

8th grade Literature Diagnostic Test

NAME: _____

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I. **DIRECTIONS:** Read each passage. Then answer each question by choosing the best answer. (15 pts.)

Let's Have a Chess Club

Good morning. I am happy to have the chance to talk to you during our class meeting today. First, I want to ask you two questions. If you could get better scores on math exams simply by learning to play a game, would you be interested? And if I told you that playing a particular game would give a boost to your reading skills, would you want to learn the game? Sure you would. The game I am talking about is chess.

Someone may have told you that chess is a game for "brainy" people. Wrong! I read that some kids learn to play when they are four years old. The game is not difficult to learn. There is a second grader in my neighborhood who plays chess with his big brother. If a second grader can learn to play, I know we sixth graders can learn to play. I want to tell you more about the game, but first I want to talk about starting a chess club here at school.

- 3 I said that you could get better scores in math by learning chess. When I was getting facts together to talk to you about starting a club, I did a lot of research on the library computer. I found many, many pages on the Internet telling how this game is so much more than just a way to pass the time. Chess requires problem solving. Educators and researchers have done studies with students just like you and me. These studies prove that chess teaches how to think ahead, how to plan, and how to be systematic in an approach to problem solving. If we know better how to use these skills, it figures we can use these same techniques to solve math problems. I read that one junior high school teacher in California said that he saw improvement in his math students' scores after they had been playing chess for only three weeks. Is there any one of us who couldn't improve his or her math skills?

Memorizing worked for us when we learned the multiplication **tables**, but chess is not about memorizing. Sometimes trying to memorize too many facts or formulas gets in the way of figuring out things for ourselves. Playing chess is a mental workout. It is thinking and analyzing. When we read, we think about and analyze the material and hope that we comprehend it. Playing chess also will help us learn to concentrate, something we must do when we read.

There is no cost for chess lessons. There is no special equipment to buy or uniform required. The only thing you have to bring to the club meetings is a determination to learn how to play. Learning how to shoot baskets is great exercise, but unless you are another David Robinson, it will not be that much help in your future life. Strategy and reasoning are tools we can use for a lifetime. Chess will help us develop these skills.

Chess is not the least bit dull or boring. Maybe you have heard of Garry Kasparov. In 2004, he was rated the highest-scoring chess player in the world. In 1999, he played a game of chess on the Internet. It was called the Kasparov vs. The World online chess match. Kasparov faced a team of players from seventy-five different countries. He made the first move on June 21, 1999. Then the opposition had twenty-four hours to make its move. Four chess experts suggested certain moves and posted them online to world team players. The world team then voted for the move they thought best. The move that received the most votes was the move the experts used against Kasparov. This game was over in October 1999. Garry Kasparov made move number 62 and won the game. It is said that over 3 million people logged on to watch this thrilling match. I would not call that a boring game.

Are you excited yet about learning to play chess? I hope so, because I am. Thank you for giving me this time to talk about organizing a club that I am sure you will enjoy and that will help all of us. Vote yes for chess!

- ____ 1. What is the definition of the base word in **systematic**?
- A. An organized method.
 - B. Random guessing.
 - C. Problem solving.
 - D. A memorization approach.
- ____ 2. In paragraph 3, what does the narrator mean by, "Is there any one of us who couldn't improve his or her math skills?"
- A. No one needs to practice math.
 - B. Everyone could use practice with math.
 - C. Math skills are easy to learn.
 - D. Only students need to practice math skills.
- ____ 3. In the phrase "Memorizing worked for us when we learned the multiplication **tables** . . ." what is the meaning of the word **tables**?
- A. Furniture designed for serving food.
 - B. Lists arranged in a particular order.
 - C. Broad, flat, elevated area of land.
 - D. To put off for a period of time.
- ____ 4. What is the correct analogy?
- A. Chess is to thinking as multiplication is to memorizing.
 - B. Chess is to reading as multiplication is to memorizing.
 - C. Chess is to computing as multiplication is to memorizing.
 - D. Chess is to playing as multiplication is to memorizing.
- ____ 5. Approximately how long did the Kasparov vs. The World chess match last?
- A. 24 hours.
 - B. 62 days.
 - C. 4 months.
 - D. 5 years.
- ____ 6. What is the main idea of *Let's Have a Chess Club*?
- A. Garry Kasparov is rated one of the highest-scoring chess players in the world.
 - B. Chess raises math scores because it helps to teach problem solving.
 - C. It is not difficult to learn chess, and it can be played online.
 - D. Because chess teaches a variety of skills, it would be beneficial to have a chess club.
- ____ 7. For what purpose might the author have written the passage?
- A. As an editorial for a newspaper.
 - B. As an essay for English class.
 - C. As a speech to classmates.
 - D. As a letter to the principal.

8. Who might find the information in the passage most useful?
- A. An opponent who explains why Kasparov is a good chess player.
 - B. A child who wants his parent to buy a new computer game.
 - C. A student who is asking a teacher to allow chess in the classroom.
 - D. An athlete who is showing the differences between chess and basketball.

There's Still Gold in Those Hills

America experienced a "gold rush" in the middle of the nineteenth century. Gold was discovered in the California mountains in 1848, and thousands of people hurried there. These gold seekers were called *forty-niners*, named after the year 1849. Gold rushes also took place in the present-day states of Colorado, Nevada, Montana, Arizona, New Mexico, Idaho, Oregon, and Alaska.

Now 150 years later, the mining operations have long since been abandoned. But that doesn't mean that all the precious metal is gone. In fact, there's still gold in those hills. With a little luck and a bit of work, people can find it. They can pan for gold like the forty-niners did so many years ago.

Where to Look

Although gold has been found in all fifty states, the best places to search are the states in the western third of the country. Because the metal gets washed out of the mountains by water, a gold seeker looks for a stream. A smaller creek is usually the best place to find gold. A stream that fills with rain water from time to time will have seen a good deal of erosion. It is in these types of streams that gold travels most easily.

With much luck, gold can be found in nugget form, but most often it appears as small flakes. Gold is very heavy and sinks. A miner might look for a little waterfall in the stream. Gold may be below it. Also, gold gets trapped deep down along the banks where the creek bends. It might also be found immediately downstream of a boulder or rock formation in the stream.

Getting to the Gold

A shovel is needed to dig up the rocks in the stream where there might be gold. Also needed is a pan that looks like a pie plate. Gold-panning pans are still sold at sports stores and hobby shops. Knowing how to care for the pan is important.

Any grease or oil in the pan needs to be removed. If there's anything slick in the pan, the flakes of gold will be washed out. The oil from a person's fingers is enough to make this happen. Heating the pan on a fire or the stove is the suggested way to get rid of the oil. Now it is ready to be used for panning!

A gold seeker digs up a shovelful of gravel from the stream and puts it into the pan. He then dips the pan into the stream and allows the water to soak the material. He shakes the pan a few times to let the heavier bits settle to the bottom. Then the pan is tipped slightly so that the grass, leaves, pine needles, and any other material float out. The gold will begin sinking to the bottom of the pan.

The panner will want to get rid of the remaining rocks and gravel, but he doesn't want to use his hands. The oil left behind by fingers will wash the gold out. Instead of using a stick, he scrapes out the top inch or so of gravel.

More Water

Unless a gold seeker spies a nugget in the pan (what luck!), he needs to add more water to the mix. He swishes the material in the pan in a slow, circular movement. The pan is tilted slightly so that the lightweight sand slips over the edge. Water is added as needed, and the process is repeated.

Soon only a small part of the pan will be covered with concentrated material of what appears to be black sand. The swishing motion will spread the sand out in a feather pattern. The bits of material at the tail end of the feather are called **tailings**. This is where the gold bits can be found.

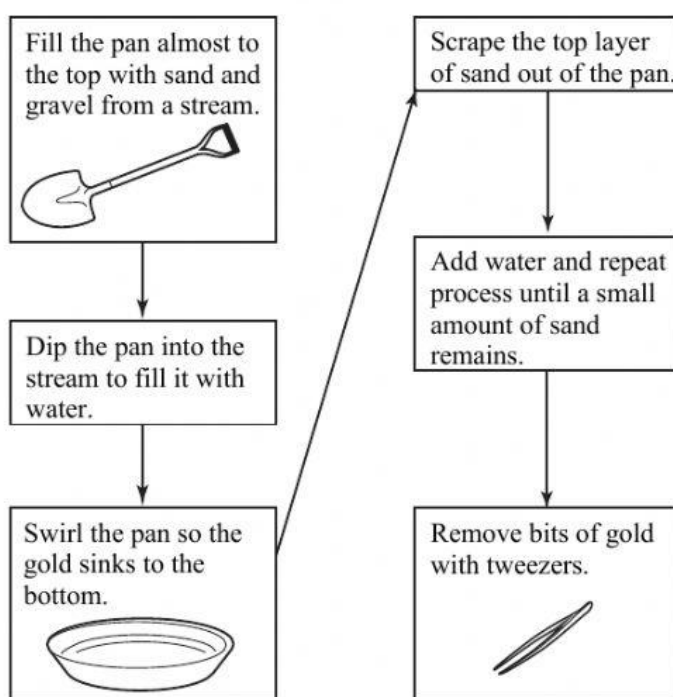
Is It Gold?

The black sand is called magnetite because of its magnetic properties. By using a magnet, the sand can be picked up and moved out of the pan. What gold panners hope to see left behind are flakes of gold. These can be tiny specks or larger flakes the size and shape of breakfast cereal. But people can be tricked by the matter that twinkles like a crystal. This is probably "**fool's gold**." The gold they want is yellow with a sheen to it.

Tweezers are used to pick out the gold flakes and place them in a container. Now the gold miner is ready to dig up another shovelful of gravel and begin the process all over again.

What if he didn't find any gold? He shouldn't give up. Even the best miners didn't find precious metal in every pan. But like the miners of today who enjoy panning, the forty-niners knew that there was still gold in those hills.

How to Pan for Gold



9. What message is suggested by the title of the passage?
- A. Gold is found in small piles.
 - B. Most hills are gold in color.
 - C. Only large nuggets of gold can be found.
 - D. Gold remains in some mountains.

- ____ 10. Why was the experience referred to as the Gold Rush?
- A. People rushed to stake a claim for the gold.
 - B. It was named after the person who first discovered gold.
 - C. Water rushed over the gold during panning.
 - D. Rushing water carried gold over waterfalls.
- ____ 11. According to the passage, where is the best place to find gold?
- A. Larger streams.
 - B. Lakes.
 - C. Smaller streams.
 - D. Ponds.
- ____ 12. Which characteristic of gold allows it to be found in the panning process?
- A. It is soft.
 - B. It is magnetic.
 - C. It is light.
 - D. It is heavy.
- ____ 13. What does the word **tailings** mean as used in the passage?
- A. Following another car too closely.
 - B. Bits of material found in the bottom of a pan.
 - C. The longest feather on a bird's tail.
 - D. What is found in the bottom of the birdcage.
- ____ 14. What is **fool's gold**?
- A. Gold discovered by special miners.
 - B. Foolish people who pan for gold.
 - C. Bits that twinkle like a crystal but are not gold.
 - D. Gravel and gold mixed together.
- ____ 15. What is the last step in the panning process?
- A. Tip the pan slightly to float out grass and leaves.
 - B. Remove gold flakes with tweezers.
 - C. Scoop a shovel full of gravel into the pan.
 - D. Use a magnet to remove magnetite.