

Middle School Level

Reading Assessment

Multiple Choice Items

The PSSA Reading Assessment is given in grades 3 through 8 and 11.

- Look at the sample questions included here and practice – your teacher has the correct answers
- Don't give up before you begin – even if the story looks difficult
- Read the questions before you read the story or passage
- Think about the questions while you read
- Use a highlighter or pencil to mark important parts of the story
- You can write notes in the story to help you later
- You will not be able to use a dictionary or thesaurus for the multiple choice questions
- Use reading skills:
 - prediction – try to guess what the story will be about and what will happen next as you read
 - previous experience – what do you already know about this subject?
 - visualize – picture in your head what you are reading about
 - story maps
 - check yourself while you read - are you understanding?
 - figure out an unknown word
 - look for the words **or** and **and** near the word, as they may give a synonym or clue to the meaning of the word
 - use your native language
 - look at the part of speech (noun, verb, adjective, adverb)
 - think about the rest of the sentence and paragraph

Reading Assessment

Multiple Choice Items (continued)

- On a vocabulary question, the unknown word should be the same part of speech as the answer (if the unknown word is a verb, the answer should also be a verb)
- Use the headings in the story to help you find answers
- Watch out for these distracters – they could make you pick a wrong answer:
 - questions or answers with words like **all**, **none**, **always**, **never** – these are tricky
 - the answer choice sounds good but it is not really in the story
 - the answer choice is in the story, but it does not really answer the question being asked – (be sure to choose the option that *answers the question*)
 - the answer choice is partially true but not completely true

Reading Assessment

Open Ended (Performance) Items

- Look at the sample Released Performance Task included here and practice using the rubric
- Look at the sample scored student response included here as a model of a great response
- Think about the topic and plan before you begin to write
- Make an outline before you begin to write
- Use a dictionary and a thesaurus
- Use a dictionary with your native language
- Use the rubric to review your answer, and make sure you included what you need for the highest score
- Even if you can not complete the whole question, write what you can so you can receive some points

GRADE 8 — Released Narrative Passage and Items

In this article you will read about domesticating a wild animal. A wild animal can be full of surprises. Read the article and answer the questions that follow.

A Bear in the Family

by Ben Mikaelson

Bringing Baby Home

Thirteen years ago my wife and I adopted Buffy. A research facility that had been studying him returned him to the game farm where he had been born.

Melanie and I knew little about Buffy's past except that he could not go to a zoo or be freed to the wild because his claws had been removed (we don't know why). And we knew he'd probably be treated as a useless animal—and therefore killed—if left on the farm.

So we agreed to take the 20-pound, 16-week-old cub to our Montana home.

Before picking up our new baby, we read dozens of books on bears and got the state and federal licenses required to keep the animal. We spent \$25,000 to build a sturdy chain-link pen around two sides of our house. We made Buffy a spring-fed pond, a playground and a den and gave him plenty of running room.

Finally, we were ready for anything—we thought.

Raising a Rascal

The cuddly rascal who suddenly joined our family (which also includes four cats and a dog) caught us unprepared.

The first night, I lay in bed listening to his haunting cry. I crept out and sat near him in his den. After a few minutes he crawled on my lap and sucked the pads on his front feet. I hummed

and rocked him to sleep.

The first six months, I rocked Buffy to sleep every night. I spent hours feeding him, playing with him, watching him. Every sound or gesture puzzled me.

Because Buffy's muscle structure and coordination resembles that of a human, his play is very humanlike. Mentally, we find him much harder to figure out. As a mere 100-pound cub, he would stand and shake his head playfully at a neighbor's angry Angus bull. Other times he would cower behind me at the sight of a small lamb.

And he is so mischievous. One day Buffy, then 6 years old and 400 pounds, sneaked into the house while we were gone. For an hour he sat in our bathtub, tearing down the shower curtains and biting open every bottle of shampoo and conditioner he could find. He even turned on the water and smeared some toothpaste in his armpits and on the ceiling.

What a mess! But he was so proud of himself, I had to hug him.

Watch Out for That . . . Tongue!

When we first got Buffy, he nursed from a bottle. When I tried to wean him at 5 months old, he refused solid foods. Melanie solved that problem by substituting his bottled milk with water.

Buffy took one suck and angrily threw the bottle across the kitchen. Then he ran after it and

sucked again. A second time he flung it. By that night he had abandoned his beloved bottle and ate solid food.

Many things about Buffy we learned the hard way. I never appreciated how long his anteater-like tongue was until we were playing one day when he was still a cub.

With a piece of candy in my mouth, I blew gently into Buffy's face to watch his nose twitch. In a blink, Buffy snaked his long tongue to the very back of my throat. He licked my tonsils and stole the candy. While I gagged, my wife howled laughing.

Finally, a Bond Develops

Our friendship with Buffy grew painfully slowly. But one evening, I discovered a wild male black bear attacking Buffy's pen. The wild bear had nearly broken down the door. I shouted and threw rocks until the bear lumbered off, then I crawled in the pen.

Buffy's tiny front feet—he was only about 5 months old at the time—pumped out from under his fuzzy rump as he ran frantically in circles, bawling with fear. Finally he stopped and stared at me. Shaking, he clambered onto my lap and hugged me. I was crying. We cuddled for a long time that night.

Finally we slept the night together, bonding and becoming family. Overnight I became not only his provider but his guardian.

Wild Animals Are Not Pets

Buffy's play can be funny. When he teases the dog, he avoids a nip on the nose by going over to the closet and bringing back a broom to use as a poke stick.

He can also be scary. Last summer, Buffy stood behind me and wrapped his huge forearms around my arms and chest. When I told him to get down, he laid back his ears and squeezed harder. I stomped on his hind toe. He bawled and grabbed the hurt toe, dancing in circles on the other hind foot. Then, standing to his full height,

he roared in my face.

His humid breath fogged my glasses as we stared at each other for several tense seconds. Then he sat and rubbed his toe. I kneeled next to him and helped rub his hurt paw. Soon he nuzzled my nose, his gesture of forgiveness.

Now read each question and mark the best answer on your answer booklet.

92. By reading the title and headings in this article, the reader can predict that
- E raising a bear can be like raising a child.
 - F a bear can be too mischievous as a pet.
 - G bears like candy and human food.
 - H everyone should adopt a bear cub as a pet.
93. An example of an **opinion** from this article is
- A Buffy's muscle structure resembles that of a human.
 - B Buffy would probably have been killed at the game farm.
 - C Buffy's tongue is long, like an anteater's.
 - D Buffy, as a cub, was rocked to sleep every night.
94. This article is a work of
- E fiction.
 - F poetry.
 - G nonfiction.
 - H genre.

95. As a reader of this article, a person can
- A learn about bears and enjoy a true story.
 - B find out about research facilities and their work.
 - C be entertained with this fictional account.
 - D learn about research and its results.

96. An important idea from this article is that
- E a bear cub was studied for research.
 - F the family had four cats and a dog.
 - G a wild animal became a part of the family.
 - H a wild bear tried to attack Buffy.

97. A supporting detail or nonessential piece of information from the article is that
- A Buffy was mischievous as a cub.
 - B Buffy became a member of the family.
 - C the family needed to learn more about raising bear cubs.
 - D they spent \$25,000 to build a pen.

98. Research related to this article would **most** likely be about
- E families who adopt wild animals.
 - F bear attacks on farm animals.
 - G bear cubs and their development.
 - H favorite foods of young animals.

99. Which **best** defines the word *abandoned* as it is used in this article?

- A free from restraint
- B given up
- C withdrawn
- D surrendered

100. Calling Buffy "our new baby" is an example of

- E formal speech.
- F dialect.
- G jargon.
- H informal speech.

101. This article should be recommended to someone who

- A likes to read about farm animals.
- B wants to read an amusing story.
- C is considering living on a farm.
- D has bears in their neighborhood.

102. The author tells of the bear's many

- E humanlike characteristics.
- F beastlike behaviors.
- G fine motor skills.
- H problematic qualities.

103. An example of a **fact** from this article is

- A Buffy was a twenty-pound cub at his adoption.
- B the family was ready for Buffy's arrival.
- C bear cubs make wonderful pets.
- D Buffy is a better pet than a dog.

104. The author's use of the word *anteater-like* to describe Buffy's tongue is an example of

- E metaphor.
- F simile.
- G allusion.
- H hyperbole.

105. The word *mischievous* in this article comes from the Middle English word *mischief*, meaning

- A gossip.
- B bad luck.
- C chief.
- D calamity.

106. The word *coordination* in this article comes from the Latin words *co* + *ordinatio*, meaning

- E with + arrangement.
- F with + facility.
- G against + arrangement.
- H together + work.

107. To start to write a paper about black bears, the **best** source would be

- A an interview with the author of this article.
- B to read about all bears in an encyclopedia.
- C to e-mail a friend to see what he or she knows.
- D to go the forest and find a bear.

108. By using context clues, the reader can determine that the word *cower*, as in "cower behind me," means

- E jump repeatedly.
- F hide fearfully.
- G crawl slowly.
- H rise quickly.

Use the table of contents below to answer question 109.

Table of Contents	
Chapter	Page(s)
1. Meet the Bear	5
2. Bear Species	10
3. Bear Habitats	16
4. Hibernation	23
5. Bears as Hunters	29
6. Food and Feeding	34
7. Family Life of Bears	41
8. Bears and Humans	47
9. Bears in Captivity	52
10. Conservation of Bears	58
Additional Sources	67
Books	67
Places to Write	69
Internet Sites	71
Glossary	73
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109. In which chapter would you find information about weaning bears?

- A Chapter 4
- B Chapter 5
- C Chapter 6
- D Chapter 7

PENNSYLVANIA READING ASSESSMENT RUBRIC

This rubric was designed by the Reading Assessment Advisory Committee to be used in the Pennsylvania Reading Assessment. The elements of reading being assessed through this rubric are limited to those that can be addressed through written responses in the on-demand performance portion of the assessment, specifically *Understanding, Comprehension* and *Connections*. *Risk-taking* is also an important element, developing throughout life's learning process. However, given the constraints of this assessment, *Risk-taking* was not included. The RAAC advises that assessments developed at the classroom, school and district levels include this element.

LEVEL 4

- Demonstrates a thorough understanding of the complexity of the text through detailed elaboration and extensions of text with sophisticated ideas, insights and reflections. There are no errors in text-based facts.
- Exhibits a level of comprehension that extends beyond the literal, to the personal, critical and/or evaluative responses.
- Cites evidence, makes a variety of strong connections to other experiences, texts, concepts, issues and/or cultural settings.

LEVEL 3 *

- Demonstrates confident, coherent and adequate understanding and interpretation of the text through some elaboration and extension.
- There are no major errors in text-based facts.
- Exhibits a level of comprehension that reflects extensions that are more literal or personal.
- Makes connections to personal experiences, other texts and/or background knowledge.

LEVEL 2

- Demonstrates a limited understanding and/or interpretation of the text. There may be errors in text-based facts.
- Exhibits a level of comprehension that consists primarily of literal responses to the text.
- Makes connections between other experiences and text that are disjointed, fragmented, limited and not integral to the text.

LEVEL 1

- Demonstrates an attempt to respond with very limited evidence of understanding of the text.
- There may be errors in text-based facts.
- Exhibits a level of comprehension that consists of disjointed, incomplete or irrelevant responses.
- Might use relevant copied text.
- Makes only distant connections to the text, using sketchy details.

LEVEL 0 - consists of 3 types of responses:

- **Non-Scorable (NS)** papers are blank.
- **Off-Task (OT)** papers show no relationship to task and text, are illegible, irrelevant copied text, or written in a language other than English.
- **Intentionally Off-Task (IO)** papers are ones that have unrelenting profanity, are a refusal to perform, state a baseless charge of too personal or are drawings, scribbling, etc.

*Note - Level 3 (or higher) is to be viewed as the performance standard for all students.

Scored Student Responses
A Bear in the Family
Grade 8 Narrative Passage

184. The local wildlife management officer is looking for a home for a bear. Use the information in the passage to help explain whether your family could provide a good home for the bear.

As you write, be sure to:

- Explain whether your family could provide a home for a bear.
- Use the author's information to explain your reasoning.
- Include your own ideas.
- Write neatly and clearly.
- Use only the space provided.

I don't think my family could provide a good home for a bear. First of all, we don't have a big enough house for a bear and it wouldn't be happy or have enough room to exercise. A bear would be too much responsibility and I don't think my parents would want to spend 500 dollars on a bear, let alone \$25,000! Also, our house is in a pretty crowded neighborhood and I don't think the neighbors would like having a bear in their backyard. Another thing is that 5 people live in my house and it's hectic enough as it is. I've always been taught that people shouldn't have wild animals as pets and I believe them because I don't think it is right to keep a wild animal in a cage. It could also get dangerous at times. For example, when Buffy squeezed his owner, he could have really hurt him. Also, if we did get a bear, we would know that someday we would have to give him up and that would be hard. And if all bears are as mischievous as Buffy, my parents wouldn't think it was cute. Bears also seem to need a lot of attention and need to be played with. In our house, everybody would be too busy to really care about a bear that they're probably scared of. Bears need nice, quiet environments with lots of room to play and exercise and that's something my family would not be able to provide in a crowded suburb of a large city.

4 – This response clearly explains why his family could not provide a home for a bear using specific information from the text. For example, the response explains the idea of not wanting to spend money by mentioning “let alone \$25,000.” The danger is explained by the example “when Buffy squeezed his owner.” The lack of room, the neighborhood, and the bear’s need for attention are also mentioned. The student includes his own insights. There are no errors in text-based facts.