

TEXAS GRADE 6 READING

Developmental Series Sample

Objective 4: The student will apply critical thinking skills to analyze culturally diverse written texts.

Knowledge and Skills Statement

(6.10) Reading/comprehension: The student comprehends selections using a variety of strategies.

Student Expectation

(J) The student is expected to distinguish fact and opinion in various texts.

ACTIVITY Fox or Opossum

Materials

Paper and pens or pencils

Procedure

All students write the following on a piece of paper:

1. a teacher they currently have
2. a famous actor or actress
3. a television show
4. a famous athlete
5. a sport
6. a class they are currently taking
7. a movie they have seen
8. a hobby that they enjoy
9. a sports team
10. a famous recording artist (person or group)

Collect all the papers, and then divide students into two teams. Each team stands in a line facing the front of the room. Identify one team as the "Foxes" and the other as the "Opossums." (Other names may be used; these just sound like "facts" and "opinions.") Put the team names on the chalkboard for scorekeeping purposes.

Tell students they will be asked to provide either a fact or an opinion about the various items listed on the papers. Stating an acceptable fact or opinion (whichever was requested) within the given amount of time earns a team one point. For example, if *hockey* is the item, an acceptable fact is *A hockey game has three periods.* An acceptable opinion is *The Dallas Stars are the best hockey team.* Stating a fact when an opinion was requested, or vice versa, costs the team one point. If a student gives no answer, no points are gained or lost.

Remind students that distinguishing fact from opinion can be tricky when a fact is based on an opinion as in *My favorite team is the Dallas Stars.* These statements are not awarded points. In addition, incorrect facts, (e.g., *Hockey has four periods*)



are not awarded points. Finally, simplistic opinions (e.g., *Hockey is boring*) may also earn no answer points to discourage their overuse.

After explaining the rules, shuffle the papers. Beginning with Team A, tell the first player in line whether (s)he should provide a fact or opinion. Then, read that player an item from one of the student papers. The player then has five to ten seconds to state a fact or opinion (whichever was directed) about the item.

The student who answered then goes to the back of his or her team's line. The first player on Team B is now up. Again, ask for either a fact or an opinion, and then read the next item. Follow this procedure until all items on all papers have been read or for a designated amount of time. Any single item may occur more than once, but a different fact or opinion must be given each time to score a point. The team with more points at the end of the game is the winner.

This activity may be repeated with other categories or with a list of topics or items compiled before the game.

Enrichment

Place students into pairs, and give each pair a newspaper. Each student finds and lists ten facts and ten opinions in the newspaper. When finished, partners can trade and check each others' work.



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Sunbelt Times

Section F, Page 1

July 23

Editorials and Opinions

A Joke but No Laughing Matter Margo Cerious

1 The jokes have already started. "Will he be able to juggle the budget?" "How many clowns does it take to run a city?" Let's not forget the most recent favorite, a saying showing up on a number of T-shirts around town: "I'm with Bozo."

2 The entrance of Camden Clown into the political arena has turned this election into a circus. Where we once talked issues, we now talk red noses. Where we once discussed the future, we now discuss oversized footwear. Where we once passed around ideals, we now pass balloon animals. It's time for this media circus to stop.

3 It's less than five days until the ballot cutoff. It's time for us, as citizens, to take a stand against this ridiculous man and these ridiculous times. Already, the heat is on the supporters of Camden Clown and his ragtag election team. The law states any candidate must get 5000 signatures to get his or her name on the ballot. At last count, Camden Clown was 2500 signatures short of that goal. What do I ask you, the proud citizens of Sunbelt, to do? You must do the only thing that will keep our city from becoming the laughing stock of the nation—do not sign the sheet to permit Camden Clown to run for mayor! Owing to Camden Clown's mysterious past, his shocking appearance, and his unpredictable state of mind, we cannot allow him to run for mayor. If he is allowed to run, Camden Clown's campaign will, like the stampeding of a mad, runaway elephant, certainly end in disaster.



4 Camden Clown tells others he is a clown. He claims he does not just act like a clown or do clown work for a job or hobby. He claims he *is* a clown, that he eats, breathes, and sleeps clowning. The truth is he is nothing more than a dangerous character with a mysterious past. It is true that he officially changed his name to Camden Clown. The problem is that nobody knows what his name was to begin with! Nobody knows who this clown is, and he wants to run for mayor! Rumor has it that his name is actually Devin Clownard, a failed circus performer and former member of the Traveling Clownards, a family of performing clowns. Still, though, nobody knows who he really is or what he has been doing all his life. A lost and lonely vagabond, Camden Clown has no job record, no past addresses, and no social security number. This mysterious past makes it impossible to check his record, and ultimately makes it impossible to trust him. He can't even get a driver's license! If you can't trust a person to drive a car, how can you trust him with the responsibility of running a city?

5 Camden Clown's appearance is certainly not befitting a respected position like mayor of Sunbelt. The man wears a clown suit every single day. The man had a clown's smile and face paint tattooed on his face. Is this the person whose face you want to see pictured in the daily papers? Is this the person you want representing our city to the world? If a person who looks like this were allowed to run for mayor, what would that say about our city? It would say that we, the voters, have no respect for the highest office in our city. To command respect, a person must look sharp. Monarchs, business executives,

presidents—all these people dress in a way that indicates the respect their positions deserve. The way Camden Clown dresses is—well, a joke.

The law states that anybody can run for mayor and that we cannot discriminate based on age, race, creed, or gender. Still, can we stop someone from running because of his outright lunacy? A solid leader should have a healthy mind. Camden Clown lives in a tiny car with no engine. You can see him pushing it around like a circus act. The man can't say two words without honking that silly horn. The man thinks he *is* a clown! He believes he is a member of a race that doesn't exist! What else has to be said? This is not the behavior of a man to be entrusted with guiding this city.

Citizens, this city has been around for one hundred years and has withstood fires, recessions, and foreign wars. I beg you, don't let this fine city be destroyed by some clown. If nothing else, just try to take the clown *out* of Camden Clown. What you will find is a man with no past, who dresses inappropriately and acts as if he were out of his mind. Don't turn our government into a circus. It would be a mistake to sign the list to put Camden Clown on the ballot. Believe me when I say I hold no personal dislike for Mr. Clown, but I will be the first one to stand up and say to him, "You, sir, are a joke, but this is no laughing matter."



Metro and State

I Am Camden Clown

**Transcription of Speech Given by
Camden Clown to Voters at Sunbelt Mall
on Tuesday, July 23**

1 My fellow townspeople, I have come here tonight to explain why I am running for mayor of this fine town. Some of you know of me, and many of you have seen me before. Some of you may have heard rumors about my past. I have come here tonight so you may not just know of me, but so you may know me. It is my greatest wish that you know the man underneath the mask and that you understand how much I love our wonderful city. My background, my understanding of the issues, and my ability to work nonstop to help this community make me the ideal candidate for mayor. That is why I am running; that is why I hope you will give me a chance to earn your vote. [Audience gives scattered applause.]

2 Let me start by telling you a little about myself, for I'm sure most of you have wondered about me. You probably see me on your way to work or to school, pushing my tiny car down the street. I know this may seem strange to you, but I assure you I am not crazy. I live in that small car and move it from place to place as the law dictates. I had the engine removed to reduce greenhouse gases and to do my part to keep our city's air clean. I wear this clown costume because I am a true clown. I am not just a clown for parties

or when the circus is in town. No, I was born a clown. I officially changed my name to Camden Clown and had this clown smile and whiteface makeup tattooed on my face. I do not take this mask off, and I do not wish to. I am a clown through and through, from the depths of my heart to the tips of my size eighteen shoes. [Audience laughs.] To set the record straight, I will tell you I am a college graduate. I attended Commonwealth Clown College from 1980 through 1984. In 1984 I graduated "laughter cum loudly" at the top of my class. Since that time, I have traveled the country learning about people and making them smile. I have no criminal background or outstanding parking tickets, and I pay sales tax on everything I buy. I am an outstanding citizen. Despite many misguided protests, I deserve the right to run for mayor of Sunbelt.

3 My understanding of the issues that face our community is second to none. Since I live on the streets, I know more about traffic problems than anyone. Since I live outside with no air conditioner, I am more aware of the benefits of clean air and the harmful effects of global warming than many. Who can possibly know more about homelessness, poverty, lack of medical insurance, or prejudice than I? I am the ideal candidate for this city. I understand what it's like to live in a multicultural neighborhood. I understand what it's like to be put down simply because I'm different. I did not choose



to be a clown. I was born this way, and there is nothing I can do about it but accept it and move on. I accept everybody for who they are and what they have to offer, and that's all I ask of you. [Audience gives applause.]

4

I am sure you all can see how perfect I am for this job because of my totally open schedule. I have nothing else to do but be the best mayor that this city has ever had. I have no house, no mortgage, and no family. I won't even live in the mayor's mansion. Instead, I'll stay on the streets making sure this city is growing and changing the right way. No other candidate has said that! All the other candidates have families and jobs. These added responsibilities are distractions. Nobody in their right mind would want a mayor who wasn't totally committed to the city twenty-four hours a day for seven days a week. Nobody can match my commitment, promise what I can promise, or be a better mayor! [Audience gives boisterous applause and laughs.]

Now I think you are starting to see my point. I even see that some of you are laughing, which is good. It shows that you believe what I am saying and that you understand my unique qualifications. My background as a college graduate and as an entertainer ensures I will be good in front of crowds. My life on the streets ensures that I have the right perspective on and understanding of our most important issues. Finally, my ability to give myself completely to the job makes me the perfect candidate. If you only look past the nose, the wig, the whiteface, and the tiny car, you will see the truth. Now that you know me, you should know I am the best candidate. I want your votes, ladies and gentlemen. I want to be the first clown mayor of this city, and when I am, I promise I will make you proud! Thank you very much. [Mr. Clown honks his horn twice. Audience gives thunderous applause.]

5



Use "A Joke but No Laughing Matter" to answer questions 1 through 3.

- 1 Which of the following is an opinion found in "A Joke but No Laughing Matter"?
- A *Camden Clown tells others he is a clown.*
 - B *It is true that he officially changed his name to Camden Clown.*
 - C *The way Camden Clown dresses is—well, a joke.*
 - D *The law states that anybody can run for mayor and that we cannot discriminate based on age, race, creed, or gender.*
- 2 Which of these is a fact from the selection?
- A *It's less than five days until the ballot cutoff.*
 - B *If he is allowed to run, Camden Clown's campaign will, like the stampeding of a mad, runaway elephant, certainly end in disaster.*
 - C *A solid leader should have a healthy mind.*
 - D *It would be a mistake to sign the list to put Camden Clown on the ballot.*
- 3 Which of the following is an opinion expressed in the selection?
- A *The entrance of Camden Clown into the political arena has turned this election into a circus.*
 - B *The law states any candidate must get 5000 signatures to get his or her name on the ballot.*
 - C *The man had a clown's smile and face paint tattooed on his face.*
 - D *Camden Clown lives in a tiny car with no engine.*



Use "I Am Camden Clown" to answer questions 4 through 6.

- 4 Which of the following is a fact from "I Am Camden Clown"?
- A *My background, my understanding of the issues, and my ability to work nonstop to help this community make me the ideal candidate for mayor.*
 - B *I have no house, no mortgage, and no family.*
 - C *These added responsibilities are distractions.*
 - D *Nobody can match my commitment, promise what I can promise, or be a better mayor!*
- 5 Which of these is an opinion expressed in Camden Clown's speech?
- A *. . . I am a college graduate.*
 - B *I have no criminal background or outstanding parking tickets, and I pay sales tax on everything I buy.*
 - C *All the other candidates have families and jobs.*
 - D *. . . my ability to give myself completely to the job makes me the perfect candidate.*
- 6 Which of the following is a fact stated in the selection?
- A *I attended Commonwealth Clown College from 1980 through 1984.*
 - B *I am an outstanding citizen.*
 - C *My understanding of the issues that face our community is second to none.*
 - D *Now that you know me, you should know I am the best candidate.*

