



**NEW ENGLAND  
COMMON ASSESSMENT PROGRAM**

**Released Items  
2007**

**Grade 8  
Reading**

# Reading

Use the definitions below to answer the question.

**order** (or' der) n. 1. peaceful situation  
2. a sequence 3. a command 4. that which  
is supplied, bought, or sold

1 The streets returned to order after the looting.

Which is the **best** definition of the word order as it is used in this sentence?

- A. definition 1
- B. definition 2
- C. definition 3
- D. definition 4

2 A synonym for the word retain is

- A. reply.
- B. close.
- C. keep.
- D. scold.

*This Korean folktale tells the story of a special thief. Read the folktale and then answer the questions that follow.*

## THE CLEVER THIEF

*(Korean folktale)*

IN KOREA, MANY YEARS ago, there once lived an old thief who was known throughout the country as a very clever person—far too clever to be captured. However, one morning he was so careless and overconfident that he was caught stealing some spices from a shopkeeper. With great satisfaction the police brought the thief before an extremely severe judge who fined the old man very heavily. Unable to pay the sum, the thief had to submit instead to a very lengthy jail sentence. When he arrived at the prison he examined with great thoroughness his cell and the building itself, looking for a means of escape. Finding none, he soon gave up the idea of escape and instead decided upon another way of getting out of jail. Early one morning he called for the jailkeeper.

2 “Yes,” the keeper inquired gruffly, “what do you want?”

3 “Take me before the king,” demanded the thief.

4 “The king!” The jailkeeper threw back his head and gasped with laughter. “Why should the king see *you*?”

5 The thief ignored the jailkeeper’s scorn.

“Tell him I have a gift for him—of extraordinary value.”

The jailkeeper, impressed with the old man’s seriousness, finally agreed to arrange the interview.

The next afternoon the thief was taken to the royal quarters. There the king sat upon an enormous throne, looking very impressive and stern.

“Well, well, what is it? What do you have for me?” asked the king. “I don’t have all day to spend on the likes of you, you know.”

Before replying, the thief noted that the prime minister, the secretary of state, the general of the army, and the head jailkeeper were also present.

“Your Majesty,” said the thief, “I have come here to present you with a rare and valuable gift.”

Slipping his hand into his pocket, he carefully withdrew a tiny box, elegantly wrapped in gold paper with silver ribbons.

The king took the package and swiftly opened it. Examining the contents, his face suddenly flushed red with rage and his voice filled the room with a series of royal bellows.

“What is the meaning of this? How dare you bring me an ordinary plum pit!”

“True,” admitted the old thief quietly, “it is a plum pit.” Here he paused for emphasis. “But by no means an ordinary one.”

17 “What do you mean by that?” stormed the king. “He who plants this pit,” stated the old man, “will reap nothing but golden plums.”

A moment of astonished silence greeted this news.

Finally the king said, “Well, if that’s the case, why haven’t you planted it yourself?”

“For a very good reason, Your Majesty,” answered the thief. “Only people who have never stolen or cheated can reap the benefit. Otherwise, the tree will bear only ordinary plums. That is why,” and the old thief smiled in his most winning way, “I have brought the pit to you. Certainly, Your Majesty has never stolen anything or cheated.”

“Alas,” declared the king with great regret in his voice—for he was an honest man no matter what other faults he had—“I am afraid I am not the right person.”

“What do you mean?” cried the others present.

But the king remained silent, remembering how he had once stolen some pennies from his mother’s purse when he was a little boy.

“Well, how about the prime minister?” suggested the thief. “Perhaps he—”

But the old thief got no further with his sentence.

“Impossible!” blustered the prime minister with a very red face. He had often accepted bribes from people who wanted fine positions in the government. Surely, the pit would never work for him.

“You then, General?” asked the thief, turning to the head of the army.

“No, no,” muttered the general with lowered eyes. He had become an enormously rich man by cheating his soldiers of part of their pay.

“Well then, Mr. Secretary of State?” offered the thief.

“I’m afraid not,” sputtered the honorable old man, whose conscience was obviously troubling him. Like the prime minister, he had at times accepted money in return for favors.

“Then the head jailkeeper must be our man,” said the thief solemnly as he turned to the last candidate.

Silently the jailkeeper shook his head and shrugged his shoulders. “I’m afraid I’m not right either,” he said at last. He was remembering how he was always treating new prisoners, sending those who gave him money to the best quarters and reserving the worst cells for the poor and unfortunate.

Refusing to give up, the thief suggested several other officials. Each of the fine gentlemen, however, rejected in his turn the offer of the plum pit that would bear him golden fruit forever.

When the room was entirely still, each official trying to hide his embarrassment, the old thief suddenly burst out laughing.

**35** “You gentlemen,” he exclaimed, “you embezzle and you steal, and yet you never end up in jail!” He searched their faces earnestly, and then in a quiet voice, he added, “I have done nothing more than steal some spices, and for this I have been condemned to serve five years in jail.”

For quite some time the king and his officials remained silent with shame.

At last the king stirred.

“I would suggest,” he said in a low voice, looking at each of his ministers one by one, “that we all contribute to this man’s fine, so that he will not go back to jail.”

Immediately the necessary money was gathered and placed at the monarch’s feet. Calling the old thief to him, the king gave him the money.

“Go, my good man,” he said. “You are free. You have spent enough time in prison. From your experience you have instructed us wisely. Ministers and kings sometimes forget themselves. We will remember your lesson well.”

And so, with nothing more than a plum pit to help him, the very clever old thief left jail a free man.

- 3 In paragraph 2, the word gruffly means
- A. simply.
  - B. seriously.
  - C. lazily.
  - D. roughly.

- 4 In paragraphs 2 through 5, what is the jailkeeper's attitude toward the thief?
- A. disrespectful
  - B. regretful
  - C. concerned
  - D. panicked

- 5 In paragraph 17, the word reap means to
- A. obtain.
  - B. buy.
  - C. build.
  - D. present.

- 6 According to the thief, the plum pit will yield golden plums only if
- A. the plum is old and rotten.
  - B. the thief is still in jail.
  - C. the planter is honest.
  - D. the owner likes plums.

- 7 Describe how the king changes during this folktale. Use details from the folktale to support your answer.

- 8 What stops all of the officials from taking the plum pit?
- A. They decide planting it is too much work.
  - B. They have guilty consciences.
  - C. They want to see golden plums.
  - D. They hope someone else will take it.

- 9 In paragraph 35, what was the thief **most likely** looking for when “he searched their faces earnestly”?
- A. shame
  - B. pride
  - C. power
  - D. greed

- 10 The **most likely** reason the king and other officials pay the thief’s fine is because they are
- A. wealthy.
  - B. ashamed.
  - C. grateful.
  - D. suspicious.

- 11 What will the jailkeeper in this folktale **most likely** do next?
- A. ask permission to plant the plum pit
  - B. confess his misconduct to the king
  - C. treat his prisoners more fairly
  - D. try to put the thief back in jail

- 12 Explain how the thief uses the plum pit to free himself from jail. Use information from the folktale to support your answer.

# Acknowledgments

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## Grade 8 Reading Released Item Information

Released Item Number	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Content Strand <sup>1</sup>	WV	WV	WV	LA	WV	LI	LA	LI	LA	LA	LA	LI
GLE Code	7-2	7-3	7-2	7-5	7-2	7-4	7-5	7-4	7-5	7-5	7-5	7-4
Depth of Knowledge Code	1	1	2	2	2	1	2	2	2	2	2	2
Item Type <sup>2</sup>	MC	MC	MC	MC	MC	MC	CR	MC	MC	MC	MC	CR
Answer Key	A	C	D	A	A	C		B	A	B	C	
Total Possible Points	1	1	1	1	1	1	4	1	1	1	1	4

<sup>1</sup>Content Strand: WV = Word ID/Vocabulary, LI = Literary/Initial Understanding, LA = Literary/Analysis & Interpretation, II = Informational/Initial Understanding, IA = Informational/Analysis & Interpretation

<sup>2</sup>Item Type: MC = Multiple Choice, CR = Constructed Response