



# ELA Grade 9 Unit 1 - Print

## Question 1

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### Excerpt from *Catalyst*

by Laurie Anderson

1.0 Elemental

SAFETY TIP: Never carry out unauthorized experiments.

I like to run at night. No one watches me. No one hears my sneakers slipping in the loose gravel at the side of the road. Gravity doesn't exist. My muscles don't hurt. I float, drift past churches, stores, and schools, past the locked houses and their flicker-blue windows. My mind is quiet and clear.

A ghost hovers off my left shoulder. I can almost hear her breathe. I pick up the pace. She doesn't scare me; I know I'll win. Well, I'm pretty sure I'll win. Chances are good.

On the outside I am Good Kate, Rev. Jack Malone's girl, isn't she sweet, she helps so much with the house, so sad about her mother, and she's smart, too, see her name in the papers for honor roll this and science fair that, she's got scholarship written all over her, runs pretty fast, she's so good with her brother, why can't all teenagers be like her?

On the inside I am Bad Kate, daughter of no one, thinks she's all that, prays with her eyes open, Miss Perfect, Miss Suck-up, disrespectful, disagreeable, still waters run deep and dirty, she's going to lose it, just you watch, I've seen her type before.

Run faster.

Sweat trickles along the bones of my face and licks my neck. Running, sweating, evaporating ... I'm distilling myself in the dark: mixture, substance, compound, element, atom. The ghost is getting closer. Run faster. Push beyond the wall, push beyond my limits. My chest is flayed open; no lungs to breath with, no heart to pound. The air flows around and between my shiny bones. My skin is silk. I take it off when I get hot.

The first night I ran late like this, the puddles were filmed with ice. Now the trees are leafing and the roads are dry and I fly, breathless, running out of the empty night into a place where I can't hear myself think.

I wish I never had to stop.

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**Part A:**

Read the excerpt from the passage *Catalyst*.

On the inside I am Bad Kate, daughter of no one, thinks she's all that, prays with her eyes open, Miss Perfect, Miss Suck-up, disrespectful, disagreeable, still waters run deep and dirty, she's going to lose it, just you watch, I've seen her type before.

Which statement **best** explains the meaning of the phrase "still waters run deep"?

- A It is often extremely difficult to pull oneself out of a deep state of depression.
- B People with calm exteriors are often hiding a more passionate nature deep inside.
- C It is what a person is like deep down inside that is the true measure of their character.
- D People who talk very little do so because deep down inside they have nothing much to say.

**Part B:**

What phrase in *Catalyst* helps explain the meaning of the phrase "still waters run deep"?

Underline the phrase that **best** supports the answer to Part A.

I like to run at night. No one watches me. No one hears my sneakers slipping in the loose gravel at the side of the road. Gravity doesn't exist. My muscles don't hurt. I float, drift past churches, stores, and schools, past the locked houses and their flicker-blue windows. My mind is quiet and clear.

A ghost hovers off my left shoulder. I can almost hear her breathe. I pick up the pace. She doesn't scare me; I know I'll win. Well, I'm pretty sure I'll win. Chances are good.

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I wish I never had to stop.

## Question 2

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Read the excerpt from the passage *Catalyst*.

Running, sweating, evaporating ... I'm distilling myself in the dark: mixture, substance, compound, element, atom.

What does the phrase “distilling myself” most likely mean as it is used here?

- A** When Kate runs, she exerts herself to the point that it is as though her very molecules can feel the strain.
- B** When Kate runs, all the worries in her life are somehow extracted, and she feels purified, like her true self again.
- C** Kate's late-night runs break her down so she feels like a little kid again, the way a molecule breaks down into atoms.
- D** Kate's late-night runs are so physically strenuous, she feels as if she's been broken down into some lower, animal life form.

### Question 3

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The author of the passage develops the main themes of transformation and coming of age by employing

- A haunting images such as ghosts and empty churches, stores, and schools.
- B lists of traits that reflect how the main character is perceived by others.
- C words and phrases related to chemistry, such as experiment, element, and catalyst.
- D vivid descriptions of how physically taxing the act of running is for the main character.

## Question 4

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Read the excerpt from the passage *Catalyst*.

On the outside I am Good Kate, Rev. Jack Malone's girl, isn't she sweet, she helps so much with the house, so sad about her mother, and she's smart, too, see her name in the papers for honor roll this and science fair that, she's got scholarship written all over her, runs pretty fast, she's so good with her brother, why can't all teenagers be like her?

Which **best** describes the effect the author achieves by structuring Kate's narration as a series of run-on sentences like the one above?

- A It creates a sense of dramatic tension, as it shows Kate to be emotionally unstable.
- B It creates a sense that the realities of Kate's everyday life are literally chasing her.
- C It creates a sense that Kate is a rather unreliable narrator, which calls the rest of the facts into question.
- D It creates a sense of mystery, because the reader is left in the dark as to what happened to Kate's mother.

### Question 5

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Which **best** defines the meaning of “catalyst” in the context of the passage?

- A a person, thing, or force that brings about an event or kind of change
- B something that causes activity between persons or forces without itself being affected
- C a substance that causes or speeds up a chemical reaction without itself being affected
- D an energetic, cheerful person whose presence causes those around them to be the same way



## Question 6

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### Excerpt from *Black Boy*

by Richard Wright

Hunger stole upon me so slowly that at first I was not aware of what hunger really meant. Hunger had always been more or less at my elbow when I played, but now I began to wake up at night to find hunger standing at my bedside, staring at me gauntly. The hunger I had known before this had been no grim, hostile stranger; it had been a normal hunger that had made me beg constantly for bread, and when I ate a crust or two I was satisfied. But this new hunger baffled me, scared me, made me angry and insistent. Whenever I begged for food now, my mother would pour me a cup of tea, which would still the clamor in my stomach for a moment or two; but a little later I would feel hunger nudging my ribs, twisting my empty guts until they ached. I would grow dizzy and my vision would dim. I became less active in my play, and for the first time in my life I had to pause and think of what was happening to me. "Mama, I'm hungry," I complained one afternoon.

"Jump up and catch a kungry," she said, trying to make me laugh and forget.

"What's a kungry?"

"It's what little boys eat when they get hungry," she said.

"What does it taste like?"

"I don't know."

"Then why do you tell me to catch one?"

"Because you said that you were hungry," she said smiling.

I sensed that she was teasing me and it made me angry.

"But I am hungry. I want to eat."

"You'll have to wait."

"But I want to eat now."

"But there is nothing to eat," she told me

“Why?”

“Just because there’s none,” she explained.

“But I want to eat,” I said beginning to cry.

“You’ll just have to wait,” she said again.

“But why?”

“For God to send some food.”

“When is He going to send it?”

“I don’t know.”

“But I’m hungry!”

She was ironing and she paused and looked at me with tears in her eyes.

“Where’s your father?” she asked me.

I stared in bewilderment. Yes, it was true that my father had not come home to sleep for many days now and I could make as much noise as I wanted. Though I had not known why he was absent, I had been glad that he was not there to shout his restrictions at me. But it never had occurred to me that his absence would mean that there would be no food.

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**Part A:**

Read the excerpt from the passage *Black Boy*.

The hunger I had known before this had been no grim, hostile stranger; it had been a normal hunger that had made me beg constantly for bread, and when I ate a crust or two I was satisfied. But this new hunger baffled me, scared me, made me angry and insistent.

Which **best** describes what the author means by referring to this new hunger as a "grim, hostile stranger"?

- A** He refers to hunger in a spiritual sense rather than in a physical sense.
- B** His hunger comes and goes without warning, like an aimless wanderer.
- C** He experiences a degree of hunger that he is entirely unfamiliar with.
- D** His hunger becomes something darker since he associates it with his father's absence.

**Part B:**

Which phrases in *Black Boy* fit the narrator's description of hunger as "grim" and "hostile

Underline the phrases that **best** support the answer to Part A.

Hunger stole upon me so slowly that at first I was not aware of what hunger really meant. Hunger had always been more or less at my elbow when I played, but now I began to wake up at night to find hunger standing at my bedside, staring at me gauntly. The hunger I had known before this had been no grim, hostile stranger; it had been a normal hunger that had made me beg constantly for bread, and when I ate a crust or two I was satisfied. But this new hunger baffled me, scared me, made me angry and insistent. Whenever I begged for food now, my mother would pour me a cup of tea, which would still the clamor in my stomach for a moment or two; but a little later I would feel hunger nudging my ribs, twisting my empty guts until they ached. I would grow dizzy and my vision would dim. I became less active in my play, and for the first time in my life I had to pause and think of what was happening to me.

### Question 7

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How does the author develop the idea of hunger in *Black Boy*?

- A by explaining that its true cause has to do with the boy's mysteriously absent father
- B by personifying it as a villain that follows the boy everywhere and terrorizes him
- C by showing its effect on the boy as he repeatedly asks his mother "why" over and over again
- D by illustrating its absurdity through the mother's suggestion that the boy "catch a kungry"

### Question 8

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Which **best** explains why the narrator's mother teases him and gives indirect answers to his questions in the passage *Black Boy*?

- A She wants to teach him about responsibility and how to fend for himself.
- B She feels that he is only bothering her out of boredom rather than actual hunger.
- C She is irritated by him and how little he seems to know about their grave situation.
- D She is trying to spare him the grief of knowing that his father may never come back.

## Question 9

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Which **best** describes the central theme of the excerpt from *Black Boy*?

- A the awful effects of racism
- B the hopelessness of poverty
- C the tragedy of losing a parent
- D the bonds of family relations

## Question 10

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Read the excerpt from the passage *Black Boy*.

Hunger had always been more or less at my elbow when I played, but now I began to wake up at night to find hunger standing at my bedside, staring at me gauntly.

Which statement **best** describes what the author means by writing that hunger had always been “at my elbow”?

- A It was a cruel and constant reminder of his family’s poverty.
- B It was always close to him but still a safe distance away.
- C It was as though he was handcuffed and unable to move.
- D It was like a faithful pet that let him know when to go home.

## Question 11

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### Remarks by the President in State of the Union Address

January 20, 2015

At this moment—with a growing economy, shrinking deficits, bustling industry, booming energy production—we have risen from recession freer to write our own future than any other nation on Earth. It's now up to us to choose who we want to be over the next 15 years and for decades to come.

Will we accept an economy where only a few of us do spectacularly well? Or will we commit ourselves to an economy that generates rising incomes and chances for everyone who makes the effort? *(Applause.)*

[...]

America thrived in the 20th century because we made high school free, sent a generation of GIs to college, trained the best workforce in the world. We were ahead of the curve. But other countries caught on. And in a 21st century economy that rewards knowledge like never before, we need to up our game. We need to do more.

By the end of this decade, two in three job openings will require some higher education—two in three. And yet, we still live in a country where too many bright, striving Americans are priced out of the education they need. It's not fair to them, and it's sure not smart for our future. That's why I'm sending this Congress a bold new plan to lower the cost of community college—to zero. *(Applause.)*

Keep in mind 40 percent of our college students choose community college. Some are young and starting out. Some are older and looking for a better job. Some are veterans and single parents trying to transition back into the job market. Understand, you've got to earn it. You've got to keep your grades up and graduate on time.

Tennessee, a state with Republican leadership, and Chicago, a city with Democratic leadership, are showing that free community college is possible. I want to spread that idea all across America, so that two years of college becomes as free and universal in America as high school is today. *(Applause.)* Let's stay ahead of the curve. *(Applause.)* And I want to work with this Congress to make sure those already burdened with student loans can reduce their monthly payments so that student debt doesn't derail anyone's dreams. *(Applause.)*



Thanks to Vice President Biden’s great work to update our job training system, we’re connecting community colleges with local employers to train workers to fill high-paying jobs like coding, and nursing, and robotics. Tonight, I’m also asking more businesses to follow the lead of companies like CVS and UPS, and offer more educational benefits and paid apprenticeships—opportunities that give workers the chance to earn higher-paying jobs even if they don’t have a higher education.

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Which statement provides relevant evidence supporting the president’s claim in “Remarks by the President in the State of the Union Address” that community college should be free to all Americans? Check all that apply.

- The U.S. economy is growing and in a better position than any other country in the world.
- Two out of three jobs will require some form of higher education by the end of the decade.
- Places with Republican and Democratic leadership have chosen to offer free community college.
- Other countries have learned from the United States and produce their own educated workforces.
- Many Americans who do get a college degree are burdened with crippling debts from student loans.
- Forty percent of American college students go to a community college at some point in their education.
- The country became an economic powerhouse in the 20th century by expanding access to education.

## Question 12

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Read the excerpt from the passage “Remarks by the President in the State of the Union Address.”

Tennessee, a state with Republican leadership, and Chicago, a city with Democratic leadership, are showing that free community college is possible.

The president’s purpose in including the remark above is **most likely** to

- A | appeal to voters in both the North and South in preparation for the upcoming national elections.
- B | explain that this proposal will only work with the cooperation of the state and local governments.
- C | convince Republicans and Democrats to work together on getting his proposal approved in Congress.
- D | demonstrate the benefits of free community college by giving examples of places with strong economies.

### Question 13

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Read the excerpt from the passage “Remarks by the President in the State of the Union Address.”

Some are veterans and single parents trying to transition back into the job market.

Which **best** describes the meaning of the word “transition” in this excerpt?

- A to enter for the first time
- B to accelerate or move rapidly
- C to take advantage of an opportunity
- D to move from one position to another

## Question 14

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Why does the president bring up the fact that “America thrived in the 20th century” and “sent a generation of GIs to college” in paragraph 2?

- A** He wants to illustrate just how much the economy has changed for the worse since then.
- B** He wants to show that expanding access to education has had great results in the past.
- C** He wants to emphasize that the country needs to give education at least as much priority as the military.
- D** He wants to appeal to elderly voters who still remember those years immediately following the war.

## Question 15

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### **Editorial: Obama's free community college tuition proposal is flawed**

President Barack Obama's proposal to give students two years of free tuition at community colleges is well-intentioned but ultimately flawed. It is too broad, too expensive and too dependent on cooperation from states such as Florida that are unlikely to invest in this initiative even if Congress approves it. A better approach would be to increase federal spending on existing programs for need-based financial aid rather than create another entitlement.

The president's pitch has several shortcomings, particularly for Florida. The proposal would offer free tuition to any student who maintains a 2.5 grade-point average and makes steady progress. But in Florida, community colleges already have an open enrollment policy. Many students aren't ready for college-level work even though they have a high school diploma, yet state law now bans colleges from forcing them into remedial, noncredit courses even if the students would benefit.

Would a low-income student who maturely recognizes that she needs help and then opts to take appropriate catchup classes—and maybe takes more than two years to earn an associate's degree—be left without free tuition just when a degree became tantalizingly near?

Under the president's proposal, only the tuition would be free, leaving books (averaging \$1,328, according to a College Board study) and transportation (\$1,735), which nearly add up to the cost of tuition itself. And if the student doesn't live at home, food and housing become the highest cost of all—averaging \$7,705, according to that same study.

In Florida, about two-thirds of high school graduates who continue their education start at a community college. Community college is also the key entry point to public higher education for minority students; as pointed out by Community College Week, more than eight in 10 minority freshmen and sophomores attend a Florida community college. For the sake of fairness and upward mobility, it is vital to get the financing formula right.

The White House estimates that about 9 million students a year could benefit and that they would save about \$3,800 a year in tuition bills. The federal cost would likely run about \$60 billion over a decade. That is a big price tag. A much better—and targeted—idea would be to provide full financial aid to the low-income students who truly need it and could most benefit.

The plan, which the president will lay out more fully in his State of the Union address next week, faces a rocky reception in the Republican-dominated Congress. Even if it somehow became federal law, states would be expected to cover a quarter of the cost to participate. Good luck with that in Florida, where Gov. Rick Scott touts \$10,000 four-year college degrees on the cheap.

Put the president's free college tuition proposal in the same category as the governor's discount degrees. They are nice political sound bites, but they are impractical and do not address the real issues in higher education.

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Which **best** summarizes the author's argument in the editorial?

- A It is too broad, too expensive and too dependent on cooperation from states such as Florida that are unlikely to invest in this initiative even if Congress approves it.
- B Many students aren't ready for college-level work even though they have a high school diploma, yet state law now bans colleges from forcing them into remedial, noncredit courses even if the students would benefit.
- C In Florida, about two-thirds of high school graduates who continue their education start at a community college.
- D They are nice political sound bites, but they are impractical and do not address the real issues in higher education.

## Question 16

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Which **best** supports the author's claim that the president's proposal is "too broad"?

- A Many students aren't ready for college-level work even though they have a high school diploma, yet state law now bans colleges from forcing them into remedial, noncredit courses even if the students would benefit.
- B And if the student doesn't live at home, food and housing become the highest cost of all—averaging \$7,705, according to that same study.
- C A much better—and targeted—idea would be to provide full financial aid to the low-income students who truly need it and could most benefit.
- D The plan, which the president will lay out more fully in his State of the Union address next week, faces a rocky reception in the Republican-dominated Congress.

## Question 17

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What phrase in the editorial shows that the author feels President Obama's proposal is partially motivated by a desire to boost his approval ratings?

Underline the phrase that **best** shows the author's point of view.

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## Question 18

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Which claims about the flaws in the president's proposal does the editorial's author support with evidence? Check all that apply.

- It is a nice political sound bite that will help the president's ratings in the polls.
- It only provides for tuition, and leaves out books, transportation, and housing costs.
- It fails to account for students who need remedial courses or more than two years to complete their degree.
- It provides aid even to people who can afford it instead of focusing on those who need it most.
- It faces an uphill battle in getting approval from Republican-dominated Congress.
- It requires a quarter of its funding from states like Florida that already have their own aid programs.
- It has been conveniently announced right before the president's State of the Union address.

## Question 19

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### Remarks by the President in State of the Union Address

January 20, 2015

At this moment—with a growing economy, shrinking deficits, bustling industry, booming energy production—we have risen from recession freer to write our own future than any other nation on Earth. It's now up to us to choose who we want to be over the next 15 years and for decades to come.

Will we accept an economy where only a few of us do spectacularly well? Or will we commit ourselves to an economy that generates rising incomes and chances for everyone who makes the effort? *(Applause.)*

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America thrived in the 20th century because we made high school free, sent a generation of GIs to college, trained the best workforce in the world. We were ahead of the curve. But other countries caught on. And in a 21st century economy that rewards knowledge like never before, we need to up our game. We need to do more.

By the end of this decade, two in three job openings will require some higher education—two in three. And yet, we still live in a country where too many bright, striving Americans are priced out of the education they need. It's not fair to them, and it's sure not smart for our future. That's why I'm sending this Congress a bold new plan to lower the cost of community college—to zero. *(Applause.)*

Keep in mind 40 percent of our college students choose community college. Some are young and starting out. Some are older and looking for a better job. Some are veterans and single parents trying to transition back into the job market. Understand, you've got to earn it. You've got to keep your grades up and graduate on time.

Tennessee, a state with Republican leadership, and Chicago, a city with Democratic leadership, are showing that free community college is possible. I want to spread that idea all across America, so that two years of college becomes as free and universal in America as high school is today. *(Applause.)* Let's stay ahead of the curve. *(Applause.)* And I want to work with this Congress to make sure those already burdened with student loans can reduce their monthly payments so that student debt doesn't derail anyone's dreams. *(Applause.)*

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### **Editorial: Obama's free community college tuition proposal is flawed**

President Barack Obama's proposal to give students two years of free tuition at community colleges is well-intentioned but ultimately flawed. It is too broad, too expensive and too dependent on cooperation from states such as Florida that are unlikely to invest in this initiative even if Congress approves it. A better approach would be to increase federal spending on existing programs for need-based financial aid rather than create another entitlement.

The president's pitch has several shortcomings, particularly for Florida. The proposal would offer free tuition to any student who maintains a 2.5 grade-point average and makes steady progress. But in Florida, community colleges already have an open enrollment policy. Many students aren't ready for college-level work even though they have a high school diploma, yet state law now bans colleges from forcing them into remedial, noncredit courses even if the students would benefit.

Would a low-income student who maturely recognizes that she needs help and then opts to take appropriate catchup classes—and maybe takes more than two years to earn an associate's degree—be left without free tuition just when a degree became tantalizingly near?

Under the president's proposal, only the tuition would be free, leaving books (averaging \$1,328, according to a College Board study) and transportation (\$1,735), which nearly add up to the cost of tuition itself. And if the student doesn't live at home, food and housing become the highest cost of all—averaging \$7,705, according to that same study.

In Florida, about two-thirds of high school graduates who continue their education start at a community college. Community college is also the key entry point to public higher education for minority students; as pointed out by Community College Week, more than eight in 10 minority freshmen and sophomores attend a Florida community college. For the sake of fairness and upward mobility, it is vital to get the financing formula right.

The White House estimates that about 9 million students a year could benefit and that they would save about \$3,800 a year in tuition bills. The federal cost would likely run about \$60 billion over a decade. That is a big price tag. A much better—and targeted—idea would be to provide full financial aid to the low-income students who truly need it and could most benefit.

The plan, which the president will lay out more fully in his State of the Union address next week, faces a rocky reception in the Republican-dominated Congress. Even if it somehow became federal law, states would be expected to cover a quarter of the cost to participate. Good luck with that in Florida, where Gov. Rick Scott touts \$10,000 four-year college degrees on the cheap.

Put the president's free college tuition proposal in the same category as the governor's discount degrees. They are nice political sound bites, but they are impractical and do not address the real issues in higher education.

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Which **best** describes the different argumentative approaches used by President Obama and the author of the editorial in discussing the free community college proposal?

- A President Obama takes the differences between Democrats and Republicans into consideration, while the author of the editorial largely avoids political concerns.
- B The author of the editorial argues that similar proposals have failed in the United States in the past, while President Obama argues that similar proposals have worked in other countries.
- C The author of the editorial focuses more on how it will affect individual students, while President Obama focuses on how it will benefit the nation's economy and its place in the world.
- D President Obama concentrates on how the proposal will affect lower-income students, such as veterans and single parents, while the author of the editorial concentrates on the proposal's effect on all students.

## Question 20

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Read the excerpt from the passage “Remarks by the President in the State of the Union Address.”

Understand, you’ve got to earn it. You’ve got to keep your grades up and graduate on time.

Underline the statement in the editorial that **best** disputes the statement by President Obama above.

The president's pitch has several shortcomings, particularly for Florida. The proposal would offer free tuition to any student who maintains a 2.5 grade-point average and makes steady progress. But in Florida, community colleges already have an open enrollment policy. Many students aren't ready for college-level work even though they have a high school diploma, yet state law now bans colleges from forcing them into remedial, noncredit courses even if the students would benefit.

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### Question 21

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How does the author of the editorial develop the idea that President Obama's proposal is bad for states like Florida? Check all that apply.

- by comparing it to the Florida governor's similarly impractical education proposal
- by showing that many Florida students may not be eligible under the new proposal
- by discussing the especially high cost of housing and transportation in Florida in particular
- by explaining that states like Florida would be expected to cover a quarter of the cost under the proposal
- by pointing out how difficult it will be to gain approval in Congress from Republican-dominated states like Florida
- by providing figures about how many Florida students currently depend on community college for their educational needs

## Question 22

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In “Remarks by the President in the State of the Union Address,” the final paragraph further develops the idea

- A of having the most well-trained workforce in the world, introduced in paragraph 3.
- B of the economy's uneven distribution of wealth, introduced in paragraph 2.
- C that many people still have high debt from student loans, introduced in paragraph 6.
- D that many people depend on community college for their education, introduced in paragraph 5.