



New York State Testing Program

English 
Language Arts

Book 1

Sample Test



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Part 1

Directions

The following article describes one of the world's puzzling archaeological mysteries. Read "An Ancient Disk's Secret Message," by Mary Morton Cowan. Then do Numbers 1 through 5.

An Ancient Disk's Secret Message

by Mary Morton Cowan

Have you ever decoded a secret message? On the Greek island of Crete, in the Mediterranean Sea, there is a message so puzzling that it has remained a secret since its discovery almost one hundred years ago.

The message is ancient. Almost four thousand years ago it was stamped onto a disk that was pressed from a ball of clay. This mysterious clay disk is on display at the Archaeological Museum in Iraklion, Crete, along with other Minoan treasures. Both sides are covered with hieroglyphics—writing in pictures and symbols.

Minoan = from ancient Crete

In 1900, archaeologists uncovered an ancient palace on the north shore of Crete, older than any other European ruins. Crete quickly became a popular digging site. Soon other palaces were discovered. One July day in 1908, a group of Italian archaeologists were digging among the ruins at the ancient Palace of Phaistos (FYS-toss) on the south shore of Crete. One of them, Dr. Luigi Pernier, uncovered a mud-brick box in a storage room. Inside he found a clay tablet etched with linear writing, pieces of a broken pottery jar, and the clay disk. Brushing dirt off the disk, Pernier saw the mysterious hieroglyphic message.



The Phaistos Disk, as it came to be called, became famous for the way the message was inscribed. Each figure was pressed onto the clay with a stamp or punch—an early form of the printing process. Whoever stamped the disk used a set of punches, probably made of wood or ivory. We can tell that a punch was used for each character because each character is exactly the same every time it appears.

Go On

John Chadwick, a professor of Greek at the University of Cambridge in England, calls the Phaistos Disk “the world’s first typewritten document.” Forty-five different characters are stamped onto this disk. According to Chadwick, “Its maker must have intended to produce a large number of documents.”

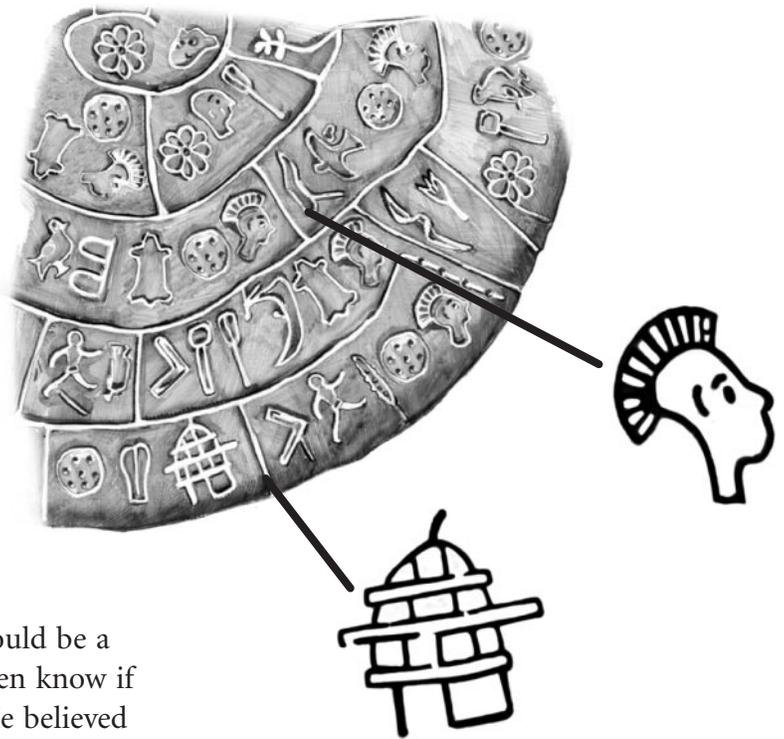
This unique disk is more than an example of ancient printing, however. It is an unsolved puzzle. Nothing like it has been found anywhere else in the world. For years scholars argued about the direction of the writing. “But,” said Chadwick, “it has now been firmly established that in some places one sign very slightly overlaps that to its right.” That proves the maker kept stamping toward the left, creating a spiral toward the center.

For almost a century, scholars and amateurs have been trying to interpret the Phaistos Disk to discover its secret. The most widely accepted opinion is that it has a sacred meaning. Other religious relics with spiral inscriptions have been found elsewhere on Crete. Similar signs were etched on a stone altar at another Cretan palace and on a bronze ax found in a sacred cave in the mountains.

When you look closely at the disk, you notice that the message is divided into sections, which may be words or phrases. Several sign groups repeat, suggesting a refrain. Each side of the disk could be a verse of a song or hymn. “But we do not even know if the text is complete,” Chadwick admitted. He believed more disks must be still hidden in ruins somewhere. He always hoped so, for he knew scholars need more than one document in any script to be able to read it. “My own view,” he wrote, “shared by all serious scholars, is that the Disk is undecipherable so long as it remains an isolated document.”

It is hard to guess where additional disks might be because experts are not sure where the Phaistos Disk was made. For one thing, the reddish-brown clay is not like clay found on the island. Archaeologists have found so many styles of pottery among the ruins on Crete that they know Minoans traded with people from other Mediterranean cultures. Many of the characters stamped on the disk show distinct cultural features that are not Minoan. The pagoda-like structure resembles those from Asia Minor, and the man with a bristly plumed headdress is probably Philistine, from across the Mediterranean Sea.

For now, the Phaistos Disk remains unreadable. No one has found the key to unlock its secret message. Maybe someday, somewhere, archaeologists will uncover more disks. Then perhaps an expert will decode the system and read the secret of this ancient disk.



1 How do scholars know that the hieroglyphics on the Phaistos Disk were made by a stamp or a punch?

- A** The symbols spiral inwards from right to left.
- B** Each character is identical every time it appears.
- C** Minoans did not use hand printing on clay disks.
- D** The stamp was found in the ruins of a nearby palace.

2 Why do experts believe that the Phaistos Disk has a sacred meaning?

- F** The images and pictures show typical Minoan religious practices.
- G** The spiral inscriptions are similar to those on other religious relics.
- H** The message on the disk is divided into sections representing phrases.
- J** The disk was originally part of a stone altar found in another palace on Crete.

3 Why do scholars consider the Phaistos Disk to be important?

- A** It is an early example of a printing process.
- B** No other spiral inscriptions have ever been found.
- C** No one knows where the disk was originally made.
- D** It is the only Minoan relic that archaeologists have found.

4 It is likely that the creators of the Phaistos Disk

- F** left the text incomplete
- G** wanted to create a secret message
- H** knew nothing about Minoan religion
- J** intended to make more than one disk

5 What was probably the author's purpose in writing this passage?

- A** to prove that the Minoans inhabited ancient Crete
- B** to tell an interesting story about an unsolved mystery
- C** to teach people about the value of preserving languages
- D** to offer a comparison of various Mediterranean cultures

Directions

Read "The Paper Bag" by Zoro Weil. Then do Numbers 6 through 10.

The Paper Bag

by Zoro Weil

Fill up a paper bag with
Spring sounds and
Open it in December

Fill up a paper bag with
Snow flurries and
Use them to decorate your bedroom

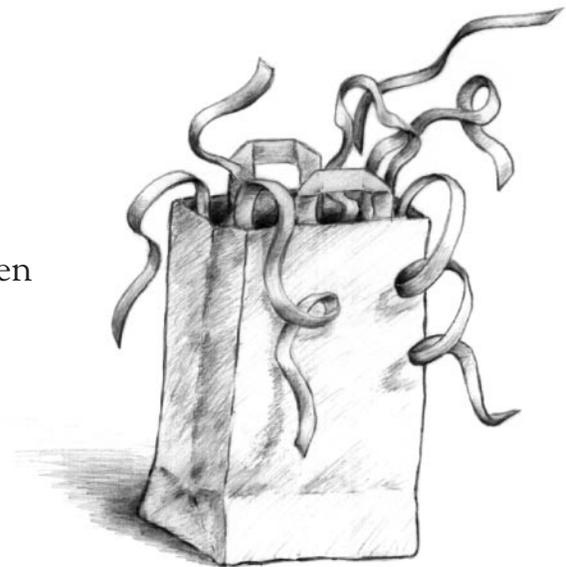
Fill up a paper bag with
Ribbons and
Fly them when you want a word with the wind

Fill up a paper bag with
Winter quiet and
Open it when it's time to be alone

Fill up a paper bag with
Your favorite words and
Shake it till a good story comes out

Fill up a paper bag with
Secrets and
Share them with a friend every so often

Fill up a paper bag with
Velvet
Just to have it



6 Which excerpt from the poem uses personification, the literary technique that gives objects or things human qualities?

- F** “a paper bag with velvet”
- G** “Use them to decorate your bedroom”
- H** “when you want a word with the wind”
- J** “Share them with a friend every so often”

7 The paper bag in this poem represents

- A** generosity
- B** gratitude
- C** memory
- D** sadness

8 Which of the following best describes things that are put in the paper bag?

- F** characteristics of the seasons
- G** experiences and favorite things
- H** ideas and objects to use later in a story
- J** special items that will be lost if they are not saved

9 The style and wording of the poem show that the poet is

- A** giving the reader advice
- B** telling a story about an event
- C** trying to make the reader laugh
- D** celebrating the changing seasons

10 Which statement best expresses the main idea of the poem?

- F** Remember the good and let go of the bad.
- G** Enjoy today for tomorrow may never come.
- H** Put your treasures in a safe place or you will lose them.
- J** Today’s experiences can provide tomorrow’s happiness.

Directions

Read this magazine article about the discovery of the dinosaur *Jobaria*. Then do Numbers 11 through 15.

Finding the Pieces . . . And Putting Them Together Again

With a team of 18 scientists, Dr. Paul Sereno unearthed 95 percent of a new species of sauropod (long-necked dinosaur), called *Jobaria* (giant), during a four-month expedition to Niger in 1997. Let's follow the process from discovery to mounted display, step by step.

Step 1: We've Got One!

Led by Niger's Touareg tribesmen, the team comes upon a site where fossilized bones are sticking out of desert rock. According to Touareg legend, these bones belonged to a mythical beast, Jobar.

Step 2: Digging In!

Using hammers, awls, and chisels, the team works for 10 weeks at the mass gravesite. Finally, a huge skeleton that had been buried for 135 million years is removed from beneath 15 tons of solid rock.

Step 3: Wrap It Up!

The fossils are covered in paper or tin foil, and then wrapped in plaster-dipped burlap strips. The tops and sides of the bones are covered first. When the plaster dries into a hard "jacket," the bone is turned over and covered on the other side. The jackets are numbered and logged into a field book. They will protect the bones on their long journey back to the lab in Chicago.

Step 4: Move It Out!

Using only an aluminum tripod, pulleys, rope, and a chain—no mechanized equipment!—more than 20 tons of jacketed fossils, some weighing more than 225 kilograms each [about 500 pounds], are loaded on several trucks for the 1,600-kilometer journey to the port of Accra (Ghana). From there, the bones are loaded into containers and shipped across the Atlantic and eventually to Chicago.

Step 5: Unwrap Carefully

The log is matched with a number on each fossil jacket so that the skeleton can be reconstructed in the right order after the bones are cleaned.

Step 6: Clean 'Em Up

Using dental tools, tiny jackhammers, and chemicals, it takes two years and hundreds of hours of careful and precise work to clean the more-than-200 bones of the adult *Jobaria* and some juveniles also found at the site.

Step 7: And the Missing Pieces?

Fortunately, 95 percent of Jobaria's bones were found. The missing ones were sculpted out of foam or clay.

Step 8: Make a Plan

With all the bones cleaned, and the missing ones sculpted, a scale model is made. From it, a blueprint for building the real skeleton is made. The tail bones are laid out first in the correct order so that the team can study how they are put together. As the bones are assembled, an image of the size and shape of Jobaria's muscles emerges.

Step 9: Copy the Fossils

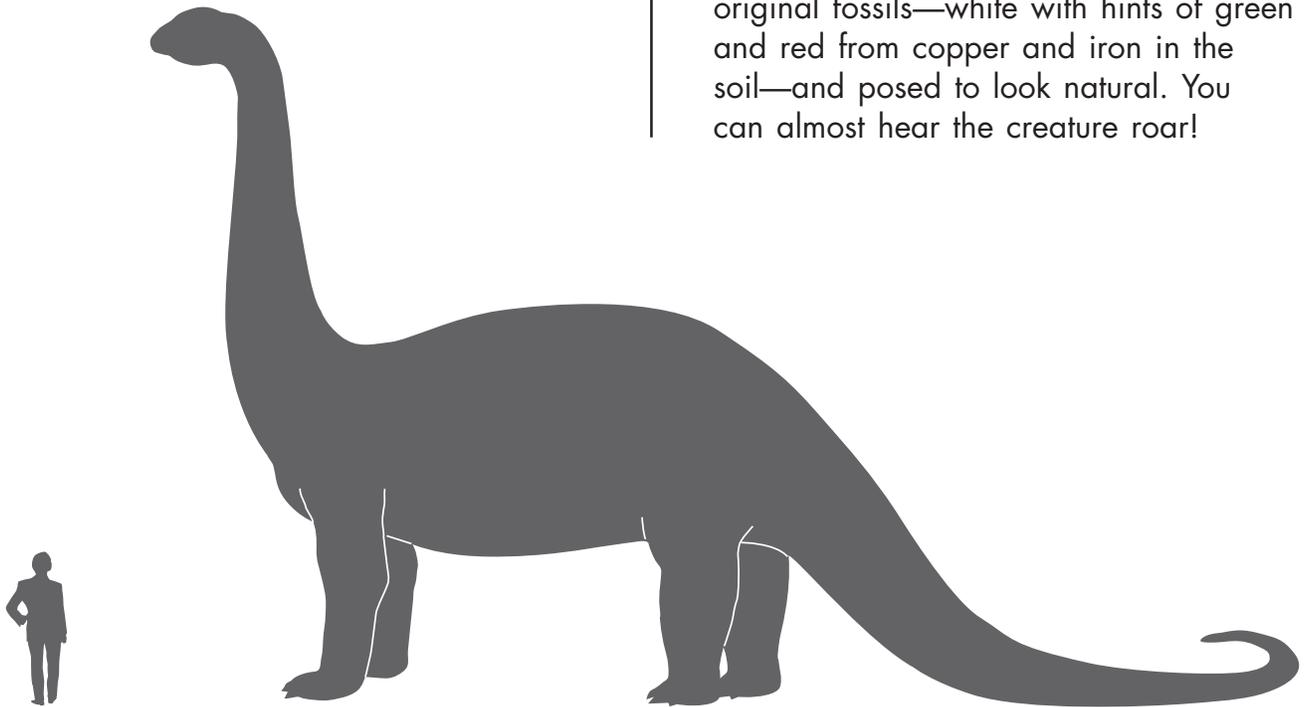
Jobaria's bones were too heavy and fragile to actually mount for display. (The thigh bone alone weighs almost 630 kilograms!) So, the original fossil bones are copied. Molds are made of each bone, and resin and fiberglass replicas are made.

Step 10: Stack It Up

Casts of the bones are attached to a framework made of high-tensile-strength steel. The frame is almost completely hidden.

Finally: Share the Discovery!

The mounted casts are painted with acrylic paint to look like the color of the original fossils—white with hints of green and red from copper and iron in the soil—and posed to look natural. You can almost hear the creature roar!



11 According to the legends of the Touareg people, the fossilized bones sticking out of desert rocks in Niger came from

- A** a race of giants
- B** a mythical beast
- C** a type of ancient skeleton
- D** a new species of sauropod

12 The article was probably divided into steps in order to

- F** provide a list of instructions for others who want to dig for fossils
- G** summarize the process in a way that is easy to follow
- H** highlight the importance of the discovery
- J** emphasize how long it takes to do the work

13 The reconstruction of Jobaria does not use real bones because

- A** most of the bones were missing
- B** resin and fiberglass casts are cheaper
- C** copies of the bones can be made to look more life-like
- D** the bones are too heavy and delicate to make a reconstruction

14 According to the article, which of the following is true of Jobaria's fossilized bones?

- F** They were found almost totally exposed above desert rock.
- G** They were mostly crushed beneath 15 tons of solid rock.
- H** They were flown from Accra to Chicago.
- J** They were covered with plaster for shipping.

15 According to what you have read, the process necessary to display a dinosaur can best be compared to

- A** painting a house
- B** planning a long trip
- C** putting a puzzle together
- D** working in a dentist's office

Directions

Look at the Web page for an Internet site offering services to bicycle owners. Then do Numbers 16 through 18.

How It Works

Register

How it Works

Law Enforcement

Licensing Your Bike

Bicycle News

About NYBR

The New York Bike Registry Service—NYBR

Did you know that many stolen bicycles are eventually recovered by the police? With our cool service, you can register your bicycle with us and help protect it against theft. We keep the serial numbers in our electronic system and we match them with police reports of recovered bikes. If your bike is stolen and later recovered by police, we can notify you that your bike has been found!

Registering Your Bicycle

You can register online using our Web site. Or you can register by printing out a registration form on our Web page. Simply fill it out and return it to the address listed on the form. There is a \$10 yearly fee, payable by check or credit card.

Registration Material

Once we receive your registration form and fee, we will send you a statement of registration. Your statement of registration can be used to prove ownership in the event you need to claim your bicycle.

Last Name:	First Name:	
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	
Address:	Phone*:	
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	
City:	E-mail:	
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	
State:	Zip Code:	Web Site*:
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Bicycle Model:	Serial Number:	
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	

If you would like more information about our service or any other participating organization, please click the applicable links below.

[Affiliated Law Enforcement Agencies](#)

[Affiliated Retailers](#)

[Affiliated Web Sites](#)

[NYBR Brochures](#)

[NYBR "Let Us Find Your Bike" Poster](#)

*Optional

Clear form and start over. Submit information to NYBR. Print form.

Go On

16 The service provided by this Web site is mainly intended to

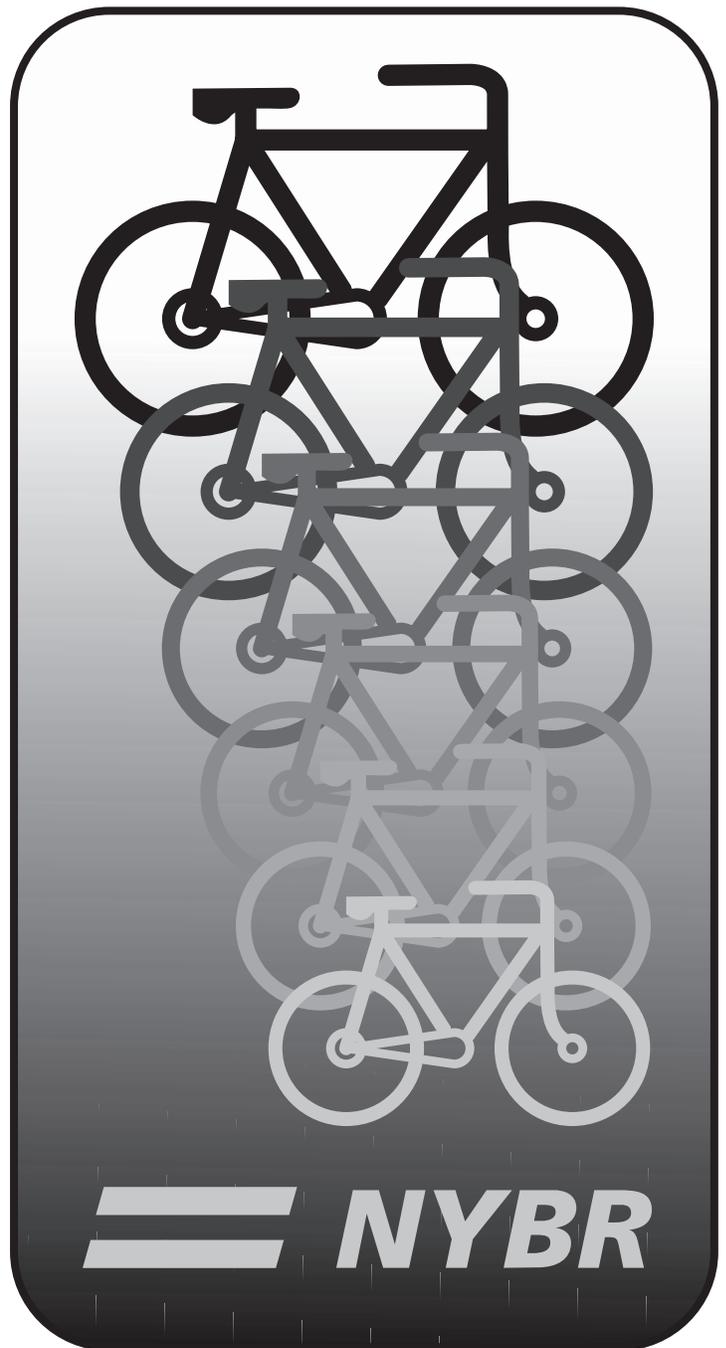
- F** prevent bicycle theft
- G** help find a stolen bike
- H** identify popular bicycle models
- J** share bike information with friends

17 Which option does this Web site offer bicycle owners?

- A** membership in bicycle clubs
- B** free registration for a second bicycle
- C** membership in affiliated organizations
- D** registration by mail or on the Internet

18 All of the following information is required for registration EXCEPT

- F** Phone
- G** Address
- H** Zip Code
- J** Serial Number



Directions

C.W. Gusewelle, a newspaper columnist, often wrote about his bird dog Rufus and the relationship that develops between people and dogs. These stories were later compiled into a book, *The Rufus Chronicle*. Read this excerpt from *The Rufus Chronicle*. Then do Numbers 19 through 25.

Make Yourself Comfortable, Rufus

by C.W. Gusewelle

Brilliance is a powerful asset. Wealth, if you're lucky enough to have it, can open some doors. But when it comes to getting ahead in the important things, patience is the sovereign virtue.

sovereign = supreme or most important

Take Rufus, for instance. He's about as bright as he needs to be, though you wouldn't call him a genius. And he's certainly not rich. But he has a clear idea of how he wants to live and is willing to advance toward his goal by measured stages.

In the beginning, as I've said, there was the doghouse. His destiny, it had been decided, was as an outdoor dog. He disagreed. Standing first on the roof of his house, and later on the patio table, he could look directly through a window and see the old dog, happy on her rug, and indoor people and a quantity of indoor cats. The logic of his being an outdoor dog escaped him. But there was a closed door between him and all that comfort, and he was small.

With bird dogs as with buffalo calves, however, the smallness is self-correcting. It just takes time. So he waited, and when his stature permitted he destroyed the door and came inside. Once in, he discovered that the old dog, the people and the cats spent their evenings in an upstairs bedroom. He was allowed to join them, provided he remained politely on the floor.

stature = size

It did not escape his notice that the cats arranged themselves on the bed and, when the hour grew late, the people joined the cats and the old dog selected one of the people's soft chairs—chairs

unfathomable = incapable of being understood

that for unfathomable reasons were forbidden him. He brooded for a time on this

injustice. Then he realized that the people slept, and that what happened while they slept was unimportant to them.

If he was seen to be on the floor when the light went out, and again when the alarm sounded and the people stirred, he would be praised as a floor dog, not a chair dog. The quality of his nights improved. But the arrangement was limiting. Sometimes he liked to sleep in the daytime, too. Or in the evening hours before the people retired. So he began insinuating himself into the chair whenever it pleased him.



Go On

The people grew used to it. They learned to watch television sitting on footstools, while Cinnamon and the bird dog slept in the chairs.

Cinnamon is the name of the old dog.

There remained the issue of the bed. He leapt up there the first time barking an alarm, pretending to scare a burglar from the yard. Sometimes after that he sat on the bed to look through the window at rabbits among the flowers. When the people remembered they commanded him to get down. In time they remembered less often. Climbing the stair they would hear the thump of him leaving that unauthorized place. But when they came into the room he would be in his chair, the soul of innocence.

Seven years, it took, from the roof of the doghouse to the lap of comfort.

The other evening, in the middle of some program, the people happened to look at the bed and see him there, brazenly and in full view, curled in a knot as small as possible for a dog his size, trying to resemble a cat.

“Do you see it?” one of the people said.

His near eye was slitted open, looking at them looking at him. Then the eye slid shut in satisfaction.

So far, he still eats dog food and does not join them for meals at the table. But time is his ally, and he takes the long view. There’s no sure way

ally = friend or supporter

fop = someone who cares excessively about appearance and the finer things in life

of knowing how far patience may get him or where ambition ends. But it’s a pity to see what’s happened to him. The tough, utilitarian beast has become a lounging fop, whose taste now runs to electric blankets set on 6.

19 In general, Rufus attained his goals through

- A** repeated demonstrations of strength
- B** friendliness and usefulness
- C** a series of small steps
- D** logic and persuasion

20 Why is Rufus convinced he should not be an outdoor dog?

- F** He has grown too big for the doghouse.
- G** He thinks he is too brilliant to live outside.
- H** He sees other animals living inside the house.
- J** He wants to protect the people from danger.

21 Why does the author compare Rufus to a buffalo calf?

- A** to show that all animals have things in common
- B** to imply that Rufus will be very large when he grows
- C** to provide an example of the color and shape of Rufus
- D** to contrast animals that live inside houses with those that live outside

22 Read this sentence from the passage:

So he began insinuating himself into the chair whenever it pleased him.

In this sentence, what does *insinuating* mean?

- F** sneaking
- G** jumping
- H** forcing
- J** raising

23 Rufus would probably agree with which statement?

- A** Better to be safe than sorry.
- B** Prevention is the best medicine.
- C** All things come to those who wait.
- D** Never put off until tomorrow what you can do today.

24 Rufus tries to “resemble a cat” because the cats are allowed to

- F** sleep on the bed
- G** eat meals at the table
- H** stay inside the house
- J** watch television with the people

25 Now that years have passed, what is Rufus’s next goal?

- A** to be a brilliant bird dog
- B** to join the family for meals
- C** to be the only pet in the house
- D** to sleep on the bed during the day

STOP

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English Language Arts
Grade 8

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