



New Meridian

MasteryGuide Assessment

Writing

Grades 5–8, 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 article “Moonlight.”

Moonlight
by Gail Skroback Hennessey

- 1 Some nights, moonlight shines through your bedroom window. It might keep you from falling asleep, make you toss and turn, and finally, force you to get up to close your window shades. Otherwise, you probably 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 reflected from the Moon's dusty and rocky surface. Depending on the lunar phase (the positions of the Moon and the Sun in the sky), the Moon may appear bigger or smaller. Even when the Moon is full, however, moonlight is about 400,000 times fainter than sunlight.
- 3 Look outside your window when there's moonlight. You might see an animal poking around, busy with its nighttime activities. Animals notice the difference between moonlit and dark nights just as we do. Migrating birds and moths use moonlight to help find their way. Owls like a full moon to help them hunt. But other animals, such as ocelots and leopards that can't move around as silently as an owl does, avoid moonlight. Beams of moonlight help their prey to see them coming.
- 4 Humans use moonlight, too. If you've gone camping when there's a full moon, you may have noticed that it is easy to pick your way between tents and through the trees by moonlight. 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. Although you might be able to make out a few words at first, you couldn't keep it up. That's because your eyes function differently depending on how much light is available. Your eyes contain two kinds of light-sensitive cells, called rods and cones, that enable you to see. Cones help you to see color, fine lines, and details. They need bright light to work. Rods work best in the dark, picking up shapes and shades without details or colors. You can't see printed words in the moonlight because the light is too faint for your cones to work, and your rods don't see enough detail to make out the type on the page.

- 6 Some people like the grayish, hazy look that moonlight casts upon a garden, so they plant “moon gardens” designed to be enjoyed at night. Plants with white blossoms, which reflect the most light and appear silvery in the moonlight, are specially featured in such gardens. Moon gardeners also plant types of flowers that open at night, many of which have powerful scents.
- 7 Moonlight shining in tonight? Go to the window and take in this beautiful wonder of nature!
- “Moonlight” by Gail Skroback Hennessey from ASK, October 2007. Copyright © 2007 by Cricket Media, Inc. Reproduced with permission. All Cricket Media material is copyrighted by Cricket Media, Inc. and/or various authors and illustrators.

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

The World of Caves

- 1 Step out of the sun and into a cave, and you step into another world. A cave is a hollowed-out area in the earth. It can be small—the size of your bedroom—or it can be hundreds of miles long. Mammoth Cave in Kentucky is the world’s largest cave system, spanning more than 400 miles.

Cave Formation

- 2 Caves can be found everywhere. They can be formed on mountains, below plains, on the coast, or under the sea. Wherever they are, most caves are formed by the same thing: erosion.
- 3 Water flowing along a canyon can form a cave by the waves pounding against a cliff. The wind blowing sand against a rock wall can also form a cave. However, the most common type of erosion occurs in areas known as karst. Karst is land formed by the erosion of certain kinds of rock. Limestone is one example, as it dissolves easily in acidic water. The water eats away the rock and leaves caves behind.
- 4 Think of it like this: Imagine a giant cube of sugar the size of your county. It is buried in bedrock, a thousand feet under the ground. Now imagine that a creek wears a spot in the bedrock, and water can drip underground down to the sugar cube. The water would dissolve the sugar. As it did, it would make tunnels and caves all through the sugar. Something similar happens with karst, but the dissolving process takes much more time than it would with a sugar cube. A cave large enough for a human takes more than 100,000 years to form.

Types of Caves

- 5 While many caves are formed when soft rock breaks down or dissolves in water, three types of caves form in other ways:

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

Eolian caves are also called wind caves.
Wind erodes weak areas of rock, such as cliffs made of sandstone.
The wind can create chambers, or spaces, of various 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 forms cave-like structures.
The effects of volcanic gases also create types of caves.

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

Glacier caves are a kind of ice cave.
Glacier caves form near glaciers between ice and bedrock.
Water drains down through cracks in glacier ice.
Cracks in the glacier grow in size as water melts the ice.
Cracks may turn into long tunnels.

Writing Prompt for Grades 5–8

You have read the passages “Moonlight” and “The World of Caves.” In both passages, the authors explain nature with details, examples, and explanations.

Write a response comparing how the authors present information.

Your response should

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

Write your response here and support your ideas with evidence from **both** passages.

Grade 7 Exemplar Response (8/8 points)

I read the passages about moonlight and caves. There are both similarities and differences in how the authors gave information.

Response clearly introduces the topic (Organization) and addresses the task (Purpose).

A logical structure is created with a paragraph on similarities, a paragraph on differences, and a conclusion.

The two passages are alike because they both explain where something in nature comes from and then give examples to help you understand it. In Moonlight, the author explains that moonlight is actually sunlight bouncing off the moon. In The World of Caves, the author explains that caves are big empty spaces in the ground that usually form from erosion. Both authors also use examples that make the ideas easier to picture.

It uses text-based support: owls hunting, sugar cube example, moon gardens, graphic organizer of cave types, "gray, hazy look" and "silvery."

It explains similarities with reasoning: how both use examples.

Effective transitions are used: both, even though, but, another difference, in conclusion.

For example, Moonlight talks about owls hunting in the moonlight, while The World of Caves uses a sugar cube to show how rock slowly dissolves to make caves.

Even though they are similar, the passages are also different. The passage about moonlight shows how people and animals use the moon's light in real life, like farmers harvesting crops or people planting "moon gardens." But the passage about caves does not tell how people use caves. It is more about science. It explains the steps of how caves form and even uses a chart to list facts about different kinds of caves, like wind caves, volcanic caves, and glacier caves. Another difference is that the passage about moonlight has more description about how light changes what we see at night. The author writes that moonlight has a "gray, hazy look" and the moon gardens look "silvery." But there is not very much description about caves. I can imagine how the cave forms, but it's hard to picture what it's like inside. Instead, the author of The World of Caves explains how land can change over thousands of years.

It explains difference with reasoning: connects scientific approach with text features and explanations.

An explanation of the differences and how the description affects experience is provided.

In conclusion, both passages use details and examples to teach about nature, but they do it in different ways.

The sentence ties back to the central idea and summarizes the comparison.

The conclusion demonstrates understanding of both passages and does more than just summarizing.

The passage about moonlight makes the information connect to everyday life, while the passage about caves focuses on giving more facts about science and explaining how caves form. Both authors help the reader learn something about nature, but they have different ways of doing it.