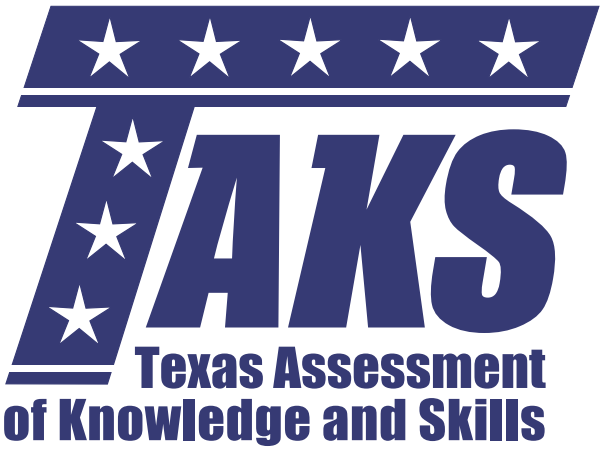
STUDENT NAME _____



GRADE 9
READING

Administered March 2009

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READING

DIRECTIONS

Read the two selections and the viewing and representing piece. Then answer the questions that follow.

The Marble Champ

by Gary Soto

My notes about what I am reading

1 Lupe Medrano, a shy girl who spoke in whispers, was the school's spelling bee champion, winner of the reading contest at the public library three summers in a row, blue ribbon awardee in the science fair, the top student at her piano recital, and the playground grand champion in chess. She was a straight-A student and—not counting kindergarten, when she had been stung by a wasp—never missed one day of elementary school. She had received a small trophy for this honor and had been congratulated by the mayor.

2 But though Lupe had a razor-sharp mind, she could not make her body, no matter how much she tried, run as fast as the other girls'. She begged her body to move faster, but could never beat anyone in the fifty-yard dash.

3 The truth was that Lupe was no good in sports. She could not catch a pop-up or figure out in which direction to kick the soccer ball. One time she kicked the ball at her own goal and scored a point for the other team. She was no good at baseball or basketball either, and even had a hard time making a hula hoop stay on her hips.

4 It wasn't until last year, when she was eleven years old, that she learned how to ride a bike. And even then she had to use training wheels. She could walk in the swimming pool but couldn't swim, and chanced roller skating only when her father held her hand.

5 "I'll never be good at sports," she fumed one rainy day as she lay on her bed gazing at the shelf her father had made to hold her awards. "I wish I could win something, anything, even marbles."

6 At the word "marbles," she sat up. "That's it. Maybe I could be good at playing marbles." She hopped out of bed and rummaged through the closet until she found a can full of her brother's marbles. She poured the rich glass treasure on her bed and picked five of the most beautiful marbles.

7 She smoothed her bedspread and practiced shooting, softly at first so that her aim would be accurate. The marble rolled from her thumb and clicked against the targeted marble. But the target wouldn't budge. She tried

again and again. Her aim became accurate, but the power from her thumb made the marble move only an inch or two. Then she realized that the bedspread was slowing the marbles. She also had to admit that her thumb was weaker than the neck of a newborn chick.

My notes about what I am reading

8 She looked out the window. The rain was letting up, but the ground was too muddy to play. She sat cross-legged on the bed, rolling her five marbles between her palms. Yes, she thought, I could play marbles, and marbles is a sport. At that moment she realized that she had only two weeks to practice. The playground championship, the same one her brother had entered the previous year, was coming up. She had a lot to do.

9 To strengthen her wrists, she decided to do twenty push-ups on her fingertips, five at a time. "One, two, three . . ." she groaned. By the end of the first set she was breathing hard, and her muscles burned from exhaustion. She did one more set and decided that was enough push-ups for the first day.

10 She squeezed a rubber eraser one hundred times, hoping it would strengthen her thumb. This seemed to work because the next day her thumb was sore. She could hardly hold a marble in her hand, let alone send it flying with power. So Lupe rested that day and listened to her brother, who gave her tips on how to shoot: get low, aim with one eye, and place one knuckle on the ground.

11 "Think 'eye and thumb'—and let it rip!" he said.

12 After school the next day she left her homework in her backpack and practiced three hours straight, taking time only to eat a candy bar for energy. With a popsicle stick, she drew an odd-shaped circle and tossed in four marbles. She used her shooter, a milky agate with hypnotic swirls, to blast them. Her thumb *had* become stronger.

13 After practice, she squeezed the eraser for an hour. She ate dinner with her left hand to spare her shooting hand and said nothing to her parents about her dreams of athletic glory.

14 Practice, practice, practice. Squeeze, squeeze, squeeze. Lupe got better and beat her brother and Alfonso, a neighbor kid who was supposed to be a champ.

15 "Man, she's bad!" Alfonso said. "She can beat the other girls for sure. I think."

GO ON

16 The weeks passed quickly. Lupe worked so hard that one day, while she was drying dishes, her mother asked why her thumb was swollen.

17 "It's muscle," Lupe explained. "I've been practicing for the marbles championship."

18 "You, honey?" Her mother knew Lupe was no good at sports.

19 "Yeah. I beat Alfonso, and he's pretty good."

20 That night, over dinner, Mrs. Medrano said, "Honey, you should see Lupe's thumb."

21 "Huh?" Mr. Medrano said, wiping his mouth and looking at his daughter.

22 "Show your father."

23 "Do I have to?" an embarrassed Lupe asked.

24 "Go on, show your father."

25 Reluctantly, Lupe raised her hand and flexed her thumb. You could see the muscle.

26 The father put down his fork and asked, "What happened?"

27 "Dad, I've been working out. I've been squeezing an eraser."

28 "Why?"

29 "I'm going to enter the marbles championship."

30 Her father looked at her mother and then back at his daughter. "When is it, honey?"

31 "This Saturday. Can you come?"

32 The father had been planning to play racquetball with a friend Saturday, but he said he would be there. He knew his daughter thought she was no good at sports and he wanted to encourage her. He even rigged some lights in the backyard so she could practice after dark. He squatted with one knee on the ground, entranced by the sight of his daughter easily beating her brother.

33 The day of the championship began with a cold blustery sky. The sun was a silvery light behind slate clouds.

34 "I hope it clears up," her father said, rubbing his hands together as he returned from getting the newspaper. They ate breakfast, paced nervously around the house waiting

My notes about what I am reading

GO ON

for 10:00 to arrive, and walked the two blocks to the playground (though Mr. Medrano wanted to drive so Lupe wouldn't get tired). She signed up and was assigned her first match on baseball diamond number three.

My notes about what I am reading

35 Lupe, walking between her brother and her father, shook from the cold, not nerves. She took off her mittens, and everyone stared at her thumb. Someone asked, "How can you play with a broken thumb?" Lupe smiled and said nothing.

36 She beat her first opponent easily, and felt sorry for the girl because she didn't have anyone to cheer for her. Except for her sack of marbles, she was all alone. Lupe invited the girl, whose name was Rachel, to stay with them. She smiled and said, "OK." The four of them walked to a card table in the middle of the outfield, where Lupe was assigned another opponent.

37 She also beat this girl, a fifth-grader named Yolanda, and asked her to join their group. They proceeded to more matches and more wins, and soon there was a crowd of people following Lupe to the finals to play a girl in a baseball cap. This girl seemed dead serious. She never even looked at Lupe.

38 "I don't know, Dad, she looks tough."

39 Rachel hugged Lupe and said, "Go get her."

40 "You can do it," her father encouraged. "Just think of the marbles, not the girl, and let your thumb do the work."

41 The other girl broke first and earned one marble. She missed her next shot, and Lupe, one eye closed, her thumb quivering with energy, blasted two marbles out of the circle but missed her next shot. Her opponent earned two more before missing. She stamped her foot and said "Shoot!" The score was three to two in favor of Miss Baseball Cap.

42 The referee stopped the game. "Back up, please, give them room," he shouted. Onlookers had gathered too tightly around the players.

43 Lupe then earned three marbles and was set to get her fourth when a gust of wind blew dust in her eyes and she missed badly. Her opponent quickly scored two marbles, tying the game, and moved ahead six to five on a lucky shot. Then she missed, and Lupe, whose eyes felt scratchy when she blinked, relied on instinct and thumb muscle to score the tying point. It was now six to six, with only three

marbles left. Lupe blew her nose and studied the angles. She dropped to one knee, steadied her hand, and shot so hard she cracked two marbles from the circle. She was the winner!

My notes about what I am reading

44 "I did it!" Lupe said under her breath. She rose from her knees, which hurt from bending all day, and hugged her father. He hugged her back and smiled.

45 Everyone clapped, except Miss Baseball Cap, who made a face and stared at the ground. Lupe told her she was a great player, and they shook hands. A newspaper photographer took pictures of the two girls standing shoulder-to-shoulder, with Lupe holding the bigger trophy.

46 Lupe then played the winner of the boys' division, and after a poor start beat him eleven to four. She blasted the marbles, shattering one into sparkling slivers of glass. Her opponent looked on glumly as Lupe did what she did best—win!

47 The head referee and the President of the Fresno Marble Association stood with Lupe as she displayed her trophies for the newspaper photographer. Lupe shook hands with everyone, including a dog who had come over to see what the commotion was all about.

48 That night, the family went out for pizza and set the two trophies on the table for everyone in the restaurant to see. People came up to congratulate Lupe, and she felt a little embarrassed, but her father said the trophies belonged there.

49 Back home, in the privacy of her bedroom, she placed the trophies on her shelf and was happy. She had always earned honors because of her brains, but winning in sports was a new experience. She thanked her tired thumb. "You did it, thumb. You made me champion." As its reward, Lupe went to the bathroom, filled the bathroom sink with warm water, and let her thumb swim and splash as it pleased. Then she climbed into bed and drifted into a hard-won sleep.

"The Marble Champ" from BASEBALL IN APRIL AND OTHER STORIES, copyright © 1990 by Gary Soto, reprinted by permission of Harcourt, Inc.

GO ON

Fast-Forward

by David Goricki

1 ST. CLAIR—Barely a teenager, a stranger in a strange land, learning a foreign language, adapting to a new family dynamic . . . you could excuse Addis Habtewold if he chose to run and hide.

2 Well, Habtewold is running, but in clear view—at the head of the field in every cross-country race he enters.

3 Not quite three years since he left his native Ethiopia, Habtewold is the talk of the running community.

4 After Thursday's Marysville Invitational, Habtewold, a 15-year-old sophomore at St. Clair High School, has won all 10 races in which he had competed, setting eight course records in the process.

5 "A coach is lucky to have a kid like Addis come around once in a lifetime," St. Clair coach Jon Davidson said. "Any coach would be shocked to see the type of results Addis has produced."

6 Area coaches who have seen him rave about his unlimited potential. But his work ethic and personality most impress his coach and teammates.

7 "He's one of the fastest guys in the state, [but] he's not arrogant in the least," Davidson said. "He's very humble, works hard and wants to be the best."

8 Habtewold, who is 5-foot-4 and 115 pounds, has lofty goals.

9 He wants to be a state champion in his first year in the sport—his best time, a school-record 15 minutes, 35 seconds, is second in the state to Landon Peacock of Cedar Springs (15:11). Habtewold also wants to run in college and become an Olympic gold medalist, like his native countryman, Haile Gebrselassie.

10 It's a tall order, but Habtewold is used to accomplishing much in a hurry. Since moving to the United States, he has learned English well enough to earn As and Bs. And, in less than a year, he has developed into an elite high school athlete.

11 "I love running," Habtewold said. "I feel like I'm missing something if I miss a day.

12 "I'm surprised I've done this well. I'm breaking records. I want to thank my coach, friends, teammates and parents. Without their support, I'd never been able to accomplish what I have so far."

Coming to America

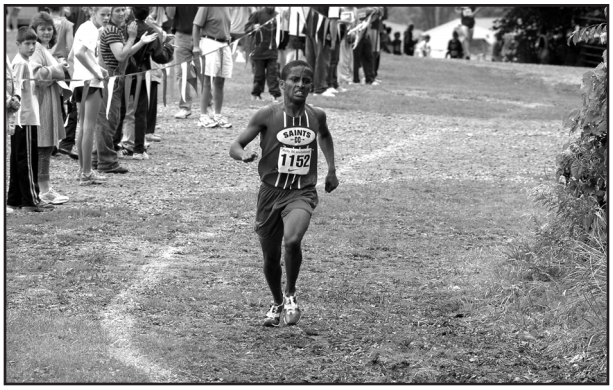
13 Habtewold had little interest in running when he was younger. He played soccer in Ethiopia. The only time he ran, he says, was when he was late to school.

14 "Addis, his older sister, Miti (21), and younger brother, Eyob (14), were orphaned and living with my mother," said Jerusalem Lothschutz, who, with her husband, Jim Lothschutz, eventually adopted them and brought them to the United States. "His mother was my sister. They grew up in the capital city of Addis Ababa where I grew up and went to school."

■ **see Fast-Forward, page 2**

GO ON

15 Jim Lothschutz, a vice principal at Hamtramck High School, was a teacher at International School in Ethiopia when he met Jerusalem, who worked in the computer lab. They married in 1997 and adopted Addis, Miti and Eyob. They have two other children, Gabbi, 6, and Sammy, 4. Miti lives in Grand Haven and attends Grand Rapids Community College. Eyob is a freshman on the varsity soccer team at St. Clair and plans to run track in the spring.



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16 Jerusalem and Jim moved to the United States in 1998. But it took four years for the adoption to be recognized by the American government, and Addis, Miti and Eyob didn't touch American soil until December 2002 in Godwin Heights near Grand Rapids. They moved to St. Clair last year.

17 Moving to America was obviously a tough transition for Addis and his siblings. His parents let them settle in before they studied English.

18 "Nine months after they settled in, they had to focus on English," Jim Lothschutz said. "I gave them a tape player and language tapes and they had to listen to them two hours a day."

19 Jerusalem, who speaks fluent English, is proud of her children's progress.

20 "They adapted much faster than I did," she said. "They made friends and were involved in sports."

Fast Start

21 Habtewold was a starter on St. Clair's soccer team as a freshman and a teammate of Davidson's son, Colin.

22 The team ran two miles for conditioning before practice each day. Habtewold's running impressed Colin, who told his father.

23 "Colin said, 'You've got to see Addis run.' I watched him and then recruited him from the soccer team," Davidson said.

24 "We talked Addis into running with us after cross-country season. We had a big group, including a number of seniors, Addis and me, and we ran for six to eight miles."

25 Jeff Standfest, now a cross-country runner at Oakland University, was part of that initial group.

26 "We got him to go out running with us one day in November," Standfest said. "We ran six to eight miles, 6:20-minute miles, and Addis was running right with us, chewing gum and breathing through his nose. It was incredible."

■ **see Fast-Forward, page 3**

GO ON

27 Habtewold recalls that first day, saying: "I ran eight miles and I was kind of sore the next day. It was a lot of fun. I ran the next day and pretty much every day after."

28 Habtewold finished seventh in the 3,200-meter run at the Division 2 state meet. His success spiked his interest in cross country. During the summer, he trained by running hundreds of miles.

29 He has dominated the competition, his time of 15:54 topping a field of more than 1,000 runners at the Holly Invitational on Sept. 17.

30 Often, he says, he gets bored from running alone.

31 "My goals are to win and get my time down," Habtewold said, "but sometimes I feel like quitting halfway through the race because I'm tired and running alone. Coach says I have to just suck it up and run through it."

32 St. Clair junior Ben Holt said the team follows Habtewold's lead.

33 "He's not a captain, but he's a leader by how he leads by example," Holt said. "He makes sure we get our mileage in. He's addicted to running."

Fitting In

34 Addis has attacked his classes in the same manner in which he trains.

35 "Not being able to speak English was the most difficult thing for me," Addis said. "My mom and dad really helped me with my reading and speaking. I still have some trouble with my reading. Life is good here. Everything is way different. The school enforces rules more than they did in Ethiopia, and I like that. People have been friendly to me. I have more opportunities to do sports, too.

36 "I write to my friends back home. Everyone from my country talks about how nice my mom and dad are to us. Back in Ethiopia, it's a big thing to come to America. We're very fortunate."

37 Patty McCormick works with Addis every day.

38 "Think about how difficult it would be for us to go to a foreign country and study in their language," McCormick said. "Addis is very respectful and does what I ask of him. The difference from last year to this has been remarkable. He expresses his ideas more fluidly and has a better grasp of our language.

39 "We go through his daily planner every day. He's taking physics, math, English literature and history. He needs help with his grammar and spelling. I brainstorm with him, but he develops his ideas and I help him write it down and transcribe it. He types it out. He's a great kid."

40 Habtewold dreams of being famous one day.

41 "I know I'll have the chance if I keep my grades up and continue to work hard," he said. "I have a great opportunity here."

"Fast-Forward" by David Goricki. Copyright © 2005 by the *Detroit News*.

GO ON

The Obstacle Course

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The Obstacle Course
It helps your kids advance in life.

ON-TARGET LEARNING GAMES

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GO ON

Use "The Marble Champ" (pp. 4–8) to answer questions 1–14.

1 Read the following dictionary entry.

fume \ˈfyüm\ *v* **1.** to perfume with incense **2.** to emit as vapor **3.** to preserve by smoking **4.** to exhibit anger or irritation

Which definition best matches the use of the word *fumed* in paragraph 5?

A Definition 1

B Definition 2

C Definition 3

D Definition 4

2 Paragraphs 3 and 4 are mainly about —

F Lupe's lack of success at sports

G the love Lupe has for physical activities

H Lupe's ability to ride a bike

J the difficulty Lupe has when roller-skating

3 What is Lupe's biggest problem in the final match of the girls' division?

A Her opponent is a poor sport.

B She does not have enough thumb strength.

C The wind blows dust into her eyes.

D Too many people have gathered to watch.

4 In paragraph 46, the word *glumly* means —

F sadly

G mysteriously

H quickly

J excitedly

5 Which of these is the best plot summary of the story?

A A straight-A student feels embarrassed because she is exceptionally uncoordinated and terrible at sports. She is a slow runner, cannot catch a ball, scores a goal for the opposing team, and still uses training wheels on her bike at age 11. Because she has such low self-esteem in the area of sports, she decides to find a sport at which she can excel.

B A girl attempts to prove herself by entering the marble championship that her brother had entered the year before. She wins matches against a fifth grader and a girl in a baseball cap and then wins the girls' division. Next she defeats the winner of the boys' division and goes home with two trophies.

C A girl's father is pleasantly surprised to learn that his daughter is training for a marble championship even though she has never been very good at sports. He sets up lights in the backyard so she can practice with her brother at night. Although the girl's father had planned to play racquetball on the day of the tournament, he decides to attend the tournament and support his daughter.

D A girl who has won many awards for her academic achievements is frustrated by her lack of athletic ability. She becomes determined to be a champion marble player and trains tirelessly for a playground tournament two weeks away. Through her newly acquired skills and good sportsmanship, she draws a crowd as she defeats the competition and wins the championship.

GO ON

6 Why is the setting in paragraphs 5 through 8 important to the story?

F The handmade shelf in Lupe's room reminds her of her father's love.

G The time alone in her room allows Lupe to come up with a solution to her problem.

H The rainy weather increases Lupe's feelings of desperation.

J The security of her home offers Lupe comfort from the teasing of others.

7 Lupe's internal conflict stems from her —

A disappointment that her parents do not notice her achievements

B envy of her brother for being a better athlete

C fear that she will never be good at sports

D desire to prove that a girl can defeat a boy in marbles

8 Lupe's match against Alfonso in paragraph 14 is significant because it —

F persuades Lupe to compete only against girls in the tournament

G causes Alfonso to turn against Lupe out of jealousy

H undermines Lupe's growing self-confidence

J shows that Lupe has a real chance of winning the championship

9 In paragraph 32, Mr. Medrano's promise to come to the marble championship shows that he —

A primarily wishes to please his wife

B loves watching marble competitions

C takes Lupe's goal seriously

D is sure Lupe has a good chance of winning

10 Lupe's opponent in the final round of the girls' competition seems serious because —

F she never looks at Lupe

G she is wearing a baseball cap

H she breaks the marbles first

J she stamps her foot when losing

11 How can the reader tell that Lupe feels a little insecure about her decision to compete in the marble championship?

A She listens to her brother's tips on how to shoot marbles.

B She can do only 10 fingertip push-ups on her first day of training.

C She squeezes a rubber eraser to strengthen the muscle in her thumb.

D She does not tell her parents about her plans until her mother notices her thumb.

GO ON

12 Which line best illustrates that the crowd was excited by Lupe's match with the girl in the baseball cap?

F *Onlookers had gathered too tightly around the players.*

G *The score was three to two in favor of Miss Baseball Cap.*

H *Her opponent earned two more before missing.*

J *It was now six to six, with only three marbles left.*

13 In paragraph 14, the author uses repetition to —

A provide a transition between scenes

B praise Lupe's natural athletic abilities

C create a poetic rhythm with words

D emphasize Lupe's dedication to her goal

14 The author structures this story by —

F telling it from the point of view of an adult recalling her childhood

G beginning in the middle of the action and flashing back to what sparked the conflict

H stating the main character's problem and then showing how she solves it

J telling the story from the point of view of the main character's father

GO ON

Use "Fast-Forward" (pp. 9–11) to answer questions 15–27.

15 Read the following dictionary entry.

tough \'təf\ *adj* **1.** able to withstand great strain without tearing or breaking **2.** very difficult **3.** inclined to violent or disruptive behavior **4.** used to express a lack of sympathy

Which definition best matches the use of the word *tough* in paragraph 17?

A Definition 1

B Definition 2

C Definition 3

D Definition 4

16 Addis's adoptive parents met when —

F they both worked at the International School in Ethiopia

G his father was the vice principal of Hamtramck High School

H they attended Grand Rapids Community College

J Addis, Miti, and Eyob were living in the United States

17 Which words from paragraph 39 best help the reader understand the meaning of the word *transcribe*?

A *develops his ideas*

B *a great kid*

C *write it down*

D *grammar and spelling*

18 Paragraphs 14 through 16 are mainly about —

F Addis, Miti, and Eyob becoming orphans in Addis Ababa

G Addis and his new family coming to live in the United States

H Jerusalem Lothschutz marrying Jim Lothschutz

J the siblings enrolling in schools near Grand Rapids

19 The reader can tell that Jon Davidson encouraged Addis to begin running with his group after the cross-country season because —

A he thought it would get Addis in better shape to play soccer

B Addis would not make the team if he did not practice during the off-season

C he hoped Addis would join the cross-country team during his sophomore year

D Addis could teach running techniques to the others in the group

20 Which line from the selection best indicates that Addis is an exceptional athlete?

F *"A coach is lucky to have a kid like Addis come around once in a lifetime."*

G *"I love running," Habtewold said.*

H *He wants to be a state champion in his first year in the sport. . . .*

J *Habtewold, who is 5-foot-4 and 115 pounds, has lofty goals.*

GO ON

21 The setting is significant in this selection because —

A cross-country running is not a popular sport in Grand Rapids

B Addis had to compete in an environment whose culture is new to him

C Addis had to pursue his goal in an unruly and impoverished school

D the rugged terrain made long-distance running especially challenging

22 In paragraph 16, the words "touch American soil" mean to —

F become a U.S. citizen

G run with a track team

H build a new home

J arrive in the United States

23 Which line best illustrates Addis's sense of humor?

A *Since moving to the United States, he has learned English well enough to earn As and Bs.*

B *The only time he ran, he says, was when he was late to school.*

C *But his work ethic and personality most impress his coach and teammates.*

D *Addis has attacked his classes in the same manner in which he trains.*

24 The selection provides evidence to show that —

F Jon Davidson expected Eyob to become as strong a runner as Addis

G Addis preferred to be a soccer player rather than a runner

H Jon Davidson had an important influence in Addis's life

J Addis would have pursued long-distance running if he had stayed in Ethiopia

25 From Patty McCormick's comments, the reader can infer that —

A she respected Addis for the progress he had made as a student

B Addis could not have passed his classes without her help

C her help gave Addis an excuse not to do his homework

D she was assigned to help Addis because he was a star athlete

GO ON

26 The author's attitude toward Addis can best be described as —

F amused

G dismissive

H admiring

J unsympathetic

27 The author develops the selection mainly by —

A writing a first-person narrative from Addis's point of view

B organizing the information into sections to describe aspects of Addis's life

C comparing Addis's daily life in Ethiopia with his daily life in the United States

D describing several important events in modern-day Ethiopia

GO ON

Use "The Marble Champ" and "Fast-Forward" (pp. 4–11) to answer questions 28–30.

28 Both selections explore the themes of —

F sportsmanship and character

G self-sacrifice and defeat

H cultural acceptance and heritage

J pride and arrogance

29 The main characters in both selections —

A are immigrants to the United States

B diligently train to achieve a goal

C do not recognize their gifts until someone else points them out

D fail to gain recognition for their achievements

30 Unlike Lupe in "The Marble Champ," Addis in "Fast-Forward" —

F never complains about the difficulty of staying committed to his goal

G does not intend to pursue his sport after graduating from high school

H is never described as uncertain about his athletic ability

J is aware of the stress that training can put on his body

Use the visual representation on page 12 to answer questions 31–33.

31 The children in the photograph are included to show that —

A the game is fun

B stairs are dangerous

C only four people can play

D the game is fast paced

32 The main purpose of the Obstacle Course is to —

F recreate the excitement of race-car driving

G entertain children while their parents are away

H teach children problem-solving strategies

J explain the classic game of darts

33 At whom is the advertisement aimed?

A Parents

B College students

C Toddlers

D Managers of toy stores

GO ON

DIRECTIONS

Answer the following questions in the space provided on the answer document.

34 In "The Marble Champ," why do you think Lupe is so determined to win? Support your answer with evidence from the selection.

35 In "Fast-Forward," what was the biggest challenge that Addis had to overcome? Explain your answer and support it with evidence from the selection.

36 How do Lupe in "The Marble Champ" and Addis in "Fast-Forward" show their determination? Support your answer with evidence from **both** selections.

BE SURE YOU HAVE WRITTEN YOUR ANSWERS
ON THE ANSWER DOCUMENT.

TAKS GRADE 9
READING
MARCH 2009