

# Test Booklet

Subject: LA, Grade: 07

MSA Grade 7 Reading Sample Items

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Author: Maryland

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- 1 The young girl wore a smart dress to the dance.

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

- A Her test scores showed everyone how smart she was.
- B His leg began to smart where the ball hit it.
- C The marching band had smart new uniforms.
- D The team moved down the field at a smart pace.

- 2 The pile of wood was starting to dwindle as the winter became harsh.

Dwindle means \_\_\_\_\_.

- A decay
- B diminish
- C disappear
- D dissolve

- 3 The ingenious inventor created many unusual products.

Ingenious means \_\_\_\_\_.

- A clever
- B famous
- C great
- D humble

## From Bard of Avon

By Diane Stanley and Peter Vennema

William Shakespeare went to London just at the time when modern theater was taking shape. In 1576, when Shakespeare was still a schoolboy, an actor named James Burbage put up a building near London designed solely for the performance of plays. It was the first such building since the days of ancient Greece and Rome. He called it the Theatre, a name now used for all playhouses.

The people of London loved to see plays, and James Burbage's Theatre was a smash success. Soon other playhouses were built, first the Curtain, then the Rose and the Swan.

These new theaters were circular wooden buildings with an open courtyard in the middle, much like the inn yards in which plays were often performed. People could stand in the courtyard for a penny. They were called groundlings, and they were known to drink too much beer and be quite noisy and rude if they didn't like the play. A wise playwright would throw in a joke every now and then to keep the groundlings happy.

Anyone willing to pay a bit more could sit in one of the three galleries, where they had a roof to protect them from the sun or a sudden shower.

Plays were only done in daylight and in nice weather, as there were no lights or heat. On the days when a play would be presented, a flag was flown from the tower of the theater, where people in the city could see it.

There was no curtain across the stage and not much scenery. A table and chairs would show that it was a banquet room; a potted bush would represent the countryside. Sometimes a sign was carried onstage telling the location, such as **A Wood Near Athens**. Or an actor would walk onstage and say something such as, "Well, this is the Forest of Arden!"

The costumes were often elegant. In those days, it was customary for a gentleman to leave his clothes to his faithful servants when he died. But servants didn't wear that sort of clothing, so they sold it to the actors to wear as costumes.

The theaters also had special effects. The roof of the stage, painted with stars and called the heavens, had a trapdoor in it. If the play called for a god to descend from the sky, a throne could be lowered through the trapdoor by ropes. The sound of thunder was made by rolling a cannonball around on the floor of the hut above the stage. There was also a cannon up there that fired blanks for the battle scenes.

- 4 Which sentence from “**Bard of Avon**” is *least* helpful in identifying this article as nonfiction?
- A Soon other playhouses were built, first the Curtain, then the Rose, and the Swan.
  - B Plays were only done in daylight and in nice weather, as there were no lights or heat.
  - C William Shakespeare went to London just at the time when modern theater was taking shape.
  - D In 1576, when Shakespeare was still a schoolboy, an actor named James Burbage put up a building near London designed solely for the performance of plays.
- 5 What information could have been added to help a reader better understand an important idea in **Bard of Avon**?
- A a sample of a script joke
  - B a scene of a Shakespeare play
  - C a description of the Rose Theater
  - D a comparison of a modern theater and a London playhouse
- 6 Which sentence would *best* provide additional information to paragraph 2 and connect to paragraph 3?
- A But the Theatre was still the favorite.
  - B It was easy to get into a playhouse for a performance.
  - C It was difficult to get workers to construct the playhouses.
  - D The playhouses were constructed of the same materials and with the same plan.

7 What text feature could have been added to **Bard of Avon** to make the article easier to understand? In your response, use information from the article that supports your answer. Write your answer on the lines below.


8 Explain whether or not the use of words and phrases in **Bard of Avon** makes the theater in Shakespeare’s London sound interesting. In your response, use information from the article that supports your explanation. Write your answer on the lines below.


9 Explain what information could have been added to **Bard of Avon** to help a reader better understand an important idea in the article. In your response, use information from the article that supports your explanation. Write your answer on the lines below.


Read this passage about a family's dinner table conversation from the novel *Absolutely Normal Chaos*.

***from Absolutely Normal Chaos***

by Sharon Creech

Well, I have to admit that we did get an interesting bit of news today! I almost missed it entirely, because of all the commotion at the dinner table. There is always commotion at the dinner table—you can hardly hear yourself eat. We had spaghetti, and Dougie doesn't like spaghetti and was pushing it around his plate and slopping sauce all over, and so Dennis punched him and Dougie started crying and Mom told him to be quiet and eat his spaghetti because he wasn't getting anything else. And Dougie said, "I'm just a poor little slob," and Dennis said, "That's right."

In the middle of all that Dad said, "Had a letter from Radene today." Radene is married to Dad's brother, Uncle Carl Joe, and they live in West Virginia. "Did you see it?" Dad said. (He meant the letter.)

"No, I didn't see it. Dougie, if you don't stop that hollering right this minute—" (Just to give you an idea of how hard it is to follow the conversation.)

"Well, she wants to know—"

"Dennis, are you aggravating the situation? If you are—" Mom can hardly eat, she's so busy trying to figure out who's causing the trouble. All this time Tommy is throwing spaghetti all over the floor and it's in his hair, but that's just the way he eats.

"Sally, are you listening or not?" My dad is getting annoyed because he can't stand all this commotion, and it happens every night.

"Why, of course I'm listening, Sam. Dennis, put your hands on the table where I can see them."

"Radene wants to send Carl Ray up here." Dad eats a meatball.

About this time Dougie is so upset that he spills his milk right onto my plate.

"Sam, can't you do something about them?" Mom said.

My dad looked up from his meatballs and spaghetti and said, "Somehow, I don't think that any of my study of rock formations and fossils prepared me for this."

I don't know how we all settled down, but we did for a time, and that's when Mom finally realized what Dad had said about ten minutes earlier.

"Radene said *what*?"

"She wants to send Carl Ray up here."

Carl Ray is one of Aunt Radene's and Uncle Carl Joe's seven children. He's my cousin.

"What do you mean, she wants to send Carl Ray up here?" My mom didn't look too happy about this.

"Just temporarily," my dad said. "He wants to get a job. No work down there. It'll just be for a little while, until he gets a job and gets on his feet."

"Send him *here*? To *this* house? To live with *us*?" As I said, my mom didn't seem too happy about all this.

Then she said, "Don't you think that's a little strange, Sam? There are lots of other places he could go, aren't there?"



My father shrugged. Sometimes he doesn't like to elaborate.

"And just where exactly will we put him?" My mother had stopped eating by now.

"Well, we could put the boys in together—"

"All three of them?"

"Wouldn't hurt 'em. Then we could put Carl Ray in the little room where Tommy is now."

"In the *nursery*? Sam, are you *serious*?"

"It's just temporary. A month. Maybe two months. Maybe the summer—"

"The *summer*? Are you serious? My father was closely examining his meatball. My mom kept going. "And *when* does she want Carl Ray to come up here."

My father was chewing when he answered. "Saturday."

Mom almost choked. "*Saturday? Saturday?* Sam, today is *Thursday*! You can't be serious. Why didn't she phone?"

**10** In paragraphs 2 and 3 words are placed in parentheses. The *most probable* reason the words are in parentheses is that the author is-

- A showing sympathy for Dad
- B amused by the conversation
- C showing the narrator is at the table
- D helping the reader follow the conversation

**11** Dad's words and actions show that he *mostly*-

- A is a serious scientist
- B is loyal to his family
- C tries to avoid confusion
- D tries to settle his children

**12** The narrator is best described as someone who-

- A has a good memory
- B acknowledges her family's faults
- C insists upon good manners
- D enjoys spending time with her family

**13** Read this sentence from paragraph 5.

"Dennis, are you aggravating the situation?"

Details from paragraphs 1 and 5 show that aggravating means-

- A revealing
- B strengthening
- C understanding
- D worsening

14 Read Sam's comment in paragraph 11.

"... Somehow, I don't think that any of my study of rock formations and fossils prepared me for this."

The best paraphrase of this comment is-

- A Learning about rocks and fossils is poor training.
- B My education is not helping me with this situation.
- C This situation does not fit with anything I know about.
- D I am considering that my studies were not a good choice.

15 Read this sentence from paragraph 20.

"Sometimes he doesn't like to elaborate."

Which words could replace elaborate without changing the meaning of this sentence?

- A give details
- B be understood
- C share problems
- D be complicated

16 Which of these words *best* describes the mood of this passage?

- A agitated
- B cheerful
- C lighthearted
- D playful

17 When telling about the circumstances of the dinner table conversation, the narrator *often*-

- A makes fun of her younger family members
- B adds ideas she might share with her parents
- C provides comments that clarify the situation
- D talks about the kind of food the family enjoys

18 After reading this passage, a reader might still want to know-

- A why Tommy is throwing food on the floor
- B how often the disruption at the dinner table occurs
- C why Radene sent a letter rather than made a phone call
- D how the narrator nearly missed the news at the dinner table

19 Read paragraph 18.

Send him *here*? To *this* house? To live with *us*?  
As I said, my mom didn't look too happy about this.

The words are written in italics *mostly* to suggest Sally's-

- A distress with Carl Ray
- B upset with her husband
- C concern about the size of their home
- D inability to believe the news from Radene

**20** How does the author use the dinner table conversation to make the characters seem real? In your response, use details from their conversation that make the characters seem real.


**21** How does the author create comedy in the passage? In your response, use details from the passage that create comedy.


## The Traveler Leaving the Library

By Audrey Baird

### The Traveler

Ravenous and savage  
from its long  
polar journey,  
the North Wind

is searching  
for food—

and *wild* to find  
shelter tonight.

Starved, it

*gnaws*

on my house  
until roof  
groans,

and  
screams  
wail down  
my chimney.

Frigid, it

*tears*  
at my  
house,

trying to  
force  
its way in,

until  
frozen  
nails

*pop.*

Then,  
at eight o'clock,  
spent and  
weary,

it wraps around  
my chimney  
with a

*sigh*

when Dad  
builds a fire.

\* \* \* \* \*

### Leaving the Library

Supper time.

Deserted streets.

Stinging winds  
blow leaves  
into fence corners.

Water on the lake  
shivers.

A V of Canada geese  
flies overheard  
squawking like  
a rusty door.

I pull up my collar,  
stick my book  
inside my windbreaker  
and lower my head  
into the  
darkening day.

I think of the  
lights on

at *home*

and start to run,

sleet pushing  
hard  
at my back.

A winter  
jacket  
tomorrow.

**22** Read the poem **The Traveler**.

In line 31 of this poem, which of these words could replace spent and not change the meaning of that line?

- A** asleep
- B** broken
- C** costly
- D** finished

**23** Read the poem **The Traveler**.

Details in this poem *mostly* suggest that the speaker

- A** imagines the wind as a desperate visitor
- B** fears the effects of bad weather
- C** believes the wind wants to return home
- D** dislikes hearing loud noises

**24** Read the poem **Leaving The Library**.

Which of these details is *least* helpful in understanding the setting of this poem?

- A** “water on the lake shivers”
- B** “stick my book inside my windbreaker”
- C** “and lower my head into the darkening day”
- D** “sleet pushing hard at my back”

**25** Read the poem **Leaving The Library**.

Read these lines from the poem.

A V of Canada geese  
flies overhead  
squawking like  
a rusty door.

This comparison *mostly* suggests that the geese

- A** are a dark brown color
- B** fly over an old door
- C** make harsh, screeching sounds
- D** are upset about flying away

**26** What do line 19 in **Leaving the Library** and line 38 in **The Traveler** mostly suggest about the speakers in each poem?

- A** The speakers have bright memories of their homes.
- B** The speakers are cheerful in all types of weather.
- C** The speakers find comfort in their homes.
- D** The speakers require warm surroundings.

27 Compare the moods created in **Leaving the Library** and **The Traveler**. In your response, use details and examples from both poems that support your answer. Write your answer on the lines below.


## A Lifeline for Lions

By Pamela S. Turner

All over the Serengeti, the lions were in trouble.

Tourists in a hot-air balloon were the first to notice. As the tourists were flying low over the savannah, they spotted a big cat lying on the ground. This lion wasn't lazing around, as lions do when they are not hunting. It was shaking and shivering.

The tourists called the park veterinarian, Dr. Melody Roelke. She watched the lion, but didn't know what was wrong.

The Serengeti is a large wildlife park in Tanzania where no hunting is allowed. The Serengeti might seem like a safe place, but wild animals face dangers other than guns. In this case, the danger was disease.

Lions began to die all over the park. After ten days, it was clear something extraordinary was going on," says Dr. Craig Packer, a biologist at the University of Minnesota. He has studied lions for 25 years. "We had no idea what it was, and we were afraid we might never know."

Usually, veterinary science focuses on the kinds of animals that are most important to people—pets and livestock. Wildlife diseases are not well understood. Dr. Packer and Dr. Roelke sent blood and tissue samples from dead lions to experts in different countries. One expert was able to solve the mystery. The lions were dying of distemper, a disease commonly found in pet dogs.

### Small but Deadly

Distemper is caused by a virus. (Viruses cause many diseases, including measles, polio, and the common cold.) Sometimes an animal's body can fight off the distemper virus.

But if it can't, the virus invades the animal's nervous system. Distemper can cause fever, shaking, and finally death.

In 1994, just before the distemper outbreak, there were an estimated three thousand lions in the Serengeti. "Over ninety percent of the Serengeti's lions were infected," says Dr. Packer. About one thousand lions died." Many other animals also died — leopards, hyenas, wild dogs, and bat-eared foxes.

How could a wild lion or leopard catch a disease from a pet? Serengeti National Park is huge—larger than the state of Connecticut—but there are farms and villages all around it. In those villages and on those farms are about thirty thousand dogs.

The disease is spread like a cold from dogs to wildlife. "We think hyenas are the key," says Dr. Packer. If a hyena looks for food in a village garbage dump, it may come into contact with an infected dog. Then the hyena may take distemper back into the park.

"Hyenas move over large distances and hang out around lions' kills," Dr. Packer says. From the hyenas, the distemper probably spread to lions and other animals.

### Lion Lovers Respond

When people heard about the sick and dying lions, offers of help poured in from all over the world. Major funding came from the World Society for the Protection of Animals and several companies.

"We began vaccinating dogs around the Serengeti against distemper," says Dr. Packer. "That was the beginning of Project Lifelion."



Why vaccinate dogs instead of the lions themselves? “It is a lot easier to catch and vaccinate thirty thousand dogs than three thousand lions,” explains Dr. Packer. “Many lions are very shy, and live in remote areas. And vaccinating lions would do nothing for the other animals at a risk—hyenas, leopards, wild dogs, and foxes.

### Healthier Pets

Project Lifelion has been vaccinating dogs around the Serengeti since 1995. Before Project Lifelion, the Tanzanian Veterinary Service took care of cattle, goats, and sheep, but not pets. With funding from Project Lifelion, the veterinarians now offer free distemper shots for dogs. They also give rabies vaccinations. Although people can’t catch distemper from dogs, they can get rabies.

“Local people are happy with the program,” says Dr. Packer. We’re saying, ‘If you have a dog, let’s make it a healthy dog.’ We tell them it is for the lions, and that is OK, too. They know lions bring tourists and tourism brings jobs.”

### A Circle of Protection

Project Lifelion aims to encircle the Serengeti with a ring of vaccinated dogs. This should prevent any future distemper outbreaks. New dogs are born or move into the area every year, so Project Lifelion will need to continue as long as lions roam the Serengeti.

The lions are now doing well — very well. Only three years after the terrible distemper outbreak of 1994, the lion population had rebounded to three thousand. Today, there are about four thousand lions. “There seem to be more lions than ever,” says Dr. Packer. “The Serengeti is still a rich and robust place.”

**28** Which of these sentences *most clearly* identifies this article as nonfiction?

- A** Tourists in a hot-air balloon were the first to notice.
- B** She watched the lion, but didn’t know what was wrong.
- C** One expert was able to solve the mystery.
- D** Distemper can cause fever, shaking, and finally death.

**29** The purpose of this article is *mostly* to—

- A** show ways people can help wild animals
- B** explain the reason for wild animal parks
- C** tell how an animal medical issue was resolved
- D** give information about the dangers of distemper

- 30** The heading **Small but Deadly** is a good one because the information that follows is about—
- A** the characteristics of certain viruses
  - B** the size and habits of hyenas
  - C** the abilities of most wild animals in the park
  - D** the reputation of the villages near the park
- 31** Which of these sentences from the article reflects a cause/effect relationship?
- A** As the tourists were flying low over the savannah, they spotted a big cat lying on the ground.
  - B** The Serengeti is a large wildlife park in Tanzania where no hunting is allowed.
  - C** The disease is spread like a cold from dogs to wildlife.
  - D** They know lions bring tourists and tourism brings jobs.
- 32** The author of this article would *probably* agree that—
- A** promoting tourism is important
  - B** preserving wildlife is necessary
  - C** fighting disease is a difficult task
  - D** keeping villages clean is demanding
- 33** The person who would find the information in this article *most helpful* would be an individual interested in—
- A** veterinary services for wildlife
  - B** donating to animal relief funds
  - C** maintenance of wildlife parks
  - D** travel in hot-air balloons
- 34** After reading this article, a reader might still want to know—
- A** whether the Serengeti permits hunting
  - B** how distemper is passed among animals
  - C** whether Project Lifelion is currently active
  - D** why veterinary medicine focuses on pets and livestock

**35** Explain whether the title helps a reader understand an important idea of this article. In your response, use information from the article that supports your explanation.


## Scrambled Eggs

*A Story from Denmark*

By Martha Hamilton and Mitch Weiss

A farmer once set off to market to sell his cattle. The way was long and tiresome, and the roads were bad, so one night he stopped at an inn to get a good night's sleep. In the morning, he ate a hearty breakfast of scrambled eggs. As he was about to pay, he realized he might run short of money before he got to market. He asked the innkeeper to trust him to pay for the eggs the next time he passed through. The innkeeper readily agreed, and the farmer went on his way.

After selling his cattle, he headed home. Not remembering the few small coins he owed the innkeeper, he took a different route. A few years later, when he finally passed by the inn once again, he remembered his debt. He apologized to the innkeeper and asked what he owed for the eggs. The innkeeper handed him a large sheet of paper covered with numbers. He said, "This is your bill. According to my calculations, you owe me four thousand kroner<sup>1</sup>." (That's approximately four thousand dollars in American money!)

**3** At first, the farmer thought it was a joke, but he soon realized the innkeeper was quite serious. "You ate ten eggs," said the innkeeper, "and if those had hatched, I would have had ten chickens. They, too, would have laid eggs, and so on. I have determined that, in the four years since you were here, I could have made four thousand kroner from those ten scrambled eggs."

The farmer protested, but it was no use. He was summoned to appear before the town judge the next day.

The farmer realized he would need a good, honest lawyer to defend him. He asked around town until he found one. The lawyer was outraged when he heard what the innkeeper had charged. He agreed to appear in court the next day to settle the matter.

All arrived in court the next afternoon at the appointed time—except the lawyer. Just as the judge was about to throw the farmer into jail, the lawyer rushed in.

The judge, who did not like to be kept waiting, asked sternly, "Are you this man's lawyer?"

**8** "Yes, I certainly am," replied the lawyer as he tried to catch his breath.

"Why are you late?" demanded the judge. "Do you think we have nothing better to do than wait for you?"

**10** "I'm very sorry, your honor," said the lawyer, still panting. "I lost track of time while I was boiling two bushels of corn and planting them in my field this morning."

**11** There was a roar of laughter in the courtroom. The judge asked, "Sir, have you lost your mind? You don't actually think that cooked corn will grow, do you?"

**12** "Well, if scrambled eggs can turn into chicks, then why not?" The judge understood the lawyer's point. He was outraged by the innkeeper's greed and deception. The judge fined him one hundred kroner, fifty to go to the clever lawyer, and fifty to the farmer.

The farmer thanked the lawyer for his cleverness and happily returned home. After that, he loved to tell the story of how he had once received *fifty kroner* for eating a plate of scrambled eggs.

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<sup>1</sup> **Kroner** is pronounced KRO-ner. This is the plural of krone, which is the Danish money unit, similar to an American dollar.

**36** Explain the tone created by the author’s words and phrases in paragraphs 10-12. In your response, use details and examples from the story that support your explanation. Write your answer on the lines below.


**37** Explain what the innkeeper probably learns from his experience. In your response, use details and examples from the story that support your explanation.


## Tackling The Trash

by Jill Esbaum



**1** In May of 1997, Chad Pregracke came home from college for summer vacation. As usual, he was disgusted by the junk that littered the riverbanks of the Mississippi near his hometown of East Moline, Illinois. But this time, instead of wondering why someone else didn't clean it up, he decided to tackle a few miles of shoreline himself.

With only a flat-bottom boat, a wheelbarrow, and a sturdy pair of gloves, he motored up and down the river. Whenever he spotted trash, he pulled to shore and picked it up. When his boat was full, he took the load to a landfill. Chad even took pictures of the junk he hauled away. "I thought it might be fun to see how much I could pick up," he says.

**3** Soon the riverbanks near his hometown were litter-free. And Chad was hooked. "I really enjoyed it," he says. "I could see the results day after day. It made me feel good to help my community." So he kept going, sleeping under a tarp each night.

But Chad's money was disappearing fast. Food, gasoline for his boat, landfill charges, and film costs were gobbling up his resources. He wondered if others would help support his cleanup.

**5** First Chad talked to government agencies like the National Fish and Wildlife Service and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. While happy about his work, they didn't have much money to donate.

So Chad called area businesses. He explained about growing up beside the river, the mess it had become, and his determination to clean it up. Most companies wouldn't help either. But finally one company decided to lend a hand. Chad got his first small grant and the encouragement he needed to find others to help as well.

**7** Chad began visiting other companies in person and found that his careful record keeping paid off. People couldn't help being impressed by his enthusiasm, or by the pictures of the junk he'd already hauled away. The next year, Chad received enough money to finish his summer's work with several volunteers to help him. In two years he raised enough money to buy two more boats and hire five helpers for the next summer.

In 1998, Chad's goal was to clean 1,000 miles of shoreline. Beginning in northern Iowa, he and his crew slowly worked their way south. Their final destination was St. Louis, Missouri. Along the way, Chad had to receive permission from each town to pile his junk in a parking lot or field. When he finished each area, he trucked the trash to the nearest landfill.

**9** As the hot summer wore on, the work became more difficult. The farther south they traveled, the more trash littered the shore. One mile of shoreline was so full of old tires, it took more than a month to clean—one small boatload at a time. Sheltered only by tents and tarps, Chad and his crew battled mosquitoes and summer storms. By summer's end, only Chad and one helper remained on the job. When cold weather forced them to stop, they were just fifty miles from St. Louis.

Chad didn't spend the winter months catching up on sleep. He needed to raise more than \$100,000. Part of the money would go toward finishing his work near St. Louis. The rest would fund his next project, cleaning the 270-mile shoreline of the Illinois River.

**11** Chad also traveled from town to town. He spoke at schools, churches, and town halls. He shared his story with community groups, conservation clubs, and Scout troops. He asked them to help keep the river clean.

People were eager to help. Someone even offered him a used houseboat for free. There was only one catch: it was resting on the muddy bottom of the Illinois River. "It was a real mess," Chad remembers. "The most totally trashed thing you've seen in your life."

**13** After a lot of repair work and elbow grease, The Miracle became the crew's floating home and headquarters—a big step up from tents and tarps.

In 2000, Chad began hosting community-wide cleanup days in cities along the Mississippi. "I want to get as many people involved as possible," he says.

**What has Chad taken out of the rivers?  
Here is a partial list of what he's pulled out as of July 2001.**

- |                               |                          |
|-------------------------------|--------------------------|
| • 13 air conditioners         | • 171 coolers            |
| • 8 anchors                   | • 2 swing sets           |
| • 348 bottles of antifreeze   | • 49 sinks               |
| • 18 duck decoys              | • 72 TV sets             |
| • 3 baby pools                | • 55 life jackets        |
| • 968 buckets                 | • 4,870 car tires        |
| • 287 refrigerators           | • 28 garbage cans        |
| • 1,109 55-gallon steel drums | • 14,240 pounds of metal |
| • 27 bicycles                 | • 223 milk crates        |
| • 40 barbeque grills          | • 46 washing machines    |
| • 430 feet of steel cable     | • 56 stoves              |
| • 90 boat bumpers             | • 350 propane tanks      |
| • 75 water heaters            | • 28 toilets             |
| • 307 chairs                  |                          |



**38** The houseboat headquarters for Chad’s team was named **The Miracle**. Is **The Miracle** an appropriate name for the houseboat? In your response, use information from the article that supports your answer. Write your answer on the lines below.


