SAMPLE TEST
Reading/Literature
2011-2013

Vocabulary

Read to Perform a Task

Demonstrate General Understanding

Develop an Interpretation

Examine Content and Structure: Informational Text

Examine Content and Structure: Literary Text
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DIRECTIONS

Read each of the passages. Then read the questions that follow and decide on the BEST answer. There are a lot of different kinds of questions, so read each question carefully before marking an answer on your answer sheet.

THE LEARNING CURVE

David Sedaris is an acclaimed novelist and satirist who is often heard on National Public Radio’s “This American Life.” In the chapter entitled “The Learning Curve,” from his autobiographical book ME TALK PRETTY ONE DAY, Sedaris relates events from his initial foray into teaching.

A YEAR AFTER MY GRADUATION from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, a terrible mistake was made and I was offered a position teaching a writing workshop. I had never gone to graduate school, and although several of my stories had been Xeroxed and stapled, none of them had ever been published in the traditional sense of the word.

Like branding steers or embalming the dead, teaching was a profession I had never seriously considered. I was clearly unqualified, yet I accepted the job without hesitation, as it would allow me to wear a tie and go by the name of Mr. Sedaris. My father went by the same name, and though he lived a thousand miles away, I liked to imagine someone getting the two of us confused. “Wait a minute,” this someone might say, “are you talking about Mr. Sedaris the retired man living in North Carolina, or Mr. Sedaris the distinguished academic?”

The position was offered at the last minute, when the scheduled professor found a better-paying job delivering pizza. I was given two weeks to prepare, a period I spent searching for a briefcase and standing before my full-length mirror, repeating the words “Hello, class, my name is Mr. Sedaris.” Sometimes I’d give myself an aggressive voice and firm, athletic timbre. This was the
masculine Mr. Sedaris, who wrote knowingly of flesh wounds and tractor pulls. Then there was the ragged bark of the newspaper editor, a tone that coupled wisdom with an unlimited capacity for cruelty. I tried sounding businesslike and world-weary, but when the day eventually came, my nerves kicked in and the true Mr. Sedaris revealed himself. In a voice reflecting doubt, fear, and an unmistakable desire to be loved, I sounded not like a thoughtful college professor but, rather, like a high-strung twelve-year-old girl; someone named Brittany.

My first semester I had only nine students. Hoping they might view me as professional and well prepared, I arrived bearing name tags fashioned in the shape of maple leaves. I’d cut them myself out of orange construction paper and handed them out along with a box of straight pins. My fourth-grade teacher had done the same thing, explaining that we were to take only one pin per person. This being college rather than elementary school, I encouraged my students to take as many pins as they liked. They wrote their names upon their leaves, fastened them to their breast pockets, and bailed up to the long oak table that served as our communal desk.

“All right then,” I said. “Okay; here we go.” I opened my briefcase and realized that I’d never thought beyond this moment. The orange leaves were the extent of my lesson plan, but still I searched the empty briefcase, mindful that I had stupidly armed my audience with straight pins. I guess I’d been thinking that, without provocation, my students would talk, offering their thoughts and opinions on the issues of the day. I’d imagined myself sitting on the edge of the desk, overlooking a forest of raised hands. The students would simultaneously shout to be heard, and I’d pound on something in order to silence them. “Whoa people,” I’d yell. “Calm down, you’ll all get your turn. One at a time, one at a time.”

The error of my thinking yawned before me. A terrible silence overtook the room, and seeing no other option, I instructed my students to pull out their notebooks and write a brief essay related to the theme of profound disappointment.
1
When the narrator says, “I had stupidly armed my audience with straight pins,” he means
A. that his students won’t agree to make a bulletin board with the leaves and pins.
B. that the straight pins ended up having no practical purpose.
C. jokingly that his students might attack him with the pins.
D. that the class could fall apart as students poke each other with pins.

2
The narrator ends the essay with the sentence “A terrible silence overtook the room,
and seeing no other option, I instructed my students to pull out their notebooks and
write a brief essay related to the theme of profound disappointment.” This is effective
irony because the narrator
A. assumes that the students came prepared with notebooks.
B. had not actually planned to require students to write in class.
C. had such high hopes of his own for this experience.
D. was aware a first writing assignment should never be so negative.

3
The narrator describes his tone of voice on his first day of teaching as
A. doubtful and fearful.
B. aggressive and firm.
C. wise and cruel.
D. businesslike and weary.

4
In the second paragraph, the author uses the sentence, “like branding steers or
embalming the dead, teaching was a profession I had never seriously considered.” He
does this in order to
A. show how many other unusual jobs he has tried.
B. create a sense of danger and excitement.
C. show how little thought he had given to the profession of teaching.
D. create a sense of foreshadowing for the rest of the story.

5
The narrator says, “The error of my thinking yawned before me.” This is another way of
saying that
A. the narrator is confident that no one will notice his mistakes.
B. the entire class yawns at the narrator’s boring lesson.
C. the narrator is so sleepy it is hard for him to think.
D. the narrator now understands the consequences of not planning ahead.
YIKES! SHARKS!

When most of us hear Michael Crichton’s name, we think of JURASSIC PARK and other popular science fiction books and movies. He has also written much nonfiction, however, including a book entitled TRAVELS, from which this excerpt is taken. At this point in the book, Crichton talks about his experiences during a dive taken with other members of his family.

The Tuamotus were old islands; their volcanic peaks had been eroded until they finally disappeared, and nothing remained but the coral reef that had originally surrounded the island, but now merely enclosed a lagoon.

On Rangiroa, the lagoon was enormous—some twenty miles in diameter. There were only two breaks in the enclosing reef, through which the tides came and went twice a day. So much water, moving through just two passes, meant that tidal currents were strong indeed. It also meant that lots of fish were attracted to the pass, because of the great nutrient flow in the water.

“It is very exciting,” the proprietor said. “You must do it.”

We went to Michel, the divemaster, and said we wanted to dive the pass. He consulted a tide table, and said we would do it at ten the following morning. (You can only dive the pass when the tide is running into the lagoon. Otherwise you risk being swept out to sea.)

We went down. It wasn’t until we got near the bottom that I realized how fast we were moving. The current was really ripping. It was tremendously exciting—if you didn’t mind being out of control.

It didn’t matter whether you were facing forward, backward, or sideways: the current moved you at the same swift pace. You couldn’t stop yourself, you couldn’t hold on to anything. If you grabbed a piece of coral, you’d either rip it off or rip your arm off. You were just swept along by the current, in the grip of a force...
orders of magnitude greater than you could possibly fight. There was nothing to do but relax and enjoy it.

After the first few minutes, after getting used to seeing the others perpendicular to the current, or looking up, clearing their masks, or facing backward, but always carried along at the same pace, it became fun. It was a kind of amusement park ride, and our powerlessness became pleasant.

Then I saw the sharks.

At first they were moving at the limit of my vision, the way I am used to seeing sharks, gray shadows where the water turns deep blue-gray, far from you. Then, as I came closer, the shadows gained definition, I could see details, and I could see more sharks. Lots more.

The current was carrying us into the middle of a school of gray sharks, so numerous that it felt as if we were entering a cloud of animals. There were easily a hundred sharks circling in a large cluster.

I thought, Oh my God.

I didn’t want to go right through the middle. I preferred to go to one side, but the current was uncontrollable and indifferent to my preferences. We were going right through the middle of them. In an effort to control my panic, I decided to take a picture. I stared down at the exposure settings on the Nikonos around my neck, feeling slightly idiotic: Here you are in the middle of a hundred sharks and you are worrying about whether the f-stop is f8 or f11. Who cares! But it was one of those situations; there was nothing I could do about it, so I might as well think about something else, and I took a picture. (It came out very blurred.)

By now the sharks were all around us, above and below and to all sides. We were being swept along by the current, like passengers riding a train, but they did not seem affected by it; they swam easily, flicking their powerful bodies with that peculiar lateral twisting that makes their movements so reminiscent of snakes.

The sharks turned away, came back, spiraled around us, but I noticed that they never came close. And already we were moving
clear of the cluster, swept onward by the current, drifting away from the compact cloud of sharks. And then gone.

My breathing had not returned to normal when Michel jerked his thumb, gestured to me that we were to go down into the crevasse he had mentioned. He was twenty yards ahead of me. I saw him swept across the bottom, and then he ducked down headfirst and disappeared into a trench. I saw a cloud of his bubbles rise as I was swept toward the trench. I also swung over, had a quick glimpse of a shallow little canyon perhaps ten feet deep, and twenty feet long.

I was much relieved to be out of the current, but unexpectedly found myself in a black cloud of surgeonfish. These plate-sized fish, moving in dense, impenetrable schools, seemed agitated. I presumed it was because of the arrival of divers into the trench.

Then the black cloud cleared, and I realized it was because of the sharks in the trench. A dozen gray sharks swam in the far end of the cul-de-sac. They were each about nine feet long, dull-snouted, beady-eyed. They swam irritably, within a couple of feet of me and Michel. I was vaguely aware of Michel, ever calm, looking at me to see how I was taking this. I was only looking at the sharks.

I had never been so close to so many sharks at one time, and a dozen impressions assailed me. The gritty texture of their gray skin (sharkskin). The occasional injuries, white scars, and imperfections. The clean gill lines. The unblinking eye, menacing and stupid, like the eye of a thug. The eye was almost the most terrifying thing about a shark, that and the slashing curve of the mouth. And I saw the way one shark, hemmed in by us, arched his back in what I had recently read was typical gray-shark threat behavior that often presaged an attack—

The other divers came swinging over the lip, blowing bubbles.

The sharks fled. The last of them threaded his way between us as if we were pylons on an obstacle course. Or perhaps he was just showing off.
6
In this selection, the phrase “orders of magnitude” is used
A. as a specific scientific measurement of the force of the current.
B. as hyperbole to emphasize the force of the current.
C. as an explanation of the relaxing and enjoyable sensation of being in the current.
D. to explain why things seemed so clear and large, even in the depths of the water.

7
The reason the current was so strong, “really ripping,” was that
A. the nature of the volcanic peaks of the islands created those kind of currents.
B. incredibly strong currents swirled chaotically around the circular reef.
C. the channels and trenches on the ocean floor caused exceptionally strong currents.
D. the tides had to pass through just two openings in the reef.

8
The reason Crichton thought about having the correct settings on his camera while encircled by a hundred sharks was that he
A. wasn’t really afraid of the sharks.
B. wanted to prove what happened.
C. decided to take his mind off the sharks.
D. is a perfectionist about his photographs.

9
Crichton implies that the only time a shark may have posed a danger was when the shark
A. was boxed in by the divers in the cul-de-sac.
B. heard the motorized shutter of his camera.
C. was swept helplessly by the current.
D. may have felt threatened by divers blowing bubbles.

10
The purpose of this selection is most likely to show the reader that
A. Crichton and his family are extraordinarily brave.
B. Crichton and his family take foolish risks.
C. many animals we deeply fear are usually not dangerous.
D. everyone would enjoy thrill-seeking adventures.
EXPLORING CAPE PERPETUA

Many people enjoy exploring the natural attractions of Oregon’s coast. This page from HIKING OREGON’S HISTORY by William L. Sullivan tells about the features at Cape Perpetua. On the map, roads are represented by solid lines; hiking trails are represented by broken lines.

Easy (to tidepools)
0.8-mile loop
50 feet elevation gain

Easy (to Giant Spruce)
2 miles round trip
100 feet elevation gain

Easy (to Devil’s Churn and shelter)
0.2-mile loops
100 feet elevation gain

Short paths visit tidepools, a giant spruce, and a viewpoint shelter.

Getting There: Drive Highway 101 south of Yachats three miles (or north of Florence 23 miles) to the Cape Perpetua Visitor Center turnoff between mileposts 168 and 169. If you don’t have a Trail Park permit or an Oregon Coast Pass, expect to pay a $3 per car day-use fee.
**Hiking Tips:** From the Visitor Center’s front door, follow a “Tidepools” pointer to the left 0.2 mile, duck under the highway, and keep left on an 0.2-mile loop to Cook’s Chasm and the tidepools. If you’d like to see a giant spruce’s walk-through root tunnel, return to the Visitor Center, follow a “Giant Spruce” pointer, and keep right at all junctions for a mile. To see the stone shelter’s viewpoint drive a quarter mile north on Highway 101, turn right at an “Auto Tour” sign, and then keep left for 1.5 miles to a parking lot and 0.2-mile loop trail. To visit the Devil’s Churn, drive north on Highway 101 another one-tenth to a parking area and a 0.2-mile loop trail on the left.

**Season:** Open all year.

**While You’re in the Area:** Don’t miss the Heceta Head lighthouse (Hike #35), located 11 miles south on Highway 101.

**11**
The text lists three short hikes. What do all three hikes have in common?

A. They all begin at the Visitor Center.
B. They are all loops.
C. They all take the visitor to the beach.
D. They all have easy elevation gain.

**12**
What alternate route, other than the one described in the text, could be taken to the stone shelter?

A. Take the auto tour to Yachats; then loop back on Highway 101.
B. Take the Giant Spruce Trail for 0.2 miles; then the Perpetua Trail for 1.3 miles.
C. Follow the directions to the Devil’s Churn; then hike north until reaching the shelter.
D. Hike to the Perpetua Campground and take Road 55.
13
Although not stated exactly in the text, it is evident that the Perpetua Campground may be reached via
A. the Oregon Coast Trail.
B. the Cook’s Ridge Trail.
C. the Giant Spruce Trail.
D. the Perpetua Trail.

14
The hiking tips in the text
A. indicate routes that are as short and easy as possible.
B. provide alternate routes over more challenging terrain.
C. describe locations that are not found on the map.
D. match the elevations and compass bearings on the map.

CONQUERING EVEREST

Jim Whittaker, a mountain climber from Seattle, was the first American to reach the top of Mt. Everest, the tallest mountain in the world. In this passage from his book A LIFE ON THE EDGE, Whittaker describes this great achievement.

The ridge we were climbing had a heavy cornice of windblown snow and ice stretching out to the right over the void, and it was impossible to determine where the rock ended and the overhanging snow cornice began. If we went out on the cornice too far, we courted disaster; if we moved too far to the left, we faced difficult rock climbing. It was guesswork. Watching for signs in the texture of the snow, I chose the best route I could, hoping we were following the true ridge.

We crested the South Summit at about 11:30 A.M. and, for the first time, could see the true summit above us to the north. There was a sharp drop ahead of us and then a saddle between us and the next obstacle, a steep rock face that we’d have to climb. During the 1953 British expedition, Charles Evans and Tom Bourdillon had stood where we were now, looked at that pitch, then turned around and descended. The valves on their oxygen sets had frozen, and they couldn’t go on. The
following day, New Zealander Ed Hillary and Sherpa Tenzing Norgay scaled it, and ever since it has been known as “the Hillary Step.”

We squatted on the South Summit and climbed the Step with our eyes. Then we descended to the saddle and crossed over to it. At the base of the Step, buffeted by the wind, we rested again. From here, it was practically straight up—rock on the left, snow cornice on the right. The cornice clung to the rock, but there were wind-cut cracks and hollows. Beneath the cornice, the Kangshung Face of Everest dropped thousands of feet into Tibet.

As Gombu belayed and anchored me, I wiggled and pried myself up through a slot between the lee side of the rock and the cornice, gasping for breath and cursing my pack for its weight and awkwardness. At last, I crawled out on top to a good belay spot, took in the slack, and jerked on the rope for Gombu to come up after me. Slowly, I coiled in the rope as he climbed up alongside me. We sprawled flat and took another break.

Finally, Gombu and I stood again and turned. Moving once more and near complete exhaustion, I suddenly realized I was sucking on an empty oxygen bottle. I had thought one bottle each would take us to the summit and back to the cache, but the ascent had taken longer—and taken more out of us—than I had expected. Gombu, smaller than I, used less oxygen and still had some left, but he would be out soon too. If my brain had been functioning normally, I probably would have been frightened. Instead, about the only thing that registered was “Keep moving.” And we were close, with only a gentle slope ahead of us.

About fifty feet from the top, I coiled in the rope again, and Gombu came up beside me. I leaned toward him and shouted against the wind, “You first, Gombu!”

“You first, Big Jim!” he shouted. Even with the oxygen mask I could see him grinning.

We compromised. Side by side, we staggered the last few feet until, at 1:00 P.M., we stood together at the highest point on earth—29,028 feet above the sea. The sky above us was that deep, dark blue you only see when you’ve climbed above most of the earth’s atmosphere. We were on the edge of space.

At this moment, I did not feel expansive or sublime; I felt only, as I said later, “like a frail human being.”
15
Telling his own story rather than having someone else write it allows Whittaker
A. to give the reader a more complete description of the setting.
B. to tell the story chronologically, building the suspense.
C. to describe the events realistically without being concerned about exaggeration.
D. to pull the readers into the story with a more intimate perspective.

16
Why does the author include the exchange between Gombu and himself where they each say “You first!”?
A. To indicate they are concerned about their supply of oxygen
B. To show that the two men thought of each other as equals
C. To equate mountain climbing with other challenging adventures
D. To hint that both men are intimidated by the final climb

17
The final part of Whittaker’s journey involved climbing
A. a difficult wall of rock and ice.
B. the sheer face of a rocky saddle.
C. a gentle slope covered in snow.
D. the Kangshung Face of Everest.

18
Clues in the final sentence help the reader know that when the author says he doesn’t feel expansive or sublime, he means he doesn’t feel
A. important or elevated in quality.
B. grateful or relieved at the outcome.
C. exhausted or overwhelmed by the effort.
D. insignificant or small in stature.

19
The author unifies this text by following a strict chronological structure EXCEPT when
A. introducing the Kangshung Face.
B. revealing Gombu’s compromise.
C. reflecting on the Hillary Step.
D. describing the South Summit.
LYDIA’S CHALLENGE

THE JUMP-OFF CREEK, a novel by native Oregonian Molly Gloss, portrays a pioneer woman enduring hardships in Oregon's Blue Mountains. The following passage presents one such hardship, which may have been faced by one of Gloss’s own pioneer ancestors.

There was a spring that made a reddish bog in a low corner of the Owl Meadow but no clear water in it. She had to bring water half a mile from another spring, hauling it in pails. By the time there were fifteen steers on the meadow, she was going down and back for the water six times a day, or seven. It was the worst of the work. There was a saucer formed among the stones of the old chimney where the cabin had fallen down, and she let the pails of water into it. But it leaked out slowly onto the ground and often when she came onto the meadow in the afternoon the steers would be standing muddy-legged around the empty basin of the chimney, or snuffling the mud of the spring.

On one of the last days, a steer was stuck up to its belly in the quickmud in that bog. From half a mile off, coming in tiredly after a second gainerless day, she heard it lowing dully and steadily with an unpitiful sound of complaint. She rode to the edge of the drying-up pond and looked at the steer unhappily. She was loath to get out in the mud herself. But the stupid steer kept up its crying, and made no effort to get clear of the bog on its own. Its eyes were glazed, blank.

She stood down beside the mule and dispiritedly bunched her skirt, pulling it up under the belt so her long shins in black stockings were bared above the boot tops. She stepped her boots unwillingly into the sucking mud and pitched a noose of rope around the steer’s big horns. He kept up his steady complaining. She backed out of the mud and tied off the rope to the saddle horn of the mule, backed him up slowly until it was taut. The mule squatted back hard until the saddle tried to stand up on its pommel, but the big steer stood sullenly in the wallow, eyes
bulging, neck twisted over by the pull on its horns. Lydia put all her own weight on the rope too, planting her feet and yelling at the mule, but the steer stood where it was. Finally she went into the trees and got a stick. She slogged out into the mud again and hit the steer hard across the nose. It bellowed in surprise and eyed her, white-edged. She yelled at the mule and the rope twanged tight a couple of times, but by then the steer’s eyes had glazed again and it stood glumly in the mud, unmoving.

“Dang you!” Lydia said suddenly, harsh and loud.

She hit the steer’s head again, swinging the long stick in flat and hard between the eyes, a cracking blow. The steer rocked once, silently—for a wild moment she thought she might have killed it—then it lurched ahead suddenly in the mud, bellowing and slinging its horns, hurling mud and slobber in a short, spattering flurry.

Lydia staggered quick out of the mud herself, grabbing along the rope for Rollin. She flung a leg up over the mule’s back and held on to the saddle, hanging half off it while the mule sprang out of the way of the steer’s short, mad lunge. The mule had never been inclined to buck, but the rope pulled around under his tail when the steer staggered past him, and he snorted wildly, put his head down and bucked up his back. She would have stayed on him if she’d had both stirrups, a solid seat. But she was hanging off the saddle clumsily and his one stiff-legged bounce shook her off. She hit on her back and got up quick, scrabbling around to watch the steer. He kept bellowing and hooking his horns, trying to get loose of the rope, but he stood in one place, cross-legged and swaying, as if he hadn’t figured out yet that he was unstuck from the mud.

Lydia got shakily on the mule again, setting her boots well in the stirrups. Then she sidled up along the steer’s shoulder. Rollin was set stubbornly on keeping away from the slung horns, she had to pull his head up hard, twisting the reins, kicking him, to get him in close enough, and then she leaned out, grabbing warily for the rope. She tried five or six times, reaching in and out, before she got the rope loose of the steer.

By then her mouth was aching and full of blood—she had bit her cheek, jarred her teeth, when Rollin had bucked her off. She sat on the mule, rocking and keening a little, while she watched the
steer staggering off irritably across the grass. She had a piteous impulse to go home. She would have liked to leave the big dumb steers standing around the chimney basin and ride Rollin away now, with her handkerchief inside her mouth stopping the blood. She did put the handkerchief in her mouth. But then she got the pails and walked slowly, bitterly, down to the other spring. After a while she walked with the bloody handkerchief wadded up in the pocket of her sweater, but the taste of blood stayed in her mouth, a sourness, from that moment standing scared and frozen facing the mad steer.

20

The word loath in the second paragraph means
   A. anticipating, foreseeing.
   B. unwilling, reluctant.
   C. seeing the necessity of.
   D. anxious, fearful.

21

Considering especially the first and last paragraphs of the selection, the main idea is that
   A. the steers were more work than they were worth.
   B. the steers might be better off without Lydia’s help.
   C. the work was wearing Lydia down.
   D. the work was necessary despite Lydia’s feelings.

22

Which of the following literary devices does the author use primarily in this passage to increase its effectiveness?
   A. Figurative language
   B. Hyperbole; purposeful exaggeration
   C. Visual and sound imagery
   D. A shift in point of view
23
Which of the following quotes provides the best evidence of the theme of this passage?
A. “She had to bring water half a mile from another spring, hauling it in pails.”
B. “But the steer...made no effort to get clear of the bog on its own.”
C. “She hit on her back and got up quick, scrabbling around to watch the steer.”
D. “She would have liked to leave the big dumb steers...But then she got the pails.”

24
The long sentence beginning “Rollin was set stubbornly” is a run-on sentence with six commas. The effect of this construction is to
A. make the writing seem ungrammatical.
B. purposely create a calming rhythm.
C. emphasize Lydia’s difficult, off-balance maneuver.
D. imply that Lydia is not capable of controlling Rollin.
# High School Reading/Literature
## SAMPLE TEST KEY 2011-2013

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Key</th>
<th>Score Reporting Category</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>Develop an Interpretation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>Examine Content/Structure Literary Text</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>Demonstrate General Understanding</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>Vocabulary</td>
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<td>Demonstrate General Understanding</td>
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<td>D</td>
<td>Develop an Interpretation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>Examine Content/Structure Literary Text</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## CONVERTING TO A RIT SCORE

<table>
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*Likely to meet High School standards  
**Likely to exceed High School standards
Oregon Reading/Literature Sample Test

Use number 2 pencil.
Do NOT use ink or ball point pen.
Make heavy dark marks that completely fill the circle.
Erase completely any marks you wish to change.

Name of Student
________________________________________

Name of Teacher
________________________________________

Name of School
________________________________________

1  A  B  C  D
2  A  B  C  D
3  A  B  C  D
4  A  B  C  D
5  A  B  C  D
6  A  B  C  D
7  A  B  C  D
8  A  B  C  D
9  A  B  C  D
10 A  B  C  D
11 A  B  C  D
12 A  B  C  D
13 A  B  C  D
14 A  B  C  D
15 A  B  C  D
16 A  B  C  D
17 A  B  C  D
18 A  B  C  D
19 A  B  C  D
20 A  B  C  D
21 A  B  C  D
22 A  B  C  D
23 A  B  C  D
24 A  B  C  D