

Grade 7 Reading Achievement Test - March 2006
Annotated Item 33

Standard and Benchmark Assessed:

Standard: Reading Applications: Informational, Technical and Persuasive Text

Benchmark: E. Explain the treatment, scope and organization of ideas from different texts to draw conclusions about a topic.

Multiple-Choice Question:

33. The information in this passage would be most useful for a research report on which topic?
- A. notable music reviews of the 1700s
 - B. popular musical instruments of the 1700s
 - C. European kings and queens of the 1700s
 - D. famous European composers of the 1700s

Commentary:

This multiple-choice question asks students to explain how the text of a work of non-fiction may relate to other texts on a similar topic. Response D is correct because the text is devoted entirely to the early musical life of one of Europe's most gifted and famous composers. Response A is incorrect. While this passage may function like a musical review, what makes it notable are Mozart's special abilities, not the printed reviews about them. Response B is incorrect. While the text mentions two musical instruments (harpsichord and violin), it offers no information about them that explains their use or popularity. Response C is incorrect because the brief reference in the text to kings and queens of Europe offers no information about them.

Performance Data:

The percent of public school students selecting answer choice D for question 33 on the March 2006 Grade 7 Reading Achievement Test was 71%.

Keywords: ideas from different texts, informational text, explain

Passage:

A Child Prodigy
Cliff Eisen

There were child prodigies before Mozart and child prodigies after him—but few, if any, of them made the impact young Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart made. When he was four, he started to learn short harpsichord pieces; at five, he began to compose music. In fact, Mozart was so bright that, in 1762, his father, Leopold, took him to Munich and then to Vienna, where he gave concerts at the imperial courts. Both trips were a success and gave Leopold the idea to undertake a European-wide tour. In June 1763, Mozart, his father, mother, and sister Maria Anna (better known as Nannerl) set out traveling through Germany, France, and the Netherlands, before reaching England, then back through France, Switzerland, and Bavaria. More than three years passed before their carriage again entered the gates of their native Salzburg, Austria.

It was this extended concert tour that made Mozart's name. At first, he played only works by other composers. But before long he began performing his own works as well. By the time the

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family reached Paris in 1764, Mozart was ready to publish his first opus (work), a set of sonatas for violin and harpsichord. He composed his first symphony in London later that year and his first opera in Vienna in 1768.

Nannerl was a prodigy as well. A fine harpsichordist, she could hold her own with her brother, at least technically. What distinguished Mozart from all other musicians, however, was his extraordinary musical talent, his natural understanding of what music was about, and his capacity to absorb musical styles and ideas and make them his own. His earliest compositions may fall into the traditional categories, such as sonatas or symphonies, but the style was entirely his own.

Whatever Mozart did seemed to enchant kings and queens, music impresarios (managers and conductors), and the general public all across Europe. He was the “headline news” of the time. When he played in Venice, Italy, in 1771, the event was noted by newspapers as far away as Hamburg, Germany. Other prodigies labored to make local reputations—only Mozart was crowned universally.

Numerous reports documented both the interest Mozart aroused and his astonishing accomplishments. He had barely turned eight when the first of several articles about him appeared in a Paris newspaper:

Mr. [Leopold] Mozart, music director for the Prince-Archbishop of Salzburg, has been in this capital for several months with two children who cut the most delightful figure. His daughter, aged 11, plays the harpsichord in a distinguished manner; no one could have a more precise and brilliant execution. His son, who this month reached his 8th year, is a true prodigy.