



# ***New York State Testing Program***

## **ELA**

## **Common Core Sample Questions**

**Grade 4**

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## The Hawks and Their Friends

*by Ellen C. Babbitt*

1           A family of Hawks lived on the western shore of a lake not far from the great forest. On the northern shore of this lake lived a Lion, King of Beasts. On the eastern shore lived Kingfisher. On the southern shore of the lake lived a Turtle.

2           “Have you many friends near here?” the Mother Hawk asked the Father Hawk.

3           “No, not one in this part of the forest,” he said.

4           “You must find some friends. We must have someone who can help us if ever we are in danger, or in trouble,” said the Mother Hawk.

5           “With whom shall I make friends?” asked the Father Hawk. “With the Kingfisher, who lives on the eastern shore, and with the Lion on the north,” said the Mother Hawk, “and with the Turtle who lives on the southern shore of this lake.”

6           The Father Hawk did so.

7           One day men hunted in the great forest from morning until night, but found nothing. Not wishing to go home empty-handed, they went to the western shore of the lake to see what they could find there. “Let us stay here to-night,” they said, “and see what we can find in the morning.”

8           So they made beds of leaves for themselves and lay down to sleep. They had made their beds under the tree in which the Hawks had their nest. But the hunters could not go to sleep because they were bothered by the flies and mosquitoes.

9           At last the hunters got up and made a fire, so that the smoke would drive away the flies and mosquitoes.

10          The smoke awoke the birds, and the young ones cried out.

11          “Did you hear that?” said one of the hunters. “That was the cry of birds! They will do very well for our breakfast. There are young ones in that nest.” And the hunters put more wood on the fire, and made it blaze up.

12          Then the Mother bird said to the Father: “These men are planning to eat our young ones. We must ask our friends to save us. Go to the Kingfisher and tell him what danger we are in.”

13          The Father Hawk flew with all speed to the Kingfisher’s nest and woke him with his cry.

14          “Why have you come?” asked the Kingfisher.

15 Then the Father Hawk told the Kingfisher what the hunters planned to do.  
“Fear not,” said the Kingfisher.

16 “I will help you. Go back quickly and comfort my friend your mate, and say  
that I am coming.”

17 So the Father Hawk flew back to his nest, and the Kingfisher flew to the  
western shore and went into the lake near the place where the fire was burning.

18 While the Father Hawk was away, the hunters had climbed up into the tree.  
Just as they neared the nest, the Kingfisher, beating the water with his wings,  
sprinkled water on the fire and put it out.

19 Down came the hunters to make another fire. When it was burning well they  
climbed the tree again.

20 Once more the Kingfisher put it out. As often as a fire was made, the  
Kingfisher put it out.

21 Midnight came and the Kingfisher was now very tired.

22 The Mother Hawk noticed this and said to her mate: “The Kingfisher is tired  
out. Go and ask the Turtle to help us so that the Kingfisher may have a rest.”

23 The Father Hawk flew down and said, “Rest awhile, Friend Kingfisher; I will  
go and get the Turtle.”

24 So the Father Hawk flew to the southern shore and wakened the Turtle.  
“What is your errand, Friend?” asked the Turtle.

25 “Danger has come to us,” said the Father Hawk, and he told the Turtle about  
the hunters. “The Kingfisher has been working for hours, and now he is very tired.  
That is why I have come to you.”

26 The Turtle said, “I will help you at once.” Then the Turtle went to the western  
shore where the Hawks lived. He dived into the water, collected some mud and put  
out the fire with it. Then he lay still.

27 The hunters cried: “Why should we bother to get the young Hawks? Let us  
kill this Turtle. He will make a fine breakfast for all of us. We must be careful or he  
will bite us. Let us throw a net over him and turn him over.”

28 They had no nets with them, so they took some vines, and tore their clothes  
into strings and made a net. But when they had put the net all over the Turtle, they  
could not roll him over. Instead, the Turtle suddenly dived down into the deep  
water.

29 The men were so eager to get him that they did not let go of the net, so down they went into the water. But the Turtle escaped.

30 As they came out they said: “Half the night a Kingfisher kept putting out our fires. Now we have torn our clothes and got all wet trying to get this Turtle. We will build another fire, and at sunrise we will eat those young Hawks.”

31 And they began to build another fire. The Mother Hawk heard them, and said to her mate: “Sooner or later these men will get our young. Do go and tell our friend the Lion.”

32 At once the Father Hawk flew to the Lion.

33 “Why do you come at this hour of the night?” asked the Lion.

34 The Hawk told him the whole story. The Lion said: “I will come at once. You go back and comfort your mate and the young ones.”

35 Soon the Lion came roaring. When the hunters heard the Lion’s roar they cried, “Now we shall all be killed.” And away they ran as fast as they could go.

36 When the Lion came to the foot of the tree, not one of the hunters was to be seen. Then the Kingfisher and the Turtle came up, and the Hawks said: “You have saved us. Friends in need are friends indeed.”

Adapted from *More Jataka Tales*  
www.gutenberg.org

**Words that could be defined for students are in bold.**

**1** Read this line from paragraph 2 of the story.

*“Have you many friends near here?” the Mother Hawk asked the Father Hawk.*

Mother Hawk asks this question because she

- A needs a new place to live
- B knows her family may need help
- C feels lonely on the shore
- D knows that the hunters are coming

**Key: B**

**Aligned CCLS:** RL.4.1

**Commentary:** This question aligns with RL.4.1 because it asks students to read closely, paying attention to details in order to draw inferences from the text.

**Rationale:** Option B is correct. Mother Hawk is worried that they do not have friends close by if they were to ever need help.

**2** Which statements best describes how Father and Mother Hawk work together throughout the text?

- A** Mother Hawk tries to get Father Hawk to change his mind.
- B** Mother Hawk asks for Father Hawk's opinion on problems.
- C** Father Hawk carries out what Mother Hawk requests.
- D** Father Hawk brings up ideas for Mother Hawk to consider.

**Key: C**

**Aligned CCLS:** RL.4.3

**Commentary:** This question aligns with RL.4.3 because it asks students to describe important characters in the story.

**Rationale:** Option C is correct. The plot of the story builds on Father Hawk doing what Mother Hawk requests.

3

Read this sentence from paragraph 25 of the story.

*“Danger has come to us,” said the Father Hawk, and he told the Turtle about the hunters.*

What danger is Father Hawk worried about?

- A The hunters are trying to hunt all of Father Hawk’s friends.
- B The hunters have set a fire to burn down Father Hawk’s nest.
- C The hunters are planning to trap the Turtle in a net.
- D The hunters want to eat Father Hawk’s young.

**Key: D**

**Aligned CCLS:** RL.4.3

**Commentary:** This question aligns with RL.4.3 because it asks students to describe important events in the story.

**Rationale:** Option D is correct. The hunters are trying to catch the young Hawks to eat for breakfast.

4

Which piece of dialogue supports the story's **main theme**?

- A "Let us stay here to-night," they said, "and see what we can find in the morning." (paragraph 7)
- B "Go back quickly and comfort my friend your mate, and say that I am coming." (paragraph 16)
- C "Sooner or later these men will get our young." (paragraph 31)
- D "Why do you come at this hour of the night?" (paragraph 33)

**Key: B**

**Aligned CCLS:** RL.4.2

**Commentary:** This question aligns with RL.4.2 because it asks students to determine how a central theme of the story is conveyed through details in the text.

**Rationale:** Option B is correct. The main theme of the story is that friends help each other in times of need. This statement by the Kingfisher illustrates that theme.



5

Based on the text, which word best describes the hunters?

- A determined
- B brave
- C skillful
- D considerate

**Key:** A

**Aligned CCLS:** RL.4.3

**Commentary:** This question aligns with RL.4.3 because it asks students to describe characters in the story.

**Rationale:** Option A is correct. The hunters continue to go after the young Hawks throughout the entire story, battling the Kingfisher and the Turtle. Only when the Lion threatens the hunters do they finally give up.

6

Read this sentence from paragraph 32 of the story.

*“At once the Father Hawk flew to the Lion.”*

How does Father Hawk’s action lead to the ending of the story?

- A Mother Hawk asked Father Hawk to approach the Lion for help.
- B The Lion asked Father Hawk why he had come to visit.
- C The Lion told Father Hawk to go back and comfort his family.
- D The Lion came to help the hawks, chasing away the hunters.

**Key: D**

**Aligned CCLS:** RL.4.3

**Commentary:** This question aligns with RL.4.3 because it asks students to determine how a character’s actions affect events in the story.

**Rationale:** Option D is correct. After Father Hawk goes to the Lion, the Lion ends the story by chasing away the hunters.

## What is Antarctica?

### What is Antarctica?

1 Antarctica is a continent. It is Earth's fifth largest continent. Antarctica is covered in ice. Antarctica covers Earth's South Pole.

### What is Antarctica Like?

2 Antarctica is the coldest place on Earth. The temperature in the winter is cold enough to freeze water all the time. The temperature in the middle of Antarctica is much colder than the temperature on the coasts.

3 Antarctica has two seasons: summer and winter. Earth is tilted in space and the direction of tilt never changes. During summer, Antarctica is on the side of Earth tilted toward the sun. It is always sunny. In winter, Antarctica is on the side of the Earth tilted away from the sun. Then, the continent is always dark.

4 Antarctica is a desert. It does not rain or snow a lot there. When it snows, the snow does not melt and builds up over many years to make large, thick sheets of ice, called ice sheets. Antarctica is made up of lots of ice in the form of glaciers, ice shelves and icebergs.

5 Antarctica has no trees or bushes. The only plants that can live in a place that cold are moss and algae.

### Who Lives in Antarctica?

6 Antarctica is too cold for people to live there for a long time. Scientists take turns going there to study the ice. Tourists visit Antarctica in the summers. The oceans around Antarctica are home to many types of whales. Antarctica is also home to seals and penguins.

### What Can NASA Learn About Earth From Studying Antarctica?

7 NASA uses satellites to study Antarctica. NASA wants to know how Antarctica is changing. Scientists want to know what the changes in Earth's climate are doing to Antarctica's ice sheets. They also want to know what changes in Antarctica's ice might do to Earth's climate.

8 One tool that NASA uses is ICESat. That stands for the Ice, Cloud and land Elevation Satellite. Using ICESat, NASA can measure changes in the size of Antarctica's ice sheets. ICESat also helps NASA understand how changing polar ice may affect the rest of the planet. Melting ice sheets in Antarctica may change sea levels all over the world.

9 NASA instruments have also helped scientists create detailed maps of Antarctica. These maps help researchers when planning trips to Antarctica. They also give people a clearer view of the continent.

### **What Can NASA Learn About Space From Studying Antarctica?**

10 Antarctica is a good place to find meteorites that are easier to see on the white ice. Also, meteorites that fall to Antarctica are protected by the ice for a long time.

11 NASA sends teams to Antarctica to learn more about the planet Mars. Antarctica and Mars have a lot in common. Both places are cold. Both places are dry like a desert. NASA tested robots in Antarctica that later landed on Mars.

12 NASA also goes to Antarctica to study astronaut nutrition. Like people who are in Antarctica in the winter, astronauts in space are not in the sunlight. The sun helps the human body make vitamins. Scientists study people who visit Antarctica to learn how to help astronauts in space get enough vitamins.

[www.nasa.gov](http://www.nasa.gov)

**Words that could be defined for students are in bold.**

7

According to the article, NASA studies Antarctica for all of the following reasons EXCEPT

- A Antarctica helps us understand ice.
- B Antarctica helps us understand important rare plants.
- C Antarctica is a good place to find meteorites.
- D Antarctica is a good place to test robots.

**Key: B**

**Aligned CCLS:** RI.4.2

**Commentary:** This question aligns with RI.4.2 because it asks students to identify which of the details listed in the options support the main idea of the passage: that Antarctica has unique characteristics that make it useful for NASA research.

**Rationale:** Option B is correct. Although the passage does in fact state that Antarctica has rare plants, it is not one of the characteristics that NASA finds particularly useful to study. All of the other options are characteristics the passage clearly states are reasons why NASA studies Antarctica.

8

Read these two sentences from paragraph 3:

*“In winter, Antarctica is on the side of the Earth tilted away from the sun. Then, the continent is always dark.”*

Which of the following describes the relationship between these two sentences?

- A The sentences contrast two events.
- B The sentences describe two steps in the same process.
- C The first sentence explains the reason for the second.
- D The second sentence gives the cause of the first.

**Key: C**

**Aligned CCLS:** RI.4.8

**Commentary:** The question aligns to CCLS RI.4.8. It asks students to identify the logical connection between two important sentences in the description of the Antarctic seasons. To answer correctly students need to understand the basic ideas of the paragraph and how they are logically related.

**Rationale:** Option C is correct. The reason for the continual darkness of the Antarctic winter is that it is continually tilted away from the sun.

9

What can NASA learn from studying people living in Antarctica that would help astronauts?

- A the nutritional effects of a long-term lack of sunlight
- B the extra vitamins the body has to make during the winter
- C the seasons when astronauts would have the best nutrition in space
- D the types of vitamins the body needs when it is exposed to the sun

**Key: A**

**Aligned CCLS:** RI.4.3

**Commentary:** This question aligns with CCLS RI.4.3. It requires students to trace the relationship between a series of scientific ideas.

**Rationale:** Option A is correct. The lack of sunlight during the Antarctic winter reduces the vitamins produced in the bodies of humans who live there, having potentially harmful nutritional effects. According to the passage, NASA studies these effects because they are similar to those astronauts experience when in space for long periods of time.

10

According to the passage, the changing size of Antarctica’s ice sheets has an effect on

- A living conditions on the continent
- B the temperature of the air and clouds
- C the amount of wildlife that can survive there
- D sea levels all around the world

**Key:** D

**Aligned CCLS:** RI.4.1

**Commentary:** This question aligns with CCLS RI.4.1 because it requires students to answer a question by referring to details in the passage.

**Rationale:** Option D is correct. The passage tells us that “melting ice sheets in Antarctica may change sea levels all over the world”; students need to infer that when ice sheets melt they change size. The passage says nothing about changes in ice sheets affecting human inhabitants, air and cloud temperatures, or wildlife.



11

Which heading in the article would you look under to find out about the weather in Antarctica?

- A What is Antarctica Like?
- B Who Lives in Antarctica?
- C What Can NASA Learn About Earth From Studying Antarctica?
- D What Can NASA Learn About Space From Studying Antarctica?

**Key:** A

**Aligned CCLS:** RI.4.5

**Commentary:** This item aligns with CCLS RI.4.5 because it asks the student to use text features to locate information in the passage.

**Rationale:** Option A is correct. Questions about temperature would most likely be—and in fact are—answered in the section under the heading “What is Antarctica Like?” The other sections would probably not be primarily focused on this type of information.

*Passage 1: Myth*

**Why the Evergreen Trees Never Lose Their Leaves**

*by Florence Holbrook*

1 Winter was coming, and the birds had flown far to the south, where the air was warm and they could find berries to eat. One little bird had broken its wing and could not fly with the others. It was alone in the cold world of frost and snow. The forest looked warm, and it made its way to the trees as well as it could, to ask for help.

2 First it came to a birch-tree. "Beautiful birch-tree," it said, "my wing is broken, and my friends have flown away. May I live among your branches till they come back to me?"

3 "No, indeed," answered the birch-tree, drawing her fair green leaves away. "We of the great forest have our own birds to help. I can do nothing for you."

4 "The birch is not very strong," said the little bird to itself, "and it might be that she could not hold me easily. I will ask the oak." So the bird said, "Great oak-tree, you are so strong, will you not let me live on your boughs till my friends come back in the springtime?"

5 "In the springtime!" cried the oak. "That is a long way off. How do I know what you might do in all that time? Birds are always looking for something to eat, and you might even eat up some of my acorns."

6 "It may be that the willow will be kind to me," thought the bird, and it said, "Gentle willow, my wing is broken, and I could not fly to the south with the other birds. May I live on your branches till the springtime?"

7 The willow did not look gentle then, for she drew herself up proudly and said, "Indeed, I do not know you, and we willows never talk to people whom we do not know. Very likely there are trees somewhere that will take in strange birds. Leave me at once."

8 The poor little bird did not know what to do. Its wing was not yet strong, but it began to fly away as well as it could. Before it had gone far, a voice was heard. "Little bird," it said, "where are you going?"

9 "Indeed, I do not know," answered the bird sadly. "I am very cold."

10 "Come right here, then," said the friendly spruce-tree, for it was her voice that had called. "You shall live on my warmest branch all winter if you choose."

11 “Will you really let me?” asked the little bird eagerly.

12 “Indeed, I will,” answered the kind-hearted spruce-tree. “If your friends have flown away, it is time for the trees to help you. Here is the branch where my leaves are thickest and softest.”

13 “My branches are not very thick,” said the friendly pine-tree, “but I am big and strong, and I can keep the north wind from you and the spruce.”

14 “I can help too,” said a little juniper-tree. “I can give you berries all winter long, and every bird knows that juniper berries are good.”

15 So the spruce gave the lonely little bird a home, the pine kept the cold north wind away from it, and the juniper gave it berries to eat.

16 The other trees looked on and talked together **scornfully**.

17 “I would not have strange birds on my boughs,” said the birch.

18 “I shall not give my acorns away for any one,” said the oak.

19 “I never have anything to do with strangers,” said the willow, and the three trees drew their leaves closely about them.

20 In the morning all those shining green leaves lay on the ground, for the cold north wind had come in the night, and every leaf that it touched fell from the tree.

21 “May I touch every leaf in the forest?” asked the wind in its frolic.

22 “No,” said the forest king. “The trees that have been kind to the little bird with the broken wing may keep their leaves.”

23 This is why the leaves of the spruce, the pine, and the juniper are always green.

www.gutenberg.org

**Words that could be defined for students are in bold.**

## Why are evergreen trees green all year round?

1            Evergreen trees (also known as conifers because of the cones that hold their seeds) include spruce, fir and pine trees. Evergreen trees do lose leaves, but not all at the same time the way that deciduous trees (trees that lose their leaves) do. These trees are specially adapted to live in climates where there may be limited annual sunshine and/or available water.

2            The evergreen thrives in cold climates and its leaves are adapted to make the most of its environment. The leaves of evergreen trees are often small and narrow, like needles. Evergreen leaves can remain on a tree for anywhere from 1-20 years depending on the species of tree, but most leaves remain on the tree for less than five years. It is thought that by keeping its leaves year round the plant might be able to take advantage of periods of thaw during the winter to make food. It also means that the plant does not need to waste energy re-growing a full set of leaves each year.

3            The leaves of an evergreen have the same function as leaves of other trees, mainly to make food for the plant through photosynthesis. The leaves are often a dark green color indicating that a lot of the sun-absorbing compound chlorophyll is present. By having a lot of small leaves packed with chlorophyll, the plant gathers as much energy as it can from the sparse sunlight. It uses this energy to make food in the form of **glucose**. The dark color also helps keep the plant warm in its cold environment (think about wearing dark clothing on sunny day versus light or white clothing. The dark clothing absorbs more sunlight and is hotter to wear).

4            The cold climate where evergreens often live means that even if there is a large amount of precipitation, the water is often frozen and therefore unavailable to the plant. The small surface area and the thick coating of wax on the needle-like leaves allow the plant to retain more water (there is less surface area available for evaporation). The small leaves also have small holes called stomata that are used for gas exchange; these can be closed very tightly to stop water loss. Lastly the small pointy leaves and the cone-like shape of the tree itself shed snow more easily than other trees so the evergreens are not as likely to break under the weight of snow and ice.

[www.ccmr.cornell.edu](http://www.ccmr.cornell.edu)

**Words that could be defined for students are in bold.**

*Short Answer Constructed Response for “Why the Evergreen Trees Never...”*

**12**

In the myth called “Why the Evergreen Trees Never Lose Their Leaves,” why does the little bird begin talking to the trees? Use **two** details from the myth to support your answer.

Write your answer in complete sentences.

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**CCLS Alignment:** RL.4.1

**Commentary:** This item aligns with CCLS RL.4.1 because it requires the student to refer to details and examples in the text when explaining what the text says explicitly.

**Rationale:** The response accurately explains that the bird has broken its wing and cannot fly south for the winter, thus it must spend the winter in the cold, and needs the shelter that the trees can provide.

*Short Answer Constructed Response for “Why are evergreen trees green...”*

**13**

According to the article, evergreen trees are often found in cold, icy climates where water may be frozen. How does the tree survive in these conditions? Use **two** details from the article to support your answer.

Write your answer in complete sentences.

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**CCLS Alignment:** RI.4.3

**Commentary:** This item aligns with CCLS RI.4.3 because it requires the student to refer to specific information in the text in order to explain how evergreen trees survive in cold, icy climates where water may be frozen.

**Rationale:** The response accurately explains that in order to conserve water in the frozen climate evergreens have leaves with a thick coating and a small surface area. They also have small holes called stomata that allow for gas exchange.

*Extended Constructed Response Paired Passages*

- 14** The myth and the article both provide explanations for why evergreen trees keep their leaves in winter. How are the explanations similar and different? Use specific examples from the myth and the article to support your answer.

In your response, be sure to do the following:

- describe what the **myth** says about why evergreen trees keep their leaves in winter
- describe what the **article** says about why evergreen trees keep their leaves in winter
- compare and contrast the two explanations
- include details from both the myth and the article to support your answer

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**CCLS Alignment:** RL.4.9, RI.4.9, W.4.2, W.4.4

**Commentary:** This extended response aligns with CCLS RL.4.9, RI.4.9, W.4.2, and W.4.4 because it requires the student to compare and contrast the treatment of similar themes and topics using supporting details from each text.

**Rationale:** The response accurately compares and contrasts both passages, describing the reasons given in the myth and article for why evergreens keep their leaves in the winter. The response recounts the request of the bird and the rejection of the various trees and the acceptance of the evergreens. The response also explains, based on the informational text, the adaptations evergreens have made to survive in colder climates resulting in year-round leaves.



# **Grade 4**

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