Standard 1: Students will read, write, listen, and speak for information and understanding.
  • Background Knowledge and Vocabulary Development

Grade 6

This pdf file contains items aligned to the CCLS that can be used for both test prep and to assess student proficiency in the major clusters/standards that are going to appear on the New York State assessments. The use of these items is totally up to the discretion of individual teachers, and therefore is optional. Tasks are bundled by standard and the level of rigor is indicated on each. The intent is not to create a “mock assessment” but rather to provide resources from the item banks so that teachers will have easily accessible items to use for instructional purposes.
1. Read the sentence.

The young boy lost the shirt _____ received as a gift.

Which word best completes the sentence?
A) him
B) he
C) his
D) himself

The Origins of Toothpaste

Most Americans use toothpaste every day. Did you ever wonder how toothpaste came to be? Toothpaste did not have any one inventor; instead, it developed gradually over hundreds of years.

People in ancient India, China, Egypt, Greece, and Rome cleaned and polished their teeth with mixtures of rough materials, or abrasives, like dried flowers and crushed eggshells. Rubbing the abrasive onto the teeth with a finger or stick had an effect similar to using sandpaper. Some ancient recipes added herbs or honey to the mixture to improve the taste.

Persian writings a thousand years ago warned that using too rough an abrasive could harm the teeth. One Persian tooth powder recipe used burned snail shells and burned oyster shells together with the mineral gypsum.

By the late 1700s in England, tooth powder was packaged in clay pots for sale. Every manufacturer used a different recipe or formula, but most powders included two basic kinds of ingredients: abrasives to clean and polish teeth and flavorings to improve the taste. Brick powder and ground china were common abrasives. People who did not want to buy a commercial product might have rubbed salt on their teeth instead.
Throughout the 1800s, countless different tooth-cleaning products were sold. Many dentists and drugstores made their own combinations. They began adding in other materials to make tooth-cleaning products more effective and attractive. Glycerin, a sweet syrup made from animal fats, turned the powders into creamy pastes. Dyes made them a variety of colors; red and pink were most popular. Small printed pot containers proclaimed the virtues of the “rose toothpaste” or “cherry toothpaste” inside.

Borax powder was used in some early preparations to make them foam when in the mouth. In 1824, a dentist named Peabody added soap to the mixture he used to clean his patients’ teeth. In spite of its bad flavor, soap remained an important toothpaste ingredient until the late 1940s and 1950s. Manufacturers today make toothpaste foamy by using synthetic detergents that taste even worse than regular soap; mint or other strong flavorings are added to cover the taste of the detergent.

Another advance in tooth-cleaning products was the use of chalk, introduced by John Harris in about 1850. Chalk is a soft form of limestone, composed mainly of calcium carbonate. When ground into tiny pieces, it forms a gentle powder that polishes teeth without damaging them, as harsher abrasives had done earlier. Calcium carbonate remains a common toothpaste ingredient today.

Collapsible toothpaste tubes began to replace pots and jars in the 1890s. The Colgate® Company, which had marketed a sweet-smelling dental cream in a jar since 1873, began to sell toothpaste in a collapsible tube under the name “Ribbon Dental Cream” in 1896. Early toothpaste tubes were made of metal; by the 1990s most tubes were made of plastic.

The big change to toothpaste during the 1950s and 1960s was the addition of fluoride, which studies had shown to reduce tooth decay and cavities in children. Modern toothpastes include abrasives, fluoride, detergents, flavorings, sweeteners, coloring agents, moisteners, thickeners, and preservatives. Some also have disinfectants to destroy mouth bacteria, soluble calcium to strengthen teeth, and chemicals to make teeth whiter. Toothpaste has come a long way from dried flowers and crushed eggshells rubbed onto the teeth with a stick.

2. The word origin comes from a Latin word meaning “to be born.” In the title “The Origins of Toothpaste,” the word origins means
   A) types.
   B) inventions.
   C) discoveries.
   D) beginnings.

3. Read the sentence from the passage.
   Collapsible toothpaste tubes began to replace pots and jars in the 1890s.

   Collapsible is formed from the Latin root collabi, which means
   A) to close.
   B) to expand.
   C) to fall inward.
   D) to squeeze.
4. Read the sentence from the passage.

Persian writings a thousand years ago warned that using too rough an abrasive could harm the teeth.

A synonym for the underlined word is
A) a cleaner.
B) a liquid.
C) a powder.
D) a flavoring.

5. Read the sentence from the passage.

Many dentists and drugstores made their own combinations.

A homophone for the underlined word is
A) mode.
B) maid.
C) mend.
D) mate.

6. Glycerin, a sweet syrup made from animal fats, turned the powders into creamy pastes.

Glycerin \\
glyc-er-in\\  n.  1. a colorless, syrupy form of alcohol named for its sweet taste

Using the dictionary entry, which syllable grouping helps the reader know the correct pronunciation of the word glycerin?
A) glyce-r-in
B) glyc-er-in
C) gly-ce-rin
D) gl-yce-rin
Everest is Mighty, We Are Fragile

Peter Hillary explores ways in which failure can be a kind of success.

1 Over the past few years, I have watched the public perception of Mount Everest drift from awe of the greatest mountain on earth and respect for anyone who succeeds in scaling it to an assumption that now things have changed.

2 Just as computer technology advances almost daily and our back roads become highways and then freeways, people believe that surely by now the tracks and camps on Everest are permanent fixtures that are improved each year. After all, in the Alps you can climb to huts high above the snow line and sleep in a comfortable bed and order food and wine from a concierge.*

3 For Everest climbers, there has been progress, too, but it lies only in the technology of our equipment and communications. The mountain remains the same: huge, steep, cold and impassive toward our human endeavor.

4 On the great mountains of the world there is constancy, and the Everest that took the lives of George Leigh Mallory and Andrew Irvine in the 1920s is the same Everest that was finally climbed by my father, Sir Edmund Hillary, and Tenzing Norgay in 1953, the same mountain climbed solo by Reinhold Messner in 1980, the same summit I climbed on May 10, 1990, with Rob Hall and Gary Ball on a brilliantly sunny day, and it is the same Everest that took the lives of eight climbers, including Rob, in a terrible storm on May 10, 1996.

5 Some things never change. While having the right equipment and clothing is essential, it is only 5 percent of the overall mountaineering equation of what is needed to reach the top. The rest lies with you. Do you have the drive, the psyche, the power?

6 Perhaps the greatest thing to change on Everest occurred on May 29, 1953, when Dad and Tenzing reached the 29,028-foot summit for the first time.

7 It was like the breaking of the four-minute mile by Roger Bannister. The way was clear for others to establish records, but now not for humanity but for individuals. This is a new age in which individual participation has usurped** national spectatorship. Just about everyone knows somebody who has jumped out of an airplane with a parachute on his back, rappelled down a cliff face, rafted foaming white-water rapids or taken a motorcycle for a 100-mile-per-hour blast around a racetrack.

8 And so it is no surprise to me that the 100-year-old profession of guiding clients up mountains has extended to ascents of the world’s highest mountain—a mountain that has been climbed by 615 people in 43 years and has taken the lives of about 150. Many clients are expert climbers without time to organize expeditions, while others are more motivated than experienced. Nonetheless, these professional expeditions have succeeded in getting many people to the summit safely.
9 Surely the time will come when the number of climbers on Everest will have to be limited, just as Yosemite National Park has been talking about doing. I would hate to see controls that were anything but first come, first served. The highly distasteful thought of a panel of assessors scrutinizing your qualifications, commenting on your objectives and counting the number of spare underpants in your day pack is objectionable to me. It is anathema*** to the personal right to challenge oneself.

10 What happened two weeks ago on Everest demonstrated the unbridled might of the mountain, its furious high-altitude storms and the fact that not even the experience and skill of two outstanding alpine leaders like Rob Hall and Scott Fischer is enough when the Big E stirs.

11 I have heard people say they don’t care about such climbers, who, in their view, take pointless risks. It was suicidal; they knew how dangerous it was. “They have satellite telephones, meteorological reports, Gore-Tex jackets and good jobs. What are they doing?”

12 So should we discourage the risk takers by despising and shunning them? Most of us want the people around us to be the same as we are and feel the same as we do—and yet intellectually most of us will admit that variety is good. We admire people who try a little harder and who push the envelope a little further. Every success by an individual is an inspiration for his or her community—just as a person’s failure is a time for the community to take stock.

*concierge: a member of a hotel staff in charge of special services for guests
**usurped: to take the place of by or as if by force
***anathema: strongly disliked or disapproved of
“Everest is Mighty, We are Fragile” copyright © 1996 The New York Times. Reprinted by permission.

7. **Read the sentence.**

. . . the same Everest that was finally climbed by my father, Sir Edmund Hillary, and Tenzing Norgay in 1953, the same mountain climbed solo by Reinhold Messner in 1980. . .

**What does the Latin-based word *solo* mean in the sentence?**
A) high
B) alone
C) safely
D) powerfully

8. **Read the sentence from the passage.**

Surely the time will come when the *number* of climbers on Everest will have to be limited, just as Yosemite National Park has been talking about doing.

**Which of the following contains a homograph for the underlined word?**
A) Numerous monarch butterflies migrate South each year.
B) The amount of bees swarming about the hive was *numberless*.
C) Farms need a *number* of vehicles to clear the fields.
D) The cold air was making my limbs feel even *number*. 
9. Read the sentence from Paragraph 6.

Perhaps the greatest thing to change on Everest occurred on May 29, 1953, when Dad and Tenzing reached the 29,028-foot summit for the first time.

Which sentence contains a homograph for the underlined word?
A) People often change when faced with challenges.
B) Mike, the drifter, asked us if we had any spare change.
C) We decided to change the placement of the painting.
D) When she came in from the rain, Maria had to change clothes.

10. Read the sentence from the passage.

So should we discourage the risk takers by despising and shunning them?

Which of these is a synonym for the underlined word?
A) welcoming
B) surprising
C) avoiding
D) questioning

11. Which of the following is denoted by the word solo in Paragraph 4?
A) without anyone else
B) against the advice of others
C) following a new route
D) without human communication
The following is a rough draft of a student’s report. It contains errors.
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English
Mr. Quintana
February 23, 2002

Joel Barlow’s Famous Poem

(1) The story behind Joel Barlow’s famous poem “Hasty Pudding” is a unique one. (2) Following the American Revolution, Joel Barlow, a lawyer and founder of a weekly political and literary newspaper called *American Mercury* became one of our nation’s first well-known poets. (3) A man of many interests, he traveled extensively throughout Europe, became friends with many important political figures of the American and French Revolutions, and even served as a Diplomat for the United States. (4) He wrote a lot of political essays as well as poems praising the United States. (5) Most of his poetry was written in an epic style—serious works focusing on important political and historical topics. (6) Some of his poems took years for him to revise and complete. (7) Even then, they received little attention or admiration.

(8) Barlow, ironically, achieved lasting fame not for his long epic poems but for “Hasty Pudding,” a poem he wrote in a very short time (Morris 58). In 1793, Barlow was living in Chambry, in rural France. (9) While dining in a small French inn, feeling homesick, the one dish that Barlow thought of represented to him the United States. (10) That dish, hasty pudding, was a simple treat made by adding yellow cornmeal to boiling water and stirring quickly until it thickened. (11) In some parts of the United States, it is called “mush,” and when it is made with white cornmeal, it is known as “grits.” (12) Barlow was pleasantly surprised when the innkeeper stuck a hot bowl of the pudding on the table in front of him.

(13) Barlow immediately began to write, placing at the top of the page the title, “Hasty Pudding.” (14) Hasty pudding was more than just food; for Barlow, it symbolized the greatness of America. (15) In his poem, Barlow wrote about the fertility of the American soil, the planting of the corn, and about the performance of the square dances that followed the successful corn harvest (Perkins 34).

(16) Barlow then turned his attention to the pudding on the table in front of him. (17) He put butter on top, sprinkled the pudding with sugar, poured a small amount of milk around the sides, smiled, and began to eat. (18) It truly was an inspiring treat!

Works Cited


12. Read the sentence from Paragraph 1 of the report.

Following the American Revolution, Joel Barlow a lawyer and founder of a weekly political and literary newspaper called *American Mercury* became one of our nation’s first well-known poets.

**What is the best way to punctuate the underlined part of the sentence?**
A) Joel Barlow, a lawyer, and founder of a weekly political and literary newspaper called *American Mercury* became
B) Joel Barlow, a lawyer and founder, of a weekly political and literary newspaper called *American Mercury*, became
C) Joel Barlow, a lawyer and founder of a weekly political and literary newspaper, called *American Mercury*, became
D) Joel Barlow, a lawyer and founder of a weekly political and literary newspaper called *American Mercury*, became

13. Read the sentence from Paragraph 2 of the report.

Barlow, ironically, achieved lasting fame not for his long epic poems but for “Hasty Pudding” a poem he wrote in a very short time (Morris 58).

**Which is the best way to punctuate the underlined part of the sentence?**
A) for, “Hasty Pudding,” a poem he wrote
B) for “Hasty Pudding,” a poem he wrote
C) for “Hasty Pudding” a poem, he wrote
D) for “Hasty Pudding,” a poem, he wrote

14. Read the sentence from Paragraph 2 of the report.

That dish hasty pudding was a simple treat made by adding yellow cornmeal to boiling water and stirring quickly until it thickened.

**What is the correct way to write the underlined part of the sentence?**
A) That dish, hasty pudding, was a simple treat
B) That dish hasty pudding, was a simple treat
C) That dish, hasty pudding was a simple treat
D) That, dish hasty pudding was, a simple treat

15. Read the sentence.

Barlow, ironically, achieved lasting fame not for his long epic poems but for “Hasty Pudding” a poem he wrote in a very short time (Morris 58).

**What change, if any, should be made to the sentence?**
A) change *ironically* to *ironicly*
B) change *achieved* to *achieves*
C) insert a comma after Pudding
D) Leave as is.
Leilani’s English teacher wants his students to write an essay about one special poem by a poet. 

Read the first part of Leilani’s rough draft. 
(1)Every poet is inspired by something, whether it is a dramatic event like love or war, or a beautiful sight or sound in nature. (2)But no other poet has achieved lasting fame for being inspired to write an epic poem because of pudding. (3)That unique distinction belongs solely to Joel Barlow only. (4)Joel Barlow didn’t start out as a poet. (5)He grew up on a Connecticut farm and served in the Revolutionary War before he decided to write his first epic poem called *The Prospect of Peace*. (6)It was a patriotic tribute to America’s founding. (7)It was modeled on works of Homer and Virgil by the great English writers John Dryden and Alexander Pope. (8)Barlow was a man of many interests. (9)He also spent several years living abroad. (10)In 1793, Barlow was living in Chambery, in rural France. (11)While dining in a small French inn, he felt homesick for the one dish that reminded him of the United States: hasty pudding. (12)It was simple, a treat from yellow cornmeal and boiling water, and it was stirred quickly so it thickened. (13)(In some parts of the United States, it is called “mush,” and when it is made with white cornmeal, it is known as “grits.”) (14)Barlow was pleasantly surprised when the innkeeper placed a hot bowl of the pudding on the table in front of him.

Read the next part of Leilani’s rough draft. This section contains groups of underlined words. The questions will ask about these groups of underlined words.
(15)Barlow reached for his pen instead of a spoon and immediately began to write. (16)At the top of the page, he wrote the title “Hasty Pudding.” (17)Hasty pudding was more than just food it symbolized to Barlow the greatness of America. (18)The poem Barlow writes was considered a mock-epic because it was a humorous poem written in the serious poetic form of an epic. (19)The poem was about the fertility of the American soil, the planting of the corn, and about the performance of the square dances that followed the successful corn harvest. (20)It contained a lot of rich description, especially of rural scenes. (21)After writing the poem, Barlow turned his attention to the pudding on the table in front of him. (22)He put butter on top, sprinkled the pudding with sugar, poured a small amount of milk around the sides, smiled, and begins to eat. (23)It is a truly inspiring treat! (24)Barlow, inspired by patriotism along with other Yale graduates like John Trumbull and Timothy Dwight, aspired to pen its own great American epic. (25)Accomplishing that goal multiple times in book-length poems like *The Vision of Columbus* and *The Columbiad*, Barlow did become somewhat famous in his lifetime. (26)Still, more of his writing has been forgotten. (27)Today Barlow is ironically remembered for his mock-heroic poem “Hasty Pudding.” (28)Who would have guessed that a poet’s literary legisee could begin with a simple bowl of pudding?

16. In sentence 24, its is correctly written? 
   A) our
   B) his
   C) their
   D) Leave as is

17. Which sentence contains a pronoun error? 
   A) The dog jumped happily and licked him on the chin. 
   B) She walked around the house to the other door. 
   C) You and I should work together on the project. 
   D) She addressed the letter to him brother.
18. Read the sentence.

Melissa Gomez, the girl with the broken arm, is usually our catcher.

How should the underlined part of this sentence be written?
A) Gomez the girl, with the broken arm, is  
B) Gomez, the girl with the broken arm is,  
C) Gomez the girl with the broken arm is  
D) Leave as is.

19. In which sentence is the underlined word used correctly?
A) The audience members fixed its attention on the actor’s colorful costume.  
B) Our debate team won their first major competition last week.  
C) The television station refused to reveal its sources to the public.  
D) Each student must turn their assignments in on time.

20. Which sentence is written correctly?
A) Chapter four of the book states that Sherlock Holmes will help solve the mystery.  
B) The book states that Sherlock Holmes will help solve the mystery in chapter four of it.  
C) It states Sherlock Holmes in the book will help solve the mystery in chapter four of it.  
D) The mystery states that in chapter four Sherlock Holmes will help solve it.