



**NEW ENGLAND
COMMON ASSESSMENT PROGRAM**

**Released Items
2011**

**Grade 8
Reading**

Reading

① The root *graph* in the words autograph and biography means

- A. to tell.
- B. to write.
- C. to change.
- D. to create.

② An **antonym** for the word detach is

- A. mock.
- B. sting.
- C. connect.
- D. produce.

Read this folktale about Kong Rong, a young boy who lived in China long ago. Then answer the questions that follow.

The Boy Who Gave His Brother the Best Pear

Rena Krasno and Yeng-Fong Chiang

Kong Rong's father often told him, "Our famous ancestor, Confucius,* taught us that elder brothers must be responsible for their younger brothers. You have a smaller brother. Take good care of him. Be firm but kind."

Kong Rong listened to his father. He watched over his brother when he played so he wouldn't hurt himself. He scolded him when he went too near the deep pond.

One day, Kong Rong's father returned from a trip with a big basket of pears from the best orchard in the province. Kong Rong's mother washed the fruit and set it on the table, "Come children!" she cried, "Look what your father brought you!"

The children rushed to the table. Kong Rong's two elder brothers helped themselves to the best pears. Kong Rong chose the largest and ripest one of the remaining pears and handed it to his youngest brother.

Kong Rong's father rested on a bamboo chair, watching his children. "Come here, son," he said to Kong Rong. "I saw what you did. Why did you give your little brother the best pear? You could have kept it for yourself since you are older than he is."

"But father," replied Kong Rong, "you told me it is my duty to take care of my younger brother. Shouldn't I always give him the very best?"

Kong Rong's father was touched. He knew his son was special. Proudly he patted him on the shoulder.

Kong Rong tried to learn as much as he could. He read all the time. He understood things quickly and remembered them. One day, he heard his father and uncles talking about the famous scholar, Master Li, who lived in the capital city.

"I must meet this wise man and study with him," thought Kong Rong. He asked his father for permission to go to the capital city.

"You are still a very young boy," replied his father. "How will you manage on your own?"

"Please don't worry about me," said Kong Rong. "I will find a way. I am quite able to take care of myself."

His father nodded. He knew how independent and level-headed his son was. So Kong Rong set off for the capital city. A farmer agreed to bring him along in his cart. The cart jolted over the rocky roads for hours. The farmer let Kong Rong off several miles from Master Li's villa. Following muddy paths through fields, Kong Rong finally reached Master Li's estate. He wiped off his dirty shoes, then banged hard on the gate with his small fists. After some time, a doorman swung open the heavy door.

*Confucius: a great Chinese thinker

“What do you want?” he asked in an unfriendly voice.

“I would be honored to meet Master Li,” Kong Rong replied.

“Why?” questioned the doorman, feeling no need to bother with this young, ordinary-looking boy.

“Because I am related to this noble gentleman,” replied the child. The doorman hesitated. What if this were true? Well, he’d better announce the little visitor.

The great scholar was sitting in a large hall surrounded by other high officials. Meekly the doorman bowed. “There is a child at the gate who wishes to see Master Li.”

“Let him enter,” the scholar ordered.

19 Kong Rong came in. He was neatly dressed. His behavior was very respectful. He did not appear at all intimidated.

“Hmm,” said Master Li, “I don’t seem to remember you. Are you one of my younger brother’s grandchildren?”

“No Sir,” replied Kong Rong with dignity. “My ancestor was Confucius, and your ancestor was his honorable teacher Li Er. They were related to each other as teacher and student, and that is how I am related to you. I have studied some of your works and my greatest wish is to be your humble pupil.”

22 All the scholars and officials stared. What an amazing child! So young, but so poised. But one official was envious. He burst out, “Some people are clever when they are little and become stupid when they grow up.”

“Oh, honorable sir,” Kong Rong countered calmly, “you must indeed have been very smart when you were young.” Everyone laughed. Embarrassed, the official quietly retired to a corner of the room.

Kong Rong studied with Master Li for many years. Everyone admired his wisdom, devotion to studies, and good nature. His teacher was very proud of him, especially when he passed the imperial examinations.

And his father? He would often remember how Kong Rong had handed the finest pear to his baby brother and think to himself:

“I am indeed a fortunate man to have a son who continued the great tradition of our honored ancestor, Confucius.”

- 3 Kong Rong is different from his older brothers because he is
- A. helpful with his father's work.
 - B. generous to his younger brother.
 - C. able to read ancient Chinese writings.
 - D. able to hide his faults from his father.

- 4 Which word **best** describes the doorman when he opens the door for Kong Rong?
- A. hospitable
 - B. annoyed
 - C. curious
 - D. pitiful

- 5 The doorman announces Kong Rong to Master Li because he
- A. hopes that Kong Rong will eventually reward him.
 - B. thinks that Kong Rong can provide some amusement.
 - C. wants to impress Master Li by bowing to him.
 - D. worries that Kong Rong may be Master Li's relative.

- 6 In paragraph 19, the word intimidated means
- A. afraid.
 - B. worthy.
 - C. comfortable.
 - D. annoyed.

- 7 Describe how other characters in the folktale react to what Kong Rong says and does. Use details from the folktale to support your answer.

8 In paragraph 22, the word poised means

- A. calm.
- B. eager.
- C. hostile.
- D. humorous.

9 What is Kong Rong's **main** goal?

- A. to get a ride from a farmer
- B. to study harder than his brothers
- C. to become Master Li's student
- D. to be respectful of everyone

10 Kong Rong's self-confidence is shown when he

- A. gives the pear to his brother.
- B. stands up to the envious official.
- C. reveals that Confucius is his ancestor.
- D. passes the imperial examinations.

11 The point of view of the folktale allows the reader to know the thoughts and opinions of

- A. the author.
- B. only the father.
- C. only the main character.
- D. all of the characters.

12 Explain the theme or message of this folktale. Use details from the folktale to support your answer.

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