

Grade 7 English Language Arts

DIRECTIONS

This session contains two reading selections with twelve multiple-choice questions and one open-response question.

Read this article about how the marine life in the coastal bays of Virginia is being threatened. Then answer the questions that follow.

SAVE THE SEAGRASS, SAVE THE SEAHORSE

by Nicole Groeneweg

1 In late May, a boat carrying scientists and volunteers skims across the water of Virginia's coastal bays. The boaters, including Bo Lusk, a scientist with The Nature Conservancy, are there to harvest seeds from the eelgrass growing inches below the water's surface. Eelgrass and other seagrasses around the world are quickly disappearing. Working closely with the Virginia Institute of Marine Science (VIMS) and local volunteers, Lusk is in a race to restore the eelgrass habitat for an array of marine animals, including the lined seahorse (*Hippocampus erectus*).

2 The only seahorse living off the Virginia shore, the lined seahorse depends on eelgrass for survival. (The species ranges from Nova Scotia to Argentina and throughout the Gulf of Mexico.) Predators often overlook seahorses that are camouflaged by ribbons of the grass. Tails curled around the blades anchor these striped fish to the safety of the eelgrass jungle. Lined seahorse fathers release their eggs in these beds.

3 Among the many other saltwater animals that thrive in eelgrass meadows are brine shrimp. The shrimp are abundant and provide nutrition for growing seahorses. By changing colors to match their eelgrass habitat,



seahorses can ambush their unsuspecting prey. Then the tiny crustaceans (krah-STAY-shuns) are slurped up through the seahorses' strawlike snouts. Blue crabs, scallops, and juvenile fish also call the eelgrass meadow home. Even diving ducks and Brant geese feed on this grass. The eelgrass habitat supports many species.

4 Eelgrass grows in shallow waters where light can easily penetrate. "Because it does not have the ability to survive long periods of exposure to air," says Lusk, "eelgrass grows only in areas that are deep enough to remain below water at low tide. Eelgrass grows in beds or meadows and requires more light than most land-dwelling plants."

5 This submerged aquatic vegetation flourishes in estuaries and shallow bays around Virginia's Eastern Shore and up the Atlantic coast to New Brunswick, Canada. Unlike seaweed, it flowers and has a vascular system that transports food to all parts of the plant. *Zostera marina* is the perfect scientific name for eelgrass. *Zostera* comes from the Greek word for "belt," *zoster*, and describes its bandlike leaves. *Marina* refers to the marine nature of the plants.

6 Scientists worry as the number and size of eelgrass beds decrease. Natural disease has been a culprit* in the past. Lusk notes, “A slime mold weakened or killed most eelgrass in the North Atlantic in the early 1930s,” but the eelgrass recovered naturally. Hurricanes have wreaked havoc on eelgrass, too, muddying up water and blocking out needed sunlight. According to Lusk, warming ocean temperatures can also kill eelgrass. “Extreme summer temperatures in the bays where eelgrass grows are becoming more common,” he says. Eelgrass kills, due to high temperatures, have been recorded in the Chesapeake Bay in recent years.

7 The main reasons for the eelgrass decline are *sedimentation* (settling of suspended solid particles) and *eutrophication* (YOO-truf-i-kay-shun)—too many nutrients in the water that increase algal growth. Human activities such as housing construction and poor farming practices wash sediment and nutrients into the water. The sediment can cloud the water and reduce the amount of light the plants receive. Lusk believes people can change this trend.

8 In the past, restoring eelgrass beds involved transplanting healthy plants into dying meadows. “Our work uses seeds instead of whole plants,” says Lusk. “We have found this strategy gives us more bang for our buck in the Virginia Coast Reserve.”

9 Lusk and his volunteers collect flowering shoots from the blooming eelgrass in late spring. The shoots are held in tanks over the summer, while the seeds mature, are released from the plants, and settle to the bottom of the tanks. Then the seeds are moved to special tanks until they are ready to be planted in September and October. “We plant the seeds by broadcasting them by hand from a boat,” says Lusk, a process he calls similar to “feeding chickens.”

10 Working together, The Nature Conservancy and its partner VIMS are restoring eelgrass in hopes of preventing the loss of a crucial habitat for seahorses and other marine animals. Here’s how you can help.

- Learn as much as possible about eelgrass and other seagrass restoration projects.
- Educate others about the projects.
- Remind boaters to use care when riding over seagrass beds and dispose of their waste properly by using pump-out stations.
- Encourage your coastal neighbors to avoid using fertilizers and weed killers on lawns and gardens or to use them sparingly in the fall, when chemicals are less harmful to coastal environments.
- Plant beach grasses on shores to prevent erosion and cloudy coastal waters.

* *culprit* — a person or thing responsible for a negative action

1 In the article, the photograph is included **mainly** to show

- A. the size of the seahorse.
- B. the predators of the seahorse.
- C. the endurance of the seahorse.
- D. the fearlessness of the seahorse.

2 Based on paragraphs 2 and 3, how does the lined seahorse remain unnoticed in eelgrass?

- A. by emerging only at nighttime
- B. by staying away from other animals
- C. by creating barriers around its home
- D. by blending in with its surroundings

3 Based on paragraphs 8 and 9, what is the **main** difference between Bo Lusk's eelgrass restoration project and earlier restoration projects?

- A. His project relies on volunteers.
- B. His project requires more money.
- C. His project uses an alternate approach.
- D. His project focuses on a particular location.

4 Which of the following **best** states the main idea of the article?

- A. Human activity is harmful to seahorses in many ways.
- B. Eelgrass is a type of seagrass that grows in coastal waters.
- C. Coastal waters of Virginia are home to many saltwater animals.
- D. Efforts are being made to preserve marine habitats in Virginia.

5 In paragraph 6, which of the following phrases could **best** be used in place of “wreaked havoc on”?

- A. caused great damage to
- B. created interesting shifts in
- C. slowed the development of
- D. stimulated the adaptation of

6 Which of the following parenthetical notations is intended to help the reader pronounce a word?

- A. (VIMS)
- B. (*Hippocampus erectus*)
- C. (krah-STAY-shuns)
- D. (settling of suspended solid particles)

Question 7 is an open-response question.


- Read the question carefully.
- Explain your answer.
- Add supporting details.
- Double-check your work.

- 7 Explain why “Save the Seagrass, Save the Seahorse” is an appropriate title for the article. Support your answer with important and specific details from the article.

In 2004, Robina was one of eight Afghani girls invited to attend a youth soccer camp in America. Read this excerpt that describes how Robina incorporates her religion as well as soccer into her life in Afghanistan one year later. Then answer the questions that follow.

that i may play soccer
from *However Tall the Mountain*
by Awista Ayub

ROBINA, KABUL, SEPTEMBER 2005

1  N KABUL, on Friday morning, Robina wakes before dawn, as always. In the shadows before the sun rises, she prepares herself for *fajr*, morning prayer, as the *Azan* echoes across the city.

2 She rolls her sleeping mat and stores it in the corner, careful to avoid the sleeping bodies of her seven brothers, four sisters, and her father especially. Her mother will be awake soon.

3 Quietly, she sweeps away dust that sifted overnight from the flaking mud walls to the floor. She changes into loose pants and a long-sleeved shirt, then spreads out a small patterned prayer rug. Dabbing her hands, arms, and face with water left from the previous day, she performs *wudu*—the ritual ablution.* She smooths back her long, black hair and tucks it underneath the twist of a head scarf.

4 By now the sun has lifted into the sky. Back erect, head bowed, feet slightly apart, she faces east, toward Mecca. Palms against her chest, she begins *namaz*, prayer. She lowers herself to the ground, kneeling on the prayer rug, touching her forehead, nose, and palms to the ground. Rising and lowering herself with each *rak'a*, prayer cycle, she ends kneeling. Sitting on the backs of her feet, in silence she makes *du'a*:

5 *Insh'Allah* that everyone may enjoy peace and health.

Insh'Allah that I will be safe when I leave my house.

Insh'Allah that I may go to school.

Insh'Allah that I may play soccer.

Amin.



6 THE ROOTS OF PEACE compound is located in Karte Char, on the southwest edge of Kabul. The roads are wider and quieter there, the buildings more sparse than in Robina's neighborhood of Wasilibad.

* *ablution* — a cleansing with water

7 At her touch, the compound's large green doors swing open, and she catches the sweet smell of the secluded garden within. Then she slips inside.

8 Inside the walls, everything is quiet and peaceful, the air fresh and scented with flowers. Even though summer's warmth has cooled, grass still blankets the Roots of Peace field, a saturation of green in the parched landscape. Roses, sunflowers, and daisies are dotted around a small stone office building flanking the field. The light concrete walls rimming the entire complex are delicately carved. They rise high enough to block the noise from the street and prevent outsiders from peering in, but stop short of preventing the occasional overexuberant shot from flying over the wall.

9 It is September 2005. Robina hurries across the field and drops her bag at the base of the stone wall. She pulls off her head scarf and replaces it with a baseball cap, which she twists backward. She tugs off her sandals and slides into cleats. She pushes up the sleeves of her heavy sweatshirt and trots onto the neatly trimmed field, clapping her hands.

10 "Let's play," she calls out.



11 SHE AND HER teammates have been meeting every Friday since they returned from America a year ago—with two conspicuous absences. The two youngest girls have fallen away: Nadia and Deena, the smallest of them. No one knows precisely what happened. Did their parents pull them out? Is Deena focusing on her studies? Perhaps Nadia and her family moved?

12 It is common now in Afghanistan for people to disappear without explanation. Despite the "official" end of the war more than three years before, there is still a sense of displacement—families lose their jobs, cancel their cell phones, move away.

13 Friday is *Jummah*, the holy day in Islam. Schools close and businesses shut down, emptying the streets of the city. Families take trips to Qargha, a lake on the outskirts of Kabul, where they picnic on freshly grilled kebobs and salads, paddle boats, or swim in the lake. Some travel all the way from Kabul to Paghman, a lush district at the base of the Hindu Kush, replete with chalets, waterfalls, and rivers. Others return to their ancestral villages or spend a quiet day at home.

14 The six remaining girls choose to spend their day differently. Week after week they return to the Roots of Peace field, arriving in the morning to play for hours, until it is time for lunch—piles of glistening *palaw* and bowls of sliced watermelon served at a long folding table inside. Afterward, they rush back outside and race across the field, laughing and shouting, diving after the ball and blasting it past one another's outstretched bodies until it is time to go home.

8 In the excerpt, what do paragraphs 1–4 **mainly** suggest?

- A. Robina has a routine she follows in the morning.
- B. Robina is responsible for looking after her family.
- C. Robina hopes to move away from her family soon.
- D. Robina leaves before people are awake in the morning.

9 In paragraphs 3 and 9, Robina's transformations are symbolized by what is on her

- A. legs.
- B. head.
- C. back.
- D. hands.

10 What does the prayer in paragraph 5 **mostly** reveal about Robina?

- A. what she values
- B. what she studies
- C. what confuses her
- D. what challenges her

11 What do the descriptions in paragraphs 7 and 8 suggest?

- A. changes in the walled enclosure over time
- B. damages in the walled enclosure caused by fighting
- C. contrasts in the surroundings inside and outside the walls
- D. differences in the behavior of the girls inside and outside the walls

12 In paragraph 12, what is the **most likely** reason the author uses quotation marks around the word “official”?

- A. to refer to a document about the war’s end
- B. to question the idea that the war has ended
- C. to exaggerate the importance of the end of the war
- D. to show uncertainty about the cause of the war’s end

13 Which words **best** describe the change in Robina’s mood from the beginning to the end of the excerpt?

- A. from angry to caring
- B. from mature to childish
- C. from confident to frantic
- D. from peaceful to energetic

