

*I created this practice ELA (English Language Arts) exam to help my school's students prepare for the state-wide exams all students in New York take each April. The first reading in the packet discusses my life with Parkinson's.*

# 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> Grade Practice Exam

# Parkinson's Disease

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

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Directions: In this packet you will read and answer questions about the following:

- **“How I Found Out I Had Parkinson's Disease,”** by Dr. Bruce Ballard of our school
- **“Parkinson's Disease – FAQs”** from a medical website
- **A graph** about the relationship between drinking coffee and Parkinson's disease, taken from a research website
- **“Keeping My Diagnosis a Secret,”** a newspaper article by Sally Courant

At the end you will write an extended response essay where you cite information from all four sources.

# How I Found Out I Had Parkinson's Disease

*by Dr. Bruce Ballard*

I was diagnosed with Parkinson's disease (PD) in the summer of 2012, but the symptoms started to appear years before that. Perhaps the first symptom was when I lost the ability to smell. This was in the winter of 2007. Someone would be cooking something in the kitchen, maybe involving the rich aroma of garlic, and everyone would remark, "That smells great!" I couldn't smell anything.

I didn't think much of it at the time. I thought it was just a sign that I was getting old, as many old people cannot smell anymore. I didn't tell my doctor when I went for my annual physical examination.

A few years later I noticed that in the gym, my right arm was growing weak. If I was lying on my back on a bench and was pushing heavy weights up into the air over my chest, I found that my right arm couldn't handle heavy weights anymore, and that my arm would start to wobble as it tried to push the weight up.

Otherwise I was fine, but when I next saw my doctor I mentioned this problem. He suggested I see a neurologist, a doctor who specializes in the body's nervous system, which includes the brain, the spinal cord, and the nerves that extend out all over your body. I thought it was strange to see a doctor who specializes in the nervous system when it seemed to me I had a muscle problem, but after observing me for a year and giving me lots of tests, the neurologist announced I had Parkinson's disease. By this time I was having difficulty moving the fourth and fifth fingers on my right hand, and I limped on my right leg.

The neurologist's diagnosis threw me for a loop. On the one hand, I didn't know very much about Parkinson's disease and it sounded scary. On the other hand, because there is no cure I'll have it for the rest of my life. And on a third hand (yes, this is a situation with three hands!), the more I read about it the more I learned that everyone who has Parkinson's disease will experience different

symptoms, and the disease will progress differently for each person. What would be my future? I went into a panic mode from all the uncertainty.

I am quite lucky, though, for at least two reasons. First, my case is mild at the moment. There are a few things I can't do very well anymore, but they are trivial, not so major. For example, I can't twirl spaghetti on a fork, and on some days I can't type at the computer with all ten fingers. My other major symptoms are that I limp with my right leg, and sometimes my right arm trembles. These things are easy to live with. I don't have some of the serious symptoms that affect other people with PD. For example, some Parkinson's patients have difficulty swallowing. They also cannot roll over in bed at night, or get dressed by themselves in the morning.

One explanation for why my case is mild may be that I drink a lot of coffee. Coffee seems to inhibit the development of PD. (*See graph on page 10.*) Also, I go to the gym a lot and have been athletic as an adult. Almost every summer I compete in swimming races in the ocean and the Hudson River. Some races are as long as five miles! My doctor says I have to continue being athletic to keep my symptoms mild.

The second reason why I am lucky is because I was able to tell everyone here at BBL, and when I did, I received lots of positive support. I went a few months without telling anybody, but my secret became too hard to hide. People on the staff kept asking me if I had hurt my leg, and when I worked with students on their writing, some would ask why my hand was shaking. I would lie and say, "Oh, it's nothing." But want to know something? Living a lie is stressful. It created a lot of anxiety in me, and I would wake up in the middle of the night worrying about keeping my PD a secret. I finally sent an email to the entire staff where I "came out" as someone with PD. Mr. Jacobs immediately sent out a follow-up email saying the school would support me going forward. The response from the rest of the BBL community has been wonderful.

I feel better now, much calmer. However, not everyone is so lucky, as you'll read on page 12.

Multiple Choice Questions - ***How I Found Out I Had Parkinson's Disease***

1. Dr. Ballard's article is a kind of...
  - a. folktale.
  - b. personal narrative.
  - c. short story.
  - d. persuasion essay.
  
2. What is the general gist of the article?
  - a. Dr. Ballard is terrified by the illness he has and is wildly nervous every day.
  - b. Dr. Ballard has PD, but feels lucky that his case is mild.
  - c. Dr. Ballard panicked when he first received his diagnosis, but feels better now.
  - d. Both B and C.

3. Reread the first two sentences from the 7<sup>th</sup> paragraph:

*(1) One explanation for why my case is mild may be that I drink a lot of coffee.*

*(2) Coffee seems to inhibit the development of PD.*

Which of the following best describes the relationship between these two sentences?

- a. The second sentence makes a comparison to the first.
- b. The sentences describe opposite ideas.
- c. The second sentence further explains the first.
- d. The second sentence gives an example of the first.

# Parkinson's Disease - FAQs

*FAQ = Frequently Asked Questions*

*(adapted from a medical information website)*

## **What is Parkinson's disease?**

Parkinson's disease (PD) is a chronic (persistent, never-ending) disorder of a tiny part of the brain. PD is named after the English doctor James Parkinson, who wrote the first detailed description of the disease in 1817. Parkinson's disease mainly affects the way the brain controls the muscles in various parts of the body.

## **Who gets Parkinson's disease?**

More than 50,000 Americans are diagnosed with PD each year. PD mainly occurs in people over the age of 50, and becomes more common as people get older. It affects both men and women but is more common in men. Rarely, it develops in people under the age of 50. When this happens, it is called “Young Onset Parkinson's disease.” Michael J. Fox (the Hollywood actor) and Brian Grant (who played basketball in the NBA) both have Young Onset Parkinson's disease.

## **What causes Parkinson's disease?**

PD mainly affects a small part of the brain called the *substantia nigra*. The words *substantia nigra* are Latin for “black substance,” as this part of the brain is darker than the areas around it. This section of the brain sends messages through the body's nerves to control the body's muscles. The messages are passed between brain cells, nerves and muscles by a chemical called *dopamine*. When someone has Parkinson's disease, the *substantia nigra* stops producing enough dopamine. Thus, people with PD lose the ability to control muscles in certain parts of their body.

## What are the symptoms of Parkinson's disease?

Everyone experiences PD differently. Some of the usual symptoms are listed below. They tend to become worse over time. However, the speed in which symptoms become worse varies from person to person. If you get PD, it may take several years before the symptoms become bad enough to have much effect on your life.

- **Slowness of movement.** For example, it may become difficult to get up out of a chair or get dressed in the morning.
- **Stiffness of muscles.** For example, one of your arms will not swing much when you walk.
- **Shaking (tremor).** This typically affects the fingers, hands, and arms. It is most noticeable when you are resting; your hand or arm may shake like you are shivering in cold weather. The shaking may become worse when you are anxious or emotional. However, it may disappear when you use your hand to do something such as picking up an object.
- **Limping.** One leg may not work as well as the other.
- **Fewer facial expressions** such as smiling or frowning. People with advanced PD often have what looks like a frozen face, with no facial movements at all.
- **Difficulty with small movements** such as tying shoe laces, twirling spaghetti on a fork, or buttoning shirts.
- **Difficulty with writing.** Your handwriting may become tiny.
- **Difficulty with balance.** People with advanced PD may fall down easily and not be able to get back up.
- **Difficulty swallowing.**
- **Tiredness (fatigue).**
- **Loss of your sense of smell.**
- **Difficulties with sleeping.**
- **Difficulty turning over in bed at night.**

## What should you do if you get Parkinson's disease?

There is no cure for PD, but you should do the following:

- **Take medicine** to control or lessen the symptoms. If the symptoms get very bad, your doctor may recommend a simple form of brain surgery.
- **Exercise regularly.** Go to the gym. Lift weights to build strength. Take yoga classes to keep your muscles limber (loose). Run outdoors or on a treadmill to build stamina. Now, more than ever, you need to keep your body strong.
- **Stay as active as possible.** Well-meaning relatives or friends may tell you to rest and take things easy. They may tell you to sit on the sofa while they make dinner or clean the house for you. However, as much as possible, you should resist the temptation to let other people do things for you just because it's easier.
- **Keep your mind sharp.** People with advanced stages of Parkinson's are likely to develop *dementia*, a condition where you lose your memory, lose your ability to pay attention, and lose your ability to think and solve problems. To keep your mind sharp, you should stop watching most TV programs, which don't really exercise your mind. Instead, you should hold conversations with a wide variety of family and friends from your life, including your past. You should also read books and play mind games like sudoku and crossword puzzles.
- **Eat healthy food.** A healthy diet with plenty of water is the foundation for good health, regardless of whether or not you have PD. However, for those with PD, it is even more important. The reason why it is so critical for those with PD is that healthy eating can help keep your bones strong, thus decreasing the likelihood of a fracture if you fall. It will also help keep the rest of your body strong.

## Multiple Choice Questions - *Parkinson's Disease - FAQs*

4. How is this non-fiction article organized?
- eleven sections, in alphabetical order
  - every paragraph begins with a topic sentence and has three supporting details
  - it's mostly questions about PD, followed by answers
  - it's a series of personal anecdotes about people with PD
5. The section ***What are the symptoms of Parkinson's disease?*** lists about a dozen symptoms of PD. In Dr. Ballard's essay, he said he had all of the following symptoms EXCEPT...
- limping.
  - difficulty with balance.
  - loss of sense of smell.
  - difficulty twirling spaghetti on a fork.
6. Reread this paragraph from ***What should you do if you get Parkinson's disease?***
- (1) **Exercise regularly.** (2) Go to the gym. (3) Lift weights to build strength. (4) Take yoga classes to keep your muscles limber (loose). (5) Run outdoors or on a treadmill to build stamina. (6) Now, more than ever, you need to keep your body strong.

Which of the following best describes the relationship among the sentences?

- The sentences describe six steps in a sequence.
- Each sentence provides a contrast to the sentence before it.
- Sentence (1) asks a general question. Sentences (2), (3), and (4) provide answers. Sentences (5) and (6) provide counter arguments.
- Sentence (1) is a topic sentence. Sentences (2), (3), (4) and (5) provide examples. Sentence (6) is a conclusion.



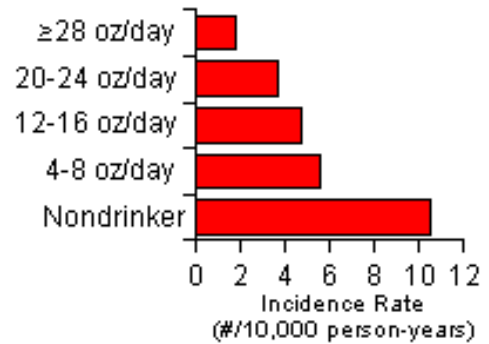
7. What is the *substantia nigra*?
- a. a small section of the brain that is darker than the areas around it
  - b. the shaking (tremor) of the hand, fingers and arm
  - c. a section of the brain that helps control the body's muscles
  - d. both A and C
8. If you get PD, why is it not a good idea to watch a lot of TV?
- a. The radiation from the TV screen will make the PD worse.
  - b. Most TV programs do not exercise your mind.
  - c. Watching a lot of TV makes you depressed.
  - d. both A and C
9. According to the FAQ, all of the following are true EXCEPT...
- a. PD mostly affects people over the age of 50.
  - b. the disease is named after an English doctor who wrote about it in 1817.
  - c. there is no cure for PD.
  - d. one of the symptoms is that the patient bleeds without stopping.

# Graph

(adapted from a research website)

## **New Research: Coffee May Provide Protection from Parkinson's Disease**

As part of a long-term study of the Honolulu Heart Program, a team of researchers looked at the relationship between people who drank coffee and people who developed Parkinson's disease (PD). Researchers studied 8,004 Japanese-American men for 30 years. Of these men, 102 developed Parkinson's disease.



The researchers found that the incidence of Parkinson's disease was lower in people who drank coffee. In fact, the men who drank the *most* coffee were the *least likely* to get Parkinson's disease (see graph). Men who did not drink any coffee were five times more likely to develop Parkinson's disease than men who drank more than 28 ounces of coffee each day. In other words, the more coffee people drank, the less likely they were to develop PD.

Later research found similar results with different groups of people – not just Japanese-American men. Additional studies have found that people who already have Parkinson's disease will see some of their symptoms reduce if they continue to drink coffee.

### Note:

- 8 ounces = 1 cup
- “oz” = “ounce”

Multiple Choice Questions - **Graph**

10. According to the graph and the text that explains it, how many cups of coffee would you have to drink every day to best protect yourself from getting Parkinson's disease?
- a. 28 cups
  - b. 3 ½ cups
  - c. 2 cups
  - d. 20 – 24 cups

11. Reread the first two sentences from the second paragraph:

*(1) The researchers found that the incidence of Parkinson's disease was lower in people who drank coffee.*

*(2) In fact, the men who drank the most coffee were the least likely to get Parkinson's disease (see graph).*

Which of the following describes the relationship between these two sentences?

- a. The second sentence further explains the first.
  - b. The sentences describe two steps in a process.
  - c. The second sentence explains a vocabulary term in the first.
  - d. The second sentence contrasts the first.
12. The main idea of the graph and the text that explains it is that...
- a. drinking coffee may increase your chances of getting PD.
  - b. drinking lots of coffee can cure you of PD if you get it.
  - c. drinking lots of coffee will give you stomach problems, which is not good for people with PD.
  - d. drinking coffee may protect you from getting PD, and may lessen the symptoms if you do get it.

# Keeping My Diagnosis a Secret

*by Sally Courant*

*[This reading was an 800-word article adapted from a local newspaper story about a woman with Parkinson's who tried to keep her diagnosis a secret. The story looked at the effect it had on her family and her job. Eventually she revealed her condition, with mixed reactions from her coworkers and supervisors. She retired from her job and started a second career as a freelance proofreader. Her youngest daughter was briefly bullied at school for having a mother who was a "zombie goat."]*

**Short Answer Question**

Mrs. Marta Molinski experienced good outcomes and bad when she went public with her diagnosis of Parkinson’s disease. What was one positive result? What was a negative outcome? Write your answers below in complete sentences.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## Extended Writing Assignment

Think about everything you've just read about Parkinson's disease (PD). Now imagine that an adult you know – perhaps an uncle or aunt, a teacher, or a parent – is suddenly diagnosed with PD. Would you advise her or him to keep the condition a secret, or to go public with it? What other advice would you give this person about staying healthy?

Write mostly in your own words, but be sure to draw information and cite quotations from the articles and graph to support your claims.

Be sure to:

- Introduce the topic in your own words.
- State your claims: make clear what you would say to an adult who was recently diagnosed with Parkinson's disease, especially about whether he or she should keep the condition a secret. What else would you tell the person about staying healthy?
- Organize your essay in paragraphs.
- Cite relevant facts and details from the sources you've just read.
- Discuss the details using mostly your own words. If you copy sentences from the readings, use quotation marks correctly.
- Use transition words to link information and ideas.
- Write a conclusion.

To help you organize your ideas, you can write notes or an outline on the next, blank page. However, you must write the essay itself on the lined pages, beginning on page 16.

You may use this blank space to write your notes or outline. However, whatever you write here will not count towards your essay score. You must begin writing the actual essay on the next page.









