

# Grade 9

## FCAT Reading

### Sample Questions

The intent of these sample test materials is to orient teachers and students to the types of questions on FCAT tests. By using these materials, students will become familiar with the types of items and response formats that they will see on the actual test. The sample test materials are not intended to demonstrate the length of the actual test, nor should student responses be used as an indicator of student performance on the actual test. Additional information about test items can be found in the *FCAT Test Item Specifications* at <http://fcap.fldoe.org/fcatis01.asp> and previously released FCAT tests at <http://fcap.fldoe.org/fcatrelease.asp>.

When the 2010 FCAT Reading tests and associated sample test materials were developed, the State of Florida was in the process of revising the Sunshine State Standards in Reading and Language Arts. These newer standards were not yet approved for use in Florida's schools, so it was not feasible to incorporate these new standards into the 2010 FCAT Reading tests. The portion of the 2010 FCAT Reading tests that will be used to calculate student results and school grades in 2010 will be composed of items that assess mastery of the 1996 Sunshine State Standards. Because it was also not feasible to develop 2010 field test items to assess mastery of the newer standards, the 2010 FCAT Reading tests will contain field test items that assess mastery of the 2007 Sunshine State Standards. Student performance on these items will not be used to calculate student results or school grades, but data will be gathered and examined so these items can be considered for use on future tests, including those assessing the newer standards.

#### **Directions for Answering the Reading Sample Questions**

Mark your answers on the Sample Answer Sheet located on page 15. If you don't understand a question, just ask your teacher to explain it to you. Your teacher has the answers to the sample questions. Beginning in 2010, the sample questions will be distributed to students in print and will be available online, but the sample answers for teachers will only be available online at <http://fcap.fldoe.org/fcatsmpl.asp>.

Read the article “The Night Hunters” before answering Numbers 1 through 10.

## The Night Hunters

by Rob Criswell

**T**hey’re an amazing bunch. One is known as the “Tiger of the Skies,” another can catch a mouse on a barn floor in total darkness, and the call of a third is often imitated by turkey hunters trying to locate an elusive gobbler. They’re Pennsylvania’s owls—night hunters par excellence.

Predators without peer, owls are splendidly adapted to life in the darkness. Fringes on the leading and trailing edges of the outer flight feathers act as mufflers, and long, soft “hairs” on the upper wing surfaces eliminate noises that would be caused by feathers rubbing against one another while the wings are in use. The result is silent flight, ensuring that hapless victims will not detect the sky-borne raider, and that the owl can better hear prey movements.

While some owls have “ear tufts” and others do not, all have incredible hearing ability. These tufts are merely display feathers—the real ears are located behind the eyes on the sides of the head and covered by feathers of the facial disk.

When an owl hears a noise, it is able to pinpoint its direction because the sound does not strike both ears at precisely the same time. The owl turns its head until the sound registers in both ears simultaneously; it then knows dinner is directly in front of it. An owl can detect left/right sound differences as small as 30 millionths of a second.

Perhaps the most obvious features of owl anatomy are the eyes, which account for up to five percent of the bird’s body weight depending on species. The forward-facing position of the eyes lends the owl its “wise” appearance, but more importantly, it affords the bird binocular vision, which allows it to judge distances as humans do.

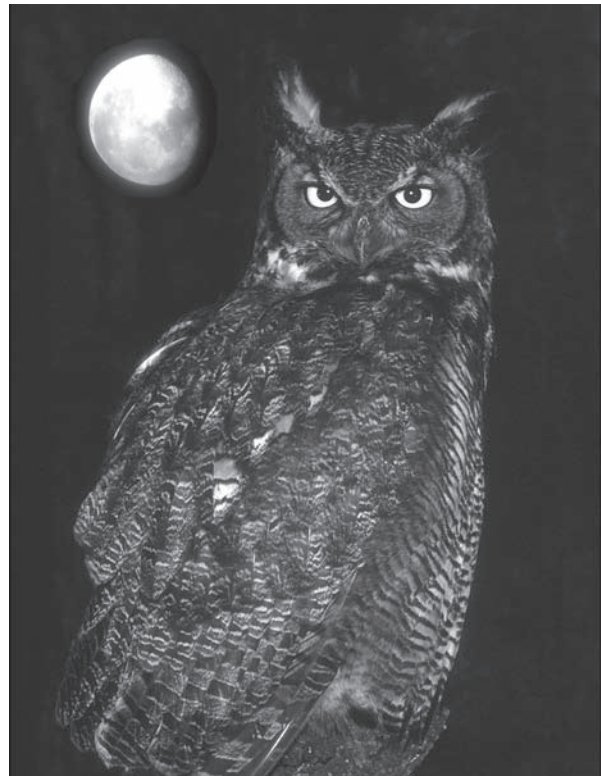
Eyes of owls are so large they cannot move, and the bird must move its entire head to change its field of view. However, the bird makes up for this deficiency with the ability to turn its head up to 270 degrees in either direction (but not, as some rumors insist, in a full circle). The large retina of an owl’s eye makes it extremely efficient

at sighting moving objects in dim light. In spite of this ability, owls can also see well during daylight hours, and are not blinded by strong light as some believe.

There are approximately 215 species of owls worldwide. They are divided into two families—the Tytonidae, which includes barn owls and their close relatives, and the Strigidae, which includes the great horned owl and all other species.

### Great Horned Owl

In 1890, ornithologist Ernest Thompson Seton expressed his opinion of the great horned owl: “their untamed ferocity ... ; their magnificent bearing; their objection to carrion,<sup>1</sup> and strictly carnivorous tastes—would make me rank these winged tigers among the most pronounced and savage of the birds of prey.”



Great Horned Owl

Its prowess as a predator has made this bird one of the most maligned and despised in our state's history. Long blamed for decimating game populations, it has survived bounties and habitat destruction and remains an important part of our bird fauna today. Although game species appear in its diet, the great horned prefers smaller mammals, and is the only predator that regularly dines on skunks. It is fearless, though, and will sometimes attack mink, woodchucks, domestic cats, and even porcupines.

At 18–25 inches in height and up to three pounds, it is our largest owl. It is easily recognized by its size and “horns”—two-inch-long ear tufts. It is a habitat generalist, occupying deep forest and open areas alike. It generally lays its eggs from January to early March, utilizing the nests of raptors, crows, herons, and on rare occasions even eagles.

The great horned is the classic “hoot owl.” Its call is a mellow “hoo, hoo-hoo, hoo, hoo.”

### Screech Owl

At 7–10 inches, the screech owl is the smallest of Pennsylvania's resident owls bearing ear tufts. This bird comes in two phases—red and gray, and a nest may contain all young of either color, or one or more of both. This phenomenon, known as “dichromatism,” is exhibited regardless of sex or age.

Screech owls reside in many different habitat types, including woodlands, old orchards, parks, and even tree-lined streets. It is a cavity nester, utilizing natural holes in trees, nests excavated by woodpeckers, and even deeper crevices. They sometimes take advantage of artificial boxes erected for woodpeckers, kestrels, and wood ducks.

This owl is a strictly nocturnal hunter. Its 22-inch wingspan allows it to hunt swiftly over fields and other openings, catching large insects, small birds, mice, voles, and other small mammals. In some areas, screech owls even feed on crayfish regularly.

Roger Tory Peterson described the screech owl's call as “a mournful whinny, or wail.” Interestingly, the bird practically never utters a sound that can be described as a “screech.” The most frequent call is a tremulous series of notes that descend the musical scale.

### Long-Eared Owl

The long-eared is our most mysterious owl. Its secretive habits, silence, and apparently low numbers make it extremely difficult to study. During the seven-year Pennsylvania Breeding Bird Atlas Project, this bird was confirmed nesting at only six locations during the period 1983–89.

This owl is midway in size between the screech and great horned, and grows to 16 inches and 10–11 ounces, with a 40-inch wingspan. Its “ears” appear to be more closely spaced than the other two species and its wings longer, allowing it to glide and hover while hunting, and maneuver easily in brushy habitat. Its diet consists mainly of small mammals, one report noting that “probably close to 80 or 90 percent consists of injurious rodents.”

Long-eared owls occur in mixed woodlands and pine plantations with fields nearby. They nest in early spring usurping vacant hawk and crow nests. During daylight hours, they remain “frozen” on a branch close to a tree trunk, and in winter months colonial roosts are sometimes used.

On the rare occasions when it vocalizes, the long-eared emits a low, musical “hoo-hoo-hoo” that may sound like the cooing of a mourning dove.

### Barred Owl

The barred owl may be the turkey hunter's best friend. Frequently its call, described as “Who cooks for you; who cooks for you-all?” evokes a response from a nearby gobbler during the spring. Hunters imitate the call, which is sometimes heard during daylight hours, while attempting to locate their quarry at sunrise.

This bird is easily distinguished from our other owls by its large size—to 17–24 inches and two pounds, with a 44-inch wingspan, rounded head, and brown eyes.

Barred owls prefer moist woods and bottomlands in larger forested tracts, and although this type of habitat has been dramatically reduced over much of the state, these birds are still fairly common. This owl is a cavity nester, and because of its size, at least some mature trees are a necessary component of its territory.

## Barn Owl

Where it occurs, the barn owl may be considered the “farmer’s best friend,” dining from a menu consisting almost exclusively of voles, shrews, mice, and rats. One study concluded that, during nighttime hours, adult barn owls with nestlings decimated rodents at the rate of one every four minutes. With ears asymmetrically placed to provide hearing even more acute than many of its relatives, locating and catching its prey in total darkness is “business as usual” for this nocturnal raider.

Also known as “monkey-faced owl,” “white owl,” and “golden owl,” this bird is easily identified by its light color and white, heart-shaped face. It grows 14–20 inches and weighs less than two pounds.

Barn owls nest in man-made structures—barns, silos, abandoned buildings, churches, and nest boxes, and occasionally in hollow trees and caves. Their domain must include grasslands and agricultural fields, and provide plenty of rodents. In a classic example of prey controlling the predator, barn owl nesting initiations and successes have been linked to increases in vole populations.



Barn Owl

“Night Hunters” by Robert W. Criswell, reprinted by permission of the author. All rights reserved.

Now answer Numbers 1 through 10 on your Sample Answer Sheet on page 15. Base your answers on the article “The Night Hunters.”

- 1 The main purpose of the opening paragraph of the article is most likely to
- A. caution readers about a predatory group of birds.
  - B. arouse readers’ interest in a unique group of birds.
  - C. pose an issue to readers that the article will address.
  - D. encourage readers’ efforts to preserve threatened species.

- 2 Read these sentences from the article.

**Predators without peer, owls are splendidly adapted to life in the darkness.**

**Its prowess as a predator has made this bird one of the most maligned and despised in our state’s history.**

Which literary technique does the author use in these sentences?

- F. imagery, portraying owls as powerful predators
  - G. personification, assigning to owls the human trait of adapting
  - H. hyperbole, exaggerating the status of owls among their predators
  - I. alliteration, repeating a sound to emphasize the superiority of owls
- 3 According to the article, what is one result of owls’ eyes being fixed in their sockets?
- A. frequent head movement
  - B. enhanced binocular vision
  - C. lower overall body weight
  - D. greater distance perception

- 4 In the article, the term *dichromatism* is used to describe two
- F. species of owls.
  - G. colors of a species.
  - H. ages between phases.
  - I. sexes within a family.
- 5 According to the article, which owl would be most affected by a decline in the population of rodents?
- A. barn owl
  - B. screech owl
  - C. long-eared owl
  - D. great horned owl
- 6 Which is a true statement about the nesting behavior of all the owls described in the article?
- F. They evict birds and take over their nests.
  - G. They find unoccupied nests and use them.
  - H. They utilize natural cavities in trees for nesting.
  - I. They find nesting places rather than construct them.
- 7 According to the article, all of the following contribute to the owl's effectiveness as a predator EXCEPT
- A. its ability to see well even in dim light.
  - B. its ability to mimic the calls of other species.
  - C. its ability to fly without making much noise.
  - D. its ability to detect and locate the slightest sounds.

- 8 According to the article, which of the owls' names is the most misleading?
- F. the screech owl, because its call rarely approximates a screech
  - G. the barn owl, because its domain must include fields and grasslands
  - H. the great horned owl, because its "horns" are actually feathered ear tufts
  - I. the long-eared owl, because its real ears are behind its eyes and covered by feathers
- 9 Which of the following best describes the organization of this article?
- A. information presented in chronological order
  - B. information presented in order of its importance
  - C. general information followed by facts specific to each species
  - D. descriptive information followed by comparisons of five species
- 10 According to the article, which two owls are most similar in size?
- F. barn owl and barred owl
  - G. barn owl and screech owl
  - H. great horned owl and barred owl
  - I. great horned owl and screech owl

Read the article “American Odyssey” before answering Numbers 11 through 18.

# American Odyssey

Lewis and Clark’s trek west  
still inspires travelers  
200 years later

BY DAYTON DUNCAN

From the dramatic bluffs of Cape Disappointment on the Washington coast, the vista was quite the opposite of disappointing. As far as my eyes could see, out to the farthest western horizon, the rolling swells of the Pacific Ocean marched toward me, whitecaps flashing in the sun, only to crash into sparkling foam on the rocks far below my perch. If I were looking for a spot that states “Continent Ends Here” with utmost finality, this would be it. And I couldn’t help repeating out loud William Clark’s most famous journal entry from his epic expedition with Meriwether Lewis: “Ocian in view! O! the joy.”



This historic statue, located in Charlottesville, Virginia, commemorates the 1803–1806 journey of Lewis, Clark, and Sacagawea.

For two months I had been retracing Lewis and Clark’s historic route from the mouth of the Missouri River, near St. Louis, to the mouth of the Columbia, at Fort Canby State Park. I had spent some time in canoes and barges on those two mighty rivers, and I had ventured occasionally on horseback and on foot into the forbidding mountains that separate them. But my main means of travel had been my sister’s aging Volkswagen camper. I had named it

Discovery, in honor of the two captains and their Corps of Discovery, the first U.S. citizens to cross the continent and reach the Pacific by land.

My car (and the passage of nearly 200 years) had made my journey both faster and easier than theirs. For much of their journey west—as they fought the Missouri’s relentless current for its entire 2,400-mile length, then trudged through the snowy Bitterroot Mountains—Lewis and Clark would have defined substantial progress as making 12 miles a day. Shooting down the Snake and Columbia Rivers in their dugout canoes for the final stretch must have seemed like hyperdrive, although in fact it only increased their speed to 30 to 40 miles per day. No wonder it took them a year and a half to reach Cape Disappointment. Without exceeding any speed limits, and allowing plenty of time for unhurried stops and side trips, my Volkswagen camper covered the same distance in 60 days.

Needless to say, I also hadn’t suffered any of the hardships the Corps of Discovery routinely faced: backbreaking toil, loss of a comrade to illness, encounters with enraged grizzlies, near-starvation in the ordeal across the Bitterroots, demoralizing coastal rains that rotted the clothes on their backs, and so much more. Compared with their experience crossing the continent, mine was a summer vacation. They had been making history; I was merely retracing it.

Yet, on that sunlit afternoon as I stood mesmerized by the rolling breakers below, I felt a kinship with the explorers. Like them, I had chased one sunset after another, moving steadily west across a constantly changing, perpetually awe-inspiring landscape. Like them, along the way I had encountered new people, seen

new sights, learned new things as I rounded each bend. And like them, I had finally reached the spot where that trail could go west no farther.

Standing at the coast, I could share in their sense of satisfaction. (“Great joy in camp,” Clark had written, deploying his always surprising choices of spelling. “We are in View of the Ocian, this great Pacific Octean which we [have] been So long anxious to See, and the roreing or noise made by the waves brakeing on the rocky Shores ... may be heard distictly.”) But retracing their route had also permitted me to share something that a mere reading of their journals would never have revealed: an indelible, visceral sense of the country’s sheer largeness.

Lewis and Clark and their Corps of Discovery were the first to truly comprehend that central fact of our national being. In November 1805, as they prepared to make their winter camp near the Pacific coast, they understood—as no other Americans at the time could—just how big, how rugged, how mind-bogglingly varied this country really is. They understood because they had crossed it at a pace of 12 miles a day.

The Lewis and Clark expedition is significant in many ways—for science, geography, ethnology, the politics of empire; for providing (through their journals) an unparalleled description of the West at the dawn of the 19th century; for offering enduring lessons in bravery, perseverance, and the success that comes from working together; for leaving behind what the historian Bernard DeVoto

recognized as “something simple and immortal—a tableau of courage and endurance in clear light, one of the world’s heroic stories that seem like myths.”

But equally significant is the journey itself. The Corps of Discovery had crossed the continent and survived, simultaneously learning how much more difficult it was than Thomas Jefferson, its sponsor, had imagined, yet proving nonetheless that it could be done. For the rest of the 19th century, Americans followed Lewis and Clark’s footsteps west, taking the nation with them. Much of our history, much of who we are as a people, for good and for ill, is bound up in that larger journey.

Today, we take for granted that the United States reaches from sea to shining sea. We take for granted, traveling as we do in jet planes, that getting from one coast to the other is no big deal. Lewis and Clark remind us otherwise.

When the expedition was originally conceived, the United States ended at the Mississippi River. Thanks to Jefferson’s Louisiana Purchase, by the time they set off from the Mississippi’s east bank in 1804, the nation’s boundaries had been stretched to the Rocky Mountains. The Southwest and the Pacific coast were still claimed by others, however, and there was nothing to indicate that our nation would one day embrace it all. Lewis and Clark’s arrival on the continent’s western coast helped make possible what we now consider inevitable.

In taking the nation’s first transcontinental “road trip,” they set in motion what has become an American tradition: a belief that the only way to really get to know this country is to hit the road. These are experiences unavailable to those who peer out of airplane windows at 35,000 feet and idly wonder what it must be like down there in all those seemingly endless, open, empty spaces.

During my own trip, I attended a Memorial Day service in South Dakota at the grave of Sitting Bull, where descendants of warriors who had defeated the U.S. Army at Little Bighorn saluted the American flag, sang Native American chants to the beat of a drum, and spoke proudly of their service. In North Dakota, I slept in an earth lodge and tasted raw buffalo liver with a Mandan-Hidatsa Indian who has become a lifelong friend. In Helena, Montana, I met an old man who turned out to be Fry Pan Jack, the King of the Hoboes. In Idaho, I relaxed in the same natural hot springs that had comforted Lewis and Clark. And in Oregon, I spent an unforgettable and solitary night in the reconstruction of Fort Clatsop, the expedition’s winter quarters, communing with the spirits of the Corps of Discovery as I read their journals by candlelight.

Since my first trip, I’ve retraced the Lewis and Clark trail in its entirety three more times. And in the course of two decades, not a year has gone by that I haven’t revisited at least one segment of the route. I’ve done it alone, with friends,

with my family. With the expedition’s bicentennial now beginning, I expect to do it more—always traveling in the spirit of the Corps of Discovery, full of curiosity and wonder, eager to learn the lessons that only the road can teach. Whenever a jet

passes overhead, I look up and think that the passengers inside don’t know what they’re missing. And whenever I reach the Pacific coast, I still can’t help exclaiming, “Ocian in view! O! the joy.”



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Now answer Numbers 11 through 18 on your Sample Answer Sheet on page 15. Base your answers on the article “American Odyssey.”

- 11 Read the title and subtitle of this article.

**American Odyssey**  
**Lewis and Clark’s trek west still inspires travelers 200 years later**

Based on these text features, how is this article most likely organized?

- A. as an analysis of how travel has changed since earlier times
  - B. as a chronological listing of explorers during the last two centuries
  - C. as a descriptive guide for some important places to visit in our country
  - D. as an account of some lasting effects of an extended adventurous voyage
- 12 According to the article, what most helped Lewis and Clark recognize the vastness of the West?
- F. facing the hardships of raw wilderness
  - G. paddling upstream for thousands of miles
  - H. creating their own maps of the new territory
  - I. progressing an average of twelve miles per day

- 13 Read this sentence from the article.

**These are experiences unavailable to those who peer out of airplane windows at 35,000 feet and idly wonder what it must be like down there in all those seemingly endless, open, empty spaces.**

Which of the following best restates the meaning of the sentence above?

- A. The country appears small and rustic from far above.
- B. Modern travel is boring compared to travel in the past.
- C. Only land travel offers genuine understanding of scale.
- D. Much of the country is uninhabited and without beauty.

- 14 Which of the author's experiences most likely generated emotions similar to those Lewis and Clark had felt?
- F. befriending interesting characters along the route
  - G. rereading the journals by candlelight at Fort Clatsop
  - H. observing the breadth of the country from an airplane
  - I. sighting the Pacific Ocean from Cape Disappointment
- 15 The author learned many lessons while following Lewis and Clark's route because he
- A. traveled by land.
  - B. conducted careful research.
  - C. possessed a vivid imagination.
  - D. used the same types of transportation.
- 16 In this article, the author organizes his information by primarily using
- F. comparisons between his experiences and those of Lewis and Clark.
  - G. excerpts from Lewis and Clark's journals describing their experiences.
  - H. anecdotes about his experiences as he retraced Lewis and Clark's route.
  - I. explanations of the accomplishments of Lewis and Clark and their legacy.
- 17 The author includes quotations from Lewis and Clark's journals most likely to show
- A. the historic language the explorers used.
  - B. his familiarity with the sites described in them.
  - C. the difference between unexplored and modern landscapes.
  - D. similarities between his impressions and those of the explorers.

- 18 The author's journey differed from Lewis and Clark's journey in all of the following ways EXCEPT
- F. its dangers.
  - G. its duration.
  - H. its difficulty.
  - I. its destination.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Answer all the Reading Sample Questions on this Sample Answer Sheet.

1 A B C D

7 A B C D

13 A B C D

2 F G H I

8 F G H I

14 F G H I

3 A B C D

9 A B C D

15 A B C D

4 F G H I

10 F G H I

16 F G H I

5 A B C D

11 A B C D

17 A B C D

6 F G H I

12 F G H I

18 F G H I



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