

# Everett Public Schools Assessment of Student Learning

## Student Packet



### Benchmark Reading Assessment Grade 8 Trimester 3

“Firefighters from the Sky”

“Fighting Fires”

“Courage”

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

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

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

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

## Informational Passage

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

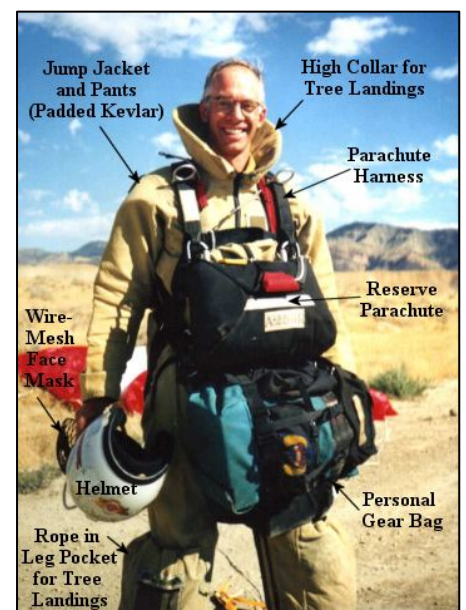
### Firefighters from the Sky

- 1 It is a hot, dry June day deep within the Lincoln National Forest. A fire spotter looks through a telescope at a plume of smoke rising into the summer sky. After watching the smoke for a few seconds, he feels certain that it is not from a campfire. Sitting in a watchtower more than 90 feet above the ground, the spotter gets on the radio. "Watch headquarters, this is Lookout Tower 7. I've got a visual on a line of smoke near the east ridge. It looks too heavy to be a campfire. Over."
- 2 A nervous ranger 20 miles away answers the call. "Acknowledged, Tower 7. What are the coordinates? Over."
- 3 The spotter in Tower 7 has already taken a reading with a special compass called an azimuth indicator to determine the exact direction of the smoke. Back at headquarters, the ranger in charge radios a spotter plane to stand by. Calls come in quickly as lookout towers throughout the area report the smoke. By using compass readings from at least two of these towers, the rangers can plot the precise location of the fire- in this case, high up a mountainside, deep within the forest. Checking a map, the rangers note that the fire is miles away from the closest trail or road. Within minutes a spotter plane is dispatched on a reconnaissance mission. It will fly over the fire to determine its size and verify its location. Time is crucial.
- 4 With every second, the fire may be gaining size and strength. Rangers wait anxiously as the plane flies to the calculated location. After 15 minutes, the pilot radios his report: The fire is small but growing. In the summer heat, with swirling winds carrying sparks to dry brush and leaves, it will soon get worse. The fire must be contained before it blazes out of control. The ranger in charge quickly makes a decision. She picks up the phone and says, "This is fire headquarters at Lincoln. Send me some smokejumpers."
- 5 Smokejumpers are the Forest Service's best defense against fires located deep within the tree pack. When fires occur near a road or trail, ground crews of firefighters called hotshots can control them. However, some fires can be reached only by the parachuting firefighters known as smokejumpers.
- 6 Smoke jumping is a risky occupation. Smokejumpers must parachute from low altitudes. They are trained in special jump techniques to decrease injuries from low-altitude jumps. It would require valuable time to transport smokejumpers to high altitudes, and their trip to the ground would take longer as well. Smokejumpers are often forced to parachute into tree-filled areas. Getting snagged in a tree in the middle of a forest fire is extremely dangerous.



- 7 Once on the ground, smokejumpers face other dangers. Fires devour large amounts of oxygen and produce poisonous gases, making it hard for firefighters to breathe. Sometimes unpredictable winds can shift fires quickly and unexpectedly, encircling a firefighter within walls of flames. As a fire feeds off the abundant supply of air brought in by the wind, it can rapidly grow in size and strength. Firefighters call this a firestorm.
- 8 Unlike city firefighters, who normally use water to extinguish flames, smokejumpers must put out fires with only the equipment they can carry or that can be dropped to them from planes. They do this by building firebreaks. Firebreaks are areas that have been stripped of trees, brush, and other vegetation. By creating areas where there is nothing for a fire to burn, firefighters are often able to stop the fire. Smokejumpers usually build firebreaks with a special tool called a Pulaski. It is a combination ax and hoe used by almost all forest firefighters. This tool is named after Edward Pulaski, a forest ranger who made the first one by hand back in the early 1900s.
- 9 In addition to the Pulaski, smokejumpers carry shovels, walkie-talkies, and equipment for descending from trees. They wear hard hats with wire facemasks and headlamps and use special lightweight uniforms that are highly visible. These uniforms are padded and fire retardant. Perhaps the most vital piece of equipment, however, is the special fire-resistant tent carried by all smokejumpers. This shelter, large enough for only one person, unfolds quickly and can reflect as much as 1,600 degrees of heat. Fire cannot permeate this protective shield. Inside the temperature will not rise about 200 degrees- survivable for a short time although extremely uncomfortable. The tent is a smokejumpers only protection should he or she become trapped in a firestorm.
- 10 Fighting forest fires is a team effort. Smokejumpers work along with spotters and ground crews. Planes drop in supplies of water and food to help keep the smokejumpers going. While fighting a fire, they can expend as many as 8,000 calories a day, more than four times what most adults eat during a typical day. Airplanes and helicopters also play an integral part in extinguishing forest fires. These planes and helicopters can drop large amounts of water and fire-suppressing chemicals on fires that are too large to control with firebreaks. Without the combined efforts of all these firefighters, many more acres of timber would be lost each year.
- 11 The nation's forests are an extremely valuable resource. A large out-of-control forest fire can destroy hundreds of years of growth in just a few hours. It can take decades for trees to grow back and completely replenish a burned area. It is the job of smokejumpers to protect this valuable resource. These brave men and women operate out of 11 bases in the United States. Though they work mostly in the West, smokejumpers are ready to respond anywhere in the country. During the hot, dry summer months, they are always on call, ready to fly into hard-to-reach areas to do battle with fire.

*Selection from- New Adventures-A Magazine for Teens. TAKS 2003 Grade 8  
Reading Online Test- [www.tea.state.tx.us](http://www.tea.state.tx.us)*



**Benchmark Reading Assessment**  
**Grade 8 – Trimester 3**  
“Firefighters from the Sky”

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

1. According to the selection, what happens when the ranger in charge is notified by the fire spotter about the rising plume of smoke? [IA17]
  - ☐ A. The ranger jumps in the spotter plane to survey the reported fire.
  - ☐ B. The ranger radios the lookout tower to keep an eye on the growing fire.
  - ☐ C. The ranger decides to assist the smokejumpers because the fire is so large.
  - ☐ D. The ranger plots the exact location of the fire and then dispatches a spotter plane.
  
2. What is most likely the author’s purpose for writing this selection? [IT18]
  - ☐ A. To demonstrate to the reader the skills needed to be a successful smokejumper.
  - ☐ B. To explain to the reader the importance of preserving natural resources.
  - ☐ C. To persuade the reader to consider a future career as a smokejumper.
  - ☐ D. To inform the reader of the role that smokejumpers play in protecting forests.
  
3. Based on the information in the selection, what is the most influential idea the author presents? [IT19]
  - ☐ A. Saving natural resources takes priority over protecting people.
  - ☐ B. People can be more productive working alone than in a team situation.
  - ☐ C. It is often times necessary to put people in dangerous situation in order to protect others.
  - ☐ D. Relying on others for important information can lead a person in the wrong direction.
  
4. After reading the selection, what generalization can the reader make about firefighting? [IT20]
  - ☐ A. Human carelessness often jeopardizes natural resources.
  - ☐ B. Innovations in technology provide new opportunities for people.
  - ☐ C. By working together, one can defeat seemingly overwhelming obstacles.
  - ☐ D. Choosing occupations that are dangerous can cause complications in one’s life.

5. Which sentence best explains why smokejumpers have fire-resistant tents? [IA17]

- ☐ A. The tent allows smokejumpers to put out 1,600 degree fires.
- ☐ B. The tent helps smokejumpers survive being trapped in a firestorm.
- ☐ C. The tent protects smokejumpers from the dangerously strong winds.
- ☐ D. The tent allows the smokejumpers to be visible to aircraft flying over the fire.

6. **Short Answer- 2 pts**

The author of the selection “Firefighters from the Sky” states that smokejumping is a risky occupation. Do you agree with this statement? Use **two** details from the selection to support your answer. [IT18]

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## Literary Passage

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

### Fighting Fires

*Rosie lives in a small Texas town. Her town has no paid firefighters. Instead, the town has a volunteer fire department. The volunteers are a group of men and women who have learned how to fight fires and help out when needed.*

- 1 When Rosie arrived home from school, she was greeted by the sight of her father in the kitchen. He hadn't shaved; consequently, the corners of her mouth turned downward.
- 2 "How did the job hunting go today?" Rosie cautiously asked.
- 3 "There's nothing out there right now," Dad solemnly answered.
- 4 Three weeks ago, the machine-repair shop where Rosie's father had worked for years had unexpectedly closed down. At first, her father had been optimistic that he could quickly find a new job. But the days had passed without any viable offers. Rosie's mother had just taken a second part-time job to help support the family.
- 5 "I'm just starting dinner," Dad stated. "You want to help your dad make a great meal?"
- 6 "Sorry, I have mounds of homework," Rosie exclaimed. She poured herself a glass of juice, retreated to her room, and quickly shut the door.
- 7 Rosie usually loved helping in the kitchen, but she didn't want her father to see how incredibly worried she was. Rosie's mother was working hard for the family, but her second job was simply a temporary position. It would last only until October. Rosie knew her father was desperately looking everywhere for a job, but he just wasn't having any luck. She couldn't bear to comprehend what would happen if he didn't find a job. To top it all off, she had to deal with the kids at school. She didn't want anyone feeling sorry for her.
- 8 After Rosie had finished her homework, she started writing about the day's events in her tattered diary. At the top of the page, she wrote, "What will happen if Dad can't find a job?" She was just beginning to write about her fears when she heard her father shout, "Rosie! I just heard on the CB radio that Mr. Becket's barn is on fire, and Mike said it's bad. You're going to have to come with me. Get a warm jacket and some sturdy shoes on while I leave a quick note for your mom."
- 9 For as long as Rosie could remember, her father had been a member of the town's volunteer fire brigade. In all those years, he had never failed to respond to a call to fight a fire. Rosie couldn't believe she was actually going to be at the fire with him and the other volunteers. Tossing her pen and journal onto her bed, Rosie quickly scrambled to put on warm clothes. She ran excitedly into the hall.



- 10 As Rosie and her father drove onto Mr. Becket's land, she noticed a reddish glow in the night sky. They hurriedly hopped out of their truck, and Dad threw on his firefighter's jacket. Snapping the strap of his helmet under his chin, he rushed over to help aim the heavy hose of the town's solo fire truck. All ten of the town's noble volunteer firefighters were present. They shouted to one another as they ran back and forth, throwing buckets of water on the thirsty fire, and beating out the ravenous flames that were trying to spring up outside the barn. Rosie had never witnessed a fire raging like this one. It was like a hungry monster with a thousand yellow arms. The arms kept grabbing at the wooden sides of the barn, the grass, and the black sky itself.
- 11 The acrid smell of charred wood filled Rosie's nostrils. She stood next to Mr. Becket and watched in amazement as her father helped control the water hose and keep it on the flames that shot haphazardly out from the barn. Each time the firefighters managed to extinguish one part of the fire, it seemed to flare up even more brightly somewhere else. Rosie gasped as one wall of the barn fell, and flames came precariously close to her father's face. But he didn't give up. He and the others held tight to the hose. One smoke-blackened hour blurred into the next until finally the last little flame was beaten out.
- 12 Rosie wandered into the curious crowd to find her father. She spotted him quickly. He was pulling off his soot-stained jacket. When he noticed her, he put his arm gently around her shoulders and said, "Come on. The Hemingways down the road have arranged food for us. Let's go eat."
- 13 The Hemingway's were Mr. Becket's nearest neighbors. They had made several pots of coffee and laid out platters of meat and cheese for the firefighters to make sandwiches. Rosie was exhausted and didn't think she was hungry, but her stomach growled when she saw the plentiful food. She stood close to her father and savored her sandwich as she listened to the mingled conversations around her.
- 14 Finally Dad said, "Time to go, Rosie. It's almost one in the morning. Your mother will be anxiously waiting up for us."
- 15 Rosie couldn't believe how much time had passed. All her earlier exhaustion had dropped away as she stood in the circle of brave firefighters. She keenly listened as her father and the others shared memories of other fires they had handled over the past years. She hadn't realized how many emergencies her father had bravely responded to.





- 16 Rosie and Dad sat together quietly as they drove down the winding roads that escorted them back home. Dad finally broke the awkward silence. “Everything’s going to be fine, Rosie. I’ll get another job. It’s just a matter of time.”
- 17 Back home Rosie saw her diary lying on her bed. She carefully picked up her pen and cherished diary to finish writing what she had started earlier. But she wrote nothing. What she had planned to write didn’t seem pertinent anymore.
- 18 As she sat there staring helplessly at the blank page, her mind raced with images of her heroic father fighting the perilous fire. She thought about the words her father had spoken to her on their ride home. She closed her diary, put on her pajamas, and climbed into bed.

*Selection from- TAKS 2003 Grade 8 Reading Online Test- [www.tea.state.tx.us](http://www.tea.state.tx.us)*





**Benchmark Reading Assessment**  
**Grade 8 – Trimester 3**  
“Fighting Fires”

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

7. Which sentence tells how Rosie and her father are similar? [LA06]
- ☐ A. They both looked forward to fighting future fires together.
  - ☐ B. They both realized that they did not respond well in emergency situations.
  - ☐ C. They both gained a more positive outlook about their situation and the future.
  - ☐ D. They both realized they did not have the courage they needed to face their future.
8. Why does Rosie not write in her diary after witnessing the firefighters’ response to the fire? [LA07]
- ☐ A. She believes in her father’s ability to take care of her family.
  - ☐ B. She thinks her father will be offered a job as a firefighter.
  - ☐ C. She has difficulty trusting that her family’s future will be secure.
  - ☐ D. She fears her father will not get a job in a timely manner.
9. In paragraph 10 of the story, why does the author include the literary device of personification? [LT08]
- ☐ A. To illustrate that the sky was dark and lit up with a reddish glow.
  - ☐ B. To show the fire is a hungry monster with a thousand yellow arms.
  - ☐ C. To paint a picture of the fire as being dangerous and difficult to extinguish.
  - ☐ D. To demonstrate how colorful the fire was to the people who were present and saw it.
10. How are the firefighters from “Firefighters from the Sky” and “Fighting Fires” alike? [IA16]
- ☐ A. They both have to fight fires in remote locations.
  - ☐ B. They both are heroes in the eyes of their families.
  - ☐ C. They both are paid to fight fires.
  - ☐ D. They both use specialized tools to fight fire.
11. Which statement is the most important conclusion the reader can draw from the selection? [LT09]
- ☐ A. Emotions can distract you from the work at hand.
  - ☐ B. People should be valued for the amount of money they make.
  - ☐ C. It is easy to keep hope about the future, especially during good times.
  - ☐ D. Ordinary people can become heroes when they help those in need.

12. Based on the information in the story, what generalization can the reader make about volunteers?  
[LT10]

- ☐ A. They should be paid for the time they donate.
- ☐ B. They are not seen as a necessary part of society.
- ☐ C. They can make a difference in people's lives.
- ☐ D. They are regularly honored for their contributions.

**13. Short Answer- 2 pts**

What are the problems firefighters face? Include **one** problem from **each** selection "Fighting Fires" and "Firefighters from the Sky" in your answer. [IA17]

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**14. Extended Response- 4 pts**

What are **two** ways the smokejumpers in “Firefighters from the Sky” are like the father firefighter in the story “Fighting Fires”? Include information from both selections in your answer. [IA16]

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What are **two** ways the smokejumpers in “Firefighters from the Sky” are different from the father firefighter in the story “Fighting Fires”? Include information from both selections in your answer.

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### Literary Passage: Poem

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

## Courage

by Unknown Author

- 1 One day my son asked me, Dad?  
What does courage mean?  
At first I simply answered,  
No fear of certain things.
- 2 Then in that same instant,  
I looked across the street,  
I saw my neighbors running,  
And jumped up from my seat.
- 3 As I ran out the front door,  
I saw what had torn their lives,  
The house that they had built and loved,  
Was burning before my eyes.
- 4 We quickly called the firemen,  
And the minutes seemed like years,  
Then they came from everywhere,  
To battle our biggest fears.
- 5 They swiftly set up their weapons,  
And clad their armor in a flash,  
Then they faced the dragon,  
A monster of fire and ash.
- 6 They boldly rushed into the flames,  
To face the enemy and pick a fight,  
Risking the very life they held,  
For another on that night.
- 7 No one was trapped inside that home,  
But a life was still at stake,  
For they have seen many homes lost,  
And have seen many hearts break.
- 8 So once again they fight their enemy,  
A War they can never win,  
For if they win this battle,  
The enemy runs to burn again.



- 9 But while the enemy was in that house,  
They walked into his lair,  
Facing his strong Talons,  
With water and a stare.
- 10 They saved my neighbor's home,  
And the houses all around,  
They then cleaned their weapons,  
Letting their armor fall to the ground.
- 11 It wasn't until the morning,  
That I realized what all had taken place,  
When I went into the house,  
I saw the scar of the enemy's face.
- 12 That is when I turned to my son,  
And answered the question again,  
Now a wiser man I said,  
When you think of courage, son,  
Think always of the firemen.

*Selection from- the Longview, Washington Fire Department website, reprinted with permission*



**Benchmark Reading Assessment**  
**Grade 8 – Trimester 3**  
“Courage”

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

15. How are the fires in the poem “Courage” and in the story “Fighting Fires” similar? [LA06]

- ☐ A. Both fires consume a beloved home.
- ☐ B. Both fires were fought by volunteers.
- ☐ C. Both fires are compared to dangerous creatures.
- ☐ D. Both fires spread from one building to neighboring buildings.

16. In the 8<sup>th</sup> stanza of the poem, why does the author include a metaphor? [LT08]

- ☐ A. To encourage readers to support their local firefighters.
- ☐ B. To illustrate the firefighter’s ability to combat the flames.
- ☐ C. To help the reader understand firefighters’ jobs are quickly completed.
- ☐ D. To compare the fire with an enemy that can run and reappear to fight again.

17. Based on the information in the poem, what generalization can the reader make about courageous people? [LT10]

- ☐ A. Courageous people fight wars.
- ☐ B. Courageous people are wise.
- ☐ C. Courageous people risk their lives.
- ☐ D. Courageous people seek danger.

18. Which statement is the most important conclusion the reader can draw from the poem? [LT09]

- ☐ A. Destruction can be a barrier to understanding the world.
- ☐ B. Relationships can be strengthened through shared events.
- ☐ C. Career choices can be influenced by personal experiences.
- ☐ D. Important lessons can be learned from the actions of others.