



# ***New York State Testing Program***

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## **ELA**

## **Common Core Sample Questions**

**Grade**

**6**

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## The Horse of Wood

by Alfred J. Church

The Greeks **besieged** the city of Troy for nearly ten years. They could not take it because the walls were so high and strong—some said that they had been built by the hands of gods—but they kept the Trojans inside. This had not always been so. There had been a time when the Trojans had gone out and fought with their enemies  
5 on the plain, sometimes they had beaten them in battle, and once they had very nearly burnt their ships. But this was all changed. They had lost some of the bravest of their chiefs, such as Hector, the best of the sons of Priam, and Paris the great archer, and many great princes, who had come from the countries round about to help them.

10 We can easily believe then that Priam, King of Troy, and his people were very glad to hear that one day the Greeks had gone home. Two Trojans, who had left the city two weeks or so before on a message from King Priam to one of his allies, came back saying that they had gone to the camp of the Greeks and had found it empty, and that there were no ships to be seen. Everyone who was not ill or too old to move  
15 about made all the **haste** they could to get out of the city. The gates were opened wide for the first time during ten years, and men, women, and children hurried out to see the plain where so many battles had been fought, and the camp in which the enemy had lived, and the place where the ships had been dragged up on the shore. As you may suppose, those who had fought in the battles had a great deal to say  
20 about what they had done and what they had seen. There were many things to see, but the strangest one of all was a great Horse of Wood, which was standing not far from the walls of the city. No one was quite sure what it was, or what it meant. One man said: "It is a very curious thing. Let us drag it into the city that it may be a monument of all that we have suffered for the last ten years." Others said: "Not so;  
25 we had better burn it, or drag it down to the sea that the water may cover it, or cut it open to see whether there is anything inside." Of these no one was more vehement than Laocoön, priest of Neptune. "Take heed what you do, men of Troy," he cried. "Who knows whether the Greeks have really gone away? It may be that there are armed men inside this Horse; it may be that it has been made so big to overtop the  
30 walls of the city. Anyhow I am afraid of these Greeks, even when they give us gifts." And as he spoke, he threw the spear which he had in his hand at the Horse of Wood, and struck it on the side. A great rattling sound was heard, and the Trojans, if they had not been very blind and foolish, might have known that there was something wrong.

35 While the dispute was going on, some shepherds came up, bringing with them a man whose hands were bound behind his back. He had come out from a hiding-place, they said, of his own **accord**, when they were in the field. The young Trojans crowded round him, and began to mock at him, but he cried out in a very piteous voice: "What shall I do? Where shall I go? The Greeks will not let me live, and the  
40 Trojans cry out for vengeance upon me." Then they began to pity him, and they **bade** him say who he was and what he had to tell.

Then King Priam had pity on him and bade them unbind his hands, saying: "Forget your own people; from to-day you are one of us. But tell us now, why did the Greeks make this great Horse of Wood that we see?"

45 Then Sinon lifted up his hands to the sky and said: "O sun and moon and stars, I  
call you to witness that I have a good right to tell the secrets of my countrymen.  
Listen, O King. From the beginning, when the Greeks first came to this place, their  
hope has been in the help of Minerva. But she was angry with them for this cause.  
Ulysses and Diomed made their way into your city, and climbed into the **citadel**, and  
50 killed the guards. And then with hands all bloody from the slaughter, they laid hold  
of her image and carried it away. It was this that made the goddess angry, that they  
should dare to touch her with hands stained with blood. I saw with my own eyes  
how the eyes of the image, when these two brought it into the camp, flashed with  
anger, and how the drops of sweat stood upon it; yes, and how it leapt three times  
55 from the ground, shaking shield and spear. Then the prophet said: 'You must go back  
to Greece, and come again, and begin the war again, if you wish to take the city of  
Troy'—and this they are doing now; they have gone back to Greece, and they will  
soon return. Furthermore, he said: 'You must make a Horse of Wood to be a peace-  
offering to Minerva. Make it, I advise you, very great, so that the Trojans may not  
60 take it within their walls. For, if they do so take it, then you will never conquer their  
city. Nay, they will come to our own land, and lay siege to our cities, and our children  
will suffer the things which we have sought to bring on them. But if they hurt the  
thing, then they themselves shall perish.' "

Then they all cried out together that the Horse of Wood should be drawn into  
65 the citadel. So they opened the great gate of the city, pulling down part of the wall  
that there might be more room, and they put rollers under the feet of the Horse, and  
they fastened ropes to it. Then they drew it into the city, boys and girls laying hold of  
the ropes, and singing songs with great joy. And everyone thought it a great thing if  
he could put his hand to a rope. But there were not wanting signs of evil to come.  
70 Four times did the Horse halt as they dragged it, before it passed through the gate,  
and each time there might have been heard a great clashing of arms within. Also  
Cassandra opened her mouth, and that she should speak the truth and not be  
believed. So the Trojans drew the Horse of Wood into the city. That night they kept a  
feast to the gods with great joy, not knowing that the end of their city was now close  
75 at hand.

*The Aeneid for Boys and Girls*  
www.mainlesson.com

**Words that could be defined for students are in bold.**

- 1** According to lines 1 through 9, what was one problem with Troy's defense against the Greeks?
- A** They had lost many of the bravest chiefs.
  - B** They had not tested the strategy for very long.
  - C** They were not able to leave their city.
  - D** They could not keep the Greeks out of Troy.

**Key: C**

**Aligned CCLS:** RL.6.1; additional standards may be added after further development.

**Commentary:** The question aligns to CCLS RL.6.1 because it asks students to identify textual evidence to support what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

**Rationale:** Option C is correct. The fortified walls that surround Troy and keep the Greeks at bay provide the context that sets up the story.

**2** How does Laocoön's opinion differ from those of other Trojans?

- A** He thinks they should keep the horse.
- B** He thinks they should not trust the Greeks.
- C** He thinks the Greeks have gone away for good.
- D** He thinks the horse is a gift from the Greeks.

**Key: B**

**Aligned CCLS:** RL.6.1; additional standards may be added after further development.

**Commentary:** The question aligns to CCLS RL.6.1 because it asks students to identify evidence about what is specifically stated in the text.

**Rationale:** Option B is correct. Laocoön warns the Trojans that men may be inside the horse and says that he is afraid of the Greeks even when they give gifts.

**3** As used in line 35 of the passage, the word *dispute* most closely means

- A search
- B disruption
- C work
- D argument

**Key: D**

**Aligned CCLS:** RL.6.4

**Commentary:** The question aligns to CCLS RL.6.4 because it asks students to determine the meaning of a word from the story.

**Rationale:** Option D is correct. Based on the context, the word “dispute” is synonymous with “argument.”

**4** How did Sinon's speech influence the Trojans?

- A** It made them ignore the help of Minerva.
- B** It convinced them to give the horse back to the Greeks.
- C** It persuaded them to take the horse into the city.
- D** It made them angry with him.

**Key: C**

**Aligned CCLS: RL.6.3**

**Commentary:** The question aligns to CCLS RL.6.3 because it asks students to explain how scenes unfold and influence future events.

**Rationale:** Option C is correct. Sinon's speech about the Greeks, Minerva, and the horse convinces the Trojans to take the horse inside the city walls.

5

Which line or lines illustrate knowledge the narrator has that the characters in the story do not?

- A “There had been a time when the Trojans had gone out and fought with their enemies on the plain.” (lines 4 and 5)
- B “We can easily believe then that Priam, King of Troy, and his people were very glad to hear that one day the Greeks had gone home.” (lines 10 and 11)
- C “No one was quite sure what it [the horse] was, or what it meant.” (line 22)
- D “A great rattling sound was heard, and the Trojans, if they had not been very blind and foolish, might have known that there was something wrong.” (lines 32 through 34)

**Key:** D

**Aligned CCLS:** RL.6.6

**Commentary:** The question aligns to CCLS RL.6.6 because it asks students to explain how the narrator’s perspective differs from that of the participants and affects the way the story is told. In doing so, the student must negotiate the various points of view at play in the text.

**Rationale:** Option D is correct. These lines illustrate that the narrator knows the horse will be dangerous for Troy, while the Trojans are unaware.



## ***The Lionfish Invasion!***



*What is as graceful and beautiful as a butterfly,  
as **ferocious** as the most dangerous predator,  
and delivers a painful sting with its poisonous spines?*

It is the lionfish, a fish from the coral reefs in the tropical waters of the South Pacific and Indian Oceans. But you don't have to travel halfway around the world to see a lionfish.

### **Perhaps you have seen one in a friend's home aquarium?**

5 Lionfish are popular saltwater aquarium fish all over the world, but especially in the United States. Nowadays, they also live in Atlantic waters off the East Coast of the United States. These lionfish are what scientists call an invasive species or an "alien invader."

### **Lionfish invade U.S. waters**

10 Local divers off the coast of North Carolina were not expecting to see what they found one day in August 2002—they spotted the exotic and beautiful lionfish, common to the warm waters of the western Pacific, but unknown at that time as residents of the Carolina coast. They provided the first solid evidence that lionfish were in the Atlantic—an actual specimen that they collected there. A year later, scientists had documented 19 lionfish sightings at eight locations along the North Carolina continental shelf. By then, lionfish were also being observed off the coasts of Florida, Georgia, and South Carolina.

15 **Juvenile** lionfish were also showing up off of Bermuda, about 650 miles away from the North Carolina coast, and even as far north as Long Island, New York! Since then, many more United States divers have reported sightings of the distinctive fish. Between 2000 and 2003, lionfish sightings were reported at 16 different shipwrecks and natural hard bottom locations. During a summer 2004 research expedition, NOAA scientists collected

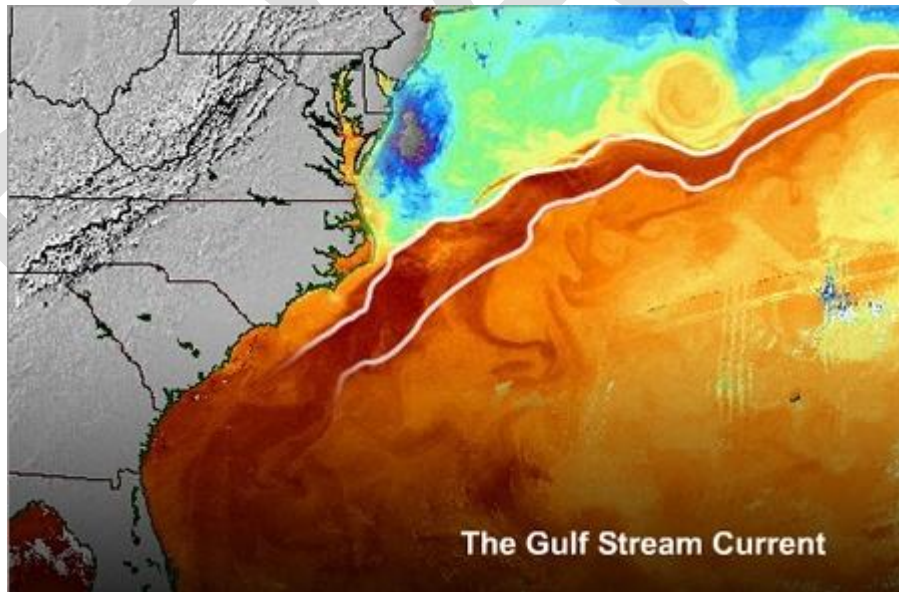
20 lionfish at 19 different locations off the North Carolina coast alone. The jump in numbers and distributions over such a short time, plus sightings of juveniles smaller than those sold for aquaria, strongly indicates that the lionfish is reproducing in the Atlantic Ocean. If this is true, it's the first time that a western Pacific fish has populated the U.S. Atlantic coast.

25 **How did the lionfish get into the Atlantic Ocean?**

Lionfish are a popular **ornamental** aquarium fish that were likely released on purpose when people no longer want them as aquarium pets! The swift and warm Gulf Stream, which likely transported buoyant lionfish eggs and larvae from Florida northward, helped the lionfish's Atlantic journey.

30 It's pretty unusual for non-native, tropical marine fishes, like the lionfish, to establish themselves at this latitude. In Florida waters and along the continental shelf near the Gulf Stream the temperatures are very similar to the lionfish's native waters.

35 However, from north Florida upward, the waters along the coastline are too cold in the winter for lionfish to survive. Scientists expect them to survive the winter only at water depths greater than 120 ft because this is where the Gulf Stream has influence all year long. Very importantly, the types of predators and competitors present in the marine community in the Atlantic are very different from the native range of the lionfish. Generally, species like the lionfish have not been perceived to pose a significant threat to marine ecosystems because they were not likely to survive  
40 long.



Text and Photos NOAA.  
<http://oceanservice.noaa.gov>

**Words that could be defined for students are in bold.**

**6** Which statement best reflects the central idea of the article?

- A** In 2002, divers looking for other species of fish discovered the lionfish off the coast of North Carolina.
- B** The beautiful and exotic lionfish, a native of tropical waters, has been populating the waters of the Atlantic Ocean.
- C** While dangerous to other forms of marine life, the lionfish has become a popular aquarium pet because of its unique appearance.
- D** The warm waters of the Gulf Stream extend from the Gulf of Mexico toward Europe and provide a habitat for the lionfish.

**Key: B**

**Aligned CCLS:** RI.6.2

**Commentary:** This question aligns to CCLS RI.6.2 in that it asks the student to identify the central idea of the article.

**Rationale:** Option B is correct. The fact that divers found lionfish off the coast of North Carolina in 2002 is not the main point of the article, and the portions of the text concerning the lionfish as a pet and the nature of the Gulf Stream are minor details, not central ideas.

7 Scientists call the lionfish an *alien invader* (line 6) because lionfish

- A attack other species with their poisonous spines
- B have overtaken the habitats of other marine species
- C came from one place and spread to another place
- D are able to live in hostile environments

**Key: C**

**Aligned CCLS:** RI.6.4

**Commentary:** This question aligns to RI.6.4 in that it asks the student to interpret the figurative phrase “alien invader” in light of information in the article as a whole.

**Rationale:** Option C is correct. There is no indication in the article that lionfish have uprooted other species; and while lionfish are predators and are able to adapt to certain environments, these characteristics do not explain the idea that they are “alien invaders.”

**8** Why does the author include lines 12–16 (“A year later...as far north as Long Island, New York!”) in the article?

- A** to list all of the places lionfish can be found
- B** to track the movements of lionfish and their habitats
- C** to warn people living in certain locations about poisonous fish
- D** to describe how widespread lionfish sightings have become

**Key: D**

**Aligned CCLS:** RI.6.5

**Commentary:** This question aligns to CCLS RI.6.5 in that it requires students to determine the purpose of a particular paragraph in an article. Understanding of the overall structure of the article and its general content is required to answer this question.

**Rationale:** Option D is correct. Lines 12–16 illustrate the extent of the lionfish invasion (as far as Bermuda and New York). The paragraph is not presented as a complete list, and nothing in the article indicates that people should be warned about the fish or that scientists are tracking movements of the fish.

9

Which of these words is closest in meaning to *expedition* (line 19)?

- A a display
- B a contest
- C a trip
- D a report

**Key:** C

**Aligned CCLS:** L.6.4a

**Commentary:** This question aligns to CCLS L.6.4a in that it asks the student to determine the meaning of an unknown word (“expedition”) from context.

**Rationale:** It is clear from context that the “NOAA scientists” went on a trip to collect lionfish at various locations off of the Carolina coast. There is no indication that the scientists collected the fish during a display or during a contest, and it does not make sense to say they collected them during a report.

*Paired Passages*

**Demosthenes**

*by John Haaren*

In the city of Athens about twenty-five years after the Peloponnesian War there lived a delicate boy named Demosthenes. His father was a manufacturer of swords and made a great deal of money. But when Demosthenes was only seven years old his father died. Guardians had charge of his property for ten years. They  
5 robbed the boy of part of his fortune and managed the rest so badly that Demosthenes could not go to school to the best teachers in Athens because he had not money enough to pay them.

One day, when he was sixteen years old, a great trial was going on at Athens and he strolled into the court. There were fifteen hundred and one dicasts or, as we  
10 call them, jurymen in their seats, and the court was crowded with citizens who, like Demosthenes, had gone in from curiosity. A lawyer named Callistratus was speaking. He did not finish his speech for nearly four hours. But no one left the court until he ceased to speak. Then hundreds of people went out and hurried home. Demosthenes waited to see the end. When each of the jurymen had thrown a voting  
15 pebble into a basket the clerk of the court counted the pebbles and told the result. Callistratus had won the case.

Demosthenes went home determined to become a lawyer and public speaker. In one year from that time he brought suit against his guardians, delivered four orations against them and won his case. He recovered a large part of the  
20 property which his father had left to his mother and himself.

After this he entered public life, but the first time he made a speech in the public assembly it was a complete failure. He stammered and could not speak loud enough, and in trying to do so he made odd faces.

25 People laughed at him, and even his friends told him that he never could be a speaker, so he went home greatly cast down.

Then an actor who was a great friend of his family went to see him and encouraged him. He asked Demosthenes to read to him some passages of poetry. Then the actor recited the same passages. The verses now seemed to have new meaning and beauty. The actor pronounced the words as if he felt them. The tones of  
30 his voice were clear and pleasant and his gestures were graceful. Demosthenes was charmed.

“You can learn to speak just as well as I do,” said the actor, “if you are willing to work patiently. Do not be discouraged, but conquer your difficulties.”

“I will,” said Demosthenes. And he did.

35 It is said that to improve his voice he spoke with stones in his mouth, and to become accustomed to the noise amid confusion of the public assembly he went to the seashore and recited there amid the roar of the waves. To overcome his habit of lifting one shoulder above the other he suspended a sword so that the point would prick his shoulder as he raised it.

40 He built an underground room in which he could study without interruption and practice speaking without disturbing anyone. He had one side of his head shaved so that he would be ashamed to leave this retreat. Then he remained there for months at a time engaged in study. One thing that he did while there was to copy eight times the speeches in the famous history of Thucydides. This was to teach him  
45 to use the most fitting language. Besides all this he took lessons of an excellent speaker named Iosm'us who taught declamation. In this way the awkward boy who had been laughed out of the assembly became in time the greatest orator of Athens. Not only was Demosthenes a graceful orator, but he was wise and patriotic. He soon acquired great influence in Athens and became one of the ten official orators.

www.books.google.com

**Words that could be defined for students are in bold.**



## **Icarus and Daedalus**

*by Josephine Preston Peabody*

Among all those mortals who grew so wise that they learned the secrets of the gods, none was more cunning than Daedalus.

5 He once built, for King Minos of Crete, a wonderful Labyrinth of winding ways so cunningly tangled up and twisted around that, once inside, you could never find your way out again without a magic clue. But the king's favor veered with the wind, and one day he had his master architect imprisoned in a tower. Daedalus managed to escape from his cell; but it seemed impossible to leave the island, since every ship that came or went was well guarded by order of the king.

10 At length, watching the sea-gulls in the air—the only creatures that were sure of liberty—he thought of a plan for himself and his young son Icarus, who was captive with him.

15 Little by little, he gathered a store of feathers great and small. He fastened these together with thread, molded them in with wax, and so fashioned two great wings like those of a bird. When they were done, Daedalus fitted them to his own shoulders, and after one or two efforts, he found that by waving his arms he could **winnow** the air and **cleave** it, as a swimmer does the sea. He held himself aloft, wavered this way and that, with the wind, and at last, like a great fledgling, he learned to fly.

20 Without delay, he fell to work on a pair of wings for the boy Icarus, and taught him carefully how to use them, bidding him beware of rash adventures among the stars. "Remember," said the father, "never to fly very low or very high, for the fogs about the earth would weigh you down, but the blaze of the sun will surely melt your feathers apart if you go too near."

25 For Icarus, these cautions went in at one ear and out by the other. Who could remember to be careful when he was to fly for the first time? Are birds careful? Not they! And not an idea remained in the boy's head but the one joy of escape.

30 The day came, and the fair wind that was to set them free. The father bird put on his wings, and, while the light urged them to be gone, he waited to see that all was well with Icarus, for the two could not fly hand in hand. Up they rose, the boy after his father. The hateful ground of Crete sank beneath them; and the country folk, who caught a glimpse of them when they were high above the tree-tops, took it for a vision of the gods—Apollo, perhaps, with Cupid after him.

35 At first there was a terror in the joy. The wide vacancy of the air dazed them—a glance downward made their brains reel. But when a great wind filled their wings, and Icarus felt himself sustained, like a halcyon-bird in the hollow of a wave, like a child uplifted by his mother, he forgot everything in the world but joy. He forgot Crete and the other islands that he had passed over: he saw but vaguely that

winged thing in the distance before him that was his father Daedalus. He longed for one **draught** of flight to quench the thirst of his captivity: he stretched out his arms  
40 to the sky and made towards the highest heavens.

Alas for him! Warmer and warmer grew the air. Those arms, that had seemed to uphold him, relaxed. His wings wavered, drooped. He fluttered his young hands vainly—he was falling—and in that terror he remembered. The heat of the sun had melted the wax from his wings; the feathers were falling, one by one, like  
45 snowflakes; and there was none to help.

He fell like a leaf tossed down the wind, down, down, with one cry that overtook Daedalus far away. When he returned, and sought high and low for the poor boy, he saw nothing but the bird-like feathers afloat on the water, and he knew that Icarus was drowned.

50 The nearest island he named Icaria, in memory of the child; but he, in heavy grief, went to the temple of Apollo in Sicily, and there hung up his wings as an offering. Never again did he attempt to fly.

[www.books.google.com](http://www.books.google.com)

**Words that could be defined for students are in bold.**

*Short Answer Constructed Response for "Demosthenes"*

**10**

How does Demosthenes' experience observing a trial at age 16 affect his life choices, as described in the passage? Use **two** details from the passage to support your response.

Write your answer in complete sentences.

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**CCLS Alignment:** RL.6.3

**Commentary:** This question aligns to CCLS RL.6.3. It asks students to look at a particular event in the beginning of the passage and explain how it affects the unfolding of the story and the development of the character throughout the rest of the passage.

**Rationale:** The response accurately describes Demosthenes' reaction to the trial ("Demosthenes went home determined to become a lawyer and public speaker") and then provides evidence that this reaction affected him throughout his life ("He brought suit against his guardians ... he recovered a large part of the property") and ("He soon acquired great influence in Athens and became one of the ten official orators").

**11**

How does Demosthenes overcome obstacles to reach his goal? Use **two** details from the passage to support your response.

Write your answer in complete sentences.

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**CCLS Alignment:** RL.6.1; additional standards may be added after further development.

**Commentary:** This question aligns to CCLS RL.6.1. It asks students to cite specific textual evidence to explain Demosthenes' goal, the obstacles in his way, and how he overcame those obstacles.

**Rationale:** The response accurately describes the steps taken by Demosthenes in order to reach his goal of becoming a great orator ("It is said that to improve his voice he spoke with stones in his mouth," "To overcome his habit of lifting one shoulder above the other he suspended a sword so that the point would prick his shoulder as he raised it," "He built an underground room in which he could study," etc.).

Short Answer Constructed Response for "Icarus and Daedalus"

12

Closely reread the following sentence from lines 7–8 of the passage:

*"...but it seemed impossible to leave the island, since every ship that came or went was well guarded by order of the king."*

How does this sentence contribute to the development of the plot of the passage? Use **two** details from the passage to support your answer.

Write your answer in complete sentences.

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**Aligned CCLS:** RL.6.5

**Commentary:** This item aligns to CCLS RL.6.5 because it asks students to analyze how a sentence fits into or impacts the overall development of the passage. Similarly, it challenges a student to look beyond the main idea of the passage, balancing the meaning of what came before the sentence and what followed.

**Rationale:** The response accurately explains that Daedalus’s motivation for flying was driven by his desire to be free from imprisonment, which eventually leads to his son flying too close to the sun. Appropriate textual evidence includes, but is not limited to, “like a great fledgling, [Daedalus] learned to fly,” “Up they rose, the boy and his father,” “The heat of the sun had melted the wax from his wings,” “He fell like a leaf tossed down the wind,” etc.

Extended Constructed Response Paired Passages

13

In both the *Demosthenes* biography and the *Icarus and Daedalus* myth the main characters exhibit determination in pursuit of their goals. Did determination help both main characters reach their goals, or did it lead them to tragedy? Write an argument for whether you believe determination helped or hurt the two main characters.

In your response, be sure to do the following:

- describe how determination affected the outcome in *Demosthenes*
- describe how determination affected the outcome in *Icarus and Daedalus*
- explain the similarities or differences that exist in the ways determination played into the outcome of both texts
- use details from both passages in your response

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**Aligned CCLS:** RL.6.9, W.6.1, W.6.4, W.6.8, W6.9a, and W.6.9b

**Commentary:** This item aligns to CCLS RL.6.9, W.6.1, W.6.4, W.6.8, W6.9a, and W.6.9b because it asks students to provide evidence from the texts to support written analysis of what the texts say explicitly.

**Rationale:** The response accurately describes how determination affects the outcome of *Demosthenes* and of *Icarus and Daedalus*, giving examples of similarities and differences that exist in the way this determination played into the outcome of both texts. In both texts the characters demonstrate determination. Demosthenes overcomes personal obstacles (his stuttering, soft voice, and odd posture) through determination and persistent hard work (building an underground room to practice speaking without disturbance, practicing speaking with stones in his mouth, reciting amid the roar of the waves, and pricking his shoulder to remind him to keep his posture perfect) to become one of Athens' ten official orators. Daedalus overcomes the imprisonment of himself and his son, Icarus, on the Island of Crete, by his determination. He demonstrates this by his careful crafting of sea-gull inspired wings and learning to fly with them (like a fledgling bird). The wings were made of feathers and wax, so Daedalus warned young Icarus to be careful and not fly too high into the heavens. But Icarus did fly too high, the wings melted, and he fell to the

water and drowned. The determination of Daedalus did lead him to his successful escape, but he lost his son. In both texts determination leads to the characters' goals; however, Demosthenes achieves complete success as an orator while Daedalus's achievement of his goal also leads to tragedy.

DRAFT



# **Grade 6**

# **ELA**

# **Common Core Sample Questions**

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