



Nebraska State Assessment

Grade 11
English Language Arts
Released Passage

Name:

Directions:

On the following pages of your test booklet are questions for the Grade 11 *Nebraska State Assessment–English Language Arts (NeSA–ELA)*.

Read these directions carefully before beginning the test.

This test will include several different types of questions. Record all of your answers in the answer document.

The test will include questions that will ask you to provide your answer in a variety of ways.

- Some questions will ask you to select an answer from among four choices.
- Some questions will have two parts and require that you choose an answer or answers to each part.
- Some questions will ask you to construct an answer by following the directions given.

When you come to the word **STOP** at the end of the test, you have finished the Grade 11 English Language Arts Test. You may review the test to check your answers. Make sure you have marked all of your answers clearly and that you have completely erased any marks you do not want. When you are finished, put your answer sheet inside your test booklet and close your test booklet.

The Eclipse

We all took the Sun for granted, until it was gone.

“Josie? What are you thinking about?” my friend Travis asked as we walked through the hall toward my locker. I had to squint when I looked at Travis because a special lamp was positioned right behind him. The lamp was supposed to mimic real sunlight, and the school installed several of these lamps a few weeks ago because they were worried students wouldn’t adjust well to living in semidarkness all the time. The lamps are supposed to help our bodies produce vitamin D, but all these lamps do is make the hallway feel like a blacktop parking lot in August.

“I don’t know . . . everything,” I said.

“Could you be a little less specific?” he joked.

I remember the day Travis and I became friends. On that day, the solar eclipse occurred. The entire earth science class had gathered in the school courtyard. Emily, Tegan, Ben, Manuel, and Travis were taking turns looking through Mr. Kim’s telescope, which he had outfitted with a special solar filter so we could safely view the eclipse. The rest of us were watching using a pinhole projector we’d made in class. Our projector was really just a large piece of paper with a small hole, which we made with a pencil, in the center of it. With her back toward the Sun, Grace held the pinhole projector above her shoulders, allowing the Sun to shine through the pinhole. There was a second piece of paper on the ground. This piece of paper acted like a screen. When the Sun projected through the pinhole, we could view an inverted image of the Sun on the second piece of paper. This simple tool provided us with a view of the eclipse without the need to look directly at the Sun.

“Josie, do you remember what that shadow’s called?” Mr. Kim asked.

“The umbra,” I mumbled, transfixed by the projected image of the diminishing Sun.

The shadow grew larger, and the world around us darkened, like twilight was coming. Then, it was like night.

“Is it supposed to get this dark?” someone whispered. No one answered.

“Okay, here it is: a total eclipse,” Mr. Kim said. I could hear the excitement in his voice.

The sun-circle on the second piece of paper had looked like a crescent moon before; now, it was all black. A shadow fell over everything, and a chill embraced me. I shivered.

A minute passed, and then two, as we all waited for the eclipse to ebb, for the Sun to return.

It never did. That was two months ago.

I grabbed the bag from my locker and slung it over my shoulder. All around us, students were filing past, their footsteps clapping and scraping as they shuffled out the doors and hurried to catch the bus or to meet their parents who were waiting in idling cars.

A bunch of my classmates used to go to this burger restaurant downtown on the weekends. Not anymore. Without sunlight, all the crops had withered. Without crops, the price of livestock feed had gone through the roof. Last I heard, meat was selling at \$55 a pound, which made burgers too expensive to enjoy. All the fast food places had hastily scribbled signs on their doors: CLOSED DUE TO ECLIPSE. The same signs hung on the door of the florist shop, too. And the produce section of the grocery store sat dark and cordoned off—its shelves fallow.

I'd never cared much for salad or fresh veggies, but now that they were impossible to get, I craved them every day.

"I miss spring," I said, zipping up my unseasonably thick jacket as Travis and I stepped out of the school.

The sky was the same eerie purple it had been ever since the eclipse began, and as usual, I was tempted to look up, directly at the black, light-rimmed umbra, but I didn't.

The eclipse happened back in March. Now, it was May, but it was still unsettling for me to see car headlights and streetlights on at three in the afternoon.

"I miss going to the lake," Travis said wistfully. "Lying there and feeling the sun on your skin . . ."

"I guess we're stuck with heat lamps and canned ravioli for the foreseeable future," I sighed. It just seemed so unfair, so impossible. Scientists, government agencies, and the greatest minds alive, had focused all the power of the human scientific machine skyward, but they still hadn't been able to figure out how the Moon remained in front of the Sun, how the usual cycles and rotations of everything had suddenly become tangled.

It made me wonder what other things I thought were solid and **immutable** might also end up changing.

I remember, on that day in the parking lot, that people were laughing at first. Mr. Kim had told us the eclipse would last under a minute; they thought it was hilarious that he was wrong. But Mr. Kim didn't think it was funny at all. He looked something up on his phone, glared up at the sky, with no goggles on, and then grumbled, pacing. He nudged some students out of the way and looked into his telescope for a long time. And I got this feeling in the pit of my stomach, like something big was happening, something that would change everything. My legs felt weak, and I sat down on the curb. Before I knew it, my face was in my hands and my mind was flooded with worry and questions.

"Hey, it's going to be okay," a voice said, and I looked up to see Travis sitting next to me.

It wasn't okay, not really, but he was there, and that made it better.

"I guess something good came out of the eclipse. We became friends, right?" Travis said.

I smiled, and it made the wind feel a little less cold.

“Right,” I said.

Something shifted then—the shadows all around us shrinking, dissolving—and we both tilted our heads up and shaded our eyes with our hands. It was too bright to look at directly, but we could tell what was happening. The Moon was moving, and the Sun was coming out again!

From the student parking lot came a cacophony of blaring car horns and shouts of elation. But Travis and I, we didn’t say anything. We both just stopped walking, shut our eyes, and felt the warmth of the Sun seep into our skin.

I promised myself in that moment that I’d never take the Sun, or anything else, for granted again.

1. In paragraph 11, how does the use of specific words impact the tone?
 - A. The use of the words “sun” and “looked” creates a mocking tone.
 - B. The use of the words “chill” and “shivered” creates a foreboding tone.
 - C. The use of the words “shadow” and “paper” creates a bitter tone.
 - D. The use of the words “crescent” and “circle” creates a patronizing tone.

2. In paragraph 21, what is the function of the metaphor “all the power of the human scientific machine”?
 - A. to indicate that humankind’s greatest scientists cannot supply the population with enough heat
 - B. to describe the problems that people are having while trying to overcome a short food supply
 - C. to indicate that humankind’s greatest thinkers cannot understand why the eclipse is lasting so long
 - D. to demonstrate that it is impossible to keep track of the cycles of the moon for long periods of time

3. In paragraph 22, what is the meaning of the word **immutable**?
- A. unable to be altered
 - B. to be wrongly accused
 - C. state of being dissolved
 - D. to be spoken again
4. Which phrase from the story BEST reflects the influence of popular culture on the plot?
- A. installed several of these lamps
 - B. held the pinhole projector above her shoulders
 - C. hurried to catch the bus
 - D. looked something up on his phone
5. Which paragraph effectively creates an apprehensive mood?
- A. paragraph 2
 - B. paragraph 8
 - C. paragraph 23
 - D. paragraph 29

6. Which phrase from the story supports the inference that people are happy when the Sun finally appears?
- A. footsteps clapping and scraping
 - B. price of livestock feed had gone through the roof
 - C. tilted our heads up and shaded our eyes
 - D. cacophony of blaring car horns
7. How does the use of time in the story effectively shape Josie’s feelings?
- A. The passing of months causes Josie to cherish the Sun after it reappears.
 - B. The passing of days causes Josie to visit more restaurants after the Sun reappears.
 - C. The passing of years causes Josie to grow more flowers after the Sun reappears.
 - D. The passing of hours causes Josie to avoid the Sun after it reappears.
8. Choose the examples from the story that BEST support each character’s traits and place the examples in the chart.

| | Josie | Travis |
|--|-------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Traits | mournful and reflective | supportive and lighthearted |
| Example from Story that Supports Traits | 1. 2. | 1. 2. |

EXAMPLES

- A. "I don't know . . . everything," I said.
- B. "Could you be a little less specific?" . . .
- C. I remember the day when Travis and I became friends. "The umbra," I mumbled . . .
- D. "Is it supposed to get this dark?" . . .
- E. That was two months ago.
- F. "I miss spring," I said . . .
- G. "Hey, it's going to be okay," a voice said . . .

9. How is the use of point of view effective in the story?
- A. It allows the reader to learn new vocabulary in the story.
 - B. It allows the reader to understand the inner thoughts and feelings of one student experiencing an unusual event.
 - C. It allows the reader to know the opinions and beliefs of the teacher about the scientific merits of the eclipse.
 - D. It allows the reader to understand the structure of the story.
10. This question has two parts. Answer part A, and then answer part B.

Part A

Which theme is implied through the protagonist of the story?

- A. It is difficult to feel different from those around us.
- B. Living without something teaches people to appreciate it more.
- C. People often doubt themselves when facing a challenge.
- D. Scientific innovation is the key to solving most problems.

Part B

Select **two** pieces of evidence that BEST support the answer in part A. Select **two**.

- A. We all took the Sun for granted, until it was gone.
- B. The lamps are supposed to help our bodies produce vitamin D, but all these lamps do is make the hallway feel like a blacktop parking lot in August.
- C. This simple tool provided us with a view of the eclipse without the need to look directly at the Sun.
- D. It was still unsettling for me to see car headlights and streetlights on at three in the afternoon.
- E. Without sunlight, all the crops had withered.
- F. I'd never cared much for salad or fresh veggies, but now that they were impossible to get, I craved them every day.
- G. Mr. Kim had told us the eclipse would last under a minute; they thought it was hilarious that he was wrong.

11. An internal conflict is the struggle that takes place in a character’s mind while an external conflict is a struggle between a character and some outside force. Analyze how “The Eclipse” effectively depicts both internal and external conflicts. Write a well-organized response using specific evidence from the story to support your answer.

**Writer’s Checklist for
Text-Dependent Analysis**

PLAN before you write

- I read the task carefully.
- I read the text(s) carefully.
- I thought about how the task connects to the text(s).
- I organized my ideas on scratch paper.

FOCUS while you write

- I responded to all parts of the task.
- I analyzed the information from the text(s) in my response.
- I chose relevant and accurate evidence from the text(s) to support my response.
- I organized my response with an introduction, body, and conclusion.

REVISE after you write

- I wrote my response in English.
- I wrote my final draft in the response box.
- I focused my writing on the task.
- I used/cited evidence from the text(s) to support my response.
- I corrected errors in capitalization, spelling, sentence structure, punctuation, and word choice.

**Grade 11
ELA Practice Test
Answer Key**

| | |
|------------|--------------------------------|
| 1. | B, |
| 2. | C |
| 3. | A |
| 4. | D |
| 5. | C |
| 6. | D |
| 7. | A |
| 8. | Josie A, F; Travis B, G |
| 9. | B |
| 10. | B/A,F |
| 11. | refer to TDA rubric |

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