



**NEW ENGLAND
COMMON ASSESSMENT PROGRAM**

**Released Items
2013**

**Grade 11
Reading**

Reading

① An **antonym** for the word pertinent is

- A. gloomy.
- B. turbulent.
- C. unprepared.
- D. irrelevant.

② The root *nov* in the words novel and renovate means

- A. simple.
- B. interesting.
- C. different.
- D. new.

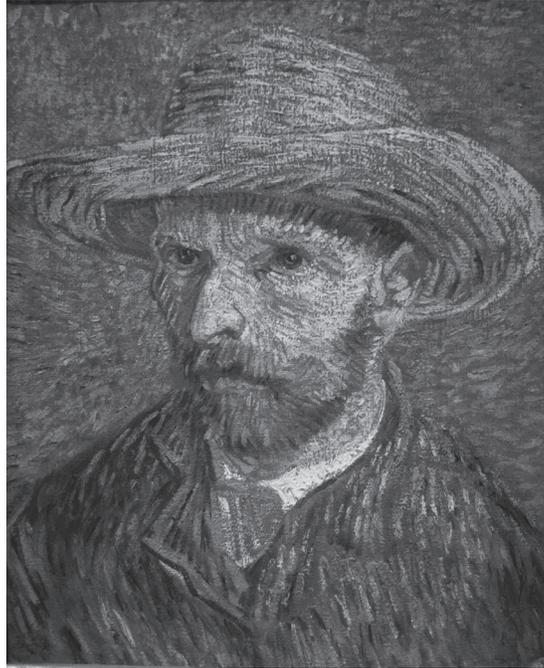
This fictionalized account of a famous painter explores the nature of his artistic process. Read the passage. Then answer the questions that follow.

Vincent van Gogh

Jan Greenberg and Sandra Jordan

Hunched like a porcupine from the weight of his easel, brushes, tubes of color, and folding stool, Vincent headed out of Arles at dawn—too early for the gang of street boys to chase after him, to call him crazy. In the pocket of his workman’s smock he carried lunch, a piece of bread and a bottle of milk. That was all he needed. He would catch the sun as it poured its first light on the glistening wheat fields.

In front of him lay the wide plain called the Crau, laden with ripe grain. It reminded him of the flat landscape of Holland, where he grew up—land that stretched out to the horizon, as beautiful and infinite as the sea. But instead of the soft, clear northern light, the fierce Provençal sun cascaded bright yellow rays on the rooftops, trees, and fields. Everywhere he looked shimmered old gold, bronze, and copper against the greenish azure of the sky.



3 Vincent braced the legs of his easel with rocks to steady it against the strong winds that blew down the valley. He squeezed paint onto his palette: emerald green, Prussian blue, crimson lake, chrome yellow, cobalt violet, orange lead. The mental labor of balancing the six essential colors strained his mind, as though he were a stage actor playing multiple parts.

4 He brought out his largest canvas, a size thirty, twenty-nine inches by thirty-six inches. Early in his career a blank white canvas had challenged him to fill it, mocked his limitations, dared him to bring it to life. Now he didn’t hesitate. He picked up his brush and began to paint.

The rhythmic hiss of the farmers’ scythes through the grain matched his strokes. Dust from the cut wheat filled the air. Spanish flies, gold and green, swarmed around the olive trees. The grasshopper-like cicadas sang in the field, as loud as frogs. Mosquitoes buzzed and bit. Vincent painted on.

In the foreground of the canvas, a fence sheltered fruit trees from the wind. Across the middle stretched flat rectangles of fields colored citron, yellow, tan, and ochre; a towering haystack balanced the white farmhouses with their red tile roofs. Harvesters bundled

the cut grain, stacked the wheat, handed it up into the high window of the mill. A man drove a cart. Each person went intently about a task as Vincent drew them with a few strokes of his brush. In the distance stood the pale violet of the hills and the ruined abbey of Montmajour. Overhead spread the blue-green sky, bleached pale by bright, shadowless light. And in the center of the painting, cool and unobtrusive in all the vibrant yellowness of the scene, sat an empty blue farm cart, its spoked wheel the hub around which the painting revolved.

Vincent had drawn several preliminary studies, preparing for this moment. Now he worked quickly, with feverish energy, to finish the painting in a day. Later, in the studio, he might touch up a few details, but here existed the feeling he wanted to portray. Drenched with sweat, he labored as intently as the harvesters he painted. And standing before *Harvest at Le Crau*, palette and brush in his hand, he lost all sense of time and space. He hardly noticed the

heat or his thirst. As the light faded he studied the canvas. His eyes, though bloodshot and tired, did not deceive. A masterpiece, at last! A painting his brother Theo would be proud to show in Paris! After years of struggle he had captured what he called

“the high yellow note,” vivid color and emotion in perfect harmony. To reach it, he had pushed himself over the edge. But, for now, all that mattered was the intoxication of this moment.

- 3 In paragraph 3, listing the “essential colors” emphasizes Vincent’s
- A. view of monotony.
 - B. strength of purpose.
 - C. sense of impatience.
 - D. feeling of astonishment.

- 4 What does paragraph 4 suggest about Vincent?
- A. He has become reckless as his fame has grown.
 - B. He struggles to imagine subjects for his paintings.
 - C. He has become more confident about his artistic skill.
 - D. He enjoys admiring his work more than perfecting it.

- 5 A synonym for the word portray is
- A. confirm.
 - B. examine.
 - C. judge.
 - D. represent.

- 6 The climax of the passage occurs when Vincent
- A. avoids the gang of street boys.
 - B. steadies his easel against the strong winds.
 - C. observes the man driving a cart.
 - D. stands before the completed painting.

- 7 Analyze the connection the authors make between the work being done in the fields and the work done by Vincent on his canvas. Use details from the passage to support your answer.

Some living creatures are thought to have survived centuries trapped in stone and wood—a phenomenon that still baffles scientists. Read this article about a theory of suspended animation. Then answer the questions that follow.

Hibernating Frogs and Living Fossils **Unusual Tales of Suspended Animation**

Kelly Bell

Since the vast majority of fossils are buried, it is predictable that mines yield the majority of mysterious zoological artifacts. For instance, in 1873, miners at the Black Diamond Coal Mine outside of San Francisco, CA found a large frog encased in limestone.

This common but venerable bullfrog was apparently blind but was able to slowly move one leg. After several hours on the surface, it died. The frog and its entombing stone were given to the San Francisco Academy of Sciences, where its survival continues to defy understanding.

But not all living fossils are found in stone or ore. For instance, in 1893, workmen at the Brown and Hall Sawmill in Ontario, Canada, were using a circular saw to cut a large tree trunk into planks when the blade sliced through a cavity and almost cut in two a live toad imprisoned in the middle of the tree trunk. The tree was about 200 years old and the spherical, perfectly smooth hole in which the amphibian was entombed was about 60 feet above the ground. The toad tumbled from its wooden prison and hopped away, seemingly none the worse for its long confinement.

Another report of a live toad in a hole comes from England. In 1829, huge granite blocks that had formed a submerged footing under the docks of Liverpool's George's Basin were being cut into small chunks to be made into steps. During one of the cuts, the stone saw revealed a little hole in the middle of a block, and a toad within it.

Workers gently enlarged the hole to free its occupant, and the amphibian made several futile attempts to get to its feet. Several hours later, after trying one last time to assume its normal crouching position, the toad sank to the pavement and died. Several scientists who later examined the small corpse confessed they were at a loss to explain how the animal could have been found alive under such

airless, foodless, and waterless conditions. One of these learned men took the dead animal home with him, and it was never seen again.

In another case, in 1818, geologist Dr. E.D. Clarke, who taught at Caius College in Cambridge, England, was present at the digging of a pit on a friend's property when the workmen hit a layer of fossils. When one of the workers was breaking up a large chunk of chalk stone into smaller pieces so they could be removed from the hole, he found three newts embedded in the rock. Clarke placed them in the bright sunlight and was stupefied when they began to move.

Two of them died later in the day and for years, he exhibited them to his students during his lectures on prehistory. He placed the third newt in a nearby brook, and it "skipped and twisted about as though it had never been torpid" and escaped, he later said. Unfortunately, Clarke was never able to identify the species to which the newts belonged.

Upon Clarke's retirement, he donated the preserved newts to the university's biology department where, for decades, other professors displayed them during lectures. But during the chaos of the 1940 bombing of London during World War II, these pickled specimens disappeared. Unless they were destroyed by a Luftwaffe bomb, they may remain somewhere within Cambridge University, forgotten and still unexplained.

9 Certain animals' ability to live prolonged stretches without sustenance is possible via hibernation. Because their metabolisms are conditioned to arouse them upon the advent of the warmth and renewed food supplies of springtime, they are seldom in suspended animation for more than four or five months. But what might happen if spring never arrived? What if their hibernation dens were to be buried by glaciers and/or metamorphose into rock?

Southern Methodist University professor of biology Dr. John Ubelaker points out that many organisms possess the ability to lower their metabolisms, which is often triggered by environmental conditions. “This is a common phenomenon in many nematodes that have the ability to form a resting stage . . . in order to survive a stressful situation,” he says. “In these nematodes, the ability to control water loss is critical, and several metabolic-biochemical processes operate.”

Called “dynamic equilibrium,” an organism’s structure and composition can remain virtually the same, even though it is not taking in nutrients or producing waste.

- 12** Similar to the way in which some seeds found in ancient tombs have occasionally managed to sprout after being exhumed centuries later, a life force in some animals apparently can also awaken decades or even centuries after their apparent demise.

- 8 Which animal was entombed inside a tree?
- A. the frog found near San Francisco, California
 - B. the toad found in Canada
 - C. the toad found in Liverpool, England
 - D. the newts found in England

- 9 A synonym for the word stupefied is
- A. astonished.
 - B. hesitant.
 - C. amused.
 - D. fearless.

- 10 Why did Clarke **most likely** display the two newts at Caius College?
- A. to highlight the importance of his academic research
 - B. to provide context for his prehistory lectures
 - C. to suggest future experiments
 - D. to help preserve the species

- 11 Based on paragraph 9, why do most animals go into hibernation?
- A. They are unable to exist without food.
 - B. They are accidentally buried under glaciers or rocks.
 - C. Their bodies experience a complete loss of water.
 - D. Their environment is temporarily unable to support them.

- 12 Explain how the discoveries described in the article support a theory of suspended animation. Use information from the article to support your answer.

- 13 What would be the **best** heading for paragraphs 9 through 12?
- A. “The Awakening of Seeds”
 - B. “Nematodes in the Resting Stage”
 - C. “More about Hibernation Dens”
 - D. “The Science Behind the Mystery”
- 14 In paragraph 12, the word exhumed means
- A. used in lectures.
 - B. removed from a grave.
 - C. replaced by something new.
 - D. destroyed by exposure.
- 15 What caused each of the animals in this article to be discovered?
- A. natural disasters
 - B. human action
 - C. wartime destruction
 - D. detection by predators
- 16 Based on the article, what do all the described animals have in common?
- A. They were discovered inside stone.
 - B. They were encased at about the same time.
 - C. They were species that normally hibernate.
 - D. They were absorbing small amounts of nutrients.
- 17 Explain how Clarke’s discovery was different from the other discoveries described in the article. Use information from the article to support your answer.

Acknowledgments

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