



GRADE

8

MCAS Finish Line

English Language Arts



**Sample
Lesson**

Continental Press

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Standards 8.9, 11

A writer does not state every fact plainly. Writers assume you can figure out some details based on what you know and what you are reading. This is called *making inferences*.



The screen says:

To get technical support on the phone, you have to call Monday through Friday from 8:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.

You know:

Today is Saturday.

You can infer:

You can't get help on the phone if you call today.

Writers may also give you pieces of information that you can put together to determine other facts. When you do that, you are *drawing conclusions*, or *making generalizations*.

Mathilde Klemmer grew up a country girl. In the 1840s, this was possible even in New York City. Manhattan Island was developed only as far north as 39th Street. Hundreds of people lived in rural villages in land that today is covered by Central Park.

The paragraph says:

- Mathilde Klemmer grew up a country girl.
- In the 1840s, this was possible even in New York City.
- Hundreds of people lived in rural villages on Manhattan Island.

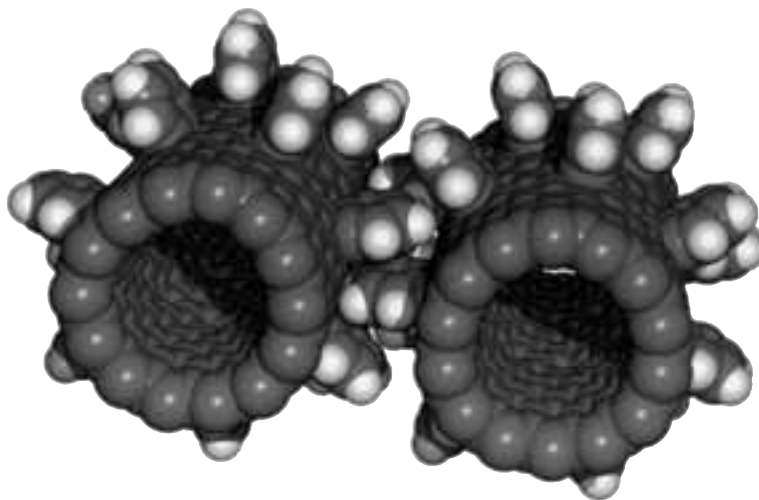
You can conclude:

Mathilde Klemmer grew up in the 1840s in a rural area of Manhattan.

Guided Practice

Read this article and answer the questions that follow.

Small, and Getting Smaller



1 The scene is a hospital in the year 2055. A swarm of bacteria-sized robots swim through a patient's bloodstream. They are powered by reversible motors with several speeds. Their target is a mass of cancer cells in the patient's brain. The robot microbes destroy the cancer cells while leaving healthy cells alone. Then, their job done, they dissolve into simple molecules and atoms, following programmed instructions.

2 In a factory nearby, machines too small to be seen without a microscope are building tomatoes. They taste like natural tomatoes—as well they should, since the machines are programmed to replicate them atom by atom according to a tomato plant's DNA. Tomorrow the machines may be reprogrammed to turn out paper. After all, it's made from the same raw materials as tomatoes—atoms and molecules.

3 This is science fiction, but it may become reality sooner than you think. It all depends on the development of nanotechnology. *Nano-* is a prefix that means “one billionth.” A nanometer is a unit of length equal to 0.000000001 meter. That's just about the diameter of an atom, and

that's no coincidence. Nanotechnology is the science and engineering of constructing matter one atom at a time.

4 Manufacturing has always been a bulk technology. We take a bunch of something and add and subtract stuff until we have what we want. A lot of energy and material is wasted. One scientist compares it to trying to build things with LEGO® blocks while wearing boxing gloves. You can pile pieces up, but you can't snap them together.

5 Nature does it another way. Electron bonds “snap” atoms together to form molecules. Proteins, nature's most complicated molecules, are assembled this way in living cells, following instructions coded in DNA. Likewise, nanotechnology may make it possible to take molecules from soil, water, and air and assemble them according to computer-coded instructions to make a tomato—or a pizza.

6 The idea of nanotechnology comes not from science fiction but from science. It was proposed in 1959 by a Nobel Prize-winning physicist, Richard Feynman. Nothing in the laws of physics, he said, makes it impossible to maneuver things atom by atom.



7 First, you need to be able to manipulate individual atoms. This was being done on a simple level by 1990, when engineers positioned atoms to spell out the name of their company. Next, you'd need to build an *assembler*—a machine that puts molecules together according to programmed patterns. But it would take years to make anything useful one atom at a time, even at supercomputer speed. So you'd need another machine—a *replicator*—that could turn out assemblers by the trillions. If the size of the parts could double at each step of the process, it would take just 30 steps to build something one meter in size from one-nanometer parts.

8 Once this technology is mastered, there will be virtually no limit to what could be done with it. Building materials many times lighter than aluminum could be made from carbon fibers. They would be strong enough to withstand the most powerful earthquakes

because the atoms would be arranged in the form of the hardest substance known—diamond. Swarms of nanorobots the size of dust particles would purify air and water by breaking down pollutants. (They could even *make* pure water.) Hand-held nanocomputers would be 100 times more powerful than today's supercomputers.

9 Some of these marvels may be with us as early as 2015. Business and government are investing hundreds of millions of dollars in “nano” research and development. Don't be surprised if nanomachines that assemble products and recycle waste someday become as common in homes as toasters. After all, until the microprocessor was invented, even science-fiction writers had trouble imagining a computer that didn't fill a room. And in 1959, the year Feynman came up with the idea of nanotechnology, another leading scientist flatly declared that genetic engineering was impossible.

Which of the following provides the **best** evidence that nanotechnology should be taken seriously?

- A The idea was proposed by a Nobel Prize-winning physicist.
- B Scientists were able to manipulate individual atoms as early as 1990.
- C Even science-fiction is often far behind what is actually happening.
- D Businesses are investing hundreds of millions of dollars in developing it.

The author argues that “nano” is the technology of the future and will lead to changes at least as great as computer technology has. What do you know that you can put together with the facts in the article to support this inference? The most concrete evidence is that businesses are taking nano seriously enough to invest a lot of money in it. Businesses are in business to *make* money. Choice D is correct.

What does the description in paragraph 1 tell the reader about the bacteria-sized robots?

- A** They would be made from actual bacteria.
- B** They are likely to be a reality within 50 years.
- C** They would be under remote control by a doctor.
- D** They would be able to distinguish healthy cells from cancer cells.

This question asks you to draw a conclusion based on information in the paragraph. Most likely, you don't have the scientific knowledge to state whether or not choices A, B, or C are true. But if the robots are going to destroy cancer cells while leaving healthy cells alone, you can conclude that they have been programmed to tell them apart. The answer is choice D.

Based on the information in paragraph 8, one result of the “nanotechnology revolution” would be that

- A** diamonds would lose their value.
- B** global warming would no longer be a problem.
- C** today's wilderness areas would quickly disappear.
- D** no one would eat naturally-produced food any longer.

For this question, you *do* know something that would lead you to infer the answer. The paragraph tells you that building materials could be arranged in the form of diamond. You know that diamonds are valuable because they are rare. How valuable would they be if they were as common as bricks? Choice A is correct.



Write your answer to this open-response question on a separate sheet of paper. Your answer should be about one-half to one page long.

The author of this article appears to believe that nanotechnology will be entirely beneficial. Explain why you agree or disagree with this position. Use relevant and specific information from the article.

This question calls on you to generalize a conclusion based on facts in the article and on what you know. Here is one possible way to answer the question:

The article tells about the benefits of “nano.” I’m worried about the dangers. Nanotechnology promises a future in which no one need lack for anything—except for those without access to it. It’s wonderful to contemplate a world where food can be put together from soil, air, and water in a machine, in which robot microbes can be injected into the bloodstream to cure diseases, in which you can recycle waste products to make the things you need. It’s wonderful—and it’s terrifying.

Today, we worry about “weapons of mass destruction” getting into the wrong hands. How would we control robots the size of dust particles? And please don’t tell me that nanotechnology would only be used for beneficial purposes! Name one technology that hasn’t been used in a negative way by someone.

Also, people become dependent on technology. Today, it’s hard to imagine life without gasoline or the Internet. Business and daily life would grind to a halt without them. Now imagine a world entirely dependent on nanotechnology for food, health, and transportation. What if the system were to break down?

I’m sure it will be wonderfully convenient to have an “assembler-recycler” in my kitchen when I’m 60. Maybe “nano” will fulfill all those dreams predicted for it. But maybe there will be some nightmares, too.

Now read an excerpt from a story and answer the questions that follow.

We were cutting the leaflets and congratulating ourselves when someone opened the door at the top of the stairs. Joel grabbed the mouse and clicked the display off the screen. A pair of girl's legs in sneakers and shorts appeared on the stairs, followed by the rest of Joel's sister Eva.

Joel relaxed. "Oh. Hi, Eva," he said brightly.

"Hi yourself. What are you doing on the computer?"

"Oh, nothing," Joel smirked, and I, cleverly, said "Homework."

"Yeah, right. Tomorrow's the first day of school. You'd better not be surfing the 'Net when Mom's not home." She snatched one of the leaflets out of my hand. "For the real story about Lucretia Mott Middle School, check out www.mottsoffun.com....' What is this?"

"Just a project Brendan and I have been working on this summer," Joel said. "Kind of a guide for incoming sixth graders about what Mott is *really* like."

Eva looked at the computer. Joel made a show of lunging for the mouse as if to keep it out of her hand, but she grabbed it first. Joel and I looked at each other, grinning, as Eva clicked, then clicked again.

"You can't publish this!" she exclaimed. "Mr. Diaz's science class is like soda pop without the fizz, like pizza without the sauce—this is slanderous!"

"You put in three years at Mott," Joel said. "Tell me it isn't true."

"Truth isn't the issue," Eva said, laughing in spite of herself. Then she exploded, sputtering. I couldn't see the screen from where I was sitting, but I knew that old Diaz's wig had just lifted off the top of his head. She turned accusingly to me. "Is this your idea, Brendan Platt?"



"It's a collaboration," I said. "Joel wrote the text, and I did the graphics."

"But it was your idea, wasn't it. This has Platt Productions written all over it. Where did you learn to do computer graphics like this?"

"Tech camp at Boston College," I said. "Remember I got awarded that scholarship last spring?"

"Yeah, well, it might be the last one they ever give a Mott student...." Eva laughed again. "If you want an A from Ms. Handler, make a point of noticing the pictures of her grandchildren on her desk and telling her how cute they are—how do you think you're going to get away with this?"

"It's just a spoof," I said. "Like *MAD* magazine."

"Freedom of the press," Joel said.

Eva turned away from the computer. "I can't look any more," she said. "This isn't freedom of the press. This isn't even shouting 'fire!' in a crowded theater. This is more like *setting* the theater on fire."

"Why?" Joel said. "You think we'll get in trouble?"

"Not the kind of trouble you're thinking about," Eva said. "Not being-sent-to-the-principal's-office kind of trouble.... Oh, my goodness!" she exclaimed, unable to keep her eyes off our work of art.



Which of these **best** describes Joel’s feelings in this excerpt?

- A He is proud of what he and Brendan have done and wants Eva to see it.
- B He is worried that Eva will tell their parents what he and Brendan have done.
- C He is vain about what he has done and doesn’t want to share credit with Brendan.
- D He is uneasy about posting his Web site and really hopes Eva will talk him out of it.

In fiction, you often draw conclusions about characters from what the author tells you, what they say, how they act, and what other characters say about them. Here, Joel “makes a show” of grabbing for the mouse, but he doesn’t really try to keep his sister from seeing what he and Brendan have done. Choice A is correct.

Eva would **most likely** agree with which statement?

- A Joel and Brendan are too clever for their own good.
- B There should be a Web site like this about every school.
- C Brendan is a bad kid who will get her brother in trouble.
- D Joel and Brendan will be caught telling lies once too often.

Eva plainly thinks that the boys will get in trouble, but she doesn’t think Brendan is bad, just thoughtless. Being a little more mature than her brother and his friend, she can foresee consequences of their actions that they cannot. The answer is choice A.

Which sentence from the excerpt supports the idea that the boys are **not** entirely comfortable with what they are doing?

- A “It’s just a spoof,” I said. “Like *MAD* magazine.”
- B “Why?” Joel said. “You think we’ll get in trouble for this?”
- C Joel grabbed the mouse and clicked the display off the screen.
- D “Oh, nothing,” Joel smirked, and I, cleverly, said “Homework.”

Joel and Brendan may not mind that Eva knows what they’re up to, but Joel’s action in paragraph 1 makes it plain that there is someone he wants to keep it a secret from—most likely his parents. The boys may be smirking and congratulating each other, but they are not being entirely honest with themselves with their talk of truth and freedom of the press. Choice C is the correct answer.

You can guess the boys will learn that

- A** a mistake made when you are young can stick with you forever.
- B** if you're smart and funny, you can get away with anything.
- C** people don't really care that much about truth and honesty.
- D** people should give more thought to the feelings of others.

This question is asking you to make a prediction based on the excerpt and on what you know—from other stories you have read and from real life. The “trouble” Eva refers to is the content of the boys’ Web site. It’s likely to cause hurt feelings—teachers’ hurt feelings—and that can’t help but boomerang back at them in negative ways. Choice D is the correct answer.

Test Yourself

Now read an extract from a colonial diary and answer the questions that follow.

Sarah Knight's Journey

In 1704, Boston businesswoman Sarah Kemble Knight took a trip to New York. The 200-mile journey along the Boston Post Road, then the finest road in America, took her two weeks through swamps and deep woods and across numerous streams. Knight's diary describing her trip is frank, funny, and sometimes cruel. In this excerpt, she is traveling between Kingston, Rhode Island, and New London, Connecticut. Knight's spelling and capitalization have been modernized, but the words and thoughts here are otherwise her own.



Wednesday, October 4th

1 About four in the morning, we set out [from] Kingston...with a French doctor in our company. He and the post¹ put on very furiously, so that I could not keep up with them, only now and then they'd stop till they see me. This road was poorly furnished with accommodations for travelers, so that we were forced to ride 22 miles by the post's account, but nearer 30 by mine, before we could [rest] so much as our horses, which I exceedingly complained of. But the post encouraged me, saying that we should well be accommodated soon at Mr. Devill's a few miles further. However, we made all possible speed to this habitation; where alighting, in full assurance of good accommodation, we were going in. But meeting his two daughters, I supposed twins, they so nearly resembled each other...and looked as old as Devill himself, and quite as ugly. We desired entertainment, but could hardly get a word out of 'em, till telling them our necessity, they called the old sophister², who was as sparing of his words as his daughters had been, and no, or none, was the reply he made to our demands....

2 Thus leaving this habitation of cruelty, we went forward; and arriving at an [inn] about two mile further, found tolerable accommodation. But our Hostess, being a pretty full mouthed old creature, entertained our fellow traveler, the doctor, with innumerable complaints about her bodily infirmities; and whispered to him so loud, that all the house had as full a hearing as he, which was very diverting to the company....

3 From hence we proceeded (about ten forenoon) through the Narragansett country, pretty leisurely, and about one [in the] afternoon came to Paukataug River, which was about two hundred paces over, and now very high, and no way to cross over to t'other side but this. I dared not venture to

ride through, my courage at best in such cases but small, and now at the lowest ebb, by reason of my weary, very weary, hungry and uneasy circumstances. So taking leave of my company, though with no little reluctance, that I could not proceed with them on my journey, stop at a little cottage just by the river, to wait the waters falling, which the old man that lived there said would be in a little time, and he would conduct me safe over. This little hut was one of the wretchedest I ever saw a habitation for human creatures. It was supported with [planks] laid on lengthwise, and so much asunder, that the light came through everywhere; the door tied with a cord in place of hinges; the floor the bare earth, no windows but such as the thin covering afforded, nor any furniture but a bed...., a glass bottle, an earthen cup, a small pewter basin, a board with sticks to stand on instead of a table, and a block or two in the corner instead of chairs.... Notwithstanding both the hut and its inhabitants [the old man, his wife, and two children] were very clean and tidy....

4 [The old man's son-in-law soon appears.] But he being, as I understood, going over the river, as ugly as he was, I was glad to ask him to show me the way to Saxton's, at Stonington; which he promising, I ventured over with the old man's assistance; who having rewarded to content, with my tatter-tailed guide, I rode on very slowly through Stonington, where the road was very stony and uneven. I asked the fellow, as we went, diverse questions of the place and way, and I being arrived at...Saxton's...was very well accommodated as to victuals and lodging, the only good of both I had found since setting out. Here I heard there was an old man and his daughter to come that way, bound to New London, and being now destitute of a guide, gladly waited for them, being in so good a harbor....

¹post: government mail carrier

²sophister: wise man

- 1 Which of these **best** explains why the editor, in the introduction, describes the Boston Post Road as “the finest road in America”?
- A He is explaining why Knight’s journey took two weeks.
 - B He is quoting from another part of Sarah Knight’s diary.
 - C He is expressing sarcasm, considering Knight’s description of the road.
 - D He is providing background information about road building in colonial New England.
- 2 In paragraph 1, what, specifically, is Knight referring to when she says, “We desired entertainment”?
- A food
 - B music
 - C conversation
 - D a place to rest
- 3 What does Knight’s description of the cottage in paragraph 3 reveal about her impressions of its inhabitants?
- A She is dismayed by their poverty.
 - B She is contemptuous of their laziness.
 - C She is annoyed by their lack of hospitality.
 - D She is afraid of their potential for violence.
- 4 What is the **main** reason Knight stays in the cottage?
- A She is tired and needs rest for the night.
 - B She is afraid to cross the river on horseback.
 - C She is waiting for her party to catch up with her.
 - D She has lost her way and needs help in finding it again.



- 5 Which of the following **best** supports the editor’s contention that Knight’s diary is “frank, funny, and sometimes cruel”?
- A her descriptions of the innkeepers
 - B her account of the difficulty of travel
 - C her description of her fellow travelers
 - D her reference to her own “small courage”

Write your answer to open-response question 6 on a separate sheet of paper. Your answer should be about one-half page long.

- 6 How is Sarah Knight’s sense of humor revealed in this excerpt? Use relevant and specific information from the selection to support your answer.