Reading Check on Paper

Optional Reading Skills Check | Grades 9–10

Name or code _____ Date _____

Read each passage. Answer each question using the passage. Follow the directions for each response. You may mark the booklet or copy your choices to the answer sheet.

The Cards and the Envelope

1 Ronan, the student host, had practiced his first question until its rhythm sounded effortless. At the arts evening, he would introduce a visiting illustrator and ask about the sketches projected behind their chairs. The illustrator had given an amusing answer during rehearsal. The host had already marked where he would smile, turn toward the audience and let the first laugh settle before asking the next question.

2 His questions had a **distinctive** pause before the final phrase. His younger sister could recognize his practice sessions from the next room without hearing every word. She had helped him time the introduction and put the cards in order. Before the evening began, he read the first card once more, then placed a small envelope beside his chair for questions written by the audience.

3 The illustrator arrived carrying a cloth pencil case and a rolled sketch. She put the sketch on the table beside the projector and asked whether she should open it during the conversation. The host checked the sequence of images and suggested saving it until the end. He pointed to the cards, explaining that each question led neatly into the picture that followed.

4 At first, the evening ran as he had imagined. The illustrator’s answer brought the laugh he remembered. Then a student in the front row handed up a question about a drawing that had never been published. The host read it silently. Nothing in his rehearsal notes covered it. The illustrator leaned forward. “I’d like to hear that one before we move on,” she said.

5 The host looked at the clock and mentioned the time. His sister, standing beside the projector, held up two fingers to show that two minutes remained in the current section. The illustrator offered to stay a few minutes beyond the printed finish if the room was available. From the back, the organizer nodded. Ronan put the new question inside the envelope and turned to his next prepared card.

6 At the following pause, he asked about the image already on the screen. The answer led to the next picture exactly as his cards predicted. He smiled toward the audience, using the pause his sister knew. The illustrator answered, then glanced at the envelope. A second handwritten question arrived. The host placed it with the first and announced that they would save written questions for a later conversation.

7 When the chairs were being stacked, the illustrator unrolled her sketch for several students near the table. Their questions did not follow the projected pictures. The host collected his cards and checked that none was missing. His sister held out the envelope, but he tucked it into the program without opening it. Beside the projector, the last image remained on the screen while the group around the sketch grew.

Questions 1–5 · The Cards and the Envelope

1. Which TWO statements together best describe the story's central conflict?

Circle TWO letters.

A The host blames the unplanned questions on the choice of drawings for the event.

B The host preserves the question-and-picture sequence he prepared in advance.

C The guest asks for the projected pictures to be replaced by the rolled sketch.

D The sister tries to end the event before the host can finish his prepared questions.

E Unplanned audience questions are put aside while Ronan continues his planned order.

2. Part A. What does "distinctive" suggest about Ronan's pause in paragraph 2?

Circle ONE letter.

A It is a speaking habit required by the illustrator.

B It is a recognizable feature of his way of speaking.

C It is a speaking habit that cannot be heard nearby.

D It is a changing feature that follows each audience.

3. Part B. Which quotation best supports the answer to Part A?

Circle ONE letter.

A "He smiled toward the audience, using the pause his sister knew."

B "She had helped him time the introduction and put the cards in order."

C "The answer led to the next picture exactly as his cards predicted."

D "The illustrator answered, then glanced at the envelope."

4. Part A. Which interest best explains the illustrator's choice to open the sketch for students?

Circle ONE letter.

A An interest in connecting the sketch to the ending Ronan had planned.

B An interest in helping Ronan practice leading the written-question segment.

C An interest in comparing the rolled sketch with the last projected picture.

D An interest in responding to students beyond the planned picture sequence.

5. Part B. Which TWO listed texts together connect her earlier interest with the later exchange?

Circle TWO letters.

A Before the evening began, he read the first card once more, then placed a small envelope beside his chair for questions written by the audience.

B The illustrator arrived carrying a cloth pencil case and a rolled sketch.

C The host checked the sequence of images and suggested saving it until the end. He pointed to the cards, explaining that each question led neatly into the picture that followed.

D The illustrator leaned forward. "I'd like to hear that one before we move on," she said.

E A second handwritten question arrived. The host placed it with the first and announced that they would save written questions for a later conversation.

F When the chairs were being stacked, the illustrator unrolled her sketch for several students near the table. Their questions did not follow the projected pictures.

The Copy Beside the Boxes

1 Linnea, the student organizer, had written a plan for the bookmaking workshop that filled three neat pages. Every table had a number, every box a label and every volunteer a task. She could picture the whole sequence without looking at the paper. The morning before the event, she placed the pages beside the supplies and asked a new helper to prepare the room while she watched from the doorway.

2 The helper found the numbered boxes quickly. He turned to the first page, then asked whether the paper bundles belonged on the welcome table or the worktables. The plan said only to put the materials in their usual places. “Which usual places?” the helper asked. The organizer began pointing toward the tables, then stopped herself. She asked him to put a pencil mark beside each instruction that needed something he had not been told.

3 By the time he reached the second page, the margins held several marks. The organizer knew that the blue box contained sample books and that the plain folder held spare labels. The helper did not. He also could not tell who should greet arrivals if the volunteer assigned to the entrance was late. The plan had a name in that space, but no description of what another person should do.

4 The organizer had called the plan **robust** because each task appeared on it. Now she tried it under a different condition. She covered the volunteers’ names and asked the helper to identify what needed doing first. He could read the task order, but two steps depended on knowing which box another volunteer would have opened already. She wrote those dependencies on separate slips and moved them beside the relevant steps.

5 Next, they exchanged jobs. The helper stood at the entrance with a fresh copy while the organizer followed his directions. He asked her to collect the sample books, and she reached toward the blue box without waiting for its label. He stopped her and read out the revised instruction. She moved her hand back. For the rest of the test, she used only the information he gave her.

6 At the event, the entrance volunteer was delayed. The helper used the first page to set out the welcome materials and asked another student to take the greeting task. The organizer arrived carrying a bag of extra paper. She put it down beside the spare supplies instead of taking over the entrance. From the doorway, she watched the helper direct an arriving group toward the worktables.

7 After the last group left, the organizer found one new pencil mark on the plan. A label had been hidden when a box lid was folded back. She wrote a note about where it should go before the next workshop. The helper returned the pages to their folder with the marked copy on top. She left the folder beside the supply boxes.

Questions 6–10 · The Copy Beside the Boxes

6. Which listed text states what had blocked the label?

Circle ONE letter.

A After the last group left, the organizer found one new pencil mark on the plan.

B A label had been hidden when a box lid was folded back.

C She wrote a note about where it should go before the next workshop.

D The helper returned the pages to their folder with the marked copy on top.

7. Part A. Which statement best expresses the story's main idea?

Circle ONE letter.

A A volunteer shortage leads an organizer to develop a new system of named assignments.

B A close inspection of the supply boxes lets an organizer replace the written setup plan.

C A trial run exposes knowledge missing from a written plan and leads its organizer to make that knowledge explicit.

D A role exchange helps a new helper memorize the locations before the organizer opens the workshop.

8. Part B. Which listed text best supports the answer to Part A?

Circle ONE letter.

A Every table had a number, every box a label and every volunteer a task. She could picture the whole sequence without looking at the paper. The morning before the event, she placed the pages beside the supplies and asked a new helper to prepare the room while she watched from the doorway.

B The organizer had called the plan robust because each task appeared on it. Now she tried it under a different condition.

C He could read the task order, but two steps depended on knowing which box another volunteer would have opened already. She wrote those dependencies on separate slips and moved them beside the relevant steps.

D He also could not tell who should greet arrivals if the volunteer assigned to the entrance was late. The plan had a name in that space, but no description of what another person should do.

9. Part A. Which meaning of "robust" fits the way the plan is tested and used in paragraphs 4–6?

Circle ONE letter.

A Able to remain usable when the usual working conditions change.

B Complete enough to name every task and the person responsible.

C Firm enough to prevent anyone from changing an assigned role.

D Familiar enough for its writer to manage each task without a copy.

10. Part B. Which quotation shows the revised plan meeting the quality in Part A?

Circle ONE letter.

A "Next, they exchanged jobs. The helper stood at the entrance with a fresh copy while the organizer followed his directions. He asked her to collect the sample books, and she reached toward the blue box without waiting for its label."

B "The helper found the numbered boxes quickly. He turned to the first page, then asked whether the paper bundles belonged on the welcome table or the worktables."

C "The organizer arrived carrying a bag of extra paper. She put it down beside the spare supplies instead of taking over the entrance."

D "At the event, the entrance volunteer was delayed. The helper used the first page to set out the welcome materials and asked another student to take the greeting task."

What Counts as a Turn?

1 Two observers can watch the same conversation and record different totals without either adding incorrectly. The difference may begin before anyone makes a mark. Each observer needs a rule for what counts as one turn. Until those rules are compared, the totals may look as if they describe the same events when they actually represent different choices about what to record.

2 Consider a practice discussion recorded for a classroom exercise. One observer marks a turn whenever a new speaker takes over the discussion. A short agreement spoken over someone else does not receive a separate mark. Another observer marks every audible contribution, including a brief agreement while the first speaker continues. Both use the same recording, but their sheets do not define a turn in the same way.

3 A speaker begins explaining a choice. Someone nearby says, “Right,” without taking over, and the explanation continues. The first observer records one turn. The second records an additional contribution. Neither has misheard the agreement. The disagreement belongs to the recording rules. Replaying the moment more loudly would not, by itself, decide which rule serves the question the observers are trying to answer.

4 A rule does not have to be arbitrary merely because someone has chosen it. If the exercise asks who develops an extended explanation, counting every brief agreement may obscure the difference between holding the floor and responding while another person holds it. If the question concerns brief vocal responses, those same agreements may be relevant. The choice should have a reason connected to the purpose, not simply produce the preferred total.

5 Ambiguous moments still need attention. Two voices may begin together, or a speaker may pause before continuing. The observers can record the time of such a moment in a separate note column and state how it was handled. A later reader can then inspect the difficult case rather than assume that every mark was equally straightforward. Revising a rule also means checking the earlier cases to which it applied.

6 The count has limits even after the rules are clear. A student who speaks little may be following an argument closely, while someone who contributes often may repeat the same point. The recording can show the contributions being counted; that total alone cannot settle what every listener understood. Another source of information would be needed for a question about understanding rather than speaking events.

7 Before comparing the two sheets, the observers put their definitions beside the totals and keep the notes about overlapping speech. They can then identify which differences follow from the rules and which cases still need review. The final label on each sheet names the event counted. A number without that label would travel more easily, but it would leave the next reader to invent the missing definition.

11. Decide whether each statement about the proposed notes matches the passage.

Use the category letters below. Write one letter for each line. Letters may repeat.

A Matches the text

B Does not match the text

_____ A separate note column can be used for a difficult moment.

_____ The moment's time is recorded only as an ordinary mark in the count column.

_____ The note can state how the difficult moment was handled.

12. Part A. Which statement best expresses the explanation's main idea?

Circle ONE letter.

A Speaking totals can differ because observers replay different portions of a recorded discussion.

B Speaking totals show how differences in understanding shape the participants' contributions.

C Speaking totals become comparable once unclear contributions are replayed at a higher volume.

D Speaking totals can differ because observers classify the same contributions in different ways.

13. Part B. Which pair of quotations most directly gives the general explanation in Part A?

Circle ONE letter.

A "The first observer records one turn. The second records an additional contribution. Neither has misheard the agreement." (paragraph 3) "Replaying the moment more loudly would not, by itself, decide which rule serves the question the observers are trying to answer." (paragraph 3)

B "If the exercise asks who develops an extended explanation, counting every brief agreement may obscure the difference between holding the floor and responding while another person holds it." (paragraph 4) "The choice should have a reason connected to the purpose, not simply produce the preferred total." (paragraph 4)

C "Two observers can watch the same conversation and record different totals without either adding incorrectly." (paragraph 1) "Each observer needs a rule for what counts as one turn. Until those rules are compared, the totals may look as if they describe the same events when they actually represent different choices about what to record." (paragraph 1)

D "A student who speaks little may be following an argument closely, while someone who contributes often may repeat the same point." (paragraph 6) "Another source of information would be needed for a question about understanding rather than speaking events." (paragraph 6)

14. Part A. An observer has marked half a discussion using a rule that includes brief overlaps. She changes to counting only changes of speaker. What should she do before reporting a total for the entire recording?

Circle ONE letter.

A Keep the earlier marks, apply the new rule to the rest, and label the whole total as changes of speaker.

B Review the earlier overlap marks under the new rule, and identify that rule with the completed total.

C Recount only the final section, and use the original rule's name when presenting the revised total.

D Remove the difficult-case notes, and choose a label after comparing the two partial totals.

15. Part B. Which TWO listed texts together support the answer to Part A?

Circle TWO letters.

A Replaying the moment more loudly would not, by itself, decide which rule serves the question the observers are trying to answer.

B Revising a rule also means checking the earlier cases to which it applied.

C Another source of information would be needed for a question about understanding rather than speaking events.

D The final label on each sheet names the event counted.

E The choice should have a reason connected to the purpose, not simply produce the preferred total.

A Question That Could Change the Reading

1 A strong interpretation should leave room for a question that could change it. That does not mean treating every reading as equally convincing or changing a conclusion whenever someone objects. It means being able to say which details support an explanation and what sort of overlooked detail would make the writer reconsider. Without that possibility, discussion can become a defense of a label rather than an examination of a text.

2 Suppose a group reads a story in which a character repeatedly stays silent during an argument. One reader calls the silence fear; another calls it a deliberate refusal to help. Each can point to an action that fits. If they stop at those matching details, the conversation may become a contest in finding more examples for the explanation each already prefers. The less comfortable task is to examine where a reading does not fit.

3 The group could place the two explanations in separate columns on a sheet. Beneath each, it could list supporting details and a question about a possible difficulty. Does the character also stay silent when no one is angry? Does the silence prevent a decision the character dislikes? These questions do not decide the interpretation in advance. They identify places where another scene might distinguish the explanations.

4 A reader may need to **revise** an explanation after examining such a scene. Revision can narrow a claim instead of reversing it. The silence might reflect fear in one situation and a chosen tactic in another. That possibility would need evidence too. Combining two labels is not automatically more thoughtful than choosing one; it is useful only if the combined account explains the actual pattern more clearly.

5 An objection also needs to be weighed rather than merely counted. Several readers may prefer the refusal explanation, but their agreement does not establish what the story shows. One overlooked scene could matter more than a repeated preference. Equally, a small wording disagreement might leave the central explanation intact. The response should fit the importance of the detail, not the number or confidence of the people raising it.

6 This approach can make a discussion less comfortable because the writer must identify what is not yet settled. It can also make the next step clearer. Instead of saying only that another reader is wrong, the group can return to the scene that would separate their accounts. A change of mind then has a reason that someone else can follow, rather than looking like surrender to the most persistent speaker.

7 At the end, the writer may keep the original interpretation. The important difference is that it has been compared with a serious alternative and checked against a relevant difficulty. On the discussion sheet, a crossed-out sentence or a new qualification records that work. A final statement need not advertise certainty by erasing the questions that helped produce it.

16. What does “revise” mean for an explanation in paragraph 4?

Circle ONE letter.

A Choose whichever explanation attracts the most supporters.

B Restate the original explanation without changing its reach.

C Change an explanation after examining further evidence.

D Combine the competing explanations before testing either.

17. Part A. Complete the sentence about the comparison layout suggested by the author.

The two explanations can be placed _____.

Circle ONE letter.

A on cards given to the most confident readers

B in a final paragraph that replaces the earlier notes

C with each explanation in its own column on one sheet

D in one list arranged by how many readers agree

18. Part B. Which listed text states the arrangement described in Part A?

Circle ONE letter.

A That does not mean treating every reading as equally convincing or changing a conclusion whenever someone objects.

B The group could place the two explanations in separate columns on a sheet. Beneath each, it could list supporting details and a question about a possible difficulty.

C Equally, a small wording disagreement might leave the central explanation intact. The response should fit the importance of the detail, not the number or confidence of the people raising it.

D This approach can make a discussion less comfortable because the writer must identify what is not yet settled. It can also make the next step clearer.

19. Part A. Two readers record their work. Mara checks a scene where the character is silent in a calm room, then keeps one explanation. Ellis lists further silences during arguments, then combines the two labels. Which difference between their records would matter most to the author?

Circle ONE letter.

A Mara tests a distinction between the accounts; Ellis's record does not show why a combined account fits better.

B Mara's one calm scene gives the repeated pattern too little weight; Ellis's combined reading is better supported by repetition.

C Mara's record is stronger because keeping an original explanation avoids having to test a second motive.

D Mara leaves one possible explanation outside her conclusion; Ellis's use of both labels gives the author the better comparison.

20. Part B. Which pair of quotations best supports the comparison in Part A?

Circle ONE letter.

A "If they stop at those matching details, the conversation may become a contest in finding more examples for the explanation each already prefers." (paragraph 2) "Several readers may prefer the refusal explanation, but their agreement does not establish what the story shows." (paragraph 5)

B "They identify places where another scene might distinguish the explanations." (paragraph 3) "Combining two labels is not automatically more thoughtful than choosing one; it is useful only if the combined account explains the actual pattern more clearly." (paragraph 4)

C "Revision can narrow a claim instead of reversing it." (paragraph 4) "The important difference is that it has been compared with a serious alternative and checked against a relevant difficulty." (paragraph 7)

D "Does the character also stay silent when no one is angry?" (paragraph 3) "Equally, a small wording disagreement might leave the central explanation intact." (paragraph 5)

Answer Sheet · Optional Reading Skills Check

Name or code _____ Date _____

Circle the letter you chose in the booklet. A number in parentheses tells you how many letters to circle. For write-in items, copy the letters in the order shown.

Question	Mark or write your answer	Question	Mark or write your answer
1 (2)	A B C D E	11	____ / ____ / ____
2	A B C D	12	A B C D
3	A B C D	13	A B C D
4	A B C D	14	A B C D
5 (2)	A B C D E F	15 (2)	A B C D E
6	A B C D	16	A B C D
7	A B C D	17	A B C D
8	A B C D	18	A B C D
9	A B C D	19	A B C D
10	A B C D	20	A B C D

Teacher use

Main idea _____ / 3

Vocabulary _____ / 3

Vocabulary evidence _____ / 2

Inference _____ / 3

Evidence _____ / 6

Literal comprehension _____ / 3