# *Montana Comprehensive Assessment System* *(MontCAS, Phase 2)*

## *Criterion-Referenced Test (CRT)*

COMMON CONSTRUCTED-RESPONSE ITEM RELEASE
READING, GRADE 7

2008

OPI

OFFICE OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

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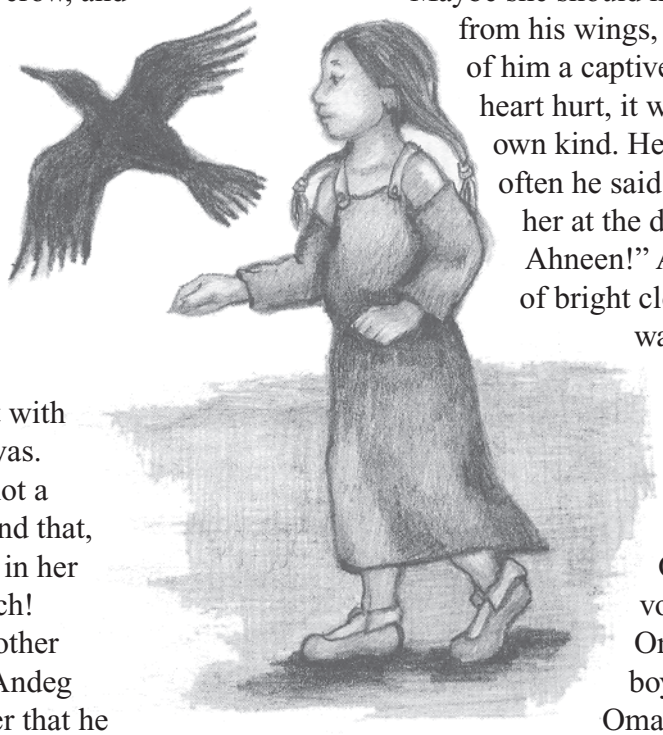
# Reading
# Session 2

*This story is taken from* The Birchbark House*, a novel about Omakayas, an Ojibwa girl growing up in the 1840s. Read the story and then answer the questions that follow.*

## Omakayas Says Good-bye to Andeg

*Louise Erdrich*

In the morning, Andeg greeted Omakayas with fluttering wings, ducking his head to accept a little scratch, cooing with a sweet and gurgling sound. Omakayas had never heard a crow make such a sound before, and she knew it was a special sign of affection. She was certain of it one day when Andeg hopped toward her with a twig in his beak. She carefully took it, thanked her crow, and laid the twig aside. All that day, wherever she turned, there was Andeg, hopeful, carrying a piece of bark for her. At last, Omakayas scratched Andeg's neck and sat down to feed him and talk to him. He listened, his lids closed, blue, his head tucked down in quiet bliss.



"You want to make a nest with me, don't you?" said Omakayas. "I can't. I love you, but I'm not a bird." She was surprised to find that, as she said this, tears formed in her eyes. Andeg loved her so much!

"You will have to find another crow," she said, very gently. Andeg didn't seem to hear. Still, after that he would leave for hours at a time. Now Omakayas was afraid that he would be taken for a wild bird and shot or killed. She attached a bit of red wool to his leg. Andeg managed to pull it off with his clever beak. He could untie almost anything if he worked hard enough.

One day, while Omakayas was working just outside the cabin in the cool air, watching a fire Nokomis had made to smoke some of the fish Deydey caught just at ice breakup, there was a sudden harsh cawing of crows. A group of wheeling, excited black birds passed overhead. Just like that, without a good-bye, Andeg jumped off her shoulder. He flew, zinging upward into the midst of the flock. In a second, he was indistinguishable from the others.

Omakayas felt her heart squeeze shut painfully as the birds passed out of sight. He was gone. Maybe she should have cut away essential feathers from his wings, but she couldn't stand to think of him a captive. No, she decided, though her heart hurt, it was better that he join with his own kind. He wasn't human, no matter how often he said "Gaygo, Pinch," or greeted her at the door, croaking out, "Ahneen, Ahneen!" Andeg stole and hoarded bits of bright cloth and shiny metal shards, he wasn't a human, he was still a crow, and she couldn't change that.

She couldn't change that any more than she could change being who she was, Omakayas, who heard the voices of plants and went dizzy. Omakayas, who talked to bear boys and received their medicine. Omakayas, who missed her one brother and resented the other, who envied her sister. Omakayas, the Little Frog, whose first step was a hop. Omakayas who'd lost her friend.

She thought she had cried all the tears she had to cry, but still found there were some left for Andeg. Omakayas put her hands to her face and sobbed until she felt just enough better. After all, she thought, Andeg was wild and she had always known it, always expected this moment to come. The thought comforted her. There in the yard, looking

into the heart of the fire, Omakayas suddenly experienced a strange awareness. Like Andeg, she couldn't help being just who she was. Omakayas, in this skin, in this place, in this time. Nobody else. No matter what, she wouldn't ever be another person or really know the thoughts of anyone but her own self. She closed her eyes. For a moment, she felt as though she were falling from a great height, plunging through air and blackness, tumbling down with nothing to catch at. With a start of fear, she opened her eyes and felt herself gently touch down right where she was, in her own body, here.

45. What does Omakayas learn from her friendship with Andeg? Use information from the story to support your answer.

## Scoring Guide

| Score | Description |
|---|---|
| **4** | Response provides a thorough explanation of what Omakayas learns from her friendship with Andeg. Explanation includes specific, relevant details from the story. |
| **3** | Response provides an explanation of what Omakayas learns from her friendship with Andeg. Explanation includes supporting information from the story but lacks specificity, relevance, and/or development. |
| **2** | Response provides a partial explanation of what Omakayas learns from her friendship with Andeg. Explanation includes limited details from the story and/or is partially correct. |
| **1** | Response makes a vague or minimal statement of what Omakayas learns from her friendship with Andeg. |
| **0** | Response is incorrect or contains some correct work that is irrelevant to the skill or concept being measured. |
| **Blank** | No response. |

**Scoring Notes**

Students may discuss how Omakayas learns that she has to accept herself and who she is. They may discuss how she learns that she cannot hold onto her friendship with Andeg by denying him his right to be free, and to be what he is.

- Andeg seems to love her, but she cannot provide the things he needs because she is a human, not a bird: She learns that he needs things she cannot provide.
- Andeg needs to be with other birds: Even though she will miss his friendship, she learns to put his needs ahead of her own.
- She knows it would be wrong to clip Andeg's wings, even though she is sad to lose him: She learns that she cannot hold onto their friendship by taking away Andeg's right to be free.
- She learns that she can take comfort in the knowledge that she always knew the time would come when Andeg would leave because he is wild and belongs in the wild.
- She learns about herself—that she can no more change who she is than Andeg can change the fact that he is a bird.

**Score Point 4**

Omakayas learns that we must accept yourself for who you are from her friendship with Andeg. In the story, at first Omakayas is very attached to Andeg, and thinks he is very happy. For example when the author states, "Andeg greeted Omakayas with fluttering wings... she knew it was a sign of affection." Near the middle of the story, Omakayas relizes that she cannot give Andeg what he needs, when she sais "You want to make a nest with me don't you?". At the very end of the story, she relizes that she just needs to be who she is and nothing more, "Opend her eyes and felt herself gently touch down right where she was, in her own body, here." Omakayas got allot out of her friendship with Andeg.

**Score Point 3**

Omahayas learns that Andeg may have been a good friend and she may have loved him a lot, but Andeg was not human and she learned to accept that she wasn't a crow, but she was human. She learned that sometimes loving someone means letting them go if that's what's best for them. The biggest lesson she learned was to accept who she truly was and love who she was.

**Score Point 2**

Omakayas learns that she needs to exept herself for who she is. She learns that great friends are hard to find, difficult to leave, and hard to forget but you still need to live life to it's fullest. Even though she couldn't give Andeg what he needed, she still gave him an unforgetable friendship.

**Score Point 1**

that she couldn't help being who she was.

**Score Point 0**

Don't trust birds.

# Acknowledgments

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"Omakayas Says Good-bye to Andeg" from *The Birchbark House* by Louise Erdrich. Published by Hyperion Books for Children. Copyright © 1999 by Louise Erdrich.