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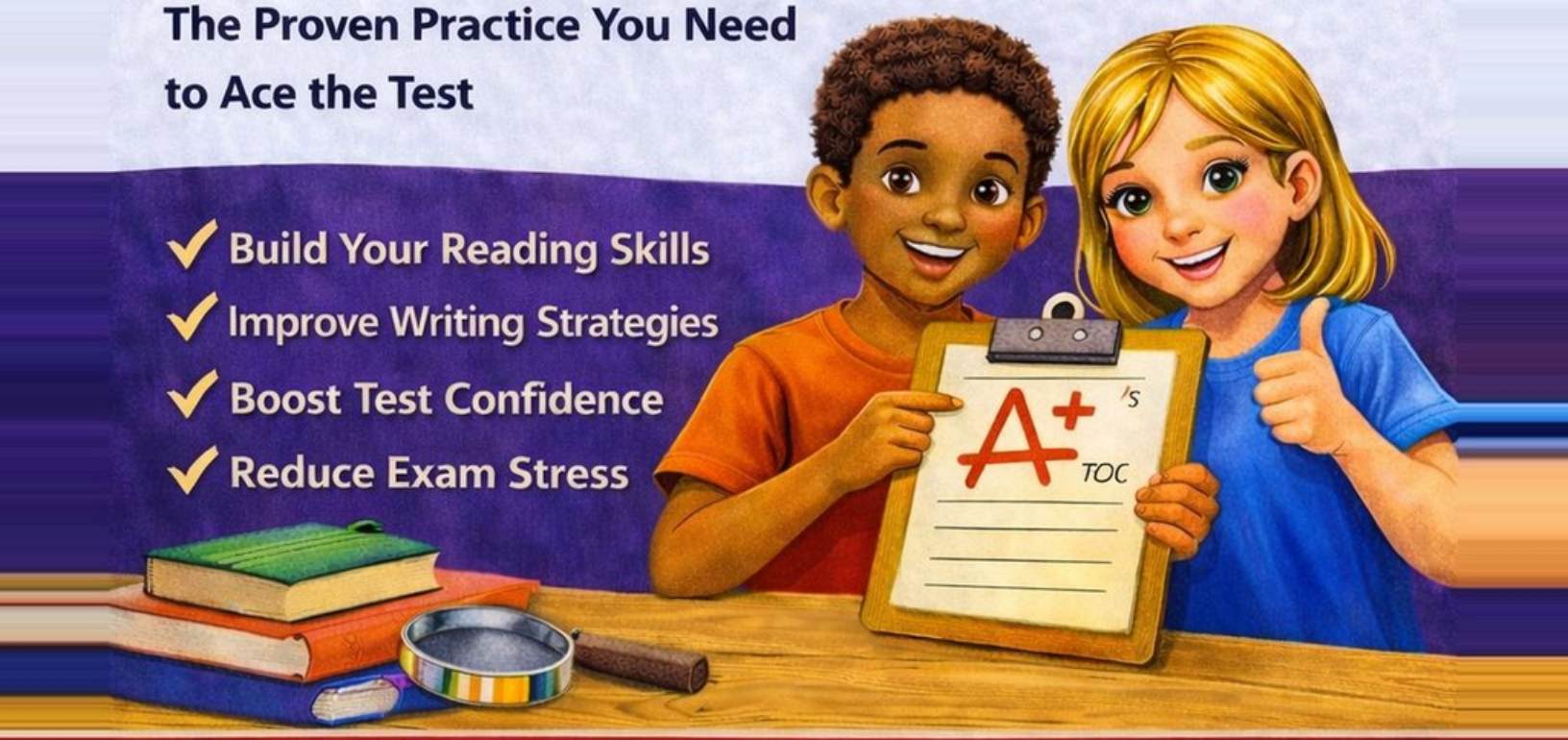
8 South Dakota Smarter Balanced

Grade 6

English Language Arts (ELA)

Practice Tests

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Reza Nazari

Grade 6 · South Dakota SDCA

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The Big Day

Your Test Day Playbook.

Tear this page out in your head. Take it with you.

◯ The Night Before

- Pack your bag now, not in the morning. Sharpened pencils, eraser, water bottle, ID if needed.
- Do *not* cram. A short, easy review is fine. A four-hour panic session is not.
- Eat a normal dinner. Tonight is not the night to try something new.
- Go to bed the same time you do on a school night. A tired brain reads slower.

◯ The Morning Of

- Eat breakfast — something with protein, not just sugar. Your brain is about to work hard.
- Move a little. A walk, stretching, even bouncing on your toes wakes up your body.
- Arrive early. Rushing in a few minutes late sets a rattled mood for the whole test.
- Take one slow, deep breath at the door. *In for four, out for six.* Try it.

◯ During the Test

- **Skim the questions first**, then read the passage with purpose.
- **Never leave a question blank.** A careful guess can be right; empty is always wrong.
- **Stuck? Circle it and move on.** Easier points are waiting. Come back when your brain is fresh.
- **Trust your first read.** Changing answers without a real reason almost always hurts.
- **Watch the clock but do not stare at it.** Glance every few questions. That is enough.

One last thing.

When you sit down on test day, remember: you are not starting this test alone. Every passage you read, every question you untangled, every morning you chose to open this book — all of it is sitting there in your head, on your team. Now go show it what you can do.

— Reza Nazari

Table of Contents

★ Practice Test 1 ____ 10
★ Practice Test 2 ____ 46
★ Practice Test 3 ____ 81
★ Practice Test 4 ____ 117
★ Practice Test 5 ____ 153
★ Practice Test 6 ____ 189
★ Practice Test 7 ____ 225
★ Practice Test 8 ____ 260
Practice Test Answer Keys ____ 297
Practice Test Answers and Explanations ____ 301

14) How do the story and poem approach a similar idea?

(A) Both texts show characters acting mainly to gain approval from others.
(B) Both texts treat strong feelings as more important than lasting consequences.
(C) Both texts suggest that steady, thoughtful action can influence what comes next.
(D) Both texts suggest that quick results matter more than careful choices.

Use both "After the First Storm" and "Barrel Song" to answer this question.

15) **This question has two correct answers.** Choose the **two** details from the story and the poem that **together** best support the shared theme.

(A) "In the end, Quinn updates the checklist and uses it during every storm check." (story, paragraph 4)
(B) "The work at the alley behind the gym should be simple, but a wrench tucked into the side pocket of a bucket keeps pulling Quinn's attention in another direction." (story, paragraph 1)
(C) "What we return to repair grows steadier than it began, / and one clear choice can steer the heart." (poem, second stanza)
(D) "The day does not announce itself / with silver bells or sudden flame." (poem, first stanza)
(E) "Quinn wants to prove dependable, but the work now carries both public expectations and private meaning." (story, paragraph 2)

Use both "After the First Storm" and "Barrel Song" to answer this question.

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16) Which sentence best summarizes the connection between the two texts?

(A) The story shows a practical choice, while the poem suggests that effort matters only when others notice it.

(B) The story focuses on a specific decision, while the poem mostly recalls a moment from the past.

(C) The story and poem both suggest that responsible choices can shape what remains afterward.

(D) Both texts suggest that immediate results matter more than what lasts over time.

Read the article. Then answer questions 17–23.

Finding the Real Night Sky

1 If you live in a city, the night sky probably shows only the brightest stars and maybe a planet or two. Streetlights, signs, and headlights scatter so much light into the air that fainter stars disappear behind a soft glow. Scientists call this glow light pollution.

2 Dark-sky parks are one response. These are natural areas where local officials work with communities to shield outdoor lights, use warmer-colored bulbs, and aim fixtures toward the ground. The goal is simple: let the real sky come back into view after nightfall.

3 The International Dark Sky Association now recognizes more than two hundred parks around the world. Visitors often describe their first clear view of the Milky Way as unlike anything they expected. Instead of a blank black space, the sky reveals bands of faint clouds, shooting stars, and the steady motion of satellites.

4 Dark skies matter beyond wonder. Many animals depend on dim light to find food, to migrate, or to return to nests. Too much artificial light confuses sea turtles, which can head toward streetlights instead of the ocean after hatching. Scientists have also linked bright nights to disruptions in insect populations, which in turn affect birds and bats.

5 Dark-sky work is not about turning off every light. Instead, it is about using the right light for the right task. A well-aimed porch light can still welcome a guest while sending almost no light upward. Communities that follow these principles often find they save money on electricity too.

6 Visiting a dark-sky park requires some planning, but the reward is a view that earlier generations took for granted. Standing under that darkness, visitors often feel a sense of wonder that is hard to describe, and a reminder that what we lose is often quieter than what we build.

17) Which statement best expresses the central idea of the article?

(A) Streetlights are the main reason people live in cities today.
(B) Dark-sky parks help restore natural nighttime conditions for people and wildlife.
(C) Scientists do not yet understand the effects of artificial light.
(D) Sea turtles are the only animals affected by light pollution.

Use the article "Finding the Real Night Sky" to answer this question.

18) As used in paragraph 1, what does the word *scatter* most nearly mean?

(A) spread in many directions
(B) fall quickly toward the ground
(C) store in a single place
(D) measure carefully

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