



New Meridian

MasteryGuide Assessment

Writing

Grades 3–4, Practice Performance Task

Today you will read the passage “Moonlight” and the passage “The World of Caves.” Then you will write a response to what you have read in both passages.

Read the passage “Moonlight.”

Moonlight
by Gail Skroback Hennessey

- 1 Some nights, the moonlight shines through your bedroom window. It might make it hard to fall asleep. You may roll around in bed and finally get up to close the window shades. Most of the time, though, you don’t think much about moonlight.
- 2 What is this nighttime beam of light that makes the world look so different? Moonlight comes to us from the moon, but it doesn’t start there. It is sunlight bouncing off the moon’s rocky, dusty surface. The moon looks different depending on where it is in the sky. Sometimes you see more of it, and sometimes you see less. Even when the moon is full and round, its light is about 400,000 times fainter than sunlight.
- 3 Look outside your window when there’s moonlight. You might see a busy animal poking around. Animals notice moonlight just like we do. Some birds and moths use the light to help them travel. Owls like full moons because the light helps them hunt. Other animals, like leopards and ocelots, cannot move as quietly as owls do. The light makes it harder for them to hunt. In moonlight, their prey can see them more easily.
- 4 People use moonlight too. If you have gone camping during a full moon, you may have noticed it is easier to walk around. You can see trees and tents without a flashlight. Farmers use the brightness of a full moon to help them harvest their fall crops. That’s where the term “harvest moon” comes from.
- 5 But if you went out in the moonlight to read your favorite magazine, you’d have trouble. At first you might see a few words, but soon it would be too hard. That’s because eyes have parts that work in different ways. Your eyes have two kinds of tiny cells to see called rods and cones. Cones help you to see color and small details. They need bright light to work. Rods help you see in the dark, but they only see shapes and shades, not details. Moonlight is too dim for cones, and rods can’t see letters clearly.
- 6 Some people like the soft, gray shine of moonlight in their gardens. They plant “moon gardens” that can be enjoyed at night. These gardens often have white flowers, which reflect the most light and look silvery in the moonlight. People also plant types of flowers that open at night. Many of these have powerful scents.
- 7 Is the moonlight shining in your window tonight? Go to the window and take in this beautiful wonder of nature!

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Read the passage “The World of Caves.” Then write your response.

The World of Caves

- 1 When you step out of the sun and into a cave, it feels like another world. A cave is a hollow space in the ground. Some caves are small, about the size of your bedroom. Others are huge. Mammoth Cave in Kentucky is the largest cave system in the world. It is more than 400 miles long!

Cave Formation

- 2 Caves are found all over the world. They can be formed on mountains, below plains, on the coast, or under the sea. Most caves are made by erosion, which means that rocks are slowly wearing away.
- 3 Water can make caves. Waves crash against cliffs and carve out openings. Wind can also help, by blowing sand against rocks until holes form. The most common kind of cave forms in areas called karst. Karst is land made of rocks, like limestone, that can slowly break apart in water. Over a long time, acidic water eats away the rock and leaves caves behind.
- 4 Think of it like this. Imagine a giant sugar cube the size of your town, buried deep underground. A creek makes a small hole in the ground, and water drips down to the sugar cube. The water slowly eats away at the sugar, leaving holes and tunnels. Caves form in limestone in the same way, but it takes more than 100,000 years for them to become large enough for people to walk in.

Types of Caves

- 5 Most caves are made when soft rock slowly breaks down in water. Here are three types of caves that are formed in other ways:

Eolian (ee-OH-lee-un) Caves: Created by the wind

Eolian caves are also called wind caves.
Wind wears away soft parts of rock, like sandstone cliffs.
Wind can make chambers, or spaces, of different sizes.

Volcanic (vol-KAN-ik) Caves: Created by lava and gas

Lava can cool and make tunnels called lava tubes.
Blister caves form when bubbles in lava harden into small caves.
Flowing lava can cool and leave spaces that become caves.
Gases from lava can also make caves.

Glacier (GLAY-shur) Caves: Created by freezing and melting

Glacier caves are a kind of ice cave.
Glacier caves form where ice meets the ground.
Water flows down through cracks in the ice.
The water melts the ice and makes the cracks bigger.
Some cracks grow into long tunnels.

Glossary

Volcano—a mountain that blows out gas, ash, and lava

Lava—hot, melted rock

Writing Prompt for Grades 3–4

You have read the passages “Moonlight” and “The World of Caves.” Both passages are about interesting parts of nature.

Write a response explaining how moonlight and caves are alike and different.

Your response should

- Introduce the topic.
- Explain how moonlight and caves are alike.
- Explain how moonlight and caves are different.
- Group ideas together.
- Use correct capitalization and punctuation.
- Provide a conclusion.

Write your response here and support it with details from **both** passages.

Grade 3 Student Exemplar Response (8/8 points):

*Main idea
is clearly
stated.*

Moonlight and caves are alike in some ways, but they are mostly different. Moonlight comes from the sun shining on the moon. It makes the night brighter and can change how animals and people act. For example, owls can hunt better in moonlight. Some animals do not. People like to look at the moon and plant flowers that look silver. Moonlight comes from the sky, but caves are usually under the ground. Caves form when water and wind wear away rocks. They make big spaces that people can go inside, like Mammoth Cave. Both moonlight and caves are part of nature, but moonlight changes what animals and people do at night. Caves make spaces that people can walk in.

*Ideas are
grouped
logically. Explains
moonlight first.*

*Provides
detail from
text 1.*

*Ideas are
grouped logically.
Makes a
comparison and
then elaborates
on caves.*

*Provides
detail from
text 2.*

*Has a conclusion
that is reasonable
and connected to
the ideas developed
in the paragraph.*

Note:

While grade 3 students will most likely write their response into one paragraph, grade 4 students should add more sentences with more detail and organize them into multiple paragraphs.