



# ***New York State Testing Program***

## **English Language Arts Test Reading**

Grade **7**

**2009 Scoring Guide**

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# The Herring Choker<sup>1</sup>

*by William Kent Krueger  
illustrated by Loren Long*



Thirteen-year-old Karl has always wanted to fish for herring like his father. His father has recently been injured in a fall, but is ready to return to fishing. For the first time, he has asked Karl to go along to help him. In this part of the story, they are in the fishing boat. They have caught many herring.

By the time we finished, herring covered the bottom of the boat as deep as my calves. For the first time in days, my father seemed happy.

Then he looked at the western sky, and his smile faded.

They are called Northwesters. They're storms that sweep out of Canada hard and fast. No one can predict their arrival. All fishermen fear them.

"We're going back," my father said.

He started the motor, wincing from the pain as he pulled the cord.

We were only two miles out, but the shoreline looked to me to be as far away as the moon. Over the distant hills, black clouds galloped toward us like wild horses. My father set a course directly for them.

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<sup>1</sup>**herring choker:** a term for a person who fishes for herring, referring to the way the herring are pulled out of the nets

We made it only halfway home before we met the storm.

The wind came first. It lifted the lake in whitecaps. The weight of the herring made us ride low in the water, and the waves broke over our bow. The spray was icy cold, needles against my face. I grasped the gunwales<sup>2</sup> as the boat bucked. In the stern, my father struggled to hold us on course. I'd put on my slicker,<sup>3</sup> but I had no life jacket. Most commercial fishermen don't carry life jackets in their boats. Wrong or right, they figure that if your boat goes down, a life jacket is useless. Even if you don't drown, the cold of the water will quickly kill you.

By the time the rain came, we'd put more distance behind us. Although we were now only half a mile from shore, the rain fell so hard we couldn't see the land. The boat was filling with water. I began to bail.

I was scared, but I saw my father sitting erect in the stern, holding the boat steady into the wind, and I felt hopeful. He didn't look hurt at all.

I was starting to think we were going to make it. That's when the motor died. My father jerked the cord desperately, but the motor wouldn't catch. I saw that the boat was coming about, broadside to the wind. I knew what that meant. We would swamp in no time. We would go down.

My father didn't fight the motor long. He leaped to the middle of the boat, beside me. "Grab an oar," he hollered above the wind.

He always carried two oars for just such an emergency.

We set the oars in the locks and began to pull hard. My father grunted, from pain or effort I couldn't tell. He dug his oar into the churning lake, bringing the boat around, bow into the wind again. With all my strength, I pulled on my own oar.

The wind pushed hard against us. We seemed to be fighting the anger of the whole lake. I was tired. My arms felt heavy and on fire. I didn't know how much longer I could shove that oar through the water.

As if he heard my thinking, my father called to me, "I need you, Karl. Only a little longer."

So I kept stroking.

Just when I thought I had no more strength, I heard it. The sound of waves breaking against the shore. We moved into the shelter of our small cove and rode the swells toward the landing.

My mother rushed through the rain to greet us. "I've been so worried," she said. She hugged me and then my father.

"Nothing to worry about," he assured her. He put his hand on my shoulder. "You did well, son. How do you feel?"

Tired as I was, I managed a smile. "I feel like a herring choker."

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<sup>2</sup>**gunwales:** upper edge of a boat's side

<sup>3</sup>**slicker:** a rain jacket

## Reading Rubric Key Points

### Reading Task: “The Herring Choker”

#### Question 27

Using details from the passage, complete the chart below with one detail that shows Karl’s father has physical strength and one detail that shows he has courage.

Qualities of Karl's Father	Supporting Detail
Physical strength	
Courage	

#### Possible Exemplary Responses:

##### *for Physical Strength*

- Karl’s father holds the boat steady in the wind.
- Karl’s father digs his oar into the lake [and turns the boat around].
- Karl’s father rows the boat to shore against the wind.
- other relevant text-based response

##### *for Courage*

- Karl’s father sets a course directly toward the black clouds.
- When the motor dies, Karl’s father leaps to the middle of the boat and instructs Karl to row [to keep the boat from swamping].
- Karl’s father keeps rowing even though it seems as if they might not make it.
- other relevant text-based response

#### Rubric:

2 points	The response is accurate, complete, and fulfills all the requirements of the task. Necessary support and/or examples are included, and the information given is clearly text-based. Any extensions beyond the text are relevant to the task.
1 point	The response includes some correct information, but may be too general or overly specific. Some of the support and/or examples may be incomplete or omitted.
0 points	The response is inaccurate, confused, and/or irrelevant, or the student failed to respond to the task.

NOTE: If the item is left blank, apply Condition Code A.

27

Using details from the passage, complete the chart below with one detail that shows Karl's father has physical strength and one detail that shows he has courage.

Qualities of Karl's Father	Supporting Detail	correct
Physical strength	Karl's father rowed all the way to land with the help of his son.	correct
Courage	Instead of giving up when the motor went out he got the oars out.	correct

This graphic organizer is complete and accurate, and it fulfills all the requirements of the task. The student has provided correct text-based details to show Karl's father's physical strength ("rowed all the way to land") and his courage ("Instead of giving up when the motor went out he got the oars out").

Reading Score Point 2

27

Using details from the passage, complete the chart below with one detail that shows Karl's father has physical strength and one detail that shows he has courage.

Qualities of Karl's Father	Supporting Detail
Physical strength	his grasped the gunwales
Courage	He leaped to the middle of the boat Gabe a oar

correct

This graphic organizer includes some correct information. The student has provided a correct text-based detail to show Karl's father's courage ("leaped to the middle [of] the boat Gabe [grabbed] a oar"), but the first answer ("grasped the gunwales") is inaccurate because it describes Karl's physical strength not his father's.

Reading Score Point 1

27

Using details from the passage, complete the chart below with one detail that shows Karl's father has physical strength and one detail that shows he has courage.

Qualities of Karl's Father	Supporting Detail
Physical strength	over the distant hills, black clouds galloped towed us like wild horses
Courage	They're storms that sweep out of Canada hard and fast.

This graphic organizer is incorrect. Both answers include details from the passage, but they describe the storm not Karl's father's physical strength or his courage. The response indicates that the student has not understood the prompt.

Reading Score Point 0



# ***New York State Testing Program***

## **English Language Arts Test Reading**

Grade **7**

**2009 Practice Set**

27

Using details from the passage, complete the chart below with one detail that shows Karl's father has physical strength and one detail that shows he has courage.

Qualities of Karl's Father	Supporting Detail
Physical strength	Fighting the storm
Courage	brave enough to Keep going.

27

Using details from the passage, complete the chart below with one detail that shows Karl's father has physical strength and one detail that shows he has courage.

Qualities of Karl's Father	Supporting Detail
Physical strength	He was holding the boat steady into the wind.
Courage	He told Karl that he needed him and didn't give up. He kept on trying to the boat to shore.

27

Using details from the passage, complete the chart below with one detail that shows Karl's father has physical strength and one detail that shows he has courage.

Qualities of Karl's Father	Supporting Detail
Physical strength	"He dug his oar into the churning lake..."
Courage	"I need you Karl, only a little longer."

27

Using details from the passage, complete the chart below with one detail that shows Karl's father has physical strength and one detail that shows he has courage.

Qualities of Karl's Father	Supporting Detail
Physical strength	He kept on with the oars even though he was in pain, because he had been recently injured in a fall.
Courage	He had courage because he was able to fight through the storm to get home, without giving up.

27

Using details from the passage, complete the chart below with one detail that shows Karl's father has physical strength and one detail that shows he has courage.

Qualities of Karl's Father	Supporting Detail
Physical strength	He kept rowing
Courage	He was not scared when the storm came and the motor did not work

27

Using details from the passage, complete the chart below with one detail that shows Karl's father has physical strength and one detail that shows he has courage.

Qualities of Karl's Father	Supporting Detail
Physical strength	I thought I had no more strength I wasn't very strong because of my injury
Courage	I saw my father sitting he had a lot of courage

27

Using details from the passage, complete the chart below with one detail that shows Karl's father has physical strength and one detail that shows he has courage.

Qualities of Karl's Father	Supporting Detail
Physical strength	he was able to catch fish and use the oars (oars)
Courage	He wanted to keep his son safe so he kept on paddling

27

Using details from the passage, complete the chart below with one detail that shows Karl's father has physical strength and one detail that shows he has courage.

Qualities of Karl's Father	Supporting Detail
Physical strength	When the motor died Karl and his dad took oars and rowed the boat. (Karl's dad was in pain)
Courage	When the storm came Karl's father was sitting erect in the stern, holding the boat steady into the wind

27

Using details from the passage, complete the chart below with one detail that shows Karl's father has physical strength and one detail that shows he has courage.

Qualities of Karl's Father	Supporting Detail
Physical strength	He pulled the car very hard even though he was in pain.
Courage	He didn't look worried or scared.

27

Using details from the passage, complete the chart below with one detail that shows Karl's father has physical strength and one detail that shows he has courage.

Qualities of Karl's Father	Supporting Detail
Physical strength	He kept rowing even know he was hurt.
Courage	He didnt let the boat sink



# 7<sup>th</sup> GRADE READING

## PRACTICE SET ANSWER KEY

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

<b>PS 1</b>	(0-2)	
<b>PS 2</b>	(0-2)	
<b>PS 3</b>	(0-2)	
<b>PS 4</b>	(0-2)	
<b>PS 5</b>	(0-2)	
<b>PS 6</b>	(0-2)	
<b>PS 7</b>	(0-2)	
<b>PS 8</b>	(0-2)	
<b>PS 9</b>	(0-2)	
<b>PS 10</b>	(0-2)	

<b>PS 11</b>	(0-2)	
<b>PS 12</b>	(0-2)	
<b>PS 13</b>	(0-2)	
<b>PS 14</b>	(0-2)	
<b>PS 15</b>	(0-2)	
<b>PS 16</b>	(0-2)	
<b>PS 17</b>	(0-2)	
<b>PS 18</b>	(0-2)	
<b>PS 19</b>	(0-2)	
<b>PS 20</b>	(0-2)	

