A long time ago, in a small Mexican village, Opossum lived at the top of a mango tree. She was so quiet that no one noticed her. She often felt left out and lonely. Iguana didn’t even notice her and he lived below the tree. Iguana was the great Firemaker. He was the only one in the village who knew how to make fire from sticks. He was very proud and often boasted of his skill.

One night Opossum heard Iguana say loudly to his wife, “I should be the ruler of this village, since I am the only one who can make fire.”

His wife replied, “Fire is not all there is to this village.”

When Iguana heard his wife’s words, his temper rose like steam from a boiling pot. Without a second to spare, he took all of the village fire and quickly climbed to the sky. Opossum sat quietly in the tree and watched it all happen. But she didn’t know what to do.
The next morning, the villagers cried out, “There is no fire!”
“Iguana carried it up the cliff to the sky,” said Opossum.
Just then, Raven flew down from the tree. “Opossum is right. I just saw
Iguana, the great Firemaker.”
The animals knew they had to make a plan and get the fire back. They
discussed whom they might send to get back the fire. They all agreed that
Opossum should go. She was smart and she could climb.
But Opossum said, “No, you have all ignored me all these years.”
“But today,” said Raven, “we need you.”
Opossum surveyed the villagers. She thought about how they had picked her
especially to get the fire. Maybe they were right. Maybe she was the one that
should get the fire back. “I’ll go,” she said.
At the top of the cliff, she found Iguana sitting before the warm fire.
“So, you’ve come to steal the fire!” said Iguana, grinning so that Opossum
would see his sharp teeth.
But Opossum had a plan. She said, “You are too clever. I could never steal
fire from you. After all, you are the great Firemaker.”
Iguana’s chest puffed up and he began to tell stories about himself. After
much time, Opossum gently said, “You look tired.”
Iguana nodded. He yawned and began to lie down. At that moment,
Opossum quickly wrapped her tail around a burning branch and threw it over the
edge of the cliff. In the process, all the hair on her tail burned away.
“Ladrón!*” shouted Iguana. Opossum curled up and pretended to be dead.
Iguana poked Opossum to see if she really was dead. His poke was so strong that
it caused Opossum to roll over the side of the cliff, but Raven caught her.
“Hooray for Opossum!” everyone in the village shouted.
Soon, everyone learned to make fire from sticks. Iguana’s wife was happy to
teach them. And to this day Opossum has a hairless tail and curls up into a ball
whenever she is in danger.

*Author’s Note: Ladrón is the Spanish word for thief.
Now answer Numbers 1 through 6. Base your answers on the myth “The Great Firemaker and Opossum’s Hairless Tail.”

1. Why did the author write “The Great Firemaker and Opossum’s Hairless Tail”?
   A. to give factual information about opossums
   B. to explain to readers how to make a fire from sticks
   C. to entertain readers with a tale that teaches a lesson
   D. to warn readers that the iguana is a dangerous animal

2. Read this sentence from the story.

   When Iguana heard his wife’s words, his temper rose like steam from a boiling pot.

   What is the meaning of rose in this sentence?
   F. a shade of pink
   G. grew stronger or higher
   H. a fragrant flower with thorns
   I. a symbol showing directions on a map

3. Which BEST expresses a theme of this story?
   A. The fiercest fighter always wins.
   B. A bully will do the right thing in the end.
   C. If others ignore you, you must talk louder.
   D. Cleverness can win a victory without a fight.
Name _____________________________________________

4 Based on her words and actions, Iguana’s wife MOST LIKELY believes that her husband
   
   ☐ is not very wise.
   ☐ has learned his lesson.
   ☐ should rule the village.
   ☐ has been treated unfairly.

5 What facts about nature does the story try to explain? What explanation does the story
give? Use information and details from the story to support your answer.

   ________________________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________

Go On
Name ____________________________

6. Explain the lesson that this story teaches. Use examples and details from the story to support your answer.
Cold Weather Hazards

Winter brings beautiful snowy scenes and fun winter sports. However, cold weather can also bring hazards that can make life difficult or even dangerous. Here are some of these winter hazards.

Snow

When the temperature in a cloud is lower than 32º Fahrenheit, ice crystals begin to form. As the crystals join together and fall, they form snowflakes. Most snowflakes are six-sided, and many look like stars.

If the temperature near the ground is well below freezing, the flakes fall as dry snow. Dry snow is easy for snowplows to scoop and move. But when the temperature is not so cold, the flakes fall as wet snow. Wet snow is heavy and difficult to clear off streets. This kind of snow can make it hard for people to travel places. It can also pull down power lines.

Any kind of snow can be a problem if there is too much of it. Snowstorms make it difficult to see, causing pedestrians and drivers to become confused and disoriented. They may get lost or have an accident. After the storm, snow can pile up in snowdrifts that cover cars and streets.

Go On
**Ice**

Even if there is no snow falling, there is usually water vapor in the air. When temperatures reach freezing, water vapor forms a frozen coating on everything. Frosty designs on tree branches are pretty, but sheets of ice on streets are slippery and dangerous. Sometimes the air is not freezing, but the ground is cold enough for ice to form. When rain falls and freezes on the ground, it forms black ice. The surface of the road shows right through clear black ice. Drivers cannot see that the road is icy. As a result, accidents can happen.

**Avalanche: Snow on the Move**

In the mountains, avalanches are a danger. An avalanche occurs after heaps of snow pile up on a slope. A small movement is sometimes all it takes to start an avalanche. Skiers or hikers often cause avalanches just walking across the snow. First, a small patch of snow starts to slide down a mountain. This causes more snow to slide. The small slide can quickly become a huge wall of snow crashing down the mountain.

**Dry Avalanche** There are two kinds of avalanches. The most common is a dry avalanche. It is made of dry, powdery snow mixed with air. It can happen anytime there is a new layer of snow. A dry avalanche can travel more than 100 miles per hour! Because it is so light, a dry avalanche is not usually dangerous. But its speed can make it powerful. It can sometimes carry people over cliffs, destroy buildings, and knock down trees.

**Wet Avalanche** A wet avalanche happens most often in the spring, when snow is beginning to melt. A wet avalanche is made of wet, heavy snow. It moves more slowly. The wet snow picks up rocks, trees, and dirt as it moves and can cause great damage to buildings and forests. If people are buried in a wet avalanche, they are in great danger from the cold and lack of air.
Now answer Numbers 7 through 11. Base your answers on the article “Cold Weather Hazards.”

7 The main topics of this article can be found
   A in the headings.
   B in the illustration.
   C in the introduction.
   D in the last paragraph.

8 What happens when ice crystals join together?
   F They form a snowflake.
   G They start an avalanche.
   H They turn to water vapor.
   I They form black ice on the road.

9 The terms snow, black ice, dry avalanche, and wet avalanche all name
   A winter sports.
   B cold climates.
   C winter hazards.
   D weather forecasts.

Go On
10 Read this sentence from the article.

**An avalanche occurs after heaps of snow pile up on a slope.**

The dictionary lists three meanings for the word *heap* as a noun and two meanings for the word *heap* as a verb. To understand the meaning of *heap* as it is used in this sentence, the reader should

- F find a dictionary entry for *heaps*, rather than *heap*.
- G use the first meaning because it is the most common.
- H decide which of the verb meanings matches the context.
- I decide which of the noun meanings matches the context.

11 Explain what determines whether snow will be dry or wet when it falls. Use information and details from the article in your explanation.
Summarize the information in the article about avalanches. Use information and details from the article to explain:

- causes of avalanches
- kinds of avalanches, and
- dangers of avalanches.
Read the article “George Washington’s Idea” before answering Numbers 13 through 20.

George Washington’s Idea

After the American Revolution, the United States gained hundreds of millions of acres of land. George Washington knew this country could become a great and powerful nation. He also realized that the new land needed to be connected to the eastern cities. But how? Traveling over the mountains was slow and difficult. Getting supplies and trade goods back and forth in a reasonable amount of time was almost impossible.

The Potomac River was the key to George Washington’s plan. The river ran from the Ohio River Valley through Maryland and Washington, D.C., on its way to the Chesapeake Bay. It was the perfect connection between the West and the East. However, the Potomac River was narrow and winding in places. Spring rains caused it to roar with dangerous rapids. Summer droughts often made it too shallow to use. Along the river there were many dangerous waterfalls. But George Washington thought there was a way to use the river for travel. He wanted to build a canal.

Construction of the Patowmack Canal began in 1785. Very few people were trained as engineers in those days. The work crew was made up mostly of unskilled workers. The job was difficult and very dangerous. Finally, after seventeen years of hard work, the canal was completed.

The Patowmack Canal was like a steep stairway. It had a series of locks that could fill with water and then empty again to raise or lower boats filled with supplies. It bypassed the worst parts of the river. The canal was a huge improvement over slow and difficult land travel. Many believe the construction of the Patowmack Canal was one of the greatest accomplishments of the 1700s.
Now answer Numbers 13 through 20. Base your answers on the article “George Washington’s Idea.”

13 Which BEST shows that this is a nonfiction article?
   - A. It has detailed descriptions.
   - B. It has a problem and a solution.
   - C. It makes an interesting comparison.
   - D. It includes historical facts and dates.

14 Which BEST describes the text organization that the author uses in this article?
   - F. question and answer
   - G. problem and solution
   - H. compare and contrast
   - I. general ideas and specific examples

15 What made the Potomac River a poor way to travel in the summer?
   - A. Dangerous rapids could destroy boats.
   - B. Boats couldn’t get past powerful waterfalls.
   - C. Droughts often made it too shallow for boats.
   - D. The river became too narrow for boats to pass.
16. Locks on the Patowmack Canal made it like a
   F. highway of fish.
   G. narrow, winding snake.
   H. stairway made of water.
   I. safe that thieves could not open.

17. What was George Washington’s idea and why did he think it was important? Include details and information from the article in your answer.
18 Based on information in the article, the canal would MOST LIKELY have been completed sooner if
   A the canal had been more important.
   B there had been trained engineers at that time.
   C Washington had not insisted that it be perfect.
   D unskilled workers had been allowed to work on the crew.

19 Read these sentences from the article.

   The canal was a huge improvement over slow and difficult land travel. Many believe the construction of the Patowmack Canal was one of the greatest accomplishments of the 1700s.

What is the meaning of the word construction?

   F to build something
   G someone who builds
   H the act of building something
   I helpful in building something

20 Look back at the articles “Cold Weather Hazards” and “George Washington’s Idea.” Which sentence tells one way that the two passages are DIFFERENT?

   A One gives information, and the other gives instructions.
   B One has facts about nature, and the other has facts about history.
   C One describes dangerous situations, and the other gives safety tips.
   D One is a nonfiction article, and the other is a work of historical fiction.
A long time ago, in a small Mexican village, Opossum lived at the top of a mango tree. She was so quiet that no one noticed her. She often felt left out and lonely. Iguana didn’t even notice her and he lived below the tree. Iguana was the great Firemaker. He was the only one in the village who knew how to make fire from sticks. He was very proud and often boasted of his skill.

One night Opossum heard Iguana say loudly to his wife, “I should be the ruler of this village, since I am the only one who can make fire.”

His wife replied, “Fire is not all there is to this village.”

When Iguana heard his wife’s words, his temper rose like steam from a boiling pot. Without a second to spare, he took all of the village fire and quickly climbed to the sky. Opossum sat quietly in the tree and watched it all happen. But she didn’t know what to do.
The next morning, the villagers cried out, “There is no fire!”
“Iguana carried it up the cliff to the sky,” said Opossum.
Just then, Raven flew down from the tree. “Opossum is right. I just saw
Iguana, the great Firemaker.”
The animals knew they had to make a plan and get the fire back. They
discussed whom they might send to get back the fire. They all agreed that
Opossum should go. She was smart and she could climb.
But Opossum said, “No, you have all ignored me all these years.”
“But today,” said Raven, “we need you.”
Opossum surveyed the villagers. She thought about how they had picked her
especially to get the fire. Maybe they were right. Maybe she was the one that
should get the fire back. “I’ll go,” she said.
At the top of the cliff, she found Iguana sitting before the warm fire.
“So, you’ve come to steal the fire!” said Iguana, grinning so that Opossum
would see his sharp teeth.
But Opossum had a plan. She said, “You are too clever. I could never steal
fire from you. After all, you are the great Firemaker.”
Iguana’s chest puffed up and he began to tell stories about himself. After
much time, Opossum gently said, “You look tired.”
Iguana nodded. He yawned and began to lie down. At that moment,
Opossum quickly wrapped her tail around a burning branch and threw it over the
edge of the cliff. In the process, all the hair on her tail burned away.
“Ladrón!*” shouted Iguana. Opossum curled up and pretended to be dead.
Iguana poked Opossum to see if she really was dead. His poke was so strong that
it caused Opossum to roll over the side of the cliff, but Raven caught her.
“Hooray for Opossum!” everyone in the village shouted.
Soon, everyone learned to make fire from sticks. Iguana’s wife was happy to
teach them. And to this day Opossum has a hairless tail and curls up into a ball
whenever she is in danger.

*Author’s Note: Ladrón is the Spanish word for thief.
Now answer Numbers 1 through 6. Base your answers on the myth “The Great Firemaker and Opossum’s Hairless Tail.”

1. Why did the author write “The Great Firemaker and Opossum’s Hairless Tail”? 
   A. to give factual information about opossums 
   B. to explain to readers how to make a fire from sticks 
   C. to entertain readers with a tale that teaches a lesson 
   D. to warn readers that the iguana is a dangerous animal 
   (LA.4.1.7.2)

2. Read this sentence from the story. 
   
   When Iguana heard his wife’s words, his temper rose like steam from a boiling pot. 
   
   What is the meaning of rose in this sentence? 
   F. a shade of pink 
   G. grew stronger or higher 
   H. a fragrant flower with thorns 
   I. a symbol showing directions on a map 
   (LA.4.1.6.9)

3. Which BEST expresses a theme of this story? 
   A. The fiercest fighter always wins. 
   B. A bully will do the right thing in the end. 
   C. If others ignore you, you must talk louder. 
   D. Cleverness can win a victory without a fight. 
   (LA.4.1.7.6)
Sample 2-point response: The story tries to explain why opossums play dead and have no hair on their tails. The story explains that Opossum stole the fire by grabbing it with her tail, which burned off all the hair on it. Then, she curled up in a ball and played dead so Iguana wouldn’t fight her. According to the story, that is why modern opossums have no hair on their tails and why they roll up and play dead to protect themselves.
Sample 4-point response: This story teaches that with flattery and quick thinking even someone timid can overcome someone more powerful. In the story, Opossum was the timid one and Iguana was the powerful one. Since Opossum knew that Iguana could easily hurt or kill her, she tried flattering him instead of fighting him. She got him to brag about himself until he was tired. When he let down his guard to rest, Opossum stole the fire and tossed it over the cliff. Then she played dead so Iguana would not hurt her. So with cleverness and flattery, Opossum was able to outsmart the powerful Iguana and save her village.
Read the article “Cold Weather Hazards” before answering Numbers 7 through 12.

Cold Weather Hazards

Winter brings beautiful snowy scenes and fun winter sports. However, cold weather can also bring hazards that can make life difficult or even dangerous. Here are some of these winter hazards.

Snow

When the temperature in a cloud is lower than 32º Fahrenheit, ice crystals begin to form. As the crystals join together and fall, they form snowflakes. Most snowflakes are six-sided, and many look like stars.

If the temperature near the ground is well below freezing, the flakes fall as dry snow. Dry snow is easy for snowplows to scoop and move. But when the temperature is not so cold, the flakes fall as wet snow. Wet snow is heavy and difficult to clear off streets. This kind of snow can make it hard for people to travel places. It can also pull down power lines.

Any kind of snow can be a problem if there is too much of it. Snowstorms make it difficult to see, causing pedestrians and drivers to become confused and disoriented. They may get lost or have an accident. After the storm, snow can pile up in snowdrifts that cover cars and streets.
Ice

Even if there is no snow falling, there is usually water vapor in the air. When temperatures reach freezing, water vapor forms a frozen coating on everything. Frosty designs on tree branches are pretty, but sheets of ice on streets are slippery and dangerous. Sometimes the air is not freezing, but the ground is cold enough for ice to form. When rain falls and freezes on the ground, it forms black ice. The surface of the road shows right through clear black ice. Drivers cannot see that the road is icy. As a result, accidents can happen.

Avalanche: Snow on the Move

In the mountains, avalanches are a danger. An avalanche occurs after heaps of snow pile up on a slope. A small movement is sometimes all it takes to start an avalanche. Skiers or hikers often cause avalanches just walking across the snow. First, a small patch of snow starts to slide down a mountain. This causes more snow to slide. The small slide can quickly become a huge wall of snow crashing down the mountain.

Dry Avalanche There are two kinds of avalanches. The most common is a dry avalanche. It is made of dry, powdery snow mixed with air. It can happen anytime there is a new layer of snow. A dry avalanche can travel more than 100 miles per hour! Because it is so light, a dry avalanche is not usually dangerous. But its speed can make it powerful. It can sometimes carry people over cliffs, destroy buildings, and knock down trees.

Wet Avalanche A wet avalanche happens most often in the spring, when snow is beginning to melt. A wet avalanche is made of wet, heavy snow. It moves more slowly. The wet snow picks up rocks, trees, and dirt as it moves and can cause great damage to buildings and forests. If people are buried in a wet avalanche, they are in great danger from the cold and lack of air.
Now answer Numbers 7 through 11. Base your answers on the article “Cold Weather Hazards.”

7 The main topics of this article can be found
   A in the headings.
   B in the illustration.
   C in the introduction.
   D in the last paragraph.
   (LA.4.2.2.1)

8 What happens when ice crystals join together?
   F They form a snowflake.
   G They start an avalanche.
   H They turn to water vapor.
   I They form black ice on the road.
   (LA.4.1.7.3)

9 The terms snow, black ice, dry avalanche, and wet avalanche all name
   A winter sports.
   B cold climates.
   C winter hazards.
   D weather forecasts.
   (LA.4.1.6.4)
Read this sentence from the article.

**An avalanche occurs after heaps of snow pile up on a slope.**

The dictionary lists three meanings for the word *heap* as a noun and two meanings for the word *heap* as a verb. To understand the meaning of *heap* as it is used in this sentence, the reader should

- F find a dictionary entry for *heaps*, rather than *heap*.
- G use the first meaning because it is the most common.
- H decide which of the verb meanings matches the context.
- I decide which of the noun meanings matches the context.

(LA.4.1.6.10)

Explain what determines whether snow will be dry or wet when it falls. Use information and details from the article in your explanation.

Sample 2-point response: The air temperature near the ground determines whether snow will be dry or wet when it falls. If the temperature is well below freezing, the snow will be light and dry. If the temperature near the ground is warmer and close to the freezing point, the snow will be heavy and wet.
Sample 4-point response: An avalanche happens when a lot of snow slides down a mountain. A hiker or skier walking on the snow or any small movement can cause an avalanche when snow is piled up high. First, a small patch of snow slides. As it slides, it starts more and more snow sliding.

There are two kinds of avalanches. In a dry avalanche, the snow is light and powdery and there is a lot of air in the snow. Because a dry avalanche is light, it moves fast enough to carry a person over a cliff. A wet avalanche happens when the snow is melting and wet, usually in the spring. A wet avalanche is slower and heavier than a dry avalanche, but it is more dangerous. Its weight makes it powerful enough to move rocks and trees. Someone buried in a wet avalanche will be more likely to suffer from cold and lack of air than someone buried in dry snow.
Read the article “George Washington’s Idea” before answering Numbers 13 through 20.

George Washington’s Idea

After the American Revolution, the United States gained hundreds of millions of acres of land. George Washington knew this country could become a great and powerful nation. He also realized that the new land needed to be connected to the eastern cities. But how? Traveling over the mountains was slow and difficult. Getting supplies and trade goods back and forth in a reasonable amount of time was almost impossible.

The Potomac River was the key to George Washington’s plan. The river ran from the Ohio River Valley through Maryland and Washington, D.C., on its way to the Chesapeake Bay. It was the perfect connection between the West and the East. However, the Potomac River was narrow and winding in places. Spring rains caused it to roar with dangerous rapids. Summer droughts often made it too shallow to use. Along the river there were many dangerous waterfalls. But George Washington thought there was a way to use the river for travel. He wanted to build a canal.

Construction of the Patowmack Canal began in 1785. Very few people were trained as engineers in those days. The work crew was made up mostly of unskilled workers. The job was difficult and very dangerous. Finally, after seventeen years of hard work, the canal was completed.

The Patowmack Canal was like a steep stairway. It had a series of locks that could fill with water and then empty again to raise or lower boats filled with supplies. It bypassed the worst parts of the river. The canal was a huge improvement over slow and difficult land travel. Many believe the construction of the Patowmack Canal was one of the greatest accomplishments of the 1700s.
Now answer Numbers 13 through 20. Base your answers on the article “George Washington’s Idea.”

13 Which BEST shows that this is a nonfiction article?
   A  It has detailed descriptions.
   B  It has a problem and a solution.
   C  It makes an interesting comparison.
   D  It includes historical facts and dates.
   (LA.4.2.2.4)

14 Which BEST describes the text organization that the author uses in this article?
   F  question and answer
   G  problem and solution
   H  compare and contrast
   I  general ideas and specific examples
   (LA.4.1.7.5)

15 What made the Potomac River a poor way to travel in the summer?
   A  Dangerous rapids could destroy boats.
   B  Boats couldn’t get past powerful waterfalls.
   C  Droughts often made it too shallow for boats.
   D  The river became too narrow for boats to pass.
   (LA.4.1.7.4)
What was George Washington's idea and why did he think it was important? Include details and information from the article in your answer.

Sample 2-point response: George Washington’s idea was to build a canal to bypass the worst parts of the Potomac River. He thought it was important because it would make the river usable for transporting supplies and goods between the East and the West more quickly. Washington believed that connecting the East and West would help make the United States a powerful nation.

Short-Response Rubric

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Points</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>The answer shows that the student completely understands the task. The response is based on the text and is complete, correct, and provides needed examples and/or support.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>The answer shows that the student partially understands the task. The response is based on the text and mostly correct, but the information may be incomplete, too general, or lack support.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>The answer shows that the student does not understand the task. The response is inaccurate, incomplete, or irrelevant.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(LA.4.2.2.3)
Based on information in the article, the canal would MOST LIKELY have been completed sooner if

A the canal had been more important.
B there had been trained engineers at that time.
C Washington had not insisted that it be perfect.
D unskilled workers had been allowed to work on the crew.

(LA.4.1.7.4)

Read these sentences from the article.

The canal was a huge improvement over slow and difficult land travel. Many believe the construction of the Patowmack Canal was one of the greatest accomplishments of the 1700s.

What is the meaning of the word construction?

F to build something
G someone who builds
H the act of building something
I helpful in building something

(LA.4.1.6.7)

Look back at the articles “Cold Weather Hazards” and “George Washington’s Idea.” Which sentence tells one way that the two passages are DIFFERENT?

A One gives information, and the other gives instructions.
B One has facts about nature, and the other has facts about history.
C One describes dangerous situations, and the other gives safety tips.
D One is a nonfiction article, and the other is a work of historical fiction.

(LA.4.1.7.7)