
Tennessee Comprehensive Assessment Program
TCAP

**TNReady — Grade 6 English Language Arts
Part I**

PRACTICE TEST

Student Name

Teacher Name



Tennessee Department of Education

Directions

In this Practice Test, you will read a passage or set of passages and then write a response to a writing task. This task gives you an opportunity to demonstrate how well you can organize and express your ideas in written text.

After reading the passage(s) and writing task, take a few minutes to think about the material and to plan what you want to write before you begin to answer. Do your best to write a clear and well-organized response. Be sure to keep in mind your purpose and audience when developing your response.

If you finish before the allotted time ends, review your work.

Read the passage and write a response to the writing task.

from “Lace Round the Sky”

by Cecilia Aragon

- 1 As Papá’s snores boomed off the clapboard walls, Catalina slid from her mattress and groped her way to the front door. The latch clicked softly. The girl waited a moment to see if any of her family would wake, but nobody stirred.
- 2 Catalina stood on the doorstep of their Cerro Tololo observatory staff housing, drinking in deep lungfuls of the clear night air under the blazing Southern Hemisphere starshine. The Milky Way sprawled across the sky, a swath of pure white lace shadowed by dark blotches.
- 3 Night was her favorite time. During the day the Chilean mountaintop swarmed with tourists, shouting and calling to each other as breezes spun dust into the thin mountain air. While the visitors were there, Papá could not allow her to help polish the brass fittings of the old refractor¹ telescope nor pour smoking liquid nitrogen into the Dewar vessel that kept the Schmidt telescope camera cool. During the day she was no one special, just a kid underfoot among the many who made the pilgrimage to the mountaintop to visit the miraculous devices that let scientists learn about the stars.
- 4 But at night, when everything was quiet, Catalina was one of the few who were allowed beyond the roped-off corridors and the “No Admittance” signs. The night staff all knew her, knew she would keep her hands away from the delicate instruments and could always be counted on to fetch a cup of coffee or grab a toolbox.
- 5 She loved helping to service the grand telescopes, the eyes that peered out into the universe—even if it was annoying how she was always told not to disturb the astronomers who directed the telescopes through the night, searching the sky in elaborate patterns. Catalina wanted more than anything to confess her secret dream to these great and revered scientists, whose love of astronomy had brought them from all over the world to an isolated mountaintop.
- 6 Instead, Señor Alfonso, the accountant, told her that if she bothered the scientists she would be banned from the telescopes. Señora Carmen, the head administrator, frowned and scolded her. “Little girls have no place interfering with important work.”

¹ **refractor:** a telescope whose principal focusing element is a lens

- 7** Even her father, when she said, “Papá, I want to be an astronomer someday,” laughed and tugged at one of her long black braids. “Maybe if you work hard, you’ll be hired to clean the offices when you’re big enough, like your mother.”
- 8** But Catalina was curious. The sky did not merely consist of white dots of stars against a black background, like her schoolbooks said. The sky she saw every night was knotted with patterns, from fuzzy balls of fluff to filaments² braided and twirling overhead. What were the bright threads that looped in twisting arcs around dark eyelets? And what secret commands did the astronomers type on their computers to persuade the telescopes to rotate and capture the distant, hidden galaxies?
- 9** One day last summer, she had been curled up on a dingy green vinyl sofa in the small library. Magazine pages flapped on battered wooden side tables as fans swung back and forth. Flipping through the pages of a botany journal, she had stopped at the picture of an intricate³ white flower.
- 10** “It’s called wild carrot, or Queen Anne’s Lace.” One of the foreign astronomers, pallid⁴ and tall in an expensive suit, stood behind her. . . . She stared up at him, panicked. “Pretty, isn’t it? I’ve always liked that flower, because I think it looks like a galaxy. Nature repeats itself.”
- 11** She looked down at the page. It did look familiar. “A flocculent spiral galaxy,” she whispered.
- 12** Blond eyebrows climbed his reddened forehead. “Indeed. And what is your name, young lady?” he asked, his light blue eyes focusing on her with disconcerting⁵ intensity.
- 13** “I’m Catalina Solis.”
- 14** “Eduardo Solis’s daughter? The mechanic?”
- 15** “Yes.” She slanted a look at him. “I want to be an astronomer when I grow up.”
- 16** He laughed genially, no longer meeting her eyes, and patted her on the shoulder. “Yes, of course, my dear. Work hard in school, and it could happen.”

² **filaments:** thin wires in a light bulb that glow when electricity passes through them

³ **intricate:** having many parts

⁴ **pallid:** dull and uninteresting

⁵ **disconcerting:** upsetting or embarrassing

- 17** No one believed she would be a scientist one day. But why? She knew she could be a good scientist. She knew it!
- 18** She danced along the dirt road, bare feet soundless against the gravel, a practiced eye scanning the half-dozen domes at the mountaintop's summit. Then she stopped suddenly. The one-meter telescope's dome slit was open, but its angle was unusual. Cautiously, she wandered nearer. The telescope was pointed down, almost at the ground, lower than she had ever seen it.
- 19** She bit her lip, shifting from foot to foot. The red light over the entrance door indicated that it was forbidden to enter and disturb the scientists at work.
- 20** She looked back along the darkened road. No adults were around. Quickly making up her mind, she ran to the dining hall. Dim yellow light framed blackout curtains behind narrow, wired-glass windows. The cooks must still be cleaning up after dinner.
- 21** Bursting through the door, she cried, "Señora Silvia, I need your help. I think there's a problem with one of the telescopes."
- 22** Inside, dishes clattered loudly against the cast-iron sinks. The head cook put one soapy hand on her apron and glared. "Girl, what does someone like you know about telescopes?"
- 23** Catalina explained, but Silvia only shook her head. "Nonsense. I'm sure they're just doing something different tonight. It's not our place to interrupt. Now shoo!" She flapped her apron at the girl.
- 24** Back out under the starlight, Catalina stared at the offending dome. A strand of unease twisted in her gut. Something was wrong, she was sure of it. But what could she do?

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