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NMSBA/HIGH SCHOOL
GRADUATION
ASSESSMENT (HSGA)

READING Items for Practice

Grade 11

Student Name: ________________________________________

School Name: _________________________________________
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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Rushing for Gold*
by Nicola Barber

One January morning in 1848, a man named James Marshall was examining the bed of a stream in California. A glint of something yellow caught his eye. It was a piece of gold, about half the size of a pea. Marshall’s discovery sparked an era of gold madness. Here was a chance for ordinary people to go to the goldfields and make a claim, and they flocked from all over the world, lured by the prospect of “getting rich quick.” However, as we shall see, Marshall and his partner, John Sutter, were not entirely happy about their amazing find.

John Sutter originally came from Switzerland, but he settled in the foothills of the Sierra Nevada Mountains in California, in 1839, and built a small estate that became known as Sutter’s Fort. He and James Marshall teamed up to construct a sawmill, about 37 miles (60 km) from Sutter’s Fort. They built it on a fast-flowing stream in order to use the power of the water to turn the mill wheel. But when the sawmill was completed, Marshall found that the water was too shallow to turn the wheel fast enough, so he ordered his men to dig out the bed of the stream to make it deeper. It was as he was inspecting their work that he made his important discovery.

Is it Gold?

Marshall gathered several pieces of metal, then returned to the camp where his men were eating breakfast. The question in Marshall’s mind was—is this gold? He knew that another mineral called iron pyrite looks like gold; in fact, its nickname is “fool’s gold.” So Marshall decided to do some simple experiments to test his find. First he hammered the “gold.” It was soft and easily workable. Then he put a piece in the center of the campfire. It came out unchanged. Finally the camp cook dropped the gold into boiling water with a type of acid. Again, the gold was unchanged. Marshall saddled his horse and rode as fast as he could to tell Sutter the news.

The Secret Is Out

Marshall demanded an immediate, secret meeting with Sutter. In the privacy of Sutter's office, with the doors locked, Marshall showed his partner the gold. Neither of them was overjoyed about the find. Sutter didn't own the land on which the sawmill was built, and he knew the reports of gold would probably bring hordes of treasure seekers to the area. The two men decided to keep their find a secret at least until the work digging out the stream was finished. In the meantime, Sutter would try to secure ownership of the land. But any hopes of secrecy soon faded. Word leaked out and strangers began to pour into the area. So began the biggest gold rush in history.

Marshall found gold in the stream running through this sawmill.

Gold for Everyone

People came to California from all over America, and then from all over the world. A report in the New York Daily Tribune stated: “The only machinery necessary in the new gold mines of California is a stout pair of arms, a shovel and a tin pan.” There was gold for everyone—shopkeepers, farmers, soldiers, sailors, professors, or judges. By the end of 1849, the population of California had risen by more than 89,000, and still people kept coming.

Poverty and Ruin

What happened to John Sutter and James Marshall? As the discoverers of the gold, they should have become rich men. But as he had foreseen, Sutter’s land was overrun by prospectors and his estate was ruined. He died a poor man in 1880. James Marshall turned to drink and also died a pauper in 1885.

Panning for Gold

How did the prospectors find the gold? The simplest way was by using a flat dish called a “pan.” This was filled with sand and gravel from the bottom of a river, together with some water. Then the prospector swilled the pan around in a circular motion, washing out the light sand and gravel while any gold remained behind, because it is very heavy. As you can imagine, panning was a long and back-breaking job.
Questions: 1 – 9 refer to “Rushing for Gold” passage.

1. Why did John Sutter want to keep the discovery of gold a secret?
   A. John Sutter wanted to test the metal to make sure it was gold.
   B. John Sutter wanted to purchase the land where the gold was found.
   C. John Sutter was afraid that James Marshall would receive credit for the discovery.
   D. John Sutter was interested in finding an easier way to remove the gold from the land.

2. Which idea is best supported by information in the selection?
   A. James Marshall’s discovery had life-changing results.
   B. John Sutter and James Marshall were overjoyed about their find.
   C. James Marshall’s discovery led to new methods of searching for gold.
   D. John Sutter and James Marshall established new settlements for gold seekers.

3. Which sentence summarizes paragraph 2 in the selection?
   A. John Sutter settled in California, built Sutter’s Fort and teamed with James Marshall to construct a sawmill.
   B. James Marshall’s discovery sparked a gold rush that caused the population of California to increase.
   C. James Marshall tested the gold by hammering it, putting it in a campfire and dropping it into water.
   D. John Sutter’s men were ordered to search for gold while digging a riverbed at Sutter’s mill.

4. Why does the author include the quote, “The only machinery necessary in the new gold mines of California is a stout pair of arms, a shovel, and a tin pan,” from the New York Daily Tribune?
   A. To explain the process of panning for gold
   B. To describe where gold miners should search
   C. To describe how easy it was for people to find gold
   D. To explain why keeping the gold a secret was impossible

5. What is the purpose of the text box at the end of the selection?
   A. To explain how easy it was to find gold in California
   B. To explain the process used to identify gold in the river
   C. To explain the steps used to determine if a metal is gold
   D. To explain the main events of the gold rush in California
6. Based on the information in the selection, what inference can the reader make about people who search for gold? Include information from the selection in your inference.

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7. Based on the information in the selection, which conclusion can the reader draw about John Sutter and James Marshall?
   A. John Sutter and James Marshall were interested in sharing their knowledge of panning for gold.
   B. John Sutter and James Marshall were unable to discuss their discovery with each other.
   C. John Sutter and James Marshall were proud of helping other prospectors find gold.
   D. John Sutter and James Marshall were unable to enjoy the wealth others found.

8. Which two things does the author contrast in the selection?
   A. Panning and digging for gold
   B. Sawmills and goldfields
   C. Iron pyrite and gold
   D. Sand and gravel

9. Why did James Marshall test several pieces of the metal he found?
   A. To decide whether to continue building the sawmill
   B. To decide whether his men were trustworthy
   C. To make sure he had found real gold
   D. To make sure the area was safe
Directions: Read the poem and answer the questions.

Desert Tortoise in the Rain*
by Joseph Bruchac

His shell glistens with the moisture of early winter rain.
Small drops have drawn him from his earth-dug bed
beneath porch steps—all that remains of a house washed away by fire.
The backyard fence, which once kept him
from the sight of ocean or winding canyon, has also been returned to ash.
The chirr of a wren can now be heard
from camellia branches which survived, somehow, the red flow of flame to hold new blossoms, fluttering purple and red
as perfect as Chinese silk.
The tortoise, his head like a lump of lava, takes one club foot step after another, bumps his way across heaved red bricks.
He opens his mouth
to let his almost human tongue loll out to lap up drops of moisture dark as his eyes.
He turns his gaze away from the sea below to begin his trek back toward the Mohave where human hands a decade ago picked him up to carry him here, away from his own kind.


10. What is the main conflict in the poem?
   A. A tortoise emerges from hibernation.
   B. A tortoise demonstrates curiosity.
   C. A tortoise seeks his former home.
   D. A tortoise lives near the ocean.

11. Based on the information in the poem, what conclusion can be drawn about the tortoise?
   A. He is clumsy.
   B. He is injured.
   C. He is unhappy.
   D. He is persistent.

12. Which sentence best summarizes the fifth stanza of the poem?
   A. The desert tortoise drinks the cool raindrops.
   B. A bird sings in the branches of a beautiful tree.
   C. A house and fence burn down to the scorched ground.
   D. The desert tortoise starts his long journey back to the desert.
13. According to the poem, which sentence tells how the tortoise is different after the fire?
   A. He is free to return home.
   B. He is sick from too much ash.
   C. He is sad that the house is gone.
   D. He is moved by the mountain view.

14. What is the meaning of the phrase “the chirr of a wren” in the third stanza of the poem?
   A. The sight of a bird
   B. The sound of a bird
   C. The silence of a bird
   D. The movement of a bird

15. Why does the tortoise "begin his trek back toward the Mohave"? Include two details from the poem in your answer.

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Directions: Read the selection and answer the questions.

**North Mountain State Park Hiking Tips**

A good hiking expedition should be planned out in advance. Whether it is a hike on a mountain trail or through the woods, an enjoyable hiking excursion can easily turn into a dangerous situation if safety precautions are not taken. North Mountain State Park recommends hikers consider the following tips before hitting any trails:

- Make a copy of your itinerary to give to a family member or a friend. Make sure that someone close to you knows where you are and how long you will be gone.
- Wear a good pair of hiking boots or durable athletic shoes. The right footwear will keep you safe, warm, and comfortable.
- Prepare for various types of weather conditions. Check the forecast before you leave; take along sunglasses and extra clothing (e.g., a hat and/or a jacket for a day hike) and wear sunscreen.
- Pack plenty of food and water. Consider the length of your hike and pack accordingly.
  - Pack basic and essential supplies. Bring a first-aid kit, a flashlight, a pocket knife, a map of the area (if available), and a compass. You may need other supplies, such as matches or bug repellent, depending on the length of your hike.
  - Determine what time the sun sets. This information is available in most local newspapers. Most people become lost after nightfall, so it is important to know this information in advance.
  - Stay on properly marked trails. Stay on established trails to decrease the odds of becoming lost. Staying on established trails also lowers the risk of trampling rare and endangered plants.
  - Carry a whistle. Using a loud whistle is a good way to call attention to your location if you get lost.
  - Keep an eye out for wildlife. Do not approach animals in the wild, even if they seem friendly.

The Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission (WSPRC) manages a diverse system of more than 120 parks. The 90-year-old park system, which receives nearly 48 million visits a year, ranks fourth nationally in day-use attendance, 10th in overnight attendance, and the WSPRC has a smaller budget than most states.

**“North Mountain State Park Hiking Tips.” Used by permission of the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction.**

16. Which sentence from the selection is irrelevant to hiker safety?
   A. Determine what time the sun sets.
   B. Do not approach animals in the wild, even if they seem friendly.
   C. Make a copy of your itinerary to give to a family member or friend.
   D. Staying on established trails also lowers the risk of trampling rare and endangered plants.

17. After reading this selection, which generalization can the reader make about Washington State parks?
   A. They are operated with efficiency.
   B. They provide search and rescue services.
   C. They provide trail and wildlife restoration.
   D. They are only accessible during summer months.

18. According to the document, what could happen if hikers ignore what time the sun sets?
   A. Hikers may need extra clothing.
   B. Hikers may become lost in the dark.
   C. Hikers may encounter wild animals.
   D. Hikers may have difficulty finding supplies.

19. Suppose you are responsible for collecting supplies for hikers to wear. Provide two details from the selection that are examples of appropriate supplies.

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20. Which statement is the most important conclusion the reader may draw about North Mountain State Park?
   A. The park features a variety of different types of trails.
   B. The park is committed to promoting safety.
   C. The park has many visitors annually.
   D. The park employs many rangers.