**Stimulus Text:**

*Read the story “The Discontented Pendulum,” about the pieces of a clock including a pendulum, a swinging, weighted lever. Then answer the question that follows.*

**The Discontented Pendulum**

By Jane Taylor

An old clock that had stood for fifty years in a farmer's kitchen, without giving its owner any cause of complaint, early one summer's morning, before the family was stirring, suddenly
stopped. Upon this, the dial plate (if we may credit the fable) changed countenance with alarm; the hands made a vain effort to continue their course; the wheels remained motionless with surprise; the weights hung speechless; and each member felt disposed to lay the blame on the others. At length the dial instituted a formal inquiry as to the cause of the stagnation, when hands, wheels, weights, with one voice, protested their innocence.

But now a faint tick was heard below from the pendulum, who spoke thus: "I confess myself to be the sole cause of the present stoppage; and I am willing, for the general satisfaction, to assign my reasons. The truth is, that I am tired of ticking." Upon hearing this, the old clock became so enraged that it was upon the very point of striking. "Lazy wire!" exclaimed the dial plate, holding up its bands.

"Very good!" replied the pendulum; "it is vastly easy for you, Mistress Dial, who have always, as everybody knows, set yourself up above me,—it is vastly easy for you, I say, to accuse other people of laziness! you who have had nothing to do all your life but to stare people in the face, and to amuse yourself with watching all that goes on in the kitchen. Think, I beseech you, how you would like to be shut up for life in this dark closet, and to wag backward and forward year after year, as I do."

"As to that," said the dial, "is there not a window in your house on purpose for you to look through?" "For all that," resumed the pendulum, "it is very dark here; and, although there is a window, I dare not stop even for an instant to look out at it. Besides, I am really tired of my way of life; and, if you wish, I'll tell you how I took this disgust at my employment. I happened, this morning, to be calculating how many times I should have to tick in the course of only the next twenty-four hours; perhaps some one of you above there can give me the exact sum."

The minute hand, being quick at figures, presently replied, "Eighty-six thousand four hundred times." "Exactly so," replied the pendulum. "Well, I appeal to you all, if the very thought of
this was not enough to fatigue anyone; and when I began to multiply the strokes of one day by those of months and years, really it was no wonder if I felt discouraged at the prospect. So, after a great deal of reasoning and hesitation, thinks I to myself, I'll stop."

The dial could scarcely keep its countenance during this harangue; but, resuming its gravity, thus replied: "Dear Mr. Pendulum, I am really astonished that such a useful, industrious person as yourself should have been seized by this sudden weariness. It is true, you have done a great deal of work in your time; so have we all, and are likely to do; which, although it may fatigue us to think of, the question is, whether it will fatigue us to do. Would you now do me the favor to give about half a dozen strokes to illustrate my argument?"

The pendulum complied, and ticked six times at its usual pace. "Now," resumed the dial, "may I be allowed to inquire if that exertion is at all fatiguing or disagreeable to you?" "Not in the least," replied the pendulum; "it is not of six strokes that I complain, nor of sixty, but of millions."

"Very good," replied the dial; "but recollect that, although you may think of a million of strokes in an instant, you are required to execute but one; and that, however often you may hereafter have to swing, a moment will always be given you to swing in." "That consideration staggers me, I confess," said the pendulum. "Then I hope," resumed the dial plate, "that we shall all return to our duty immediately; for the maids will be in bed if we stand idling thus."

Upon this, the weights, who had never been accused of light conduct, used all their influence in urging him to proceed; when, as if with one consent, the wheels began to turn, the hands began to move, the pendulum began to swing, and, to its credit, ticked as loud as ever; while a red beam of the rising sun, that streamed through a hole in the kitchen, shining full upon the dial plate, it brightened up as if nothing had been the matter.

When the farmer came down to breakfast that morning,
upon looking at the clock, he declared that his watch had gained half an hour in the night.

**Item Prompt:**

During the course of this story, the pendulum undergoes a major transformation. What lesson does he learn, and how does the dial help him reach this new understanding? Use details from the story to support your response.

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<th>Scoring Rubric</th>
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**Scoring Notes:**

Response may include but is not limited to: The pendulum learns to approach life one step at a time rather than becoming overwhelmed by the totality of his responsibilities. The dial teaches him this important lesson by asking the pendulum to break down his ticking responsibilities into a short series of six ticks and evaluate his reaction. When hearing that the pendulum considers these discrete tasks to be quite manageable, the dial reminds his friend that he can make his task simpler by focusing only on what’s immediately before him.

Score Point 2 Sample:
The pendulum learns that he needs to take life one step at a time and not worry about getting his whole job finished at a single stretch. The dial helps the pendulum understand this point by telling him to make a few ticks at a time. The pendulum can do this without feeling tired, and the dial reminds him that he just needs to focus on the single steps ahead in order to get the whole job done.
<table>
<thead>
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<th>Score Point 1 Sample:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The pendulum learns that if he makes a just a few ticks at a time instead of worrying about ticking forever, then he will be able to get the job done without feeling exhausted.</td>
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<td>Score Point 0 Sample:</td>
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<td>The clock was old and lazy.</td>
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Worksheet: Text Complexity Analysis

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
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<tr>
<td>Discontented Pendulum</td>
<td>Jane Taylor</td>
<td>A parable of a clock that faces a defining moment</td>
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Recommended Placement for Assessment: Grade 9

While the qualitative measures are slightly lower, the levels of meaning embedded in this parable suggest that a higher grade level assignment is appropriate. Based on these sets of measures, this passage is recommended for assessment at grade 9.

Qualitative Measures

Meaning/Purpose:  
Very complex: The parable form may not be as familiar as some to students; the theme is revealed gradually over the course of the text.

Text Structure:  
Moderately complex: The piece requires readers to see human characteristics in the parts of a clock and to consider the allegorical meaning.

Language Features:  
Very complex: Relies entirely on figurative language (personification, mainly). The vocabulary and style are formal.

Knowledge Demands:  
Very complex: The parable form may be unfamiliar; students must consider everything that is said and done on more than one level.

Quantitative Measures

Lexile or Other Quantitative Measure of the Text:  
Lexile: 990L; grades 6-8  
Flesch-Kincaid: 7.0  
Word Count: 818

Considerations for Passage Selection

Passage selection should be based on the ELA Content Specifications targets and the cognitive demands of the assessment tasks.

Potential Challenges a Text May Pose:

- Accessibility
- Sentence and text structures
- Archaic language, slang, idioms, or other language challenges
- Background knowledge
- Bias and sensitivity issues
- Word count

Adapted from the 2012 ELA SCASS work