



pennsylvania
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

The Pennsylvania System of School Assessment

English Language Arts Item and Scoring Sampler



2021*
Grade 8

* This is a revised version of the 2017 Item and Scoring Sampler.

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INTRODUCTION

General Introduction

The Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) provides districts and schools with tools to assist in delivering focused instructional programs aligned with the Pennsylvania Core Standards (PCS). These tools include Academic Standards, Assessment Anchors and Eligible Content documents, assessment handbooks, and content-based item and scoring samplers. This Item and Scoring Sampler is a useful tool for Pennsylvania educators in preparing local instructional programs by providing samples of test item types and scored student responses. The item sampler is not designed to be used as a pretest, a curriculum, or other benchmark for operational testing.

This Item and Scoring Sampler is available in Braille format. For more information regarding Braille, call (717) 901-2238.

Pennsylvania Core Standards (PCS)

This sampler contains examples of test questions designed to assess the Pennsylvania Assessment Anchors and Eligible Content aligned to the Pennsylvania Core Standards. The Mathematics, Reading, and Writing PSSA transitioned to PCS-based operational Mathematics and English Language Arts assessments starting with the spring 2015 PSSA administration.

The PCS-aligned Assessment Anchors and Eligible Content documents are posted on this portal:

- www.education.pa.gov [Hover over “Data and Reporting,” select “Assessment and Accountability,” and select “PSSA-PA System of School Assessment.” Then select “Assessment Anchors/Eligible Content” on the right side of the screen.]

What Is Included

This sampler contains stimulus reading passages with test questions, Conventions of Standard English questions, and a text-dependent analysis (TDA) prompt that have been written to align to the Assessment Anchors, which are based on the Pennsylvania Core Standards (PCS). The passages represent some of the genres approved by PDE to appear on an operational, PCS-based PSSA. The test questions provide an idea of the types of items that may appear on an operational, PCS-based PSSA. Each sample test question has been through a rigorous review process to ensure alignment with the Assessment Anchors.

Typically an item and scoring sampler is released every year to provide students and educators with a resource to assist in delivering focused instructional programs aligned to the PCS. However, due to the cancellation of standardized testing in 2019–2020, the 2021 Item and Scoring Sampler is a revised version of the previously released 2017 Item and Scoring Sampler. This revised version ensures that students and educators have an enhanced item and scoring sampler to use during instruction and/or preparation of students to take the PSSA Exam.

Purpose and Uses

The items in this sampler may be used¹ as examples for creating assessment items at the classroom level. Classroom teachers may find it beneficial to have students respond to the text-dependent analysis prompt questions in this sampler. Educators may then use the sampler as a guide to score the responses either independently or together with colleagues within a school or district.

Item Format and Scoring Guidelines

The 2021 PCS-based PSSA has multiple types of test questions. For grade 8, the types of test questions are Multiple-Choice (MC) questions, Evidence-Based Selected-Response (EBSR) questions, and Text-Dependent Analysis (TDA) prompts.

Multiple Choice: Each of this type of test question has four answer choices. Some MC test questions are based on a stimulus reading passage, while Conventions of Standard English MC test questions are independent of a passage. Each correct response to an MC test question is worth one point.

Evidence-Based Selected-Response: Each two-part EBSR prompt is designed to elicit an evidence-based response from a student who has read either a literature or an informational text passage. In Part One, which is similar to an MC question, the student analyzes a passage and chooses the best answer from four answer choices. In Part Two, the student utilizes evidence from the passage to select one or more answers based on the response to Part One. Part Two is different from a multiple-choice question in that there may be more than four answer options and more than one correct answer. Each EBSR test question is worth either two or three points, and students can receive points for providing a correct response to Part One or for providing one or more correct responses in Part Two.

Text-Dependent Analysis Prompt: The TDA prompt is a text-dependent analysis prompt based on a passage or passage set that each student has read during the test event. There are three response pages in the paper-and-pencil format and up to 5,000 characters in the online format. Both literature and informational text passages are addressed through this item type. Students use explicit and implicit evidence to make inferences leading to a conclusion or generalization in response to the task stated in the prompt. Students construct a well-written analytical essay to communicate inferences and connection to the evidence using grade-appropriate writing skills. The TDA response is scored using a holistic scoring guideline on a 1–4-point scale.

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Non-Score Considerations: For TDA items, responses can be designated as non-scorable (NS). While every effort is made to score each student response, a response may receive a NS designation if it falls into one of five categories:

Blank – Blank, entirely erased, entirely crossed out, or consists entirely of whitespace

Refusal – Refusal to respond to the task

Non-scorable – In a language other than English, incoherent, illegible, insufficient, unrelated to the passage (for TDAs), or consisting solely or almost solely of text copied from the passage (for TDAs)

Off Topic – Makes no reference to the item or passage but is not an intentional refusal

Copied – Consists of text copied from the item and/or test directions

Testing Time and Mode of Testing Delivery for the PCS-Based PSSA

The PSSA is delivered in traditional paper-and-pencil format as well as in an online format. The estimated time to respond to a test question is the same for both methods of test delivery. The following table shows the estimated response time for each item type.

During an official test administration, students are given as much additional time as is necessary to complete the test questions.

English Language Arts Item Type	MC	EBSR	TDA
Estimated Response Time (minutes)	1.5	3 to 5	45

English Language Arts Grade 8

This English Language Arts Sampler is composed of 2 passages, 5 passage-based MC questions, 2 EBSR questions, 1 TDA prompt, and 4 Conventions of Standard English MC questions.

There are three passages in this booklet. The first passage is followed by a set of passage-based MC questions and 2 EBSR questions. The second passage and third poem are a pair that is followed by 1 TDA prompt. This booklet also contains 4 Conventions of Standard English MC questions.

Each question is accompanied by a table that contains the Assessment Anchor and Eligible Content coding, answer key(s), depth of knowledge, and testing data. Each question is followed by a brief analysis or rationale. The TDA prompt is displayed with the item-specific scoring guideline and examples of student responses with scores and annotations at each scoring level.

The PCS-based PSSA may be administered in paper-and-pencil format or online. As a result, this sampler includes samples of TDA prompt responses in both formats. A sample online response is noted by the symbol .

ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS TEST DIRECTIONS FOR READING PASSAGES AND QUESTIONS**Directions:**

On the following pages are the Reading passages and questions.

Directions for Multiple-Choice Questions:

Some questions will ask you to select an answer from among four choices.

For the multiple-choice questions:

- First, read the passage carefully.
- Read each question and choose the best answer.
- Only one of the answers provided is correct.
- You may look back at the passage to help you answer the question.
- Record your choice in the answer booklet.

Directions for Evidence-Based Selected-Response Questions:

Some questions will have two parts and will ask you to select one or more answers in each part.

For the evidence-based selected-response questions:

- Read Part One of the question and choose the best answer.
- You may look back at the passage to help you answer Part One of the question.
- Record your answer to Part One in the answer booklet.
- Only one of the answers provided in Part One is correct.
- Then, read Part Two of the question and choose the evidence to support your answer in Part One. If Part Two tells you to select two answers, be sure to select two answers.
- You may look back at the passage to help you answer Part Two of the question.
- Record your answer or answers to Part Two in the answer booklet.

Directions for Text-Dependent Analysis (TDA) Prompts:

The English Language Arts TDA prompt will ask you to analyze the passage and use evidence from the passage to write an essay.

For the TDA Essay:

- Be sure to read the passage and the TDA prompt carefully.
- Review the Writer’s Checklist to help you plan and organize your response.
- You may look back at the passage to help you write your essay.
- Write your essay in the appropriate space in the answer booklet. If you use scratch paper to write a rough-draft essay, be sure to transfer your final essay to the answer booklet.
- Be sure to check that your essay contains evidence from the passage to support your response.
- Be sure to check your essay for errors in capitalization, spelling, sentence formation, punctuation, and word choice.

PASSAGE 1

Read the following passage about a marine biologist. Then answer questions 1–7.

Swimming With Gentle Giants

by Rachel Cartwright

Rachel Cartwright teaches biology at California State University Channel Islands and has studied trends in habitat use in humpback whale mother-calf pairs in Hawaiian waters.

For many field biologists, there may be moments when you consider the focus of your lifelong work and wonder: How did I end up here?

Working with humpback whales in the warm, tropical waters of Hawaii, I have that moment at the start of each field season. I grew up in the north of England where, like most youngsters, my experience of the ocean was limited to a yearly bone-chilling knee-deep paddle in the murky gray waters of Blackpool, a well-known Northern seaside resort. Around age 10, I managed the required 25 yards across a frigid swimming pool, and with that, I figured I had all the aquatic skills I would need in later life.

Fast forward more than 20 years, and here I sit, poised on the side of a 20-foot-long research boat. I've traded the gray North Atlantic waters for the azure-blues of the Pacific and temperate for tropical climes. But this water has no reassuring bottom close to my feet. Instead, I'm looking down into 200 feet of water, and resting just below me is a 45-foot-long behemoth—a female humpback whale. From below her massive girth, a tiny calf peeks out. New humpback moms rarely rest with such young calves in tow, so my teammate John Cesere and I know that is a moment not to be missed. We grab snorkels, masks and cameras and slip gently into the water.

Despite their huge size, humpback whales, especially females with calves, are as skittish as young deer. The challenge is to approach without disturbing them—one stroke of the huge fluke and they will be long gone. We've already spent an hour with this pair, following from our research boat at a discreet distance, plotting their movements, dive patterns and surface activity. But humpback whales generally spend less than 10 percent of their time at the surface. As researchers we catch just fleeting glimpses of their behavior. To get the full perspective, we need to see the underwater portion, so with that in mind, we gently push away from the side of the boat and float toward the resting pair.

Researchers have long presumed that it is the well-being of these young calves that draw humpback and other baleen whales to the tropics, the warm water temperatures being more suited to the survival and growth of these young, skinny offspring. However, as it turns out, even the smallest calves are thermo-neutral, generating enough metabolic heat to keep them toasty warm in even the most frigid waters. It is the threat of predation that propels pregnant females out of their summertime feeding regions and off across 3,000 miles of open waters to breeding grounds like Hawaii.

Neonate baleen whale calves are small and naive, and though tailor-made for fundraising posters, they're extremely uncoordinated and would basically be an easy meal for the smart, marine-mammal-eating transient killer whales that frequent their feeding grounds. So pregnant females head for nutrient-poor, subtropical waters, beyond the range of this potential predator, and their relocation motivates the rest of the humpback population to follow. Fertile females and males ready to breed also head south and juveniles follow suit, too.

Humpbacks show up in Hawaii by Thanksgiving, congregating in these waters from across an arc of feeding regions that stretch from British Columbia to the Russian peninsula. And although we have yet to document exactly where and when pregnant females give birth, by mid-January females with their young calves arrive and the protected waters between the islands of Maui, Molokai, Lanai and Kaho'olawe become an impromptu nursery.

Overall, Hawaii hosts approximately 50 percent of the central North Pacific stock of humpback whales, placing the region right at the heart of a true conservation success story. In the late '70s, numbers of humpback whales visiting waters in Hawaii had dropped to as low as 200 to 300 each year and the population looked to be inevitably bound for extinction. But the implementation of the ban on commercial whaling in 1986, combined with the added protection of the Marine Mammal Protection Act, the instigation of protected marine areas, like the National Marine Sanctuaries and also the timely uptick in environmental awareness and appreciation have brought humpback whales back from the brink. They are still listed as an endangered species, but most populations are now increasing around the globe.

In the North Pacific, numbers are rising by a healthy 7 percent each year. Over the course of the winter, 9,000 to 11,000 humpback whales may use the waters of Hawaii as their wintertime home, with newly born calves of the year consisting of some 10 percent of this population. The coastal waters between Maui, Lanai, Molokai and Kaho'olawe make up the core of Hawaiian Islands Humpback Whale National Marine Sanctuary and more than 200,000 visitors a year come to the old whaling town of Lahaina on Maui to take a whale-watching trip. Widely recognized as one of the best places in the world to see whales in the wild, whale watching now contributes around \$85 million annually to the local economy and serves as a perfect example of the ecosystem capital that may be generated by a healthy and vital local whale population.

But all may not be well in paradise. As whale-watching companies switch to larger vessels and land use along the shoreline transitions from agriculture to housing, the coastal regions of west Maui are becoming more and more urbanized. Typically, within subtropical breeding grounds, mothers with young calves favor shallow coastline areas, as they offer the new moms some respite from overly amorous male whales presumed to be more common in the deeper midchannel areas. However our recent research suggests that females and their young calves are moving away from some regions of the shoreline and are now found more frequently in the deeper waters of the channel.

Whether this is a result of noise, traffic or even water quality remains to be seen, and any costs of this switch away from the shoreline have yet to be accurately quantified. But as any good behavioral ecologist will tell you, habitat shifts are not done lightly; usually there is a cause and all too often there may be a consequence. Which brings us to the key question we hope to answer this season: For maternal females in Maui waters, is there a cost to this offshore switch?

I will be looking into this question, working with my colleague Blake Gillespie. We're both from California State University Channel Islands, a wonderful institution that has most generously provided sabbatical leave for me this semester to undertake this work. Others in the team include the experienced local boat captains Amy Venema and Terence Mangold, the underwater photographers John and Dan Cesere of C3 Submerged, and a number of hard-working local volunteers. Our work is funded primarily through private donations; Mark Percival of Britain has supported our project throughout. We add to this with our own direct fundraising efforts, and we also receive support from concerned local whale-watching companies, like Ultimate Whalewatch Maui. As the season progresses, we'll be joined intermittently by a documentary team from the BBC, as well as young, enthusiastic undergraduates from our university.

For now, I'm pretty much mesmerized by the mother and her calf below me. I fin slightly toward mom, reminding myself that there must be good reasons we call these animals gentle giants. I'm hoping to document clear signs of age for the calf, like fetal folds, a dimple at the neck or a lingering umbilical scar. Typically, moms with young calves like this travel almost continually, so it's rare to get a chance to document these neonate indicators.

As I watch the mother maneuver around her calf, she turns slightly to place me in her clearest line of sight, off to her side. She waits as the calf rolls off her far side, ducks underneath and then pops up once more, alongside mom. My teammate John falls back as she moves into the slowest travel. She heads slightly toward me, the calf on my side. The pair pauses as they swim leisurely by; two large eyes slowly inspect me. Then, with the calf safely tucked in the draft of her pectoral fin, a mere movement of her fluke propels the mother on and I'm left bobbing like shark bait in the water column. The season lies ahead, no doubt to produce more questions than answers, but my lingering thought for today—exactly who was watching who?

Multiple-Choice Questions

1. Read the sentence from the passage.

“But this water has no reassuring bottom close to my feet.”

Why does the author include the sentence in the passage?

- A. to illustrate how the ocean waters are more dangerous in the summer than they are in the winter
- B. to compare her current experience in the ocean with her experience in a pool as a youth
- C. to explain how her goal to do research in the ocean is a goal she regrets having made
- D. to establish the fact that the water conditions are an unpredictable characteristic of the ocean

Item Information	
Alignment	B-C.2.1.2
Answer Key	B
Depth of Knowledge	2
p-value A	8%
p-value B	57% (correct answer)
p-value C	6%
p-value D	29%
Option Annotations	The student is asked to determine why the author has included the given sentence in the passage. Option B is the correct answer, because the author includes it to contrast her experience in the ocean with her experience in a pool as a child. The comparison serves to show the reader that her work as a marine biologist has its challenges. Option A is incorrect, because there is no evidence in the text to support the statement that the ocean waters are more dangerous in the summer than in the winter. Option C is incorrect, because the author does not express any regret over her career choice. Option D is incorrect, because there is no evidence in the text to support this statement.

2. Which idea does the author convey by writing that newborn whale calves are “tailor-made for fundraising posters”?
- A. Newborn whale calves are the focus of expensive research.
 - B. Newborn whale calves have an emotional impact on people.
 - C. Newborn whale calves are interesting subjects for photographers.
 - D. Newborn whale calves need more attention from environmental groups.

Item Information	
Alignment	B-C.2.1.3
Answer Key	B
Depth of Knowledge	2
p-value A	18%
p-value B	46% (correct answer)
p-value C	18%
p-value D	18%
Option Annotations	The student is asked to determine which idea the author conveys by referring to newborn whale calves as “tailor-made for fundraising posters.” Option B is the correct answer, because people think baby whales are appealing, posters bearing their images will raise money. Option A is incorrect, because the phrase does not relate to the cost of conducting research on whales. Option C is incorrect, because the phrase does not relate to photography. Option D is incorrect, because the phrase does not relate to the need for more attention from environmental groups.

3. How does the author develop the central idea that humpback whales are extremely wary of humans?
- A. by describing the distances that humpback whales travel each year
 - B. by describing the remote areas of the ocean inhabited by humpback whales
 - C. by emphasizing the caution that must be used to approach humpback whales
 - D. by emphasizing how little time humpback whales spend at the surface of the ocean

Item Information	
Alignment	B-K.1.1.2
Answer Key	C
Depth of Knowledge	2
p-value A	7%
p-value B	14%
p-value C	64% (correct answer)
p-value D	15%
Option Annotations	The student is asked to determine how the author develops the central idea that humpback whales are extremely wary of humans. Option C is the correct answer, because the author describes how humpback whales are “as skittish as young deer” and that she has followed the pair “at a discreet distance.” These descriptions suggest that the humans must be cautious and not scare off the whales. Options A, B, and D are incorrect, because they do not relate to the central idea that is given.

4. Which sentence does the author include in the passage to disprove a theory?
- A. “New humpback moms rarely rest with such young calves in tow, so my teammate John Cesere and I know that is a moment not to be missed.”
 - B. “We’ve already spent an hour with this pair, following from our research boat at a discreet distance, plotting their movements, dive patterns and surface activity.”
 - C. “To get the full perspective, we need to see the underwater portion, so with that in mind, we gently push away from the side of the boat . . .”
 - D. “However, as it turns out, even the smallest calves are thermo-neutral, generating enough metabolic heat to keep them toasty warm . . .”

Item Information	
Alignment	B-C.2.1.1
Answer Key	D
Depth of Knowledge	2
p-value A	16%
p-value B	15%
p-value C	12%
p-value D	57% (correct answer)
Option Annotations	The student is asked to determine which sentence the author includes in the passage to disprove a theory. Option D is the correct answer, because the fact about calves is meant to disprove the theory that mothers travel to the tropics to keep the newborn calves warm. Options A, B, and C are incorrect, because they only describe the author’s actions in studying the whales.

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Evidence-Based Selected-Response Question

5. This question has two parts. Answer Part One and then answer Part Two.

Part One

What is the meaning of the statement that humpback whales have come “back from the brink”?

- A. The whales were close to becoming extinct.
- B. The whales are now popular with the public.
- C. The whales are now flourishing in deeper waters.
- D. The whales were being chased away by predators.

Part Two

Which phrase from the passage **best** provides the context to support the answer in Part One? Choose **one** answer.

- A. “success story”
- B. “environmental awareness”
- C. “endangered species”
- D. “around the globe”

Item Information	
Alignment	B-V.4.1.2
Answer Key: Part One	A
Answer Key: Part Two	C
Depth of Knowledge	3
Mean Score	0.62
Option Annotations	<p>The student is asked to interpret the meaning of the statement that humpback whales have come “back from the brink” and to select one phrase from the passage that best supports that interpretation.</p> <p>Part One: Option A is the correct answer, because the phrase “back from the brink” suggests that the whales were on the verge of something very undesirable; the passage explains that they are “still listed as an endangered species.” Options B, C, and D are incorrect, because they are not supported by details in the passage.</p> <p>Part Two: Option C is the correct answer, because the phrase “endangered species” suggests that the plight of the whales was once worse. Option A is incorrect, because even though the humpback whale population has recovered somewhat, the phrase “back from the brink” suggests a mild to moderate recovery. Option B is incorrect, because although there may be improved environmental awareness today for the humpback whale, the phrase “back from the brink” connotes that the whales barely escaped total extinction. Option D is incorrect, because it does not relate to the phrase “back from the brink.”</p>

Multiple-Choice Question

6. Read the sentence from the passage.

“As whale-watching companies switch to larger vessels and land use along the shoreline transitions from agriculture to housing, the coastal regions of west Maui are becoming more and more urbanized.”

What is the meaning of the word transitions in the sentence?

- A. changes
- B. improves
- C. expands
- D. commences

Item Information	
Alignment	B-V.4.1.1
Answer Key	A
Depth of Knowledge	2
p-value A	82% (correct answer)
p-value B	7%
p-value C	8%
p-value D	3%
Option Annotations	The student is asked to use context clues to determine the meaning of the word “transitions.” Option A is the correct answer, because “changes” is the meaning of “transitions” and fits with the context of the sentence. Options B, C, and D are incorrect, because they do not reflect the meaning of the word “transitions.”

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Evidence-Based Selected-Response Question

7. This question has two parts. Answer Part One and then answer Part Two.

Part One

Based on the passage, which event has **most** directly influenced the author’s current research plans?

- A. the change in the preferred habitat of female humpback whales and their calves
- B. the increased public interest in the preservation of humpback whale populations
- C. the opportunity to make a documentary about humpback whale calves
- D. the presence of male humpback whales in different areas of the ocean

Part Two

Which sentences from the passage support the answer in Part One? Choose **two** answers.

- A. “. . . we have yet to document exactly where and when pregnant females give birth . . .”
- B. “. . . females and their young calves are moving away from some regions of the shoreline . . .”
- C. “. . . For maternal females in Maui waters, is there a cost to this offshore switch?”
- D. “. . . but my lingering thought for today—exactly who was watching who?”

Item Information	
Alignment	B-K.1.1.3
Answer Key: Part One	A
Answer Key: Part Two	B, C
Depth of Knowledge	3
Mean Score	1.05
Option Annotations	<p>The student is asked to analyze the passage to determine which event has most directly influenced the author’s current research plans and to select the two sentences from the passage that support that analysis.</p> <p>Part One: Option A is the correct answer. The change in the habitat of female humpback whales and their calves from shallow coastal waters to deeper waters has caused the author to want to research this phenomenon. The author states that she “will be looking into this question” and that she has been granted sabbatical leave “this semester to undertake this work.” Option B is incorrect, because increased public interest may have been a result of research conducted on humpback whales, but it did not influence the author’s current research plans. Option C is incorrect, because even though it will be a result of the author’s current research plans, it did not cause her plans to change. Option D is incorrect, because it is not related to the author’s current research plans.</p> <p>Part Two: Both options B and C are the correct answers, because these sentences indicate why the author has undertaken her current research plans—her desire to find out why the female humpback whales are moving into deeper waters and the consequences of this move. Option A is incorrect, because it does not relate to the author’s current research plans. Option D is incorrect, because it is a commentary on her experience with one particular whale.</p>

PASSAGE 2

The following passage and poem are based on a Greek myth. Read the passage and the poem and answer question 8.

Icarus and Daedalus

by Josephine Preston Peabody

Among all those mortals who grew so wise that they learned the secrets of the gods, none was more cunning than Daedalus.

He once built, for King Minos of Crete, a wonderful Labyrinth of winding ways so cunningly tangled up and twisted around that, once inside, you could never find your way out again without a magic clue. But the king's favor veered with the wind, and one day he had his master architect imprisoned in a tower. Daedalus managed to escape from his cell, but it seemed impossible to leave the island since every ship that came or went was well guarded by order of the king.

At length, watching the seagulls in the air—the only creatures that were sure of liberty—he thought of a plan for himself and his young son Icarus, who was captive with him.

Little by little, he gathered a store of feathers great and small. He fastened these together with thread, molded them in with wax, and so fashioned two great wings like those of a bird. When they were done, Daedalus fitted them to his own shoulders, and after one or two efforts, he found that by waving his arms he could winnow the air and cleave it, as a swimmer does the sea. He held himself aloft, wavered this way and that with the wind, and at last, like a great fledgling, he learned to fly.

Without delay, he fell to work on a pair of wings for the boy Icarus, and taught him carefully how to use them, bidding him beware of rash adventures among the stars. “Remember,” said the father, “never to fly very low or very high, for the fogs about the earth would weigh you down, but the blaze of the sun will surely melt your feathers apart if you go too near.”

For Icarus, these cautions went in at one ear and out by the other. Who could remember to be careful when he was to fly for the first time? Are birds careful? Not they! And not an idea remained in the boy's head but the one joy of escape.

The day came, and the fair wind that was to set them free. The father bird put on his wings, and, while the light urged them to be gone, he waited to see that all was well with Icarus, for the two could not fly hand in hand. Up they rose, the boy after his father. The hateful ground of Crete sank beneath them; and the country folk, who caught a glimpse of them when they were high above the tree-tops, took it for a vision of the gods—Apollo, perhaps, with Cupid after him.

At first there was a terror in the joy. The wide vacancy of the air dazed them—a glance downward made their brains reel. But when a great wind filled their wings, and Icarus felt himself sustained, like a halcyon-bird in the hollow of a wave, like a child uplifted by his mother, he forgot everything in the world but joy. He forgot Crete and the other islands that he had passed over: he saw but vaguely that winged thing in the distance before him that was his father Daedalus. He longed for one

draught¹ of flight to quench the thirst of his captivity: he stretched out his arms to the sky and made towards the highest heavens.

Alas for him! Warmer and warmer grew the air. Those arms, which had seemed to uphold him, relaxed. His wings wavered, drooped. He fluttered his young hands vainly—he was falling—and in that terror he remembered. The heat of the sun had melted the wax from his wings; the feathers were falling, one by one, like snowflakes; and there was none to help.

He fell like a leaf tossed down the wind, down, down, with one cry that overtook Daedalus far away. When he returned and sought high and low for the poor boy, he saw nothing but the bird-like feathers afloat on the water.

¹ draught—a portion of liquid or medicine

Icarus

by Wendy A. Shaffer

Did Icarus,
 falling,
 watching white feathers flutter upward,
 curse the wax as a fair-weather friend?
It seemed such a strong solid type,
 but it melted away
 when things got hot.

Did he rail at the sun,
 which beckoned enticingly,
 and then changed from a beacon to a furnace?

Did he blame Daedalus, his father?
Who warned him not to fly too high
 in the same distracted tones with which
 he admonished his son
 to put on a sweater in the cold,
 to eat his lima beans,
 to not run with scissors.

How could he have known that this time the old man really meant it?

Or did he regret that the illustrious inventor,
 when creating his flying apparatus,
 did not take the obvious next step:
 the emergency parachute?

He must have thought
 all of this
 and more.

It was
 a long
 long
 fall.

But as he neared the ocean,
 came close enough to wave to the startled fishermen in their boats,
 he laughed,
 and admitted
 that even had he known
 of the many failings of fathers and feathers,
 he would have done it anyway.

Text-Dependent Analysis Prompt

8. Nature often has a role in many myths. Write an essay analyzing the role of nature in **both** the passage and the poem. Use evidence from **both** the passage and the poem to support your response.

Writer’s Checklist for the Text-Dependent Analysis Prompt

PLAN before you write

- Make sure you read the prompt carefully.
- Make sure you have read the entire passage carefully.
- Think about how the prompt relates to the passage.
- Organize your ideas on scratch paper. Use a thought map, outline, or other graphic organizer to plan your essay.

FOCUS while you write

- Analyze the information from the passage as you write your essay.
- Make sure you use evidence from the passage to support your response.
- Use precise language, a variety of sentence types, and transitions in your essay.
- Organize your paper with an introduction, body, and conclusion.

PROOFREAD after you write

- I wrote my final essay in the answer booklet.
- I stayed focused on responding to the prompt.
- I used evidence from the passage to support my response.
- I corrected errors in capitalization, spelling, sentence formation, punctuation, and word choice.

Text-Dependent Analysis Scoring Guideline

#8 Item Information

Alignment	E.1.1	Depth of Knowledge	3	Mean Score	1.88
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Assessment Anchor:

E08.E.1–Evidence-Based Analysis of Text

Specific Assessment Anchor Descriptor addressed by this item:

E08.E.1.1–Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

Score	Description
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effectively addresses all parts of the task demonstrating in-depth analytic understanding of the text(s) • Effective introduction, development, and conclusion identifying an opinion, topic, or controlling idea related to the text(s) • Strong organizational structure that effectively supports the focus and ideas • Thorough analysis of explicit and implicit meanings from text(s) to effectively support claims, opinions, ideas, and inferences • Substantial, accurate, and direct reference to the text(s) using relevant key details, examples, quotes, facts, and/or definitions • Substantial reference to the main idea(s) and relevant key details of the text(s) to support the writer’s purpose • Skillful use of transitions to link ideas • Effective use of precise language and domain-specific vocabulary drawn from the text(s) to explain the topic and/or to convey experiences/events • Few errors, if any, are present in sentence formation, grammar, usage, spelling, capitalization, and punctuation; errors present do not interfere with meaning

Score	Description
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adequately addresses all parts of the task demonstrating sufficient analytic understanding of the text(s) • Clear introduction, development, and conclusion identifying an opinion, topic, or controlling idea related to the text(s) • Appropriate organizational structure that adequately supports the focus and ideas • Clear analysis of explicit and implicit meanings from text(s) to support claims, opinions, ideas, and inferences • Sufficient, accurate, and direct reference to the text(s) using relevant details, examples, quotes, facts, and/or definitions • Sufficient reference to the main idea(s) and relevant key details of the text(s) to support the writer’s purpose • Appropriate use of transitions to link ideas • Appropriate use of precise language and domain-specific vocabulary drawn from the text(s) to explain the topic and/or to convey experiences/events • Some errors may be present in sentence formation, grammar, usage, spelling, capitalization, and punctuation; errors present seldom interfere with meaning
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inconsistently addresses some parts of the task demonstrating partial analytic understanding of the text(s) • Weak introduction, development, and/or conclusion identifying an opinion, topic, or controlling idea somewhat related to the text(s) • Weak organizational structure that inconsistently supports the focus and ideas • Weak or inconsistent analysis of explicit and/or implicit meanings from text(s) that somewhat supports claims, opinions, ideas, and inferences • Vague reference to the text(s) using some details, examples, quotes, facts, and/or definitions • Weak reference to the main idea(s) and relevant details of the text(s) to support the writer’s purpose • Inconsistent use of transitions to link ideas • Inconsistent use of precise language and domain-specific vocabulary drawn from the text(s) to explain the topic and/or to convey experiences/events • Errors may be present in sentence formation, grammar, usage, spelling, capitalization, and punctuation; errors present may interfere with meaning
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimally addresses part(s) of the task demonstrating inadequate analytic understanding of the text(s) • Minimal evidence of an introduction, development, and/or conclusion • Minimal evidence of an organizational structure • Insufficient or no analysis of the text(s); may or may not support claims, opinions, ideas, and inferences • Insufficient reference to the text(s) using few details, examples, quotes, facts, and/or definitions • Minimal reference to the main idea(s) and/or relevant details of the text(s) • Few, if any, transitions to link ideas • Little or no use of precise language or domain-specific vocabulary drawn from the text(s) • Many errors may be present in sentence formation, grammar, usage, spelling, capitalization, and punctuation; errors present often interfere with meaning

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STUDENT RESPONSE

Response Score: 4 points



8. Nature often has a role in many myths. Write an essay analyzing the role of nature in **both** the passage and the poem. Use evidence from **both** the passage and the poem to support your response.

Nature plays a large role in both Josephine Preston Peabody's passage Icarus and Daedalus and Wendy A. Shaffer's poem "Icarus". The avian way of flight was a main peice in the story, as well as the poem. The sun and water were also prevelent. All of these things connect with nature to help create meaning in both works.

Birds played a large role in Icarus and Daedalus because they were Daedalus's inspiration for his flying device. Daedalus's inspiration for his flying device. Daedalus saw the seaguls outside the tower and used their feathers to build himself and his son Icarus wings. The birds represent freedom in the passage. Daedalus even refers to them as the "only creatures that were sure of liberty" (peabody 1). Icarus was compared to a bird many times after he flew out of imprisonment, and we wallowed in his newfound freedom. Icarus even uses birds to justify not listening to Daedalus's warning to not fly up too high by thinking "Are birds careful? Not they!" (Peabody 1).

The sun is another part of nature that served an important purpose in both works. In the passage, Daedalus warns Icarus not to fly too high because the suns heat will melt the wax holding the fathers together. Icarus disregarded the warning, and what happened was exactly as Daedalus predicted. Icarus's wings fell apart, causing him to fall to the earth. In the poem "Icarus", the narrator asks "Did he rail at the sun / which beckoned enticingly / and then changed from a beacon to a furnace?" Much like a moth to a flame, Icarus flew too high in his search for freedom, and his beacon of hope turned into his downfall.

Water is also a prevelent peice of nature in the passage and poem In the passage, Daedalus warns Icarus against flying too low, as "the fogs of the earth" would weigh him down. This could be refering to the mists coming off the ocean, along with the fog. At the very end of the passage, Daedalus only finds feathers floating on the water, instead of the remains of his son. In the poem, Icarus waved to the ficherman as he plummeted towards the ocean. It is here he had his great revelation, that despite everything, he would have done it all anyway.

The whole point of nature in Peabody's passage and Shaffer's poem is to create conflict and represent change. the humans tried to be birds so they could be free. The sun gives light and life to everything on earth, but it killed the prideful boy who beleived he could fly to the heavens. The water gives the boy a final resting place. And all of these are connected by the feathers. The birds gave the feathers for the wings, the sun melted the wings, and the feathers were all that was left floating in the water.

This response effectively addresses all parts of the task, demonstrating in-depth understanding of the texts. The organizational structure is strong. The effective introduction, development, and conclusion support the student's focus on the *large role* that nature plays in both the passage and the poem. In the introduction, the student provides a multi-part controlling idea (*The avian way of flight was a main peice in the story, as well as the poem. The sun and water were also prevelent. All of these things connect with nature to help create meaning . . .*) that both supports the focus and functions to organize the development of the response. In the first body paragraph, development begins with effective analysis of how the *avian way of flight* plays a role in the passage and poem (*Birds played a large role in Icarus and Daedalus because they were Daedalus's inspiration for his flying device*), which is supported by relevant text (*Daedalus saw the seaguls outside the tower and used their feathers to build himself and his son Icarus wings*). The development continues with more effective analysis (*The birds represent freedom in the passage*) coupled with well-chosen text references (*Daedalus even refers to them as the "only creatures that were sure of liberty" and Icarus was compared to a bird many times after he flew out of imprisonment . . .*). The paragraph concludes with a melding of strong analysis and relevant text (*Icarus even uses birds to justify not listening to Daedalus's warning to not fly up too high by thinking "Are birds careful? Not they!"*) that clearly shows the significant role that the *avian way of flight* plays in the story/poem. In the second body paragraph, the student shifts focus to the role that the sun plays, starting off with an inference (*The sun is another part of nature that served an important purpose in both works*). This is followed with two substantial text references (*In the passage, Daedalus warns Icarus not to fly too high because the suns heat will melt the wax holding the fathers together. Icarus disregarded the warning, and what happened was exactly as Daedalus predicted. Icarus's wings fell apart, causing him to fall to the earth. In the poem "Icarus", the narrator asks "Did he rail at the sun / which beckoned enticingly / and then changed from a beacon to a furnace?"*) Both references are clarified with effective analysis (*Much like a moth to a flame, Icarus flew too high in his search for freedom, and his beacon of hope turned into his downfall*). In the third body paragraph, the student develops the final element of nature identified in the controlling idea (*water*). The development begins with well-chosen text (*Daedalus warns Icarus against flying too low, as "the fogs of the earth" would weigh him down*), which is coupled with an inference (*This could be refering to the mists coming off the ocean, along with the fog*). More relevant text follows (*At the very end of the passage, Daedalus only finds feathers floating on the water, instead of the remains of his son. In the poem, Icarus waved to the ficherman as he plummeted towards the ocean*) and is contextualized with effective analysis (*It is here he had his great revelation, that despite everything, he would have done it all anyway*), demonstrating in-depth understanding of explicit and implicit meanings of the text. The thoughtful conclusion (*The whole point of nature in Peabody's passage and Shaffer's poem is to create conflict and represent change. the humans tried to be birds so they could be free. The sun gives light and life to everything on earth, but it killed the prideful boy who beleived he could fly to the heavens. The water gives the boy a final resting place. And all of these are connected by the feathers. The birds gave the feathers for the wings, the sun melted the wings, and the feathers were all that was left floating in the water*) comprises strong analysis, key text details, and generalizations. In addition to providing a sense of closure, the conclusion broadens the focus and significance of the student's ideas. Transitions are skillfully used to link ideas throughout the response (*as well as, All of these things, Much like a moth to a flame, At the very end of the passage*). Precise language is used effectively to explain the role of nature in both the passage and the poem (*avian way of flight, prevelent, inspiration, flying device, newfound freedom, disregarded the warning, predicted, remains of his son, plummeted, great revelation, prideful boy, final resting place*). The few errors present do not interfere with meaning.

STUDENT RESPONSE

Response Score: 4 points

8. Nature often has a role in many myths. Write an essay analyzing the role of nature in **both** the passage and the poem. Use evidence from **both** the passage and the poem to support your response.

Nature in both was a beautifully tragic thing in both. It was a beautiful thing in the passage from "Icarus and Daedalus" because it helped Daedalus create an idea of how to escape Crete. In the passage it says "... watching the seagulls in the air - the only creatures that were sure of liberty - he thought of a plan for himself and his young son, Icarus who was captive with him." In that sentence it shows that nature gave him the idea of escape. The birds flying gave him the great idea that he could escape with his son to a new life. As you read on you learn how nature is also a tragic thing, as the son melts the wax you have the feeling of impending sadness. In the passage from

GO ON 

"Icarus and Daedalus" it says "Warmer and warmer grew the air. Those arms, which had seemed to uphold him, relaxed. His wings wavered, drooped. He fluttered his young hands vainly - He was falling - and in that terror he remembered. The heat of the sun had melted the wax from his wings." In that passage it shows you how he had forgotten about the sun and only thought of the heavenly beauty that he believed would be above him. Whereas in the poem "Icarus" it talks of when he's falling and what he could have thought of. In the stanzas it says "he laughed / and admitted / that even had he known / of the many failings of fathers and feathers, / he would have done it anyway!" Those stanzas prove it didn't matter what the weather would have been like he would have flown there either way. He couldn't blame nature for allowing the glue to melt, although the sun was hot enough to melt the wax it

GO ON 

was he who decided to make the decision to go that high. That proves that although nature is a beautifully tragic thing, it is also human error that can cause it.

This response effectively addresses all parts of the task, demonstrating in-depth understanding of the texts. A strong organizational structure effectively supports the controlling idea (*Nature in both [the passage and poem] was a beautifully tragic thing . . .*) presented in the introduction. To begin development of this idea, the student focuses on one positive (i.e., *beautiful*) role that nature plays in the story of Icarus, by providing the inference that nature *helped Daedalus create an idea of how to escape Crete*. A well-chosen text reference supports the inference (*“watching the seagulls in the air – the only creatures that were sure of liberty – he thought of a plan for himself and his young son, Icarus who was captive with him”*) and is then connected with effective analysis (*In that sentence it shows that nature gave him the idea of escape. The birds flying gave him the great idea that he could escape with his son to a new life*). Next, the student shifts focus to a tragic aspect of the role nature plays in the story, by means of effective, context-providing analysis (*As you read on you learn how nature is also a tragic thing, as the son melts the way you have the feeling of impending sadness*). A well-chosen text reference (*In the passage from “Icarus and Daedalus” it says “Warmer and warmer grew the air. Those arms, which had seemed to uphold him, relaxed. His wings wavered, drooped. He fluttered his young hands vainly – He was falling – and in that terror he remembered. The heat of the sun had melted the wax from his wings”*) connects with more effective analysis (*In that passage it shows you how he had forgotten about the sun and only thought of the heavenly beauty that he believed would be above him*). Continuing development of the idea of nature’s tragic role, the student selects specific stanzas from the poem (*Whereas in the poem “Icarus” it talks of when hes falling and what he could have thought of. In the stanzas it says “he laughed / and admitted / that even had he known / of the many failings of fathers and feathers, / he would have done it anyway”*) and analyzes them effectively (*Those stanzas prove it didn’t matter what the weather would have been like he would have flown there either way. He couldn’t blame nature for allowing the glue to melt, although the son was hot enough to melt the wax it was he who decided to make the decision to go that high. That proves that although nature is a beautifully tragic thing, it is also human error that can cause it*). This demonstrates insight and connection with universal ideas of human error, the desire for freedom, and personal accountability. The effective conclusion demonstrates in-depth understanding of the texts by clarifying the roles nature plays in both the passage and the poem. Transitions are skillfully used to link ideas (*In that sentence, As you read on; In that passage it shows, Whereas, Those stanzas prove*), and there is skillful use of precise language to effectively explain the topic (*beautifully tragic, feeling of impending sadness, heavenly beauty, blame nature for allowing, it was he who decided, decision, human error*). There are few errors in the response that do not interfere with meaning.

STUDENT RESPONSE

Response Score: 3 points

8. Nature often has a role in many myths. Write an essay analyzing the role of nature in **both** the passage and the poem. Use evidence from **both** the passage and the poem to support your response.

In both the story "Icarus and Daedalus" and the poem "Icarus" nature plays an important role.

There are three aspects of nature, however, that really make an impact on these two passages: the seagulls, the sun, and Earth.

The first aspect of nature that plays an important role is the seagulls. These seagulls are the ones Daedalus spots and watches while confined on the island. Because of watching the seagulls, Daedalus comes up with a plan; as it says in the story.

It reads, "At length, after watching the seagulls in the air, he thought of a plan [to get off the island] for himself and his young son Icarus."

This plan to get off the island would not have been thought of if Daedalus hadn't seen the seagulls. However, there are two more aspects of nature that are necessary to the plots of these passages.

The second aspect of nature that is



needed is Earth and its seas. The earth was included in the one rule Daedalus gave Icarus. He said, "Never to fly very low or very high, for the fog about the Earth will weigh you down." This tells the reader that if Icarus flew too low, his feathers would be weighed down, making it almost impossible to fly. So, if Icarus flew too close to the Earth, he would die. But, what about if he flew too high?

The last aspect of nature that is necessary is the Sun. The sun was a part of the one rule Icarus was given. The rule said, "Never to fly very low or very high... the blaze of the sun will surely melt your feathers." Now, since the reader knows that the "very low" part refers to the Earth, the reader can conclude that "very high" refers to getting too close to the sun. If he was to do this, to get too close to the sun, it would melt the wax, causing the feathers to fall off, which would mean flying was impossible. Icarus did not listen to his fathers rule,

GO ON 

however, and flew too close to the sun! The story reads, "the heat of the sun had melted the wax off his wings." This shows us that the sun really would have an effect on Icarus. In fact the poem compares the sun to a furnace. So, the sun had a big role in both passages because the sun was the reason Icarus died!

In conclusion, the three main aspects of nature that played a big role in "Icarus and Daedalus" and "Icarus" was the seagulls, the Earth, and the Sun. The seagulls were Daedalus' inspiration; the Earth was a potential death trap for Icarus; and the Sun was the reason for Icarus' death.

After you have checked your work, close your answer booklet and test booklet so your teacher will know you are finished.



This response adequately addresses all parts of the task, demonstrating sufficient analytic understanding of the texts. The organizational structure is appropriate and supports the focus of analyzing the *important role* that nature plays in both the story and the poem. The clear introduction identifies the student's controlling idea (*three aspects of nature . . . really make an impact on these two passages: the seagulls, the sun, and Earth*). In the first body paragraph, the student focuses on the seagulls (*The first aspect of nature that plays an important role is the seagulls*), by paraphrasing relevant text (*These seagulls are the ones Daedalus spots and watches while confined on the island. Because of watching the seagulls, Daedalus comes up with a plan; and "At length, after watching the seagulls in the air, he thought of a plan [to get off the island] for himself and his young son Icarus"*). The student connects these text references with clear analysis (*This plan to get off the island would not have been thought of if Daedalus hadn't seen the seagulls*). Next, by means of an appropriate transition (*However, there are two more aspects of nature that are necessary to the plots of these passages*), the student shifts the focus to *Earth*, the subject of the next body paragraph. The paragraph begins with clear analysis (*The second aspect of nature that is needed is Earth and its seas. The earth was included in the one rule Daedalus gave Icarus*), which is supported with relevant text (*He said, "Never to fly very low or very high, for the fog about the Earth will weigh you down"*). The student continues to develop the idea by providing analysis embedded with text references (*This tells the reader that if Icarus flew too low, his feathers would be weighed down, making it almost impossible to fly. So, if Icarus flew too close to the Earth, he would die*). Shifting focus to the third aspect, *the sun*, the student offers a rhetorical question (*But, what about if he flew too high?*) to skillfully transition to the final body paragraph. The student begins the development (*The last aspect of nature that is necessary is the Sun. The sun was a part of the one rule Icarus was given*) and supports the focus with relevant text references and analyses (*The rule said, "Never to fly very low or very high...the blaze of the sun will surely melt your feathers." Now, since the reader knows that the "very low" part refers to the Earth, the reader can conclude that "very high" refers to getting too close to the sun. If he was to do this, to get too close to the sun, it would melt the wax, causing the feathers to fall off, which would mean flying was impossible. Icarus did not listen to his fathers rule, however, and flew too close to the sun! and "the heat of the sun had melted the wax off his wings"*). The student concludes the paragraph with more analysis (*This shows us that the sun really would have an effect on Icarus. In fact the poem compares the sun to a furnace. So, the sun had a big role in both passages because the sun was the reason Icarus died!*). The concluding paragraph restates the controlling idea from the introduction and draws appropriate conclusions regarding the role nature plays in the story and poem (*The seagulls were Daedalus' inspiration; the Earth was a potential death trap for Icarus; and the Sun was the reason for Icarus' death*), thus providing a sense of closure to the essay. The transitions appropriately link ideas (*The first/second/last, However, This tells the reader, So, But, The rule said, Now, The story reads, This shows us, In fact, because, In conclusion*), both within and between paragraphs. There is an appropriate use of precise language and domain-specific vocabulary (*aspects, confined, plots, compares, potential death trap*) throughout the response. The few errors present do not interfere with meaning.

STUDENT RESPONSE

Response Score: 3 points



8. Nature often has a role in many myths. Write an essay analyzing the role of nature in **both** the passage and the poem. Use evidence from **both** the passage and the poem to support your response.

Nature sometimes has a big part or small part in myths. The role of nature in the passage “Icarus and Daedalus” by: Josephine Peabody is to help Daedalus and Icarus fly better and to help Daedalus know everything or most things about flying. The role of nature in “Icarus” by: Wendy Shaffer is to teach Icarus a lesson and to melt the wax off of his feathers. In the passage “Icarus and Daedalus” I believe nature’s job was to help Icarus and Daedalus not to have any problems for Daedalus to know something about flying. Also, in the poem “Icarus” I believe that nature wants to teach Icarus a lesson of to listen to your elders.

In “Icarus and Daedalus,” nature plays a big role. Part of this role is to help Icarus and Daedalus fly good and to help Daedalus to something about flying. I know this because, in the passage, the father knows that fog weigh you down. The text states, “never to fly very low or very high, for the fogs about the earth would weigh you down, but the blaze of the sun will surely melt your feathers apart if you go too near.” As you can see, part of nature’s role to help Daedalus and Icarus fly better and to make sure that Daedalus knows something about flying.

Also, in “Icarus,” nature is also a big role. Part of nature’s role is to teach Icarus a lesson. The lesson nature wanted to teach was to listen to your elders. I know this because Icarus didn’t listen to his dad. The poem states “Did he blame Daedalus his father? / who warned him not to fly too high.” This example shows that his father warned him not to fly too high in the sky but Icarus didn’t listen and for that the wax on his feathers melted.

But, in “Icarus”, Icarus would have flown close to the sky anyway because he wanted to feel free. The text states, “...he laughed / and admitted / that even had he known / of the many failings of father and feathers / he would have done it any way.” This example shows how even if he knew what would happen if he got too close to the sun, he would have still done it.

To sum up, Nature has a role in almost every myth. In “Icarus and Daedalus”, nature was a part of the Greek myth. Nature also played a part in “Icarus.” To conclude, nature, most of the time, has a role in many myths.

This response adequately addresses all parts of the task, demonstrating sufficient analytic understanding of the texts. An appropriate organizational structure is present. The clear introduction, development, and conclusion adequately support the focus on the role nature plays in both the passage and the poem. In the introductory paragraph, the student begins by reiterating part of the task (*Nature sometimes has a big part or small part in myths*). This is followed by a multi-part controlling idea that comprises clear analysis regarding the role nature plays in each text (*The role of nature in the passage "Icarus and Daedalus" . . . is to help Daedalus and Icarus fly better and to help Daedalus know everything or most things about flying. The role of nature in "Icarus" . . . is to teach Icarus a lesson and to melt the wax off of his feathers*). This analysis is extended with an insightful generalization (*I believe that nature wants to teach Icarus a lesson of to listen to your elders*), demonstrating sufficient understanding of explicit and implicit meanings from the text. In the first body paragraph, the student focuses on the role nature plays in the passage, first by reiterating part of the controlling idea (*to help Icarus and Daedalus fly good and to help Daedalus to something about flying*), which is then supported with relevant text (*I know this because, in the passage, the father knows that fog weigh you down. The text states, "never to fly very low or very high, for the fogs about the earth would weigh you down, but the blaze of the sun will surely melt your feathers apart if you go too near"*). Next, the student provides more clear analysis (*As you can see, part of natures role to help Daedalus and Icarus fly better and to make sure that Daedalus knows something about flying*). Shifting focus to the poem, the student starts the next paragraph with clear analysis (*. . . in "Icarus," nature is also a big role. Part of natures role is to teach Icarus a lesson. The lesson nature wanted to teach was to listen to your elders. I know this because Icarus didn't listen to his dad*) that is supported by specific text (*The poem states "Did he blame Daedulus his father? / who warned him not to fly too high"*). The analysis continues (*This example shows that his father warned him not to fly to high in the sky but Icarus didn't listen and for that the wax on his feathers melted*), demonstrating clear analytic understanding of the text and, specifically, the consequences of disobeying nature's rules. The final body paragraph maintains focus on nature's role in the poem, using clear analysis (*But, in "Icarus", Icarus would have flown close to the sky anyway because he wanted to feel free*) supported by relevant text (*The text states, "...he laughed / and admitted / that even had he known / of the many failings of father and feathers / he would have done it any way"*), all of which is extended by means of an inference addressing personal accountability within the context of the poem (*This example shows how even if he knew what would happen if he got to close to the sun, he would have still done it*). The conclusion, though somewhat repetitive, is adequate. The use of transitions to link ideas is appropriate throughout the response (*As you can see, Also, I know this because, But, This example shows, To sum up, To conclude*). Precise language and domain-specific vocabulary (*teach Icarus a lesson, listen to your elders*) are used appropriately to explain the topic. Although there are some errors present (missing punctuation, capitalization issues), they seldom interfere with meaning.

STUDENT RESPONSE

Response Score: 2 points

8. Nature often has a role in many myths. Write an essay analyzing the role of nature in **both** the passage and the poem. Use evidence from **both** the passage and the poem to support your response.

Nature is used in both the passage and poem, and in his essay. I will analyze the role of nature in both the passage and the poem also showing evidence first. I'll analyze the role of nature in the passage. In the passage The inventor used the seagulls he seen from his tower as inspiration for his new invention wings!

The inventor made the wings from wax and the fethers from the seagulls around his tower. The inventor also used the seagulls as an exaput of how to fly his new invention. The sun was also important natural factor in the passage as that if inventors wings got to close to it the wings would fall apart.

Now those where the role of nature in the passage next is nature's role in the poem,

GO ON 

Now nature seems to have less of a role in the poem than The passage but now the less its still there. The poem Icarus starts of with Icarus falling, and the is where natures role comes in because of the sun melting the wax on his man made wings.

Thes are natures roles in both the the passage and the poem, with The passages main nature role being the seagulls and the poems being the sun.

This response minimally addresses some parts of the task, demonstrating partial analytic understanding of the texts. A weak organizational structure inconsistently supports the student's focus of analyzing *(the role of nature in both the passage and the poem)*. In the introductory paragraph, the student begins with an inference focusing on the role that seagulls played in the passage *(in ventor yoused the seagulls he seen from his tower as in spuration for his new invention wings!)*. This inference is supported with a limited reference to a main idea from the texts *(The inventor made the wings from wax and the fethers from the seagulls arowned his tower)*, which is developed further with weak analysis *(The inventor also yoused the seagulls as an exapul of how to fly his new in vention)*. The student's response then shifts focus to another aspect of nature that played a role in the passage and poem *(The sun was also important natural facter in the passage . . .)*. The student begins this development with a relevant text reference *(if inventors wings got to close to it the wings would fall apart)* that somewhat supports the idea of the sun as a factor. The student shifts focus from the passage to the poem in the next paragraph *(Now those where the rolse of nature in the passage next is natures role in the poem)*, initiating development with a weak inference *(Now nature seems to have less of a role in the poem than The passage but nun the less its still there)* that is supported with text *(The poem Icarus starts of with Icarus falling)*. Next, the student provides some very weak analysis *(where natures role comes in because of the sun melting the wax)* that only somewhat supports the ideas. The conclusion summarizes the main ideas of the response *(Thes are natures roles in both the the passage and the poem, with The passeges main nature role being the seagulls and the poems being the sun)*. The student uses inconsistent transitions, which sometimes link ideas *(Now those where the rolse of nature)* and sometimes leave gaps. There are many errors present throughout the response. The errors in spelling *(yoused for used)*, usage *(seen for saw)*, sentence structure *(run-ons)*, and punctuation *(random capitalization)* sometimes interfere with meaning.

STUDENT RESPONSE

Response Score: 2 points



8. Nature often has a role in many myths. Write an essay analyzing the role of nature in **both** the passage and the poem. Use evidence from **both** the passage and the poem to support your response.

Nature often has a role in many myths. The way that nature had a role in this myth was by presenting the birds as freedom and liberty. In both the poem and the passage the escape plan is inspired by a bird.

In the passage the father and his son are imprisoned, the father spots a group of birds and get the idea to escape like birds—By flying.

The poem already takes part in the air during the escape, the sun is an enemy to Icarus, the sun is a bully to Icarus the father knows to stay away and tells Icarus, but he doesn't listen.

That is how nature plays a role in my "Icarus and Daedalus".

This response inconsistently addresses some parts of the task, demonstrating partial analytic understanding of the texts. The student's introduction identifies a controlling idea that is somewhat related to the texts (*The way that nature had a role in this myth was by presenting the birds as freedom and liberty*); the development and conclusion (*That is how nature plays a role in my "Icarus and Daedalus"*) are both weak. In the first paragraph, the student provides an inference (*In both the poem and the passage the escape plan is inspired by a bird*) followed by vague text references (*In the passage the father and his son are imprisoned, the father spots a group of birds*) and weak analysis (*get the idea to escape like birds—By flying*) that is only somewhat connected to the rest of the response. The next paragraph consists of inferences (*The poem already takes part in the air during the escape and the sun is an enemy to Icarus, the sun is a bully to Icarus*) and a vague text reference (*the father knows to stay away, tells Icarus, but he doesn't listen*). Overall, the analysis is weak but does move the response beyond a strictly literal interpretation of the texts; the quality of the analysis falls short of being clear. The response also lacks sufficient development. The student's use of transitions to link ideas (*In both the poem and the passage, In the passage, That is how*) and precise language (*presenting, freedom, enemy, bully*) is inconsistent. Though errors in sentence formation, usage, spelling, and punctuation are present throughout the response, they seldom interfere with meaning.

STUDENT RESPONSE

Response Score: 1 point



8. Nature often has a role in many myths. Write an essay analyzing the role of nature in **both** the passage and the poem. Use evidence from **both** the passage and the poem to support your response.

Nature can often play a role in myths, stories, and poems. In the passage “Icarus and Daedulus”, it states “impossible to leave the island since every ship that came or went was well guarded by order of the king. This shows the reader that for Icarus and Daedulus to escape, they’ll have to fly over an area of sea. As for the poem “Icarus”, it reads, “It was / a long / long / fall.” Their stating that the nature is the sky because their flying. The passage starts off on the ground and Daedulus building the wings while the poem is the sky at all points. As you can tell, nature can show what the story line will be.

This response minimally addresses parts of the task, demonstrating inadequate analytic understanding of the texts. There is minimal evidence of an organizational structure, and the response has a weak introduction (*Nature can often play a role in myths, stories, and poems*). The student’s response is insufficiently developed and contains a confusing conclusion (*As you can tell, nature can show what the story line will be*) that provides little closure to the essay. After the brief introduction, the student begins the development with a text reference (*In the passage “Icarus and Daedulus”, it states “impossible to leave the island since every ship that came or went was well guarded by order of the king*), which is loosely connected to a weak inference (*This shows the reader that for Icarus and Daedulus to escape, they’ll have to fly over an area of sea*). Next, the student shifts focus to the poem by means of an insufficient reference to the text (*As for the poem “Icarus”, it reads, “It was / a long / long / fall”*). However, the attempt at analysis that follows is confusing (*Their stating that the nature is the sky because their flying*) and does little to clarify the text reference. The student gives a final attempt at analysis that is both simplistic and confusing (*The passage starts off on the ground and Daedulus building the wings while the poem is the sky at all points*). There are a few transitions (*In the passage, This shows the reader that, As for the poem, As you can tell*) that do little to link the student’s ideas. There is little use of precise language and domain-specific vocabulary to explain the topic. Usage errors (*their* for *they’re*) and spelling (*Daedulus*) are present but seldom interfere with meaning.

STUDENT RESPONSE

Response Score: 1 point

8. Nature often has a role in many myths. Write an essay analyzing the role of nature in **both** the passage and the poem. Use evidence from **both** the passage and the poem to support your response.

The Role in Nature is you got to let stuff FREE her some evidence that shows that. "He longed for one draught of flight to quench the thirst of his captivity." He stretched out his arms to the sky and made toward the highest heavens.

Her some other evidence of letting nature FREE. "At length, watching the sea gulls in the air — the only creatures that were sure of liberty — he thought of a plan for himself and his young son learns, who was captive with him."

There I showed you were I got evidence of "you got to let Nature FREE."



This response minimally addresses parts of the task, demonstrating inadequate analytic understanding of the texts. The organizational structure is minimal, with a simplistic introduction, basic development (consisting mostly of direct quotes), and a conclusion that reiterates ideas from the introduction. In the introductory sentence, the student provides a simplistic attempt at analysis (*The Role in Nature is you got to let stuff FREE . . .*). However, there is no context for the inference, so its connection to the rest of the response, as well as to the task (“analyzing the role of nature in **both** the passage and the poem”), is unclear. The introductory inference is followed by a minimal attempt at development (. . . *her some evidence that shows that. “He longr d for one draught of Flight to quench the thirst of his captivity.” He stretched out his arms to the sky and made towards the highest heavens*). Other than stating that the cited text constitutes “evidence” for the idea that *you got to let stuff FREE*, the connection between the quote and the inference is not clarified or contextualized and therefore remains unclear. The next paragraph mostly consists of another vaguely supportive quote (*HeR some other evidence of letting nature FRee. “At legth, watching the sea gulls in the air — the only creatures that were sure of liberty — he thought OF a Plan for himSelf and his young son”*). Again, development is ineffective, and there is no context or clarification for the quote. Both quotes’ connections to the main idea and the task are minimal, and the student’s only inference is both minimal and unclear. The few transitions link ideas in the response (*HeR some other evidence, There I showed you*). Other than the domain-specific vocabulary contained in the quotes, there is little use of precise language in the response. The errors in sentence formation (run-ons), usage (*were* for *where*), spelling (*stretched*, *legth*), and capitalization (*Role*, *FREE*) interfere with meaning.

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ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS TEST DIRECTIONS FOR CONVENTIONS OF STANDARD ENGLISH QUESTIONS

Directions:

On the following pages are the Conventions of Standard English questions.

Directions for Multiple-Choice Questions:

Each question will ask you to select an answer from among four choices.

For the multiple-choice questions:

- Read each question and choose the best answer.
- Only one of the answers provided is correct.
- Record your choice in the answer booklet.

CONVENTIONS OF STANDARD ENGLISH MULTIPLE-CHOICE QUESTIONS

9. Read the paragraph.

(1) James Pollard Espy was born in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, in 1785. (2) He is remembered today as a pioneering scientist who discovered how clouds are formed. (3) Espy spent much of his career working for the United States government, specializing in creating weather maps. (4) If he had not made these advancements, he is still remembered as one of the first scientists to use the telegraph to obtain weather reports from different parts of the country.

Which change should be made to the paragraph to correct the error in verb usage?

- A. Change was born to had been born in sentence 1.
- B. Change is to would be in sentence 2.
- C. Change spent to would be spending in sentence 3.
- D. Change is still to would still be in sentence 4.

Item Information	
Alignment	D.2.1.1
Answer Key	D
Depth of Knowledge	2
p-value A	10%
p-value B	9%
p-value C	8%
p-value D	73% (correct answer)
Option Annotations	The student is asked to identify the change that should be made to the paragraph to correct the error in verb usage. Option D is correct, because sentence 4 should be changed from the present to the present conditional. Option A is incorrect, because the past tense is correctly used in sentence 1. Option B is incorrect, because the present tense is correctly used in sentence 2. Option C is incorrect, because the past tense is correctly used in sentence 3.

10. Read the paragraph.

(1) Louisa May Alcott, a 19th-century author, used her life experiences as material in her work. (2) In her novel *Little Women*, Alcott relates childhood experiences that she and her sisters shared growing up in Massachusetts. (3) The story follows the lives of Jo March and her sisters, characters based on Alcott’s own family. (4) Set in New England, the novel shows the difficulties the sisters faced during the American Civil War a time of great change.

Which revision corrects an error in punctuation?

- A. Remove the commas after Alcott and author in sentence 1.
- B. Add a comma after experiences in sentence 2.
- C. Remove the comma after sisters in sentence 3.
- D. Add a comma after War in sentence 4.

Item Information	
Alignment	D.1.2.4
Answer Key	D
Depth of Knowledge	2
p-value A	6%
p-value B	6%
p-value C	15%
p-value D	73% (correct answer)
Option Annotations	The student is asked to determine which revision corrects an error in punctuation. Option D is correct, because a comma should be added after “War” in sentence 4 to set off the appositive phrase. Option A is incorrect, because the commas set off an appositive phrase, they are necessary. Option B is incorrect, because no comma should be added; the clause after “experiences” is restrictive. Option C is incorrect, because a comma is needed after “sisters” in sentence 3 to mark the appositive phrase.

11. Read the paragraph.

(1) The student council itself, concerned that older students hardly know the younger students in the school, want to start a program called Reading Buddies. (2) Once a week, students in sixth, seventh, or eighth grade have the option to spend time reading with a kindergartner or first grader. (3) Members of the student council believe that the program will promote a stronger school community. (4) No one has to be a Reading Buddy, but the program will be more successful if the majority of students take part.

Which change should be made to correct the error in the paragraph?

- A. Change want to wants in sentence 1.
- B. Change have to has in sentence 2.
- C. Change believe to believes in sentence 3.
- D. Change take to takes in sentence 4.

Item Information	
Alignment	D.1.1.11
Answer Key	A
Depth of Knowledge	1
p-value A	60% (correct answer)
p-value B	20%
p-value C	12%
p-value D	8%
Option Annotations	The student is asked to identify the change that should be made to correct the subject-verb agreement error in the paragraph. Option A is correct, because in sentence 1, since “student council” is singular, the verb needs to be changed from the plural “want” to the singular “wants.” Option B is incorrect, because “students” agrees with the verb “have” in sentence 2. Option C is incorrect, because “members” agrees with the verb “believe.” Option D is incorrect, because the collective noun “majority” is being used as a plural and it agrees with the verb “take.”

12. Read the paragraph.

(1) The Willis Tower, located in Chicago, is the second tallest building in the Western Hemisphere at 1,450 feet. (2) On a clear day, a tourist can see four different states Illinois, Indiana, Wisconsin, and Michigan. (3) The building uses approximately 25,000 miles of electric cable, enough to circle the entire Earth at the equator.

Which revision would correct the mistake in punctuation?

- A. Remove the comma after Tower in sentence 1.
- B. Add a dash after at in sentence 1.
- C. Add a dash after states in sentence 2.
- D. Remove the comma after cable in sentence 3.

Item Information	
Alignment	D.1.2.4
Answer Key	C
Depth of Knowledge	2
p-value A	13%
p-value B	13%
p-value C	64% (correct answer)
p-value D	10%
Option Annotations	The student is asked to identify the revision that would correct the mistake in punctuation in the given paragraph. Option C is the correct answer, because the addition of a dash after “states” in sentence 2 sets off the nonrestrictive clause “Illinois, Indiana, Wisconsin, and Michigan.” It also emphasizes the states listed at the end of the sentence. Option A is incorrect, because the comma after “Tower” in the sentence should remain. The phrase “located in Chicago” is a nonrestrictive clause that needs to be set off with commas. Option B is incorrect, because a dash cannot be added after “at”; it would break up the prepositional phrase “at 1,450 feet.” Option D is incorrect, because the phrase after “cable” is a nonrestrictive clause; therefore, the comma is needed.

ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS—SAMPLE ITEM SUMMARY DATA

Multiple-Choice and Evidence-Based Selected-Response Questions

Sample Number	Alignment	Answer Key	Depth of Knowledge	p-value A	p-value B	p-value C	p-value D
1	B-C.2.1.2	B	2	8%	57%	6%	29%
2	B-C.2.1.3	B	2	18%	46%	18%	18%
3	B-K.1.1.2	C	2	7%	14%	64%	15%
4	B-C.2.1.1	D	2	16%	15%	12%	57%
5	B-V.4.1.2	Part One: A Part Two: C	3	Mean Score: 0.62			
6	B-V.4.1.1	A	2	82%	7%	8%	3%
7	B-K.1.1.3	Part One: A Part Two: B, C	3	Mean Score: 1.05			
9	D.2.1.1	D	2	10%	9%	8%	73%
10	D.1.2.4	D	2	6%	6%	15%	73%
11	D.1.1.11	A	1	60%	20%	12%	8%
12	D.1.2.4	C	2	13%	13%	64%	10%

Text-Dependent Analysis Prompt

Sample Number	Alignment	Points	Depth of Knowledge	Mean Score
8	E.1.1	4	3	1.88

Acknowledgements

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PSSA Grade 8 English Language Arts Item and Scoring Sampler

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