

TCAP Writing Operational Test

TCAP/WA

DIRECTIONS

In a few moments, you will see a passage(s) and a prompt. You are to plan and write an essay about the passage(s) according to the instructions provided in the prompt. This activity will show how well you write. Express your thoughts clearly and make your writing interesting to the reader. Your essay will be scored as a rough draft, but you should watch for careless errors.

Before writing, spend some time reading the passage(s), thinking about the prompt, and planning your thoughts.

WRITE ONLY ON THE PROMPT AND PASSAGE(S) YOU ARE GIVEN.

The time you have for writing is 60 minutes.

**PROMPT J – GRADE 5 WRITING ASSESSMENT
TENNESSEE COMPREHENSIVE ASSESSMENT PROGRAM (TCAP)
2013 OPERATIONAL TEST**

The following article is an account of a scientific expedition in Peru.

Mystery of the Tattooed Mummy

Deep inside an ancient pyramid in Peru, a mummy lay hidden in a gold-filled tomb. The underground chamber remained a secret for nearly 1,600 years, until an archaeologist¹ noticed rectangular patches of soft clay in the pyramid’s floor—a telltale sign of a grave. His heartbeat quickened. He suspected that someone powerful would be buried here.

The archaeologist was standing in a sacred location, a courtyard near the peak of the biggest pyramid at El Brujo—a ceremonial site of the ancient Moche (MO-chay) people. The civilization’s rulers, who controlled the north coast of Peru from A.D. 100 to 800, probably reserved this spot for a king or a great warrior. What valuable treasures would lie inside this leader’s tomb?

The Mummy Unwrapped

Finally, after weeks of careful digging, the scientists peered through the ancient dust. In front of them lay one of the world’s largest and best-preserved mummies. As they unwrapped the bundled layers, hundreds of treasures were revealed, including gold nose rings and necklaces, sparkling crowns, and huge war clubs usually reserved for the Moche’s greatest warriors.

But when archaeologists lifted a gold bowl covering the mummy’s face, they found the biggest surprise yet. The mummy wasn’t a king or a male warrior; it was a young Moche woman—and she was covered in mysterious tattoos!

The Moche Way

Until now research had shown that only men ruled Moche society—a warrior culture in which prisoners were captured in battle and sacrificed in bloody rituals atop this very pyramid. Where did this 20-something woman fit in? Was she a queen? A high priestess? A warrior princess?

One thing’s for sure: This Moche VIP² would have received star treatment. When visiting her people, servants would have carried her high above the crowds on a litter, a special platform reserved for only the most elite³ figures. Says anthropologist⁴ John Verano: “Her gold objects would have shimmered so brightly you could have seen them from miles away.”

¹ **archaeologist:** a scientist who studies objects from the past

² **VIP:** very important person

³ **elite:** important

⁴ **anthropologist:** a person who studies people’s way of life

Twenty Questions

Today this mystery woman is making headlines again. Her well-sealed tomb helped preserve hundreds of ancient artifacts⁵—even her dresses and braided hair. “It’s like going back in a time machine to A.D. 450 and seeing her just as she was,” says Verano. But now the scientists have unearthed more questions than answers.

What did the mummy’s elaborate tattoos mean? With drawings of snakes, spiders, crabs, and imaginary animals crawling along her arms, legs, and feet, she has more body art than any known Moche mummy. No one knows for sure what these creatures mean, but the Moche may have believed the animals would bring healthy harvests. And why was the mummy buried with 23 spear throwers? Even the most powerful male leaders were buried with only one or two. Did her bodyguards leave the weapons to protect her in the afterlife?

Most important, why did this adored woman die at such a young age? The skeleton showed no sign of disease or injury. Some experts think she may have died while giving birth, but researchers are still uncertain.

Tomb Be Continued

Whoever this woman was, it’s clear from her elaborate burial that she was a star among her people. And now the ancient heroine’s tomb is helping experts re-create her life and the world of the Moche people.

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⁵ **artifacts:** objects made by people

READ THIS WRITING PROMPT CAREFULLY BEFORE YOU BEGIN YOUR WRITING.

Tattooed Mummy

It can be fun to think about people who lived long ago. We might discover that our lives would be very different if we lived in another time.

Write a narrative essay about what life would have been like for the tattooed mummy. Use details from the passage to help you write your story. Be certain to use concrete words, phrases, and sensory details to write about the tattooed mummy and the people she knew. Also, remember to use correct grammar, usage, capitalization, punctuation, and spelling when writing your essay.

You may use the space below for prewriting. However, only the lined pages of your answer document will be scored. You will have a time limit of 60 minutes.

This writing prompt must be returned with all test material.