



**NEW ENGLAND  
COMMON ASSESSMENT PROGRAM**

**Released Items  
2010**

**Grade 8  
Reading**

# Reading

1 A **synonym** for the word slogan is

- A. symbol.
- B. motto.
- C. speech.
- D. lecture.

My interest in football started to dwindle when I learned to play hockey.

2 What does dwindle mean as it is used in the box?

- A. mature
- B. lessen
- C. inform
- D. expand

Read this passage about the benefits of calcium in the diet. Then answer the questions that follow.

**Calcium:**  
**It's Good For Your Bones**  
*Julie Mehta*

**1** Stop reading for a second. Concentrate on your body. Do you feel your bones growing? Do you feel yourself getting stronger? Well, whether you can feel it or not, you actually are. Every second, tiny cells in the body use calcium to stretch and bulk up the bones. Don't get too used to it, though. In a few years, this rush of growth will be over. According to Duane Alexander, director of the National Institute for Child Health and Human Development, 95 percent of bone building happens by the age of 20. After age 30, bones start deteriorating faster than new bone can be created.

"Calcium provides the strength we need throughout life," says Alexander. "Think of it like money in a bank account. You want to deposit as much calcium in your body as you can before the withdrawal process starts."

**Back to Basics**

**3** Calcium is the most abundant mineral in the human body. Almost all of it (98 percent) is found in bone. One percent is in teeth. The remaining 1 percent is in blood and other tissues, but even that tiny amount is essential. Without it, nerves would have trouble relaying messages, the heart would not beat correctly, blood would not clot, and muscles would contract in painful knots.

It's bones, however, that most people associate with calcium. Many people think of their bones as being solid and dead, but they are as alive as the brain or the skin, constantly repairing themselves in a process called *remodeling*. Remodeling is essential because every time people put weight on their bones, tiny cracks appear inside the bones. Bone cells called *osteoblasts* take calcium from the blood to repair the cracks and to reinforce the weak parts of the bones.

If a person doesn't get enough calcium from food or supplements, the body does the reverse: It takes calcium from the bones, instead of giving it to them, to keep that 1 percent of calcium available for the heart, brain, and nerves to function.

Calcium intake is especially important for kids, because half of all bone growth throughout life takes place during the teen years. The denser your bones grow now and the more calcium you put in your calcium "bank," the less likely you are to face weak or broken bones in the future. Kids need about 1,300 milligrams (mg) of calcium daily; adults up to age 50 require 1,000 mg a day.

**Bank on It**

Unfortunately, most kids fall short of the amount they need. Only one in seven girls and one in three boys deposit enough in their calcium banks to have a comfortable retirement, so to speak. Why? Well, consider this: Thirty years ago, kids drank twice as much milk as soft drinks. Today the reverse is true, and that's a problem: Milk is a prime source of calcium, along with leafy green vegetables, such as spinach, which have never been a top food with kids.

- 3 In the first paragraph, the word deteriorating means
- A. contracting.
  - B. hardening.
  - C. breaking.
  - D. weakening.

- 4 In paragraph 3, the word abundant means
- A. plentiful.
  - B. desirable.
  - C. constant.
  - D. vigorous.

- 5 How do scientists know bones are alive?
- A. Bone growth continues throughout life.
  - B. The body can take calcium from the bones.
  - C. Bones provide calcium to osteoblasts.
  - D. Cracked bones can repair themselves.

- 6 The author's **most likely** purpose for writing this passage is to
- A. persuade teens that calcium is important to them.
  - B. inform adults that calcium can relieve stress.
  - C. explain why teens often break bones in sports.
  - D. report new research about adult bone loss.

- 7 Explain why providing the body with calcium is important for teens. Use information from the passage to support your answer.

*Read this poem about discovering a snake. Then answer the questions that follow.*

## **Carrying the Snake to the Garden**

In the cellar  
was the smallest snake  
I have ever seen.  
It coiled itself  
5 in a corner  
and watched me  
with eyes  
like two little stars  
set into coal,  
10 and a tail  
that quivered.  
One step  
of my foot  
and it fled  
15 like a running shoelace,  
but a scoop of the wrist  
and I had it  
in my hand.  
I was sorry  
20 for the fear,  
so I hurried  
upstairs and out the kitchen door  
to the warm grass  
and the sunlight  
25 and the garden.  
It turned and turned  
in my hand  
but when I put it down  
it didn't move.  
30 I thought  
it was going to flow  
up my leg  
and into my pocket.  
I thought, for a moment,  
35 as it lifted its face,  
it was going to sing.  
  
And then it was gone.

*—Mary Oliver*

- 8 A synonym for the word quivered is
- A. startled.
  - B. hissed.
  - C. raced.
  - D. shuddered.
- 9 The speaker quickly carries the snake up the stairs because the speaker
- A. feels responsible for the snake's fear.
  - B. is afraid that the snake will bite.
  - C. knows the snake wants to be outside.
  - D. is worried the snake will get loose on the stairs.
- 10 Which word **best** describes the speaker's reaction to the snake?
- A. wonder
  - B. fear
  - C. caution
  - D. annoyance
- 11 Line 37 is separated from the rest of the poem **most likely** to show the
- A. extent of the snake's fear.
  - B. suddenness of the snake's escape.
  - C. speaker's search for the snake.
  - D. speaker's relief that the snake is gone.
- 12 Explain how the snake seems to change in the poem. Use details from the poem to support your answer.

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