Test Booklet

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2008-09 ACTAAP Grade 7 Reading Test

Student name: ____________________________

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Read the passage. Then answer multiple-choice questions 1 through 8 and open-response question A.

The Mystery in the Attic
by Jeanne B. Hargett

Staring at the ancient three-story house, I’d have changed places with just about anybody. It had turrets and bay windows and carvings as fancy as those on a fairy-tale castle. It had a sundial at one end of the garden and a fish pond at the other. Inside, we discovered that it also had peeling paint, mildew-stained walls, and a shortage of bathrooms.

“I love it,” Mom said.

“I hate it,” I said at the same instant.

Dad cleared his throat. “It was built almost a century ago. It’ll be good for another hundred years when a few repairs are made.”

My older brother, Greg, darted from doorway to doorway counting. “What a house—fifteen rooms if you include the attic. And maybe an extra room behind a secret panel, Molly. Bet I find it first!”

Greg led the way up the stairs, carrying a flashlight. But when he pushed open the attic door, we stood blinking at early afternoon sunlight streaming through three windows.

7 “Some attic,” Greg said. “If it had a floor everywhere we could roller skate up here. Be careful to stay on the wooden beams, or you could crash into the rooms below.” Stepping carefully, he went to raise a window. “Wow! We’re as high as the moon. Come see how small the sundial looks from here.”

8 “High places scare me, and you know it,” I told him. “I’m not coming near a window.” Instead I followed a bridge of creaky flooring till it ended at a chimney. I was standing on tiptoe to trace the chimney’s exit through the roof when I saw the doll-sized trunk. It sat on a brick ledge. Layers of dust had woven a blanket over its rounded top.

“Greg, come here—I’ve found something!” I said. Both of us reached for it. The trunk slipped from our fingers and dust swirled around us. After our sneezing stopped, we crouched by the chimney to examine the doll clothes that had tumbled from the trunk. Green velvet jackets, dresses of yellowed satin, and beautifully made silk bonnets.

The trunk’s lid had been lined with silk, too. Someone had cut a slit in the fabric and tucked in a thin sheet of notepaper.

I let Greg unfold the brittle paper. Then, squinting at the faded ink, I read aloud these words:

bq. “September 5, 1921. I, Hannah Forbes, must grow up. Mama says life in a new place will help us forget our trouble. But I cannot bear taking Samantha, Angenetta, and Cynthia from this home where my mother also grew up. The dolls belonged first to her, and she agrees. I shall leave them . . . resting under wooden rails, sheltered when the cold wind wails, hidden where the shadows flee, and sunbeams mark their place at three.”

My voice trembled and trailed off. What long ago trouble had driven Hannah away? And how old was she then?

Greg interrupted my trance. “Molly—‘Hidden where the shadows flee, and sunbeams mark their place at three.’ It’s clear as anything. They’re buried near the sundial!”
We found shovels in the garage and raced out to the yard. After an hour of digging produced no results, I asked, “But what about the wooden rails?”

“There was probably a fence here then. Who knows what changes have been made in so many years? Keep digging!”

Finally Greg agreed to take a break. There was someone I wanted to see. “Miss Jamison at the library knows everything,” I said. “As soon as I clean up I’m going to ask if she can tell us about the Forbes family.”

Greg snorted. “And leave me with the dirty work? Nothing doing. I’m coming, too.”

Miss Jamison’s information set me shivering in spite of the afternoon heat. Hannah’s father had been a president of a local bank and had been convicted of embezzling thousands of dollars. Depending on which person you believed, he was either a shameless thief or a kind man too soft-hearted when folks needed money. He’d died shortly after being sent to prison. Like me, Hannah was eleven when she had had to change homes. I was glad we didn’t share the same reason.

“Those dolls simply have to be found, Greg,” I said as we walked back to the house.

“Five blisters prove I’ve been trying,” he grumbled.

“It’s more important now,” I insisted. “I’ll help dig. Just give me time to put their clothes away in the trunk.”

Greg agreed and came back to the attic with me to shut the window. I finished folding the clothes, then picked up the fragile note. In the bright sunlight I saw two faded ink strokes I’d missed before.

“Greg,” I yelped, “it says, ‘resting under wooden TRAILS.’ These walkways are Hannah’s wooden trails. The dolls are here!” I soon got hot and dusty again trying to look under the boards, but Greg sat quietly by a window.

“Aren’t you going to help look?” I asked.

He pointed to a patch of sunlight on the floor near the window. “I told you the sundial had to be involved. Hannah looked at it out this window. How else did she know the sun touches here at three o’clock?”

As we lifted a loose plank in the sunlit spot, I didn’t care who got credit for finding the bundle below.

The dolls’ china faces were still rosy. Gently I touched one painted smile after another. Which was Samantha? Which Angenetta? Which Cynthia? It didn’t matter. Somewhere, I was sure of it, Hannah was smiling, too.

“Mystery in the Attic” by Jeanne B. Hargett: Copyright ©1997 by Highlights for Children, Inc., Columbus, Ohio.
1. In paragraph 7, the statement “We’re as high as the moon” helps the reader understand that —
   A. the sundial is tiny  
   B. Greg is very happy  
   C. the house is quite tall  
   D. Molly is afraid of heights

2. Molly can best be described as —
   A. frightened  
   B. determined  
   C. confused  
   D. humorous

3. What is the “trouble” Hannah refers to in her note?
   A. Moving to a new place  
   B. The difficulty in leaving her dolls behind  
   C. Her own refusal to grow up  
   D. Her father’s conviction of a crime

4. The author includes the information in the first paragraph to —
   A. introduce the characters  
   B. describe the setting  
   C. establish the time period  
   D. begin the conflict

5. What is the definition of trace as it is used in paragraph 8?
   A. To draw or sketch  
   B. To find the origin of  
   C. To follow the path of  
   D. To copy through paper

6. What will Molly most likely do with the dolls?
   A. Attempt to locate Hannah and return the dolls to her  
   B. Sell the dolls and use the money to help restore the house  
   C. Keep the dolls as a way to feel a connection to Hannah  
   D. Give the dolls to the librarian to thank her for the information

7. What would have most likely happened if Molly had not been afraid of heights?
   A. Greg would have discovered the trunk.  
   B. The trunk would have remained hidden.  
   C. Molly would have discovered the trunk sooner.  
   D. The trunk would have been moved out of the way.

8. The main reason Hannah hides the dolls in the attic is because she —
   A. wants to protect them from the wind and rain  
   B. hopes to eventually move them to her new home  
   C. wants to keep them safe after she moves away  
   D. thinks her mother approves of her leaving them
9 Explain what happens throughout the story that improves Molly’s opinion of moving into the old house. Use details from the passage to support your answer.
Read the article. Then answer multiple-choice questions 9 through 16 and open-response question B.

**Gardens Under Glass**

by Gail A. Wolfson

1 If you lived in Victorian London, you’d carry a black umbrella and have a house with dark furniture and wallpaper. Why? London was a city of smoky factories. Your black umbrella would protect you from soot-filled rain and wouldn’t show the dirt. Your house’s dark furnishings and walls would camouflage the dust from coal-fueled stoves. Like other Victorians, you’d love gardening and houseplants, but your plants couldn’t thrive in the dirty city air—that is, until London surgeon Dr. Nathaniel Ward made an amazing discovery.

2 Ward, who loved plants and nature, decided to put a sphinx moth cocoon and some soil into a bottle and close the lid. Somehow, he misplaced the bottle, and found it only months later. To his surprise, a fern had sprouted in it—a fern that looked healthier than those growing in his London yard.

While experimenting with other bottle gardens, Ward built a large glass case, filled it with English ferns, sealed it, and sent it on a six-month voyage to Australia. The ferns flourished. In 1842, Ward published a book describing these gardens under glass. Soon, Wardian Cases, as they were called, became a fixture in drawing rooms.

The cases protected plants from coal dust and from the frigid nighttime temperatures in Victorian homes. Ward designed an elaborate garden under glass for his house with ferns, fish, a lizard, and a toad all living in it.

Wardian Cases were also used to ship exotic plants, such as orchids, to Britain. Victorians were enchanted with orchids, which have unique petals and colors and come in thousands of varieties. Queen Victoria created the position of royal orchid grower. Wealthy Victorians often collected these flowers, and some hired hunters to find and ship them from tropical locations. Before Wardian Cases were invented, most orchids died from the salt spray and varying temperatures on the long sea voyage.

Terraria (plural of terrarium), as Wardian Cases were later called, are still popular. Although houseplants today don’t need protection from coal dust or cold household temperatures, terrariums are perfect, low-maintenance, indoor gardens. Here’s how you can make one.

Most supplies are available at garden centers. If you can’t find a large glass jar at home, look in the houseware department at a discount store or ask a delicatessen if they have an empty one.

**Plant selection:**

· select small, slow-growing, nonflowering plants that grow in medium light and fit the size of your jar. Consider these:
  · aluminum plant (Pilea)
  · small ivies
  · small ferns
  · Ficus
  · Peperomia
  · prayer plant (Mimosa)

If your jar can hold several plants, an odd number is best, artistically speaking. Look for variety in the shapes and colors of leaves to add interest. Place the tallest plant in the middle.

**Directions**
1. Wash your jar. Rinse it several times with plain water. Dry it completely.
2. Wash and drain the pebbles. Pour pebbles into the jar to a depth of inch.
3. Use a funnel (or make one from paper) to add a thin layer of powdered charcoal on top of the pebbles.
4. Use a funnel to add 2 to 3 inches of sterile potting soil on top of the charcoal. Make an indentation for each plant in the soil. Unpot the plants and place them in the container. Pat the soil around them.
5. Add accessories, if desired.
6. Lightly water or mist the terrarium until the soil is moist, but not soggy. Close the lid. Place the terrarium in a room with medium, not direct, sunlight. Water only when the soil feels dry. Many terraria need watering only once a month.

Don’t be surprised if your terrarium steams up in the morning. It’ll clear by itself when the temperature inside and outside the jar becomes the same.

YOU NEED:
· clear glass jar (not plastic) with a lid and an opening wide enough for your hand
· small plants (see list)
· pebbles or gravel (for drainage)
· powdered charcoal (to absorb odors)
· sterile potting soil
· small stones (not pebbles or gravel), a small mirror, small ceramic animals (optional)


10 The most likely reason the author wrote this article was to -
A entertain readers with stories about life in London
B explain to readers how exotic plants became popular
C persuade readers to find and grow rare orchids
D inform readers about the history of terrariums and how to create one

11 Taking care of a terrarium is most similar to -
A adopting a young puppy
B maintaining a fish tank
C raising a hamster
D feeding birds in the winter

12 When selecting a glass jar to make a terrarium, it is important to use one with a large opening to -
A make assembling the terrarium easier
B allow excess water to evaporate quickly
C keep the potting soil in the terrarium sterile
D make sure the plants get enough sunlight
13 Which of the following would be the best subheading for paragraph 2?

A London Ferns  
B Moth in a Bottle  
C The First Terrarium  
D Mystery of the Sphinx

14 As used in paragraph 1 in the article, what does *thrive* mean?

A Stay clean  
B Grow well  
C Produce flowers  
D Absorb water

15 What is the *most* important reason to choose small plants for a terrarium?

A The plants have a limited amount of space to grow in a terrarium.  
B Small plants are what are recommended for a terrarium.  
C The plants in a terrarium are prettier when they are small.  
D Small plants are easier to plant in a terrarium.

16 Read the following sentence from paragraph 2 in the article:

To his surprise, a fern had *sprouted* in it—a fern that looked healthier than those growing in his London yard.

Which word in the sentence is a synonym that helps the reader determine the definition of *sprouted*?

A surprise  
B fern  
C healthier  
D growing

17 The purpose of an accessory in a terrarium is to -

A help the plants grow better  
B add interest to the planting  
C give more light to the plants  
D make putting in the plants easier
18 Explain why the Wardian Case was important to the gardeners of Victorian London.

Use details from the article to support your answer.