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

Criterion-Referenced Test (CRT)

COMMON CONSTRUCTED-RESPONSE ITEM RELEASE
READING, GRADE 8

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OPI

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Reading
Session 3

Read this passage about a boy who learns to sing bird songs. Then answer the questions that follow.

Bird Songs

Jim Heynen

While others heard the train whistle, he heard the musical clicking of the wheels on rail joints. He heard the path of silence left behind the train. He heard the weeds lean from the whoosh of air. He heard the ripple in a stream. He heard little symphonies in the ice-bound twigs rattling in the wind. But mostly what the boy heard were the songs of birds. While others heard airplanes overhead, he heard the meadowlark far in the distance. When others heard traffic on the gravel road, he heard pigeons in the barn eaves. The good sounds of birds were a warm bath to him, calming him down and making him a good listener when grown-ups told him what to do.

Because bird songs were his favorite sounds, he spent hours listening to them. Alone and silent behind bushes or fences, he was their best audience. But the day came when listening was not enough, and he started answering the birds as best he could. He started at night when only the owl was singing. Hooting like an owl was as easy as playing a penny whistle, and the owl responded by answering back. During the day, he went on to the more difficult songs of other birds, and what he found with the owl was true with the other birds too: when he answered them, they answered back. To him, their answers sounded like applause.

Not all bird songs were easy, he soon learned, but he practiced long and hard. Everyone told him he was good at bird songs. The birds seemed to agree. They were a kind audience, sometimes fluttering by to get a closer look at him when he was finished with his little concerts.

Encouraged by his success, he expanded his repertoire. Crow sounds he mastered in a day, though his good ears had some trouble telling him that either the crow's or his own cawing fell in the good sound category. In less than a week he had the blue jay down. The staccato chirps of the sparrow came easy for him, as did the predictable repetitions of the chickadee. But then came the cheek- and lip-tightening demands of the goldfinch and the air-swallowing gurgle of the pigeon. He went from bird to bird, changing the instruments of his fingers and lips and tongue to meet the challenge of each new audience. Sometimes a bird with high standards showed some signs of impatience with his imperfect renditions and, like a fussy choir director, repeated the song over and over in an effort to help him get it right.

Success at bird calling led to fantasies of larger audiences. Singing back to large flocks of ducks and geese seemed foolish, since he wanted to sound like a musician, not a hunter. He sought out huge flocks of starlings, but starlings lacked either patience or good taste and would flee at even his best imitations. He studied bird books and imagined traveling to exotic islands that were covered with colorful birds whose songs must be as varied and challenging as their colors. He was happy in his fantasies, but he had to live with the audience he could find on the farm.

He started roaming the fields, hoping to find every possible candidate: pheasants, quail, and what he could only think of as the little brown birds that fluttered in roadside ditches. Then, just when he felt

he had exhausted both audience and repertoire, he had one terrible experience that changed everything. He had moved well beyond owl and crow, beyond sparrow and pigeon, beyond barn swallow and chickadee, and even beyond the complex riffs of the meadowlark and brown thrasher. But he made a mistake of wandering into the dark marshes of the red-winged blackbirds. He practiced for an entire mosquito-ridden afternoon and thought he had almost made an audience of the one he was imitating, when, with no warning, he was attacked from behind by a red-winged blackbird who lit into his hair like an eagle into a nest of field mice. It was his first lesson in performing to an audience that did not like what it heard. Perhaps bored. Perhaps irritable. Perhaps threatened that he was upstaging them. He didn't stop making bird songs, but he could never put his fingers to his lips again without remembering that moment, no matter what his own good ears were telling him.

45. Explain how the boy is able to improve his bird songs over time. Use information from the passage to support your answer.

Scoring Guide

Score	Description
4	Response provides a thorough explanation of how the boy was able to improve the quality of his bird songs over time. Explanation includes specific, relevant details from the passage.
3	Response provides an explanation of how the boy was able to improve the quality of his bird songs over time. Explanation includes supporting information from the passage, but lacks specificity, relevance, and/or development.
2	Response provides a partial explanation of how the boy was able to improve the quality of his bird calls over time. Explanation includes limited details from the passage and/or is partially correct.
1	Response makes a vague or minimal statement of how the boy was able to improve the quality of his bird calls over time.
0	Response is incorrect or contains some correct work that is irrelevant to the skill or concept being measured.
Blank	No response.

Scoring Notes

Some of the ways the boy was able to improve the quality of his bird calls over time:

- He spent hours listening to the songs of the birds, and eventually started to "answer" the birds.
- He practiced "long and hard" until he had the songs right.
- He began to attempt to imitate the songs of different birds, experimenting with different ways to make the sounds. He used his fingers and lips and tongue as instruments.
- He used the "feedback" he received from the birds to figure out if he had the songs right.
- He began to search for more and more birds to imitate, roaming the fields for more candidates.

Score Point 4

Examples from the story on how the boy was able to improve his birds songs over time, were he listened to them carefuly, he practiced, and he didn't give up even when terrible things have happened. In the story, since birds sounds were his favorite sounds, he spent hours listening to them. Then came the day when he started answering the birds as best as he could, knowing what they sounded like from listening. First, he started with easier birds, like the owl. That was easy for him so he went on to more difficult ones. These birds weren't all so easy he soon learned, but he had to practice long and hard. He studied books about birds and dreamed of going to exotic islands, where there were a wide stand of different birds. Not all birds were kind. One day he was attacked by a red-winged black bird, who must of felt threatened. But that didn't stop the boy, he continued to make bird songs without giving up what he loves.

Score Point 3

The boy improves his bird songs by practicing and being taught how. The boy practiced everyday to the birds he is imitating. He was practicing all day trying to learn more about how to move your lips to make the sound. Other birds would also teach him how to sing different sounds. Birds would act like directors and repeat their song over and over again. He worked long and hard to learn all of the bird sounds with the help of practice and other birds.

Score Point 2

The boy is able to improve his bird songs over time by listening long and hard to the bird, and then practicing until he got it exactly right. He learned how to use his lips and tongue to create the different types of sound he needed for the bird calls.

Score Point 1

The boy in this story is able to improve his bird songs over time by allways practcing and then he learns more.

Score Point 0

The more he thinks about it the better it will get.

Acknowledgments

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