

Grade 6
English Language Arts/Literacy
Literary Analysis Task

2018 Released Items

2018 Released Items: Grade 6 Literary Analysis Task

The Literary Analysis Task requires students to read two literary texts that are purposely paired. Students read the texts, answer questions for each text and for the texts as a pair, and then write an analytic essay.

The 2018 blueprint for grade 6 Literary Analysis Task includes Evidence-Based Selected Response/Technology-Enhanced Constructed Response items as well as one Prose Constructed Response prompt.

Included in this document:

- Answer key and standards alignment
- PDFs of each item with the associated text(s)

Additional related materials not included in this document:

- Sample scored student responses with annotations and practice papers
- Scoring Rubric for Prose Constructed Response Items
- Guide to English Language Arts/Literacy Released Items: Understanding Scoring
- English Language Arts/Literacy Assessment: General Scoring Rules for the 2015 Summative Assessment

Release Items Answer and Alignment Document

Text Type: LAT		
Passage(s): "The Sword of Damocles" / "The Eighteenth Camel"		
Item Code	Answer(s)	Standards/Evidence Statement Alignment
VH100911	Item Type: EBSR Part A: B Part B: D	RL 6.1.1 RL 6.4.1
VH101009	Item Type: EBSR Part A: B Part B: D	RL 6.1.1 RL 6.3.2
VH101020	Item Type: TECR Use the drop-down menus to complete each sentence in the summary of "The Sword of Damocles." In the passage, a courtier learns that leadership comes with responsibility . The fact that the sword is "hung by a single horsehair thread" best contributes to the development of this lesson because it represents how quickly power can be lost if people are unsatisfied .	RL 6.1.1 RL 6.2.1 RL 6.2.2 RL 6.2.3
VH101056	Item Type: EBSR Part A: D Part B: B	RL 6.1.1 L 6.4.1 RL .4.1
VH101059	Item Type: EBSR Part A: C Part B: D	RL 6.1.1 RL 6.2.1
VH101084	Item Type: EBSR Part A: C Part B: B	RL 6.1.1 RL 6.5.1 RL 6.5.2
VH101097	Item Type: PCR Refer to Grade 6 Scoring Rubric	RL 6.1.1 RL 6.2.1 RL 6.2.2
VH100999	Item Type: EBSR (additional item) Part A: A Part B: C	RL 6.1.1 RL 6.2.1

VH101049	Item Type: EBSR (additional item) Part A: D Part B: C	RL 6.1.1 L 6.4.1 RL 6.4.1
VH101095	Item Type: PCR (additional item) Refer to Grade 6 Scoring Rubric	RL 6.1.1 RL 6.2.2 RL 6.3.1

Today you will read the stories “The Sword of Damocles” and “The Eighteenth Camel.” As you read these stories, you will gather information and answer questions about the central idea or lesson learned so that you can create a written response.

Read “The Sword of Damocles.” Then answer the questions.

The Sword of Damocles

retold by Connie Nordhielm Wooldridge

- 1 “Would you care to share your thoughts with the rest of us at the table?”
- 2 King Dionysius’s question startled Damocles out of his reverie and sent a cold chill up his spine. His thoughts were the same ones that had occupied his mind ever since he had become a courtier. They were envious, bitter thoughts toward this ruler who, as king of the wealthy city of Syracuse, had everything his heart desired while he, Damocles, had to be content with what the king chose for him to have.
- 3 “I was thinking that you must be the happiest man alive, Sire,” stammered Damocles. “You eat only the finest food, you have riches beyond measure, your subjects wait to do your bidding—”
- 4 “Happy?” interrupted Dionysius. For a brief moment, Damocles thought he saw a flicker of emotion on the king’s stern face. But even as he looked, Dionysius’s eyes became cold and impenetrable again. “You shall have a chance this very day to be happy, as I am happy, Damocles,” Dionysius continued. “At this evening’s feast, you shall occupy my place and wear my crown. And I will order all in attendance to treat you as they would me.”
- 5 The courtiers in the great hall caught their breath in a collective gasp. But for Damocles, surprise quickly gave way to delight. For a few hours, this very evening, he would eat what he pleased, do what he pleased, and expect everyone to obey his slightest wish. For a few hours, he would be the happiest man alive.
- 6 That evening Dionysius, true to his word, removed his golden crown, set it upon Damocles’s head, and escorted him to the royal seat at the head of the table. Then the king moved to the seat usually occupied by his courtier.

- 7** Damocles was giddy with his new power. He gorged himself on the delicacies that were set before him and ordered his cushions rearranged each time he shifted position. He gazed at the splendid statues and ornaments that adorned the banquet hall and which, for the time being, were his.
- 8** Looking up at the ceiling in search of more finery to which he could temporarily claim ownership, Damocles’s eyes suddenly fixed on a terrifying sight. Suspended just inches above his head was a sharp, gleaming double-edged sword. It hung by a single horsehair thread that Damocles feared would break if he so much as moved.
- 9** “I see you have finally noticed the sword,” observed King Dionysius from his place at the foot of the table. “I do hope it won’t spoil your happiness. But, you see, such a sword hangs over the head of anyone who wields great power.”
- 10** Damocles was unable to move or speak, so the king continued. “The ruler of a neighboring kingdom, a disgruntled subject, or”—the king’s eyes narrowed—“a jealous courtier, any one of these might sever the thread and cause the sword to come plunging down.”
- 11** Still, Damocles sat with eyes transfixed on the menacing sword above his head. King Dionysius strode to the head of the table and took Damocles by the arm. “Until you learn that power carries with it not only privilege but responsibility,” said the king, “you had better remain in your usual seat.” He escorted Damocles to the foot of the table, placed the crown back on his own head, and resumed his rightful place without so much as a glance at the sword, which still dangled from the ceiling.
- 12** As for Damocles, he felt greatly relieved to be back in his accustomed place. In fact, he felt as though he were the happiest man alive!

Glossary Definition

reverie = daydreaming

“The Sword of Damocles” retold by Connie Nordhielm Wooldridge. Copyright © Connie Nordhielm Wooldridge. Used by permission of the author.

1. Part A

What does the word **envious** suggest about Damocles in paragraph 2 of “The Sword of Damocles”?

- A. It suggests that he disrespects Dionysius.
- B. It suggests that he is jealous of Dionysius.
- C. It suggests that he dislikes Dionysius’s decisions.
- D. It suggests that he is impatient with Dionysius’s decisions.

Part B

Which detail from paragraph 2 **best** supports the answer to Part A?

- A. “King Dionysius’s question startled Damocles. . . .”
- B. “. . . sent a cold chill up his spine.”
- C. “His thoughts were the same ones that had occupied his mind. . . .”
- D. “. . . as king of the wealthy city of Syracuse, had everything his heart desired . . .”

2. Part A

How does Damocles change after discovering the sword?

- A. He realizes that the king needs to be serious at all times.
- B. He realizes that there is more to being king than he thought.
- C. He realizes that he can easily remove the king from his throne.
- D. He realizes that pretending to be king is only a temporary opportunity.

Part B

Which detail from the story **best** supports the answer to Part A?

- A. "King Dionysius strode to the head of the table and took Damocles by the arm." (paragraph 11)
- B. ". . . you had better remain in your usual seat." (paragraph 11)
- C. "He escorted Damocles to the foot of the table, placed the crown back on his own head, and resumed his rightful place. . . ." (paragraph 11)
- D. "As for Damocles, he felt greatly relieved to be back in his accustomed place." (paragraph 12)

3.

Use the drop-down menus to complete each sentence in the summary of “The Sword of Damocles.”

In the passage, a courtier learns that

Choose...

Choose...

opportunities need to be seized

leadership comes with responsibility

community is built by sharing meals together

learning can come from unexpected situations

The fact that the sword is

Choose...

“gleaming”

“double-edged”

“hung by a single horsehair thread”

“dangled from the ceiling”

Choose... ▼

best contributes to the development of this lesson because it represents

Choose...

how knowledge can be gained

how riches are gained from having power

how too much power leads people to misuse it

how quickly power can be lost if people are unsatisfied

Choose... ▼

Read the story “The Eighteenth Camel.” Then answer the questions.

The Eighteenth Camel

A retelling by Thelma Schmidhauser of an old Bedouin folktale

- 1** Before the invention of mechanical vehicles, camels furnished transportation for many peoples of the Arabian deserts and were valued for their milk, meat, and skins. So important were they to the desert economy that a Bedouin would measure his wealth by the number of camels he owned.
- 2** A tale is told of a certain wealthy Bedouin who, upon his death, left seventeen camels to be divided among three heirs. The first heir was to get half of the camels, the second a third, and the third heir . . . one-ninth of the lot.
- 3** By such a division, the first heir would get eight and a half camels, while the second heir received five and two-thirds, and the third heir would inherit only one and eight-ninths of a camel. The situation seemed impossible to resolve. None of the heirs would sell his share to the others, and certainly none of them wanted to kill any of the camels, for the beasts were much more valuable alive than dead. Tempers flared. Angry words were spoken.
- 4** Now, in the area lived a wealthy Arabian woman. Distressed by the quarreling, she offered the heirs one of her own camels in hopes of resolving the dispute.
- 5** They now had eighteen camels to mete. The first heir received his half, nine camels. The second heir received six camels—his one-third share. And the last heir received two camels, one-ninth of the eighteen.
- 6** To their surprise, they found that there was one camel remaining. For, when added together, nine plus six plus two equals only seventeen. So they returned her camel to the woman with their thanks.
- 7** Without her camel, the inheritance would not have been peacefully resolved. Though it would seem that she had done nothing—for she had neither lost nor gained an animal—she was what is sometimes needed to bring about an

action . . . a catalyst. Her action was worth more than any wealth she could have given to the heirs.

Glossary Definition

mete = divide

“The Eighteenth Camel” retold by Thelma Schmidhauser from CRICKET MAGAZINE, Carus Publishing Co. © 2002.

4. Part A

What does the word **heir** mean as it is used in “The Eighteenth Camel”?

- A. someone who has to share with others
- B. someone who is part of a family’s problems
- C. someone who knows how to take care of animals
- D. someone who receives another person’s valuable items

Part B

Which detail from the story **best** supports the answer to Part A?

- A. A wealthy woman has camels to spare.
- B. A wealthy man gives all his camels to three people.
- C. Three people have trouble dividing the camels between themselves.
- D. Three people divide the camels after getting help from someone else.

5. Part A

Which statement is a theme in “The Eighteenth Camel”?

- A. Knowing math solves many problems.
- B. Camels are important animals.
- C. Being generous can improve situations.
- D. Conflicts can take time to resolve.

Part B

Which detail from the story **best** supports the answer to Part A?

- A. “. . . were valued for their milk, meat, and skins.” (paragraph 1)
- B. “None of the heirs would sell his share to the others. . . .” (paragraph 3)
- C. “For, when added together, nine plus six plus two equals only seventeen.” (paragraph 6)
- D. “Her action was worth more than any wealth she could have given to the heirs.” (paragraph 7)

6. Part A

How does paragraph 8 contribute to the plot of “The Sword of Damocles”?

- A. It is part of the rising action and describes how a lesson is learned.
- B. It is part of the falling action and explains how the lesson is learned.
- C. It is the turning point of the story where the lesson learned is introduced.
- D. It is the resolution of the story where the lesson learned is explained.

Part B

Which paragraph in “The Eighteenth Camel” contributes to the plot in the same way as the answer to Part A?

- A. paragraph 3
- B. paragraph 4
- C. paragraph 5
- D. paragraph 6

7. You have read “The Sword of Damocles” and “The Eighteenth Camel.” Write an essay that describes how a theme in **each** story is developed. Use details from **both** stories to support your response.

8. Part A

Which statement is a theme in “The Sword of Damocles”?

- A. Having power is not easy.
- B. New situations can be exciting.
- C. Daydreaming can lead to new experiences.
- D. Ambition is the reason people do not see the truth.

Part B

Which event from the story **best** supports the answer to Part A?

- A. when the king interrupts Damocles’ thoughts
- B. when the king allows Damocles to sit in his place
- C. when the king explains to Damocles why the sword hangs from the ceiling
- D. when the king walks Damocles back to his regular place at the table

9. Part A

What is the meaning of **a catalyst** as it is used in paragraph 7 of “The Eighteenth Camel”?

- A. a rich person
- B. an extra animal
- C. one that allows for new ideas
- D. one that causes an event to happen

Part B

Which detail from the story **best** supports the answer to Part A?

- A. “. . . would measure his wealth by the number of camels he owned.” (paragraph 1)
- B. “Now, in the area lived a wealthy Arabian woman.” (paragraph 4)
- C. “. . . she offered the heirs one of her own camels in hopes of resolving the dispute.” (paragraph 4)
- D. “To their surprise, they found that there was one camel remaining.” (paragraph 6)

- 10.** You have read “The Sword of Damocles” and “The Eighteenth Camel.”

Write an essay describing how a common theme is conveyed through the events that occur in **each** passage. Use details from **both** passages to support your response.

