

# Everett Public Schools Assessment of Student Learning

## Student Packet



### Benchmark Reading Assessment Grade 8 Grading Period 1

"The Sinking of PT 109"

"Alone"

"Best Friends"

Student: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Teacher: \_\_\_\_\_

Period: \_\_\_\_\_

## Literary Passage

Directions: Read the following selection and then answer the questions.

### The Sinking of PT 109

Based on a story by Henry Billings

- 1 The dark ominous shape appeared out of nowhere. It was about 250 yards off the starboard bow. Initially, the men of *PT 109* believed it was another deadly patrol torpedo (PT) boat. Nevertheless, it was 2:30 in the early morning on August 2, 1943. The murky night sky made visibility difficult. Within seconds, the men discovered their horrible mistake. The black shape quickly moving toward them was not another PT boat; it was a Japanese destroyer and it was storming towards them at top speed!
- 2 Lieutenant John F. Kennedy, the future president of the United States, was in command of *PT 109*. He attempted to turn his ship in order to fire his torpedoes at the enemy destroyer. He was unsuccessful. *PT 109* had turned about one-third of the way when the destroyer rammed into it, splitting it in half. Only 10 seconds had elapsed between the time Kennedy spotted the destroyer and the moment of the perilous impact.
- 3 *PT 109* was one of the many patrol torpedo boats on duty in the Solomon Islands in the Pacific Ocean during World War II. Their job was to disrupt the Japanese nighttime supply convoys known as the “Tokyo Express.” Speedy PT boats were much too diminutive and light to slug it out with enemy destroyers during the day. Instead, they had to attack at night, like mosquitoes, and then quickly dash for cover behind one of the many islands in the region. The PT boat torpedoes, Kennedy once boasted, “[could] sink any ship on the sea.” The Japanese feared PT boat attacks, calling the boats “cat-eyed devils.” But on this terrible night, the destroyer was victorious. The Japanese captain observed the PT boat first and stealthily moved in for the attack. Kennedy and his crew had no opportunity to escape.
- 4 The horrendous crash killed two of the thirteen crew members instantly. Kennedy himself barely escaped being crushed to death by the strong steel prow of the destroyer. The stern of half the PT boat sank quickly. Kennedy and five others were abandoned on the bow, which was kept afloat by a watertight hold. The sea, however, was ablaze with malicious fire caused by gasoline and flying sparks. Kennedy feared the fire would spread to the bow, causing it to explode, so he sternly ordered his men into the water. Luckily, the large inferno stayed away from the bow and slowly died down. After about 15 minutes, Kennedy and a couple of men safely returned to the floating hulk.
- 5 Kennedy then began to loudly call out the names of his missing crew members. He heard several frightened responses from the water and the valiant men with him swam out to find the scattered crewmen. Some were gasping for breath, having inhaled too many gas fumes. One had an injured leg, and another was in severe shock. But the one in the worst condition was machinist Patrick McMahon. His face, arms, legs, and feet were covered with hideous burns. Kept afloat only by his life jacket, McMahon had given up all hope. When Kennedy finally reached him, McMahon was barely conscious.
- 6 “Go on, skipper,” he murmured to Kennedy. “You go on. I’ve had it.”

- 7 Kennedy ignored McMahon's desperate plea. He bravely grabbed McMahon's life jacket and began towing him back toward what remained of the destroyed boat. It was a challenging swim because he was battling against a strong current. Also, the bow had already drifted a considerable distance from the men in the water. It took Kennedy, who was an amazingly strong swimmer, an hour to get McMahon to the bow. During the arduous swim, Kennedy swallowed much of the salty seawater mixed with gasoline; this would cause him severe stomach problems for the rest of his life.
- 8 Finally, the eleven hard fought survivors were safely back on the bow. However, they were still far from being completely safe. At any frightening moment the Japanese enemy might locate them and either kill them or take them prisoner. In addition, the bow was beginning to take on gasoline-ridden water. Kennedy was certain that in a matter of a few meager hours the woebegone boat might sink slowly to the bottom of the ominous sea. Hence, on the afternoon of August 2, the men began to swim intrepidly to a diminutive island approximately four miles away. McMahon was in dire shape; Kennedy had to desperately haul him the entire distance. The other men rigged up a float from the PT's debris and the strong swimmers in the group pushed this makeshift raft through the shadowy water with the weaker swimmers tethered to it.
- 9 That perilous night, while the others rested on the island, Kennedy heroically swam out to sea with a small lantern and a pistol. He hoped beyond hope to flag down another PT boat, which could rescue him and his men, but he was not fortunate in this endeavor.
- 10 On August 4, the men relocated to a larger nearby island closer to where PT boats patrolled. With nothing to eat except coconuts and rainwater, they were all growing weaker by the minute. Still, Kennedy again swam with McMahon in tow.
- 11 The next day, Kennedy and another man swam to a third island searching for any scraps of food. Luckily, there they discovered a box with Japanese writing on it. The box contained about 35 bags of candy and crackers. While on the island, they also spied two men in a simple canoe. It was obvious to Kennedy from their unfamiliar clothing that these men were not enemies at all—they were native islanders. Kennedy attempted to hail them, but the islanders didn't see him. Soon they paddled away.
- 12 Unknown to Kennedy, the two islanders happened to go to the island where the rest of his crew waited. Upon finding the Americans, the islanders offered their assistance. They offered the exhausted men food and even a stove for cooking.
- 13 When Kennedy returned, he purposefully carved a message in the husk of a green coconut and offered it to the islanders. They took the scripted message to a man who could radio for help. This man was a Coastwatcher, one of the many scattered throughout the South Pacific during World War II. His important occupation was to conceal himself in the dense jungle on one of the islands and report on even the slightest movement of enemy ships.

- 14 At last, on August 8, a PT boat rescued the eleven survivors of *PT 109*. The incredible story made the front page of the *New York Times*. John F. Kennedy emerged as an instant war hero. For his unparalleled bravery, the Navy awarded him the prestigious Navy & Marine Corps Medal. The citation read, in part, “For heroism in the rescue of three men following the ramming and sinking of his [PT] boat...His courage, endurance, and excellent leadership contributed to the saving of several lives.” The saga of *PT 109* would later help John F. Kennedy win the 1960 election for president.



Above is a picture of a model kit that replicates the PT 109 Kennedy and crew were on during World War II. As you can see from the picture, the boat has four 21-inch torpedo launchers and one mounted 50-caliber machine gun. The PT 109 belonged to a class of U.S. Navy vessels that were 80 feet long, made of wood, and had a maximum speed of roughly 30 mph. These patrol boats were heavily armed, extremely fast, and were used to intercept enemy ships ferrying supplies to Japanese garrisons on the Solomon Islands in the Pacific Ocean.

**Benchmark Reading Assessment**  
**Grade 8 – Grading Period 1**  
“The Sinking of PT 109”

**Fill in the bubble next to the letter of the best answer.**

1. What is the main idea in the selection? [LC01]
  - ☐ A. The press tends to exaggerate heroic rescues.
  - ☐ B. The Japanese Navy was a mighty force in World War II.
  - ☐ C. A Naval officer demonstrates bravery when rescuing his crew.
  - ☐ D. Navy battles in the Pacific Ocean during World War II were dangerous.
  
2. Based on the selection, what inference can the reader make about Kennedy during his ordeal? [LC03]
  - ☐ A. Kennedy was devastated by the loss of his men.
  - ☐ B. Kennedy was determined to warn other PT boats about the “Tokyo Express.”
  - ☐ C. Kennedy was concerned for his crew’s safety.
  - ☐ D. Kennedy was convinced this event would ensure his future presidency.
  
3. What is the meaning of the word *citation* in paragraph 14 of the selection? [LC04]
  - ☐ A. Official award
  - ☐ B. Gift certificate
  - ☐ C. Engraved trophy
  - ☐ D. Letter of reprimand
  
4. Which sentence summarizes the selection? [LC02]
  - ☐ A. During a war incident in 1943, an American boat catches on fire and unfortunately, two crewmembers die.
  - ☐ B. A Japanese boat destroys the PT 109; most of its crew eventually makes it to safety, and Lieutenant Kennedy becomes a war hero.
  - ☐ C. Survivors of the destroyed PT 109 swim to an island and eleven of them are later rescued.
  - ☐ D. After the destruction of PT 109, Kennedy emerges as an instant war hero and is given a prestigious war medal.

5. What is the purpose of the picture and caption? [LA05]

- ☐ A. They provide the reader with a clearer understanding of the swiftness of the PT 109.
- ☐ B. They let the reader know that the PT 109 was an important boat used in World War II.
- ☐ C. They let the reader know that models are available of the PT 109 so they can build one of their own.
- ☐ D. They provide the reader with a better understanding of what the PT 109 looks like and how it functions.

6. Which sentence best summarizes paragraph 5? [LC02]

- ☐ A. Kennedy finds McMahon who is badly burned and saves him.
- ☐ B. Kennedy calls out to his crew members, locates them, and helps the nearly unconscious McMahon.
- ☐ C. Kennedy shouts to his hurt crew members but discovered they were all badly burned.
- ☐ D. Kennedy gasps for breath before calling to his crew members who were eventually saved.

**7. Short Answer- 2 pts**

Any one of these titles could be another title for the story. Choose the title you think best fits the selection. [LC01]

They Lived On  
The Perils of the PT 109  
Profiles in Courage

Provide **two** details from the poem to support your choice.

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**8. Extended Response- 4 pts**

What problem does Kennedy experience? What are **three** steps he takes to solve this problem? Include information from the selection in your answer. [LA05]

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

## Literary Passage: Poem

Directions: Read the following selection and answer the questions.

### Alone

by Maya Angelou

1 Lying, thinking  
2 Last night  
3 How to find my soul a home  
4 Where water is not thirsty  
5 And bread loaf is not stone  
6 I came up with one thing  
7 And I don't believe I'm wrong  
8 That nobody,  
9 But nobody  
10 Can make it out here alone.

11 Alone, all alone  
12 Nobody, but nobody  
13 Can make it out here alone.

14 There are some millionaires  
15 With money they can't use  
16 Their wives run round like banshees  
17 Their children sing the blues  
18 They've got expensive doctors  
19 To cure their hearts of stone.  
20 But nobody  
21 No, nobody  
22 Can make it out here alone.

23 Alone, all alone  
24 Nobody, but nobody  
25 Can make it out here alone.

26 Now if you listen closely  
27 I'll tell you what I know  
28 Storm clouds are gathering  
29 The wind is gonna blow  
30 The race of man is suffering  
31 And I can hear the moan,  
32 'Cause nobody,  
33 But nobody  
34 Can make it out here alone.

35 Alone, all alone  
36 Nobody, but nobody  
37 Can make it out here alone.



*Selection from - Oh Pray My Wings Are Gonna Fit Me Well By Maya Angelou. Copyright © 1975 by Maya Angelou. Reprinted with permission of Random House, Inc. For online information about other Random House, Inc. books and authors, visit the website at [www.randomhouse.com](http://www.randomhouse.com).*



**Benchmark Reading Assessment**  
**Grade 8 – Grading Period 1**  
“Alone”

**Fill in the bubble next to the letter of the best answer.**

9. What does the author mean when she says, “Lying, thinking Last night How to find my soul a home . . .” in lines 1 through 3 of the poem? [LC03]
- ☐ A. The speaker searches for a new beginning.
  - ☐ B. The speaker plans a move in the future.
  - ☐ C. The speaker is remembering her dreams.
  - ☐ D. The speaker wants to find a place to belong.
10. According to the poem, which word best describes the speaker? [LA05]
- ☐ A. Timid
  - ☐ B. Hesitant
  - ☐ C. Certain
  - ☐ D. Skilled
11. Which sentence best summarizes the poem? [LC02]
- ☐ A. The speaker thinks about hunger, her lonely life, and the unhappiness of children.
  - ☐ B. The speaker considers how the suffering of mankind is similar to a storm brewing, eventually causing more human pain.
  - ☐ C. The speaker imagines how she can share her ideas about how to live life with other people, including the wealthy and their families.
  - ☐ D. The speaker reflects on her solitary life, the unfulfilled lives of others, and advises the reader to make a connection with others.
12. What is the main idea of the poem? [LC01]
- ☐ A. Listening to your inner thoughts allows you to be successful.
  - ☐ B. Being supported and supporting others is essential to being a satisfied person.
  - ☐ C. Accessing quality medical care leads to better health and well-being.
  - ☐ D. Finding happiness comes from having ample food and comfortable shelter.

## Literary Passage

Directions: Read the following selection and then answer the questions.

### Best Friends

Based on a story by Leslie Hall

1 Carmen had moved into the house across the street on a burning hot summer day. It was the summer before we started kindergarten. We soon became fast friends and did everything together; we learned to ride bikes on the same day (and have matching scars on our knees to prove it), explored the backwoods and initiated treasure hunts in the land behind her house, started to like guys at the same time, and always attempted to get all our classes together. We would have done anything for each other. My mom didn't allow me to get my ears pierced until I was thirteen, and even though Carmen's mom had told her she could get hers done earlier, Carmen waited so we could get our ears pierced together. At the jewelry store, the lady displayed trays and trays of earrings. I opted for a pair of tiny silver half-moons, and Carmen purchased a pair of little silver stars, and then we exchanged one of our earrings and never took them out. Everyone at school called us the Twins, and if I were alone, would say, "Where's your Twin?" instead of "Where's Carmen?" So when things started changing, I wasn't prepared.



- 2 Carmen decided she was going to audition for the school paper, which I didn't want to do. She said I should join the art club because I enjoy drawing, and then we could still walk home from school together later. I never bothered to join. The art teacher, Mr. Langley, sometimes tells me I have talent, and other times, he gives me back a drawing with a note that says he knows I can do better. I feel the same way. Sometimes, I look at a drawing I've done and I think it's horrible, and if anyone says anything nice, I think they're just trying to be respectful because they know I feel terrible. At least I know that's not how it is with Mr. Langley. He wants me to enter an art contest sponsored by a gallery he knows, but I'm uncertain.
- 3 My favorite picture is a pencil drawing I completed last summer of Carmen at the beach: she is asleep, lying on a blanket in the warm sand. She looks fantastic, with her hair cascading over her shoulder. I even drew in the half-moon earring. When she liked the drawing, I gave it to her, and her mom framed it and hung the picture on the wall in Carmen's room.
- 4 Then, little things started to bug me, like how she didn't appear interested in the same things we have *always* talked about for hours together. When she first started on the *Gazette*, she said something about this guy Ryan being so elusive, what with his dark and mysterious eyes and all, plus his incredible knack for recognizing talent—he remarked she was a great writer. So I called her up. "How's Ryan?" "What? Oh, fine," she replied, sounding distracted. "Look, Jen, I'm in the middle of something, can I call you back?"
- 5 She became a reporter for the paper, and all of a sudden, *if* she had time for me, all she could talk about was *The Garfield Gazette* and her next assignment and the editors, Kim and Ryan. Sure, I'll admit it: I was jealous, in a big, ugly way.

- 6 Yesterday, we were having lunch together in the quad, and I was telling her about how Todd Greenway exchanged lockers so now he has the locker two lockers down from me, and how I bumped into him accidentally and he smiled and said, “No problem” when I kept sputtering I was sorry and how clumsy I was. Carmen didn’t hear a word. She took another bite of her sandwich, then looked at it critically.
- 7 “Kim wants me to do a story on the cafeteria over-charging. Look at this sandwich—it contains only one tiny miserable little piece of cheese, and look how much it costs!”
- 8 I was furious, but before I could say anything, the bell rang and we commenced to class. Then after school Carmen sauntered off to the *Gazette* office and I walked home miserably. Usually I would have phoned her that evening, but I thought by not calling I would give her a chance to think about what happened, and she would realize that I had feelings, too. And she had ruthlessly stomped on all of them.
- 9 She didn’t call.
- 10 Today, I stopped at her house on the way to school, as I always do. When she opened the door, she had a piece of toast in one hand and her hair was still wet. Teeny, her little sister, was standing shyly behind her, wearing only a pair of underwear and her shoes and socks. “Can you help me?” Carmen said. “I still need to do my hair.”
- 11 “Okay,” I retorted, but in a kind of grumpy voice, so she would know I was still angry.
- 12 “Last night, after we finished at the paper, we went for pizza”—she yelled from the bathroom—“and I didn’t get home until late, and then I had to do my homework, and then my mom told me this morning she had to leave early, and would I get Teeny ready and drop her off.”
- 13 Carmen mumbled something else, but her words were not audible over the sound of the blow dryer. So that’s why she hadn’t called. I finished buttoning up Teeny’s dress. Carmen came running out of the bathroom and grabbed her backpack. I tersely held Teeny’s hand and we left, dropping Teeny off at kindergarten on the way.
- 14 “Lucky for us the stupid elementary school is next to the high school,” I exclaimed in a meaner voice than I had originally intended.
- 15 Carmen looked at me in complete surprise, “What are you mad about?” I didn’t say anything. “Well, if it’s such a big deal to wait for me, don’t do it next time, then.” Carmen briskly walked away, even though we had our first class together. She glanced back for a second and muttered something that sounded like, “And I thought you’d be happy!” Happy about what? Happy to lose my best friend to Kim and Ryan? Happy that she didn’t even care that Todd Greenway, who had never really talked to me before, had actually noticed my existence?
- 16 Soon it was lunch, and I thought maybe we would still eat lunch together, but after waiting for what seemed like an eternity by the locker, I decided to meander towards the art room and work on a charcoal drawing. Mr. Langley came in after me and looked over my shoulder at the drawing. “Coming along,” he stated, and plopped down at his desk to partake in his lunch. “Where’s the Twin?”

- 17 “I don’t know,” I replied angrily, “Probably at the *Gazette*. That’s all she cares about now, anyway.”
- 18 “Well, it’s important to have something to care about,” he said. “Especially if you’re especially talented, which she is. Did you see her article in today’s paper?”
- 19 As I walked slowly to my locker, I contemplated what he’d said. I knew how important being on the paper was to Carmen, and I hadn’t even bothered to read her first article! *Maybe* she was neglecting our friendship, but I got an ugly, squishy, muddy kind of feeling—the kind of feeling that doesn’t do anything, but just lies in a horrible mess in the pit of your wretched stomach—that told me that I was acting like a spoiled brat. Todd was at his locker and said “Hi” to me. I was so surprised, I felt my brain freeze up, and finally squeaked back, “Hi.” I blushed and immediately looked at the lock as I fumbled with the combination. I was sure he was thinking about what an idiot I was. First I bashed into him in the hallway, then I couldn’t even say hello. I finally managed to open the lock, clumsily took out my books, and hurriedly slammed the locker shut. I was absolutely shocked to see him still there when I glanced up.
- 20 “I didn’t know you were an artist,” he said. “I like to draw, too.”
- 21 At first, it was as if he was speaking in a foreign language. “What?”
- 22 “I didn’t know you were an artist. I noticed your drawing in the *Gazette*.” He maneuvered the paper out of a folder and presented it to me. “On the last page. It looks great.”
- 23 I hesitantly opened the *Gazette* to the last page and stared at it blankly. There was my drawing of Carmen, the one from the beach. It took up the entire page. There was a banner across the top that read “Art Forum” and the title and my name were in humongous letters across the bottom: “Sleeping Girl” by local artist Jennifer Collins.
- 24 “Maybe we can get together to draw sometime,” Todd said.
- 25 I had to find Carmen. That was what she had been talking about this morning. That was why she had thought I would be happy. She must think I’m the biggest jerk in the world. I remembered how the last night of the summer, before school started, we had been carelessly lying on the balcony. The wondrous sky had looked like a huge piece of black velvet, with the stars sprinkled in the darkness like diamonds. I had mentioned I wished that I could paint how beautiful the sky was, and how lying there and looking at the sky made me feel radiantly happy, but a little sad, too, because things would never be the same. “You can,” Carmen had said. “You’re so talented, you can paint anything.” I never once thought about her, about the stories she would tell me, about her wanting to write for the paper. She had never stopped being my friend; I had stopped being a friend to her. “I’d really like to,” I told him. “I have to go now, but—I’ll call you.”
- 26 I was overjoyed. I didn’t really deserve to be so happy. My heart felt like it was going to pound out of my chest, and I quickly turned and almost ran off down the hall. I glanced back and Todd was leaning against his locker, looking after me. “Maybe on Saturday?” he yelled, and I happily waved and went to find my best friend.

**Benchmark Reading Assessment**  
**Grade 8 – Grading Period 1**  
“Best Friends”

**Fill in the bubble next to the letter of the best answer.**

13. What is the theme of the story? [LC01]

- ☐ A. Friendship is necessary.
- ☐ B. Friendship can survive change.
- ☐ C. Friendships are easy to maintain.
- ☐ D. Friendships are sometimes cruel.

14. What is the meaning of the word *elusive* as it is used in paragraph 4 of the story? [LC04]

- ☐ A. Snobby
- ☐ B. Handsome
- ☐ C. Shadowy
- ☐ D. Charming

15. What is the meaning of the word *contemplated* as it is used in paragraph 19 of the story? [LC04]

- ☐ A. Considered
- ☐ B. Heard
- ☐ C. Mentioned
- ☐ D. Rejected

16. Based on the information in the story, what do you predict Jen will do now that she “happily waved” to Todd and went to find Carmen, her best friend? [LC03]

- ☐ A. She will relay to Carmen that she might have a date with Todd on Saturday.
- ☐ B. She will share with Carmen that Mr. Langley believes her drawings are “coming along.”
- ☐ C. She will apologize, the misunderstanding will be cleared up, and their friendship will continue.
- ☐ D. She will forgive Carmen for treating her so poorly and for putting her picture in the paper.

17. What is the main conflict in the story? [LA05]

- ☐ A. Jen and Todd Greenway’s relationship makes Carmen jealous because she doesn’t have a boyfriend in her life.
- ☐ B. Carmen was upset that she and Jen were considered “twins” since she was striving to create her own identity.
- ☐ C. Jen resents Carmen and Teeny’s sibling relationship because she doesn’t have a sister or brother in her family.
- ☐ D. Carmen begins to find interests different than Jen, so each becomes uncertain about the future of their friendship.

**18. Short Answer- 2 pts**

In your own words, write a summary of the story. Include a **summarizing statement** and **three main events** from the story in your summary. [LC02]

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