



New York State Testing Program

English

Language Arts Test

Book 3

Grade

8

January 20–23, 2009

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.

In this test, you will be writing about texts that you will be reading. Your writing will be scored on

- how clearly you organize your writing and express what you have learned
- how accurately and completely you answer the questions being asked
- how well you support your responses with examples or details from the texts
- how correctly you use grammar, spelling, punctuation, capitalization, and paragraphing



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

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Reading and Writing***D*** *irections*

In this part of the test, you are going to read a passage called “Drawing Calvin and Hobbes” and a passage called “Lucky Break.” You will answer questions 31 through 34 and write about what you have read. You may look back at the passages as often as you like.

Go On

Bill Watterson is the artist and writer behind the cartoon strip *Calvin and Hobbes*, which takes a look (and laugh) at the world from the perspective of a young boy and his tiger friend Hobbes. In this excerpt, he describes some of the practical difficulties of publishing comics.

Drawing

Calvin and Hobbes

I think I learned to be a writer so I could draw for a living. Actually, I enjoy writing as much as drawing, but working on a deadline, the drawing is easier and faster.

People always ask how cartoonists come up with ideas, and the answer is so boring that we're usually tempted to make up something sarcastic. The truth is, we hold a blank sheet of paper, stare into space, and let our minds wander. (To the layman, this looks remarkably like goofing off.) When something interests us, we play around with it. Sometimes this yields a funny observation; sometimes it doesn't, but that's about all there is to it. Once in a while the cartoonist will find himself in a beam of light and angels will appear with a great idea, but not often.

Occasionally I'll have a subject or issue in mind that I want to talk about, but if I don't have a ready topic, I try to think of what I'd like to draw. My goal is to feel enthusiastic about some aspect of the work. I think one can always tell when an artist is engaged and having a good time: the energy and life comes through in the work. I like to sit outside when I write, partly because it seems less like a job that way, and partly because there are bugs and birds and rocks around that may suggest an idea. I never know what will trigger a workable idea, so my writing schedule varies a great deal. Sometimes I can write several strips in an afternoon; sometimes I can't write anything at all. I never know if another hour sitting there will be wasted time or the most productive hour of the day.

I write my ideas in an ordinary school notebook. I spend a lot of time fussing with the wording, juggling the various concerns of timing, clarity, brevity, and so on. I write in pencil, and go through erasers at an alarming rate. Once I bang an idea into form, I make a small doodle of the characters to give the strip a rough outline. My purpose at this point is mostly to show who's speaking each line, but I try to suggest gestures and rough compositions, so I will think about the idea in visual terms when it comes time to ink it up. I reevaluate the roughs over several days, when I'm fresher and more objective. Often the writing needs more work, and sometimes I just cross the whole thing out. On occasion, I've ripped up entire stories—weeks of material—that I didn't think were good. Obviously, if I'm right on deadline, that kind of editing becomes a luxury, so I try to write well ahead of due dates. It's very embarrassing to send out a strip I think is bad, so I like a long lead time and, given the need to fill newspaper space every day, I weed out as much mediocre work as possible.

After I have about thirty daily strips, I show them to my wife. She can usually intuit what I'm trying to say, even when I don't get it right, so she's a good editor, and a pretty accurate Laugh-o-meter. After reworking or scrapping weak strips, I ink up the ones I like.

I typically ink six daily strips, or one Sunday strip, in a long day. I'd enjoy the inking more if I could take more time, but I need to draw efficiently in order to gain back the time lost writing bad ideas. I lightly pencil in the dialogue first, as that determines the space left for drawing. Next, I sketch in the characters very loosely, establishing the composition of each panel. I frequently make revisions, so I use a light pencil and I erase as needed. If the picture is unusually complex, I'll render the difficult parts completely, but generally, I try to do as little pencil work as possible. That way, the inking stays spontaneous and fun, because I'm not simply tracing pencil lines. Inking mistakes and accidents are whited out.

I draw the strip with a small sable brush and waterproof India ink on Strathmore bristol board. I letter the dialogue with a Rapidograph fountain pen, and I use a crowquill pen for odds and ends. It's about as low-tech as you can get.

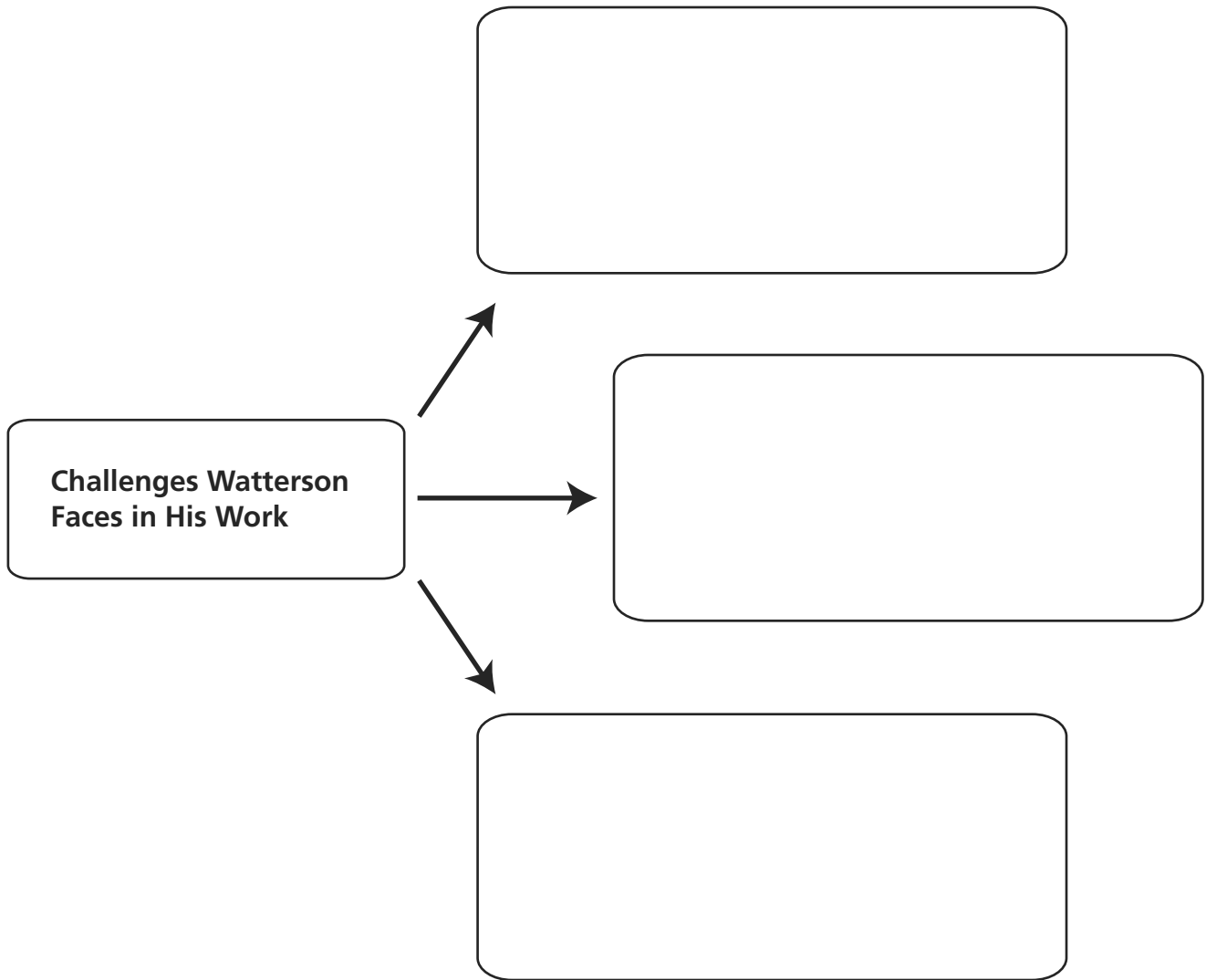
The Sunday strips also need to be colored. This is a time-consuming and rather tedious task, but the color is an integral part of my Sunday strips, so I think it's important to choose all the colors myself. (Foreign collections of my work are sometimes recolored, and the results rarely please me.) When I first started *Calvin and Hobbes*, there were 64 colors available for Sunday strips; now we have 125 colors, as well as the ability to fade colors into each other. The colors are incremental percentage combinations of red, yellow, and blue, and we have a pretty good range, although I wish there were more pale colors. Each color has a number, so I color my strip on an overlay, and mark the corresponding numbers. The syndicate sends this to American Color, a company that processes all the Sunday comics into color negatives for newspaper printing.

After a batch of strips is inked and colored, I send them to the syndicate, where my editor corrects my spelling and grammar, and looks for anything offensive. A copyright sticker is affixed and the strip is printed up and sent to subscribing newspapers. Then I start writing again.

Go On

31

Bill Watterson discusses several challenges he faces in his work. In the diagram below, describe three of those challenges.



How does the message in this cartoon by Bill Watterson apply to his own method of working? Use details from both the cartoon and the passage to support your answer.



Go On

Lucky Break

by Roald Dahl

To me, the most important and difficult thing about writing fiction is to find the plot. Good original plots are very hard to come by. You never know when a lovely idea is going to flit suddenly into your mind, but by golly, when it does come along, you grab it with both hands and hang on to it tight. The trick is to write it down at once, otherwise you'll forget it. A good plot is like a dream. If you don't write down your dream on paper the moment you wake up, the chances are you'll forget it, and it'll be gone forever.

So when an idea for a story comes popping into my mind, I rush for a pencil, a crayon, a lipstick, anything that will write, and scribble a few words that will later remind me of the idea. Often, one word is enough. I was once driving alone on a country road and an idea came for a story about someone getting stuck in an elevator between two floors in an empty house. I had nothing to write with in the car. So I stopped and got out. The back of the car was covered with dust. With one finger I wrote in the dust the single word ELEVATOR. That was enough. As soon as I got home, I went straight to my workroom and wrote the idea down in an old school exercise book that is simply labeled *Short Stories*.

I have had this book ever since I started trying to write seriously. There are ninety-eight pages in the book. I've counted them. And just about every one of those pages is filled up on both sides with these so-called story ideas. Many are no good. But just about every story and every children's book I have ever written has started out as a three- or four-line note in this little, much-worn, red-covered volume. For example:

What about a chocolate factory that makes marvellous and fantastic things—with a crazy man running it?

This became CHARLIE AND THE CHOCOLATE FACTORY.

A story about Mr. Fox who has a whole network of underground tunnels. They lead to all the shops in the village. At night he goes up through the floorboards and helps himself.

FANTASTIC MR. FOX

Jamaica and the small boy who saw a giant turtle captured by native fishermen. Boy pleads with his father to buy turtle and release it. Becomes hysterical. Father buys it. Then what? Perhaps boy goes with turtle.

THE BOY WHO TALKED WITH ANIMALS

A man acquires the ability to see through playing cards. He makes millions at casinos.

THE WONDERFUL STORY OF HENRY SUGAR

Sometimes, these little scribbles stay unused in the notebook for five or even ten years. But the promising ones are always used in the end. And if they show nothing else, they do, I think, demonstrate from what slender threads a children’s book or a short story must ultimately be woven. The story builds and expands while you are writing it. All the best stuff comes at the desk. But you can’t even start to write that story unless you have the beginnings of a plot. Without my little notebook, I would be quite helpless.

33

In what way does Roald Dahl’s notebook, *Short Stories*, play an important role in his writing process? Use details from “Lucky Break” 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.



Place Student Label Here



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