



New York State Testing Program

**English
Language Arts
Book 3**

Grade **8**

January 17–20, 2006

Name _____



TIPS FOR TAKING THE TEST

Here are some suggestions to help you do your best:

- Be sure to read carefully all the directions in the test book.
- Plan your time.
- Read each question carefully and think about the answer before writing your response.

This test asks you to write about what you have listened to or read. Your writing will NOT be scored on your personal opinions. It WILL be scored on:

- how clearly you organize and express your ideas
- how accurately and completely you answer the questions
- how well you support your ideas with examples
- how interesting and enjoyable your writing is
- how correctly you use grammar, spelling, punctuation, and paragraphs



Whenever you see this symbol, be sure to plan and check your writing.

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Reading and Writing

Directions

In this part of the test, you are going to read a story called “The Man Who Could See Elephants” and a poem called “Purple Snake.” You will answer questions and write about what you have read. You may look back at the story and the poem as often as you like.

Go On



THE MAN WHO COULD SEE ELEPHANTS

by *Vashanti Rahaman*

Deep in the mountains, near an out-of-the-way village, there was an abandoned stone quarry. And near that quarry lived an old man who could carve the most extraordinary elephants out of stone.

People from all over the world came to that out-of-the-way village deep in the mountains to buy the old man's elephants. Museums put his work on display for everyone to see.

Many sculptors tried to carve elephants as extraordinary as the ones made by the old man, but they could not. His elephants were too powerful and gentle and wise and solemn and joyous all at once. No one else could make elephants quite like his.

One winter a young sculptor came to see the old man. "Please," he said, "could you show me how to carve elephants?"

"My boy," said the old man, "I cannot show you how to carve elephants. I can only show you how to carve stone."

The young man was disappointed. He thought he already knew how to carve stone. But he had traveled far to learn from the old man, so he said, "Very well, teach me how to carve stone."

For many months, he went to the quarry early every morning with the old man. They spent the whole day there, hammering and chiseling away at the stone.

Slowly the days went by. The ice melted on the quarry ponds. The pussy willows bloomed. The birds came back from their winter homes. Children came to play hide-and-seek among the rocks and to hunt for tadpoles and limpets and dragonfly nymphs in the shallow pools.

And the young man learned that there was much he had not known about carving stone.

Finally, one evening, as bright autumn leaves danced in the breeze, the old man said, "You have learned well, my boy. You can cut and carve and polish as well as I. There is no more for me to teach you."

"But there is more for me to learn," said the young man, who still could not carve elephants. "Let me watch you for one more season."



So while the winter wind howled around the chimney and the ice covered the quarry ponds once more, the old man and the young man worked in a shed behind the old man's cottage. Scattered around the room were blocks of stone that they had brought from the quarry. For hours sometimes, the old man would just look at the stone.

"What are you doing?" asked the young man.

"I am looking for the elephants," said the old man. "There is one, and there is one, and there is one," he said, pointing to three blocks of stone.

The young man looked and looked and looked, but all he saw were blocks of stone.

"Where are the elephants?" he asked.

"Can you not see them?" asked the old man. "They are in the stone. You see, I do not carve elephants. I only carve stone."

"What do you mean?" asked the young man.

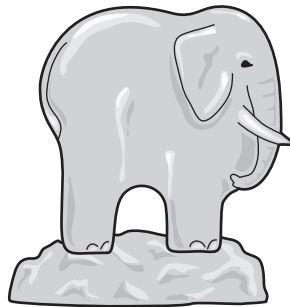
"I mean that I look for the elephants in the stone. When I can see them well, I carve away the stone to set the elephants free. Then everyone can see them. Can you see nothing at all in those three blocks of stone?"

The young man looked and looked again. "No," he said at last, "I see nothing in those three. But I see something in that large one you set by the door."

"Are you sure?" asked the old man, shaking his head sadly. "There is no elephant in that block of stone."

The young man smiled. "I do not see an elephant," he said. "In that block of stone I see a tiger."

And picking up his tools, the young sculptor went to work to set the tiger free.



Go On



31

Complete the chart below to describe the **main** problem the young man has and how his problem is resolved. Use details from the story “The Man Who Could See Elephants” to support your answer.

The young man’s main problem	How the young man’s problem is resolved



32

Circle the word below that you think **best** describes the young man in “The Man Who Could See Elephants.”

determined **curious** **clever**

Explain your choice using details from the story.

Go On



Purple Snake

by Pat Mora

“It’s in there, sleeping,”
Don Luis says and winks.
He knows I want to feel
the animal asleep in a piece of wood,
like he does,
turning it this way and that,
listening.

Slowly he strokes the wood,
rough and wrinkled like his hands.

He begins to carve his way,
“*Mira*. Its head, its scales, its tail.”

Don Luis rubs and strokes
the animal before he paints
its eyes open.

When the paint dries,
I place the purple snake
by the green bull and red frog
that Don Luis found asleep
in a piece of wood.

Mira = Look



33

Read this line from the poem “Purple Snake.”

“It’s in there, sleeping,”

Explain what this line means in the context of the poem. Use details from the poem to support your answer.

Go On



Planning Page

You may PLAN your writing for question 34 here if you wish, but do NOT write your final answer on this page. Your writing on this Planning Page will NOT count toward your final score. Write your final answer on Pages 9 and 10.



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Place Student Label Here



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