

GRADE 6: Performance Task
Narrative Task
Unit 1

Title: The Tale of the Mandarin Ducks

Task Focus

Student will use close reading of the plot in an excerpt from *The Tale of the Mandarin Ducks* by Katherine Paterson. This will culminate in a Prose Constructed Response (PRC) written by the student. There are two multiple choice questions worth one point each that the student should answer before the narrative task. These questions should help to scaffold the student's constructed response.

Performance Task

In 3-4 paragraphs, cite explicit and inferential evidence to discuss a few episodes in this text that show how the noticeable nature of the drake was responsible for his downfall and how the unnoticeable nature of the duck was responsible for her safety. Make sure to note how the initial description of the drake contributes to the development of the plot.

Then, narrate one new scene using two or more paragraphs that shows how a different behavior of the drake would have brought about a different ending.

Reading Standards

- CCSS.ELA/Literacy.RL.6.1: Cite textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.
- CCSS.ELA/Literacy.RL.6.3: Describe how a particular story's or drama's plot unfolds in a series of episodes as well as how the characters respond or change as the plot moves toward a resolution.

Writing Standards

- CCSS.ELA/Literacy.W.6.3. Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, relevant descriptive details, and well-structured even sequences.
 - a. Engage and orient the reader by establishing a context and introducing a narrator and/or characters; organize an event sequence that unfolds naturally and logically.

- b. Use narrative techniques, such as dialogue, pacing and description, to develop experiences, events, and/or characters.
- c. Use a variety of transition words, phrases, and clauses to convey sequence and signal shifts from one time frame or setting to another.
- d. Use precise words and phrases, relevant descriptive details, and sensory language to convey experiences and events.
- e. Provide a conclusion that follows from the narrated experiences or events.

Language Standards

- CCSS ELA/Literacy.L.6.2. Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling when writing.
 - a. Use punctuation (commas, parentheses, dashes,) to set off nonrestrictive/parenthetical elements.
 - b. Spell correctly.
- CCSS ELA/Literacy.L.6.4. Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases based on *grade 6 reading and content*, choosing flexibly from a range of strategies.
 - a. Use context (e.g., the overall meaning of a sentence or paragraph; a word's position or function in a sentence) as a clue to the meaning of a word or phrase.
 - d. Verify the preliminary determination of the meaning of a word or phrase.

Materials Needed: A copy of the excerpt of *The Tale of the Mandarin Ducks* found on p. 81 of *Appendix B of the Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts and Literacy*. It can also be obtained from RDA Assessment.

Rubric: The Expanded Scoring Rubric for the analytical writing task can be found on AIMS <aims.schoolnet.com> under Assessments and Resources in the Overview for the Units of Study. The same rubric is used for all tasks.

Scaffolding questions *Student should answer the two questions before the PRC is written.*
Asterisk indicates the correct answer.

Points: 18 (16 points for the writing rubric and 1 point each for the two multiple choice items.
This point total for the rubric was revised on 8/25/13 when PARCC recently announced that the Reading criterion of the rubric would not be used for the narrative task.)

1. What does the word “plumage” mean as it is used in the first paragraph?

- a. disguises
- b. feathers*
- c. prizes
- d. eyes

2. Which line from the excerpt helps the reader understand “plumage”?

- a. “... the drake flew down to a nearby pond to search for food.”
- b. “The drake is a wild spirit...”
- c. “But his mate, the duck, wore the quiet tones of the wood” *
- d. “When the drake came out of the water he saw the acorns.”

Student Copy

Student Name: _____

Date: _____

Directions: Do these two questions independently before responding to the narrative task on the excerpt from *The Tale of the Mandarin Ducks*. Circle the correct answer for each question.

1. What does the word “plumage” mean as it is used in the first paragraph?

- a. disguises
- b. feathers
- c. prizes
- d. eyes

2. Which line from the excerpt helps the reader understand “plumage”?

- a. “... the drake flew down to a nearby pond to search for food.”
- b. “The drake is a wild spirit...”
- c. “But his mate, the duck, wore the quiet tones of the wood”
- d. “When the drake came out of the water he saw the acorns.”

Long ago and far away in the Land of the Rising Sun, there lived together a pair of mandarin ducks. Now, the drake was a magnificent bird with plumage of colors so rich that the emperor himself would have envied it. But his mate, the duck, wore the quiet tones of the wood, blending exactly with the hole in the tree where the two had made their nest.

One day while the duck was sitting on her eggs, the drake flew down to a nearby pond to search for food. While he was there, a hunting party entered the woods. The hunters were led by the lord of the district, a proud and cruel man who believed that everything in the district belonged to him to do with as he chose. The lord was always looking for beautiful things to adorn his manor house and garden. And when he saw the drake swimming gracefully on the surface of the pond, he determined to capture him.

The lord's chief steward, a man named Shozo, tried to discourage his master. "The drake is a wild spirit, my lord," he said. "Surely he will die in captivity." But the lord pretended not to hear Shozo. Secretly he despised Shozo, because although Shozo had once been his mightiest samurai, the warrior had lost an eye in battle and was no longer handsome to look upon.

The lord ordered his servants to clear a narrow way through the undergrowth and place acorns along the path. When the drake came out of the water he saw the acorns. How pleased he was! He forgot to be cautious, thinking only of what a feast they would be to take home to his mate.

The Tale of the Mandarin Ducks

Just as he was bending to pick up an acorn in his scarlet beak, a net fell over him, and the frightened bird was carried back to the lord's manor and placed in a small bamboo cage.

From THE TALE OF THE MANDARIN DUCKS by Katherine Paterson, illustrated by Diane and Leo Dillon. Text © 1990 by Katherine Paterson. Illustrations © 1990 by Diane and Leo Dillon. Used by permission of Dutton Children's Books, A Division of Penguin Young Readers Group, A Member of Penguin Group (USA) Inc, All rights reserved.