

ELA BENCHMARK # 3

6th Grade Exam



Directions: In Part 1 of this exam you will read an informational text about a famous explorer by the name of James “Jim” Bridger. You are encouraged to read the text more than once. In Part 2 of this exam, you will write a short-constructed response (2-3 paragraphs) responding to a question based on the text you read in Part 1. In your short-constructed response, you will be asked to use evidence from the text to support your claim.

Part 1: Gathering Evidence

Read the article “James ‘Jim’ Bridger.” There are ten (10) multiple-choice questions that follow, all of which are based on the reading.

James “Jim” Bridger

1804-1881

- | | | | |
|---|--|---|---|
| 1 | James Felix “Jim” Bridger’s life story is as interesting as the tall tales he used to tell. Bridger was born in Virginia in 1804. Later, his family moved to a farm near St. Louis, Missouri. At age fourteen, he went to work as a blacksmith’s apprentice. He learned how to make horseshoes and other products out of iron. | 4 | Using the skills he learned while exploring the Missouri, Bridger became very good at trapping beavers for their furs, also called “pelts.” By 1830, Bridger became part owner of a company that specialized in beaver trapping. Beaver pelts were very popular for hats and clothing at the time. |
| 2 | When Bridger was eighteen years old, he was the youngest member of a group that explored and mapped the Missouri River. As a part of the expedition, he was one of the first European American people to see the natural wonders of what is now Yellowstone National Park. | 5 | Bridger’s success at trapping—as well as the growing number of people moving to the western part of America—led to the building of a trading post and fort near the Green River in Wyoming. It became known as Fort Bridger. Many people passed the fort as they traveled west on the Oregon Trail. Often, the settlers stopped to buy supplies, get their wagons fixed, and hear Jim Bridger’s stories. He became famous for telling tall tales to the people passing through. |
| 3 | Yellowstone was the first in a long line of landscapes that Bridger was to encounter before others. While spending the winter of 1824–25 in what is now Cove, Utah, members of the team Bridger was with argued about which direction they thought the Bear River went. The team chose Bridger to explore the river. He ended up at the Great Salt Lake, which he mistook for an inlet of the Pacific Ocean because of the lake’s saltiness. | | |





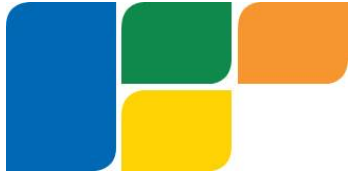
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- 6 Bridger’s stories were funny, extravagant, and often unbelievable. He would tell stories of glass mountains, “petrified” birds singing “petrified” songs, and talk about days when Pike’s Peak was just a hole in the ground. These outrageous stories were told both to tease new arrivals from the east and to amuse the locals who knew they weren’t true.
- 7 The Rocky Mountains were largely unexplored and Bridger spent many years hiking them and trapping animals. In his travels, he learned a great deal about the terrain and wildlife of the area. Because of his knowledge and skills, he became a valued guide. People often hired him to lead them across the mountains.
- 8 In 1850, Bridger found a short cut through the mountains of Wyoming
- 9 through the Rocky Mountains. This path became known as Bridger’s Pass. Because the pass shortened trips by sixty-one miles, settlers moving west frequently used it. In addition, the pass later became part of the Union Pacific Railroad. The Union Pacific was part of the Transcontinental Railroad, the first railroad to cross America from coast to coast.
- 9 Bridger spent twenty years working as a guide. When he retired, he went back to Missouri to live on a farm, where he died in 1881 at the age of seventy-seven. Jim Bridger is remembered for being a skilled mountain man and storyteller. Today, there are many places in the American West named in honor of Jim Bridger.





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This question has two parts. First, answer part A. Then, answer part B.

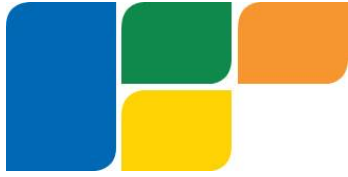
Part A

1. Which statement describes Bridger's contributions as an explorer?
- a) Bridger spent many years hiking and traveling the Rocky Mountains.
 - b) By the time he reached his fifties, Bridger was an experienced explorer.
 - c) Bridger is claimed to be the first European American to discover much of the West.
 - d) Bridger had many talents besides exploring: blacksmithing, trapping, and story-telling.

Part B

2. Which statement from the passage supports the response in Part A?
- a) "At age fourteen, he went to work as a blacksmith's apprentice."
 - b) "Yellowstone was the first in a long line of landscapes that Bridger was to encounter before others."
 - c) "For many years, people assumed Bridger discovered the Great Salt Lake."
 - d) "Because of his knowledge and skills, he became a valued guide."





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This question has two parts. First, answer part A. Then, answer part B.

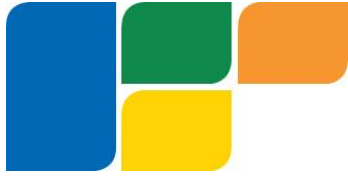
Part A

3. What is the central idea of the text?
- a) Jim had several careers in his life.
 - b) Jim was an adventurous and interesting person.
 - c) A daring life can turn a person into an interesting storyteller.
 - d) The Oregon Trail would have been more difficult without Jim Bridger.

Part B

4. Which paragraph from the passage **best** supports the response in Part A?
- a) Paragraph 1
 - b) Paragraph 3
 - c) Paragraph 5
 - d) Paragraph 8





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This question has two parts. First, answer part A. Then, answer part B.

Part A

5. Which paragraph **most strongly** contributes to the idea of Jim Bridger paving the way for future travelers to explore the Rocky Mountain areas?

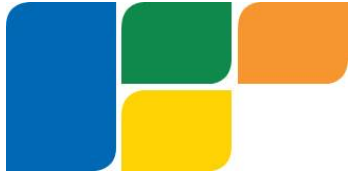
- a) Paragraph 3
- b) Paragraph 5
- c) Paragraph 8
- d) Paragraph 9

Part B

6. Which statement **best** summarizes the choice you made from Part A?

- a) "In 1850, Bridger found a short cut through the mountains of Wyoming through the Rocky Mountains."
- b) "Jim Bridger is remembered for being a skilled mountain man and storyteller."
- c) "For many years, people assumed Bridger was the first non-Native American to discover the Great Salt Lake."
- d) "The Rocky Mountains were largely unexplored and Bridger spent many years hiking them and trapping animals."





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This question has two parts. First, answer part A. Then, answer part B.

Part A

7. What is the author's purpose in the passage?

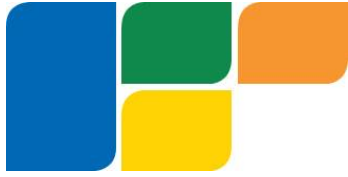
- a) to inform
- b) to entertain
- c) to persuade
- d) to describe

Part B

8. Which detail from the passage reveals the author's primary purpose?

- a) "At age fourteen, he went to work as a blacksmith's apprentice."
- b) "He would tell stories of glass mountains...and talk about days when Pike's Peak was just a hole in the ground."
- c) "The Rocky Mountains were largely unexplored and Bridger spent many years hiking them..."
- d) "Jim Bridger is remembered for being a skilled mountain man and a storyteller."





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This question has two parts. First, answer part A. Then, answer part B.

Part A

9. Which question below is left unanswered by the passage because there is a lack of evidence in the passage?

- a) How did the Rocky Mountains in Wyoming become known as the Bridger Pass?
- b) Did Jim Bridger discover the Great Salt Lake before the Native Americans?
- c) What did Etienne Provost discover about the Great Salt Lake before Jim Bridger?
- d) How did Jim Bridger amuse people while traveling through the Rocky Mountains?

Part B

10. Which statement **best** supports the answer to Part A?

- a) "These outrageous stories were told both to tease new arrivals from the east and to amuse the locals who knew they weren't true."
- b) "In 1850, Bridger found a short cut through the mountains of Wyoming through the Rocky Mountains."
- c) "However, some now think that Etienne Provost, a French-Canadian trapper, may have seen it first."
- d) "For many years, people assumed Bridger was the first non-Native American to discover the Great Salt Lake."





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Part 2: Argument Writing

You will now review your source, take notes, and plan, draft, revise, and edit your constructed response. You may use your notes and refer to the source. Read your assignment and the information about how your argumentative constructed response will be scored and then begin your work.

Your Assignment:

In 2-3 paragraphs, make a claim as to whether you agree or disagree with an idea of a statue being built in Jim Bridger's honor near the Great Salt Lake. Support and argue your claim with textual evidence and inferences drawn from the text.

Argumentative Scoring:

Your short-constructed response will be scored using the following:

- **Statement of claim and organization:** How well did you state your claim and maintain your claim from the beginning to the end? How well did your ideas thoughtfully flow from beginning to the end using effective transitions? How effective was your introduction and your conclusion?
- **Elaboration/evidence:** How well did you use relevant and specific information with evidence from the source? How well did you explain your ideas? How well did you state your ideas using clear language that is appropriate for your audience and purpose?
- **Conventions:** How well did you follow the rules of grammar usage, punctuation, capitalization, and spelling?

Now begin work on your short constructed response. Manage your time carefully so that you can plan, write, revise, and edit your response. Be as thorough as possible.

