a serious, thoughtful face, and her clear, deep blue eyes were fixed intently on the distance, without seeming to see anything, as if she were in trouble. She did not notice the little boy until he pulled her by the coat. Then she stopped short and stooped down to wipe his wet face.

"Why, Emil! I told you to stay in the store and not to come out. What is the matter with you?"

"My kitten, sister, my kitten! A man put her out, and a dog chased her up there." His forefinger, projecting from the sleeve of his coat, pointed up to the wretched little creature on the pole.

"Oh, Emil! Didn't I tell you she'd get us into trouble of some kind if you brought her? What made you tease me so? But there, I ought to have known better myself."

She went to the foot of the pole and held out her arms, crying, "Kitty, kitty, kitty," but the kitten only mewed and faintly waved its tail. Alexandra turned away decidedly. "No, she won't come down. Somebody will have to go up after her. I saw the Linstrums' wagon in town. I'll go and see if I can find Carl. Maybe he can do something."

¹**ulster:** a loose, long, overcoat

Reading Comprehension

16

The description of the setting in paragraph 1 creates a feeling of —

- (A) anger and bitterness
- (B) fear and confusion
- (C) isolation and hardship
- (D) danger and mystery

17

Emil's *main* conflict is that he is —

- (A) upset about his sister
- (B) worried about his kitten
- (C) afraid to be in town alone
- (D) ashamed of his rude behavior

18

Read this sentence from paragraph 3 of the passage.

His sister was a tall, strong girl, and she walked rapidly and *resolutely*, as if she knew exactly where she was going and what she was going to do next.

In this sentence, the word *resolutely* means —

- (A) calmly
- (B) firmly
- (C) purposefully
- (D) stubbornly

19

Explain how the author’s choice of words and phrases contributes to the somber mood of the passage. In your response, use words and phrases from the passage that support your explanation. Write your answer in the box below.



20

Which of these statements *best* describes how Alexandra feels about Emil?

- (A) She feels that he is silly.
- (B) She feels responsible for him.
- (C) She feels that he will never grow up.
- (D) She feels ashamed of his appearance.



Reading Comprehension**21**

Explain whether “The Wild Land” is an effective title for this passage. In your response, use details from the passage that support your explanation. Write your answer in the box below.

22

Read this sentence from paragraph 1 of the passage.

The main street was a deeply rutted road, now frozen hard, which ran from the squat red railway station and the grain “elevator” at the north end of town to the lumber yard and the horse pond at the south end.

The word *squat* suggests that the railway station is —

- (A) an ordinary building
- (B) a useless building
- (C) an old building
- (D) a low building





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