


Advances in  
the PARCC  
ELA/Literacy  
Assessment

August 2012



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An Aligned System

Common Core State Standards

Model Content Frameworks

Model Instructional Lessons/Units

PARCC Assessment System




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I. PARCC Core Commitments, Key Shifts in the Standards, and the Corresponding Advances in PARCC

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PARCC's Fundamental Advance

PARCC is designed to *reward quality instruction aligned to the Standards*, so the assessment is worthy of preparation rather than a distraction from good work.

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**PARCC's Core Commitments to ELA/Literacy Assessment Quality**

- **Texts Worth Reading:** The assessments will use authentic texts worthy of study instead of artificially produced or commissioned passages.
- **Questions Worth Answering:** Sequences of questions that draw students into deeper encounters with texts will be the norm (as in an excellent classroom), rather than sets of random questions of varying quality.
- **Better Standards Demand Better Questions:** Instead of reusing existing items, PARCC will develop custom items to the Standards.
- **Fidelity to the Standards (now in Teachers' hands):** PARCC evidences are rooted in the language of the Standards so that expectations remain the same in both instructional and assessment settings.

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**What is Different About PARCC's Development Process?**

- PARCC states first developed the Model Content Frameworks to provide guidance on key elements of excellent instruction aligned with the Standards.
- Then, those Frameworks informed the assessment blueprint design.

*So, for the first time. . .*

- PARCC is communicating in the same voice to teachers as it is to assessment developers!
- PARCC is designing the assessments around exactly the same critical content the standards expect of teachers and students.

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**What Are the Shifts at the Heart of PARCC Design (and the Standards)?**

1. **Complexity:** Regular practice with complex text and its academic language.
2. **Evidence:** Reading and writing grounded in evidence from text, literary and informational.
3. **Knowledge:** Building knowledge through content rich nonfiction.

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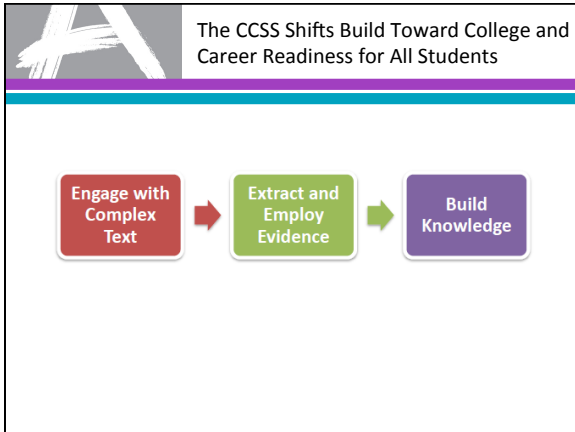
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*Nine Specific Advances in the PARCC ELA/Literacy Assessment Demanded by the Three Core Shifts. . .*

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**Shift 1:** Regular practice with complex text and its academic language

1. PARCC builds a staircase of text complexity to ensure students are on track each year for college and career reading.
2. PARCC rewards careful, close reading rather than racing through passages.
3. PARCC systematically focuses on the words that matter most—not obscure vocabulary, but the academic language that pervades complex texts.

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**Shift 2: Reading and writing grounded in evidence from text, literary and informational**

4. PARCC focuses on students rigorously citing evidence from texts throughout the assessment (including selected-response items).
5. PARCC includes questions with more than one right answer to allow students to generate a range of rich insights that are substantiated by evidence from text(s).
6. PARCC requires writing to sources rather than writing to de-contextualized expository prompts.
7. PARCC also includes rigorous expectations for narrative writing, including accuracy and precision in writing in later grades.

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**Shift 3: Building knowledge through content rich nonfiction**

8. PARCC assesses not just ELA but a full range of reading and writing across the disciplines of science and social studies.
9. PARCC simulates research on the assessment, including the comparison and synthesis of ideas across a range of informational sources.

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**II. Sample Items Illustrating Some of the Advances**

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**Students' Command of Evidence with Complex Texts is at the Core of Every Part of the Assessment!**

SO. . .

Two standards are always in play—whether they be reading or writing items, selected-response or constructed-response items on any one of the four components of PARCC. They are:

- Reading Standard One (Use of Evidence)
- Reading Standard Ten (Complex Texts)

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**Three Innovative Item Types That Showcase Students' Command of Evidence with Complex Texts**

- **Evidence-Based Selected Response (EBSR)**—Combines a traditional selected-response question with a second selected-response question that asks students to show evidence from the text that supports the answer they provided to the first question. Underscores the importance of Reading Anchor Standard 1 for implementation of the CCSS.
- **Technology-Enhanced Constructed Response (TECR)**—Uses technology to capture student comprehension of texts in authentic ways that have been difficult to score by machine for large scale assessments (e.g., drag and drop, cut and paste, shade text, move items to show relationships).
- **Range of Prose Constructed Responses (PCR)**—Elicits evidence that students have understood a text or texts they have read and can communicate that understanding well both in terms of written expression and knowledge of language and conventions. There are four of these items of varying types on each annual performance-based assessment.

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**PARCC Summative Assessment with EBSR, TECR, and PCR Items**

PERFORMANCE-BASED COMPONENT		
LITERARY ANALYSIS TASK	NARRATIVE TASK	RESEARCH SIMULATION TASK
The Literature Task plays an important role in honing students' ability to read complex text closely, a skill that research reveals as the most significant factor differentiating college-ready from non-college-ready readers. This task will ask students to carefully consider literature worthy of close study and compose an analytic essay.	The Narrative Task broadens the way in which students may use this type of writing. Narrative writing can be used to convey experiences or events, real or imaginary. In this task, students may be asked to write a story, detail a scientific process, write a historical account of important figures, or to describe an account of events, scenes or objects, for example.	The Research Simulation Task is an assessment component worthy of student preparation because it asks students to exercise the career- and college-readiness skills of observation, deduction, and proper use and evaluation of evidence across text types. In this task, students will analyze an informational topic presented through several articles or multimedia stimuli, the first text being an anchor text that introduces the topic. Students will engage with the texts by answering a series of questions and synthesizing information from multiple sources in order to write two analytic essays.
<b>END-OF-YEAR ASSESSMENT</b> On the end-of-year assessment, students have the opportunity to demonstrate their ability to read and comprehend complex informational and literary texts. Questions will be sequenced in a way that they will draw students into deeper encounters with the texts and will result in more thorough comprehension of the concepts.		

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**Literary Analysis Task (Grade 10):**  
Ovid’s “Daedalus and Icarus” and  
Sexton’s “To a Friend Whose Work Has  
Come to Triumph”



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**Understanding the Literary Analysis Task**

- Students carefully consider two literary texts worthy of close study.
- They are asked to answer a few EBSR and TECR questions about each text to demonstrate their ability to do close analytic reading and to compare and synthesize ideas.
- Students write a literary analysis about the two texts.

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**Texts Worth Reading?**

- **Range:** Example of assessing literature and helping to satisfy the 70%-30% split of informational text to literature at the high school grade band.
- **Quality:** The story of Daedalus and Icarus from Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* is a classic of the genre and has proven to be inspirational to painters and poets alike, and no poet’s version is more striking than that of Anne Sexton. Her “To a Friend Whose Work Has Come to Triumph” refashions the themes of the myth in dramatic fashion, providing a powerful counterpoint for students to explore.
- **Complexity:** Quantitatively and qualitatively, the passages have been validated and deemed suitable for use at grade 10.

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**Questions Worth Answering?**

On the following pages, there are two Evidence-Based Selected-Response Items and one Prose Constructed Response Item that challenge students' command of evidence with complex texts.

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**Grade 10 Prose Constructed-Response Item**

Use what you have learned from reading "Daedalus and Icarus" by Ovid and "To a Friend Whose Work Has Come to Triumph" by Anne Sexton to write an essay that provides an analysis of how Sexton transforms Daedalus and Icarus.

As a starting point, you may want to consider what is emphasized, absent, or different in the two texts, but feel free to develop your own focus for analysis.

Develop your essay by providing textual evidence from both texts. Be sure to follow the conventions of standard English.

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**Aligns to the Standards and Reflects Good Practice**

- Specific CCSS alignment to:
  - RL.10.1 (use of evidence); RI.10.9 (comparison of authors' presentation); RL.10.10 (complex texts).
  - W.10.2 (writing to inform and explain); W.10.4 (writing coherently); W.10.9 (drawing evidence from texts).
  - L.10.1-3 (grammar and conventions).
- Measures the ability to explain how *one text transforms ideas from another text* by focusing on a specific concept presented in the texts (the transformation of ideas with regard to the experience of flying).
- Asks students to *write to sources* rather than write to a de-contextualized prompt.
- Focuses on students' rigorously *citing evidence* for their answer.
- Requires students to demonstrate they can apply the *knowledge of language and conventions* when writing.

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**A** Grade 10 Evidence-Based Selected-Response Item

**Part A**  
Which of the following sentences best states an important theme about human behavior as described in Ovid's "Daedalus and Icarus"?

- a. Striving to achieve one's dreams is a worthwhile endeavor.
- b. The thoughtlessness of youth can have tragic results.\*
- c. Imagination and creativity bring their own rewards.
- d. Everyone should learn from his or her mistakes.

**Part B**  
Select three pieces of evidence from Ovid's "Daedalus and Icarus" that support the answer to Part A.

- a. "and by his playfulness retard the work/his anxious father planned" (lines 310-311)\*
- b. "But when at last/his father finished it, he poised himself" (lines 312-313)
- c. "he fitted on his son the plumed wings/with trembling hands, while down his withered cheeks/the tears were falling" (lines 327-329)
- d. "Proud of his success/the foolish Icarus forsook his guide" (lines 348-349)\*
- e. "and, bold in vanity, began to soar/rising above his wings to touch the skies" (lines 350-351)\*
- f. "and as the years went by the gifted youth/began to rival his instructor's art" (lines 375-377)
- g. "Wherefore Daedalus/engaged and envious, sought to slay the youth" (lines 384-385)
- h. "The Partridge hides/in shaded places by the leafy trees...for it is mindful of its former fall" (lines 395-396, 399)

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**A** Aligns to the Standards and Reflects Good Practice

- Specific CCSS alignment to:
  - RL.10.1 (evidence).
  - RL.10.2 (theme).
  - RL.10.10 (complex text).
- This item helps students gather information and details for use on the Prose Constructed Response; it requires *close analytical reading* to answer both parts correctly (e.g., Part A of this item is challenging because it requires synthesis of several parts of the myth to determine the answer).
- Requires students in Part B to *provide evidence* for the accuracy of their answer in Part A.
- PARCC assessment gives students the opportunity to gain partial credit if their answers reflect genuine comprehension on their part (e.g., they identify the theme correctly and are able to identify at least 2 details).

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**A** Grade 10 Evidence-Based Selected-Response Item

**Part A**  
What does the word vanity mean in these lines from the text "Daedalus and Icarus"?

"Proud of his success, the foolish Icarus forsook his guide, and, bold in vanity, began to soar" (lines 345-349)

- a. arrogance\*
- b. fear
- c. heroism
- d. enthusiasm

**Part B**  
Which word from the lines from the text in Part A best helps the reader understand the meaning of vanity?

- a. proud\*
- b. success
- c. foolish
- d. soar

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**Aligns to the Standards and Reflects Good Practice**

- Specific CCSS alignment to:
  - RL.10.1 (use of evidence).
  - RL.10.4 (meaning of words and phrases).
  - RL.10.10 (complex texts).
- Reflects a key advance, namely focusing on the words that matter most, not obscure vocabulary, but the *academic language* that pervades complex texts.
- Rewards *careful, close reading* rather than requiring students to race through the passage to determine the meaning (by using the context of the text) of an academic word that is important to one of the main characters and to the central themes. Again, this item helps students gather details for use on the Prose Constructed Response.
- Credit for Part B (evidence) is given only if Part A is correct, signaling the importance of the connection between the claim and the evidence.

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**Research Simulation Task (Grade 7):  
Amelia Earhart's Disappearance**



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**Understanding the Research Simulation Task**

- Session 1:
  - Students begin by reading an anchor text that introduces the topic. EBSR and TECR items ask students to gather key details about the passage to support their understanding.
  - Then, they write a summary or short analysis of the piece.
- Session 2:
  - Students read two additional sources (may include a multimedia text) and answer a few questions about each text to learn more about the topic so they are ready to write the final essay and to show their reading comprehension.
  - Finally, students mirror the research process by synthesizing their understandings into an analytic essay using textual evidence from several of the sources.

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**Texts Worth Reading?**

- **Range:** Example of assessing reading across the disciplines and helping to satisfy the 55%-45% split of informational text to literature at the 6-8 grade band.
- **Quality:** The texts on Amelia Earhart represent content-rich nonfiction on a topic that is historically significant.
- **Complexity:** Quantitatively and qualitatively, the passages have been validated and deemed suitable for use at grade 7.

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**Questions Worth Answering?**

On the following pages there are two Prose Constructed Response Items and one Technology Enhanced Constructed-Response Item that challenge students' command of evidence with complex texts.

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**Grade 7 Analytical Prose Constructed-Response Item #1**

Based on the information in the text "Biography of Amelia Earhart," write an essay that summarizes and explains the challenges Earhart faced throughout her life. Remember to use textual evidence to support your ideas.

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**Aligns to the Standards and Reflects Good Practice**

- Specific CCSS alignment to:
  - RI.7.1 (use of evidence); RI.7.2 (summary of text); RI.7.10 (complex texts).
  - W.7.2 (writing to explain or inform); W.7.4 (writing coherently); W.7.9 (drawing evidence from texts).
  - L.7.1-3 (grammar and conventions).
- Requires *writing to sources* rather than to a de-contextualized or generalized prompt (e.g., asks about a specific aspect of Earhart’s life).
- Requires students to *draw evidence* from the text and cite this evidence clearly.
- Requires students to apply the *knowledge of language and conventions* when writing.
- Purposely designed to help students gather information for writing the final analytic essay that asks students to evaluate the arguments made in three texts about Earhart’s bravery (i.e., her bravery can be expressed as her ability to face the many challenges).

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**Final Grade 7 Prose Constructed-Response Item #2**

You have read three texts describing Amelia Earhart. All three include the claim that Earhart was a brave, courageous person. The three texts are:

- “Biography of Amelia Earhart”
- “Earhart’s Final Resting Place Believed Found”
- “Amelia Earhart’s Life and Disappearance”

Consider the argument each author uses to demonstrate Earhart’s bravery.

Write an essay that analyzes the strength of the arguments about Earhart’s bravery in at least two of the texts. Remember to use textual evidence to support your ideas.

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**Aligns to the Standards and Reflects Good Practice**

- Specific CCSS alignment to:
  - RI.7.1 (use of evidence); RI.7.8 (evaluate claims in a text); RI.7.9 (comparison of authors’ presentation); RI.7.10 (complex texts).
  - W.7.2 (writing to inform and explain); W.7.4 (writing coherently); W.7.7 (conduct short research projects); W.7.8 (gather relevant information from multiple sources); W.7.9 (drawing evidence from texts).
  - L.7.1-3 (grammar and conventions).
- Measures the ability to *compare and synthesize ideas* across multiple texts and the ability to analyze the strength of various arguments.
- Asks students to *write to sources* rather than write to a de-contextualized prompt.
- Focuses on students rigorously *citing evidence* for their answer.
- Requires students to delve deeply into multiple texts to gather evidence to analyze a given claim, *simulating the research process*.
- Requires students to demonstrate they can apply the *knowledge of language and conventions* when writing.

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**Grade 7 Technology-Enhanced Constructed-Response Item**

Below are three claims that one could make based on the article "Earhart's Final Resting Place Believed Found."

<b>Claims</b>	Earhart and Noonan lived as castaways on Nikumaroro Island.
	Earhart and Noonan's plane crashed into the Pacific Ocean.
	People don't really know where Earhart and Noonan died.

**Part A**  
 \*Highlight the claim that is supported by the most relevant and sufficient facts within "Earhart's Final Resting Place Believed Found."

**Part B**  
 \*Click on two facts within the article that best provide evidence to support the claim selected in Part A.

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**Aligns to Standards and Reflects Good Practice**

- Specific CCSS alignment to:
  - RI.7.1 (use of evidence).
  - RI.7.8 (author's claims and evidence).
  - RI.7.10 (complex texts).
- This item helps students gather information and details for use on the first and second Prose Constructed Response.
- Requires students to *employ reasoning skills*, since all of the claims listed could be made, but only one is supported by the most relevant and sufficient facts.
- Reflects the key shift of *reading closely and weighing evidence* by offering credit for Part B only if Part A is correct.
- Technology enables students to highlight evidence that supports their understanding.

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**Narrative Task (Grade 6):**  
 Jean Craighead George's  
 Excerpt from *Julie of the Wolves*

PARCC  
 Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for Advanced Learning

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**Understanding the Narrative Writing Task**

- Students read one or two brief texts and answer a few questions to help clarify their understanding of the text(s).
- Students then write either a narrative story or a narrative description (e.g., writing a historical account of important figures; detailing a scientific process; describing an account of events, scenes, or objects).

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**Texts Worth Reading?**

- **Range:** Example of assessing literature and helping to satisfy the 55%-45% split of informational text to literature at the 6-8 grade-band.
- **Quality:** *Julie of the Wolves* was a winner of the Newbery Medal in 1973. This text about a young Eskimo girl surviving on her own in the tundra by communicating with wolves offers a story rich with characterization and imagery that will appeal to a diverse student population.
- **Complexity:** Quantitatively and qualitatively, the passages have been validated and deemed suitable for use at grade 6.

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**Questions Worth Answering?**

On the following pages there is one Evidence-Based Selected-Response Item, one Technology Enhanced Constructed-Response Item, and one Prose Constructed Response Item that challenge students' command of evidence with complex texts.

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**A** Grade 6 Prose Constructed-Response Item

In the passage, the author developed a strong character named Miyax. Think about Miyax and the details the author used to create that character. The passage ends with Miyax waiting for the black wolf to look at her.

Write an original story to continue where the passage ended. In your story, be sure to use what you have learned about the character Miyax as you tell what happens to her next.

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**A** Aligns to the the Standards and Reflects Good Practice

- Specific CCSS alignment to:
  - RL.6.1 (use of evidence); RL.6.3 (describe how characters respond to changes); RL.6.10 (complex text).
  - W.6.3 (narrative writing); W.6.4 (writing coherently).
  - L.6.1-3 (grammar and conventions).
- Includes *rigorous expectations for narrative writing*, including weaving details from the source text accurately into an original narrative story (students must draw evidence from the text—character traits and the events of the story—and apply that understanding to create a story).
- For students who struggle to create original stories, the source text provides ideas from which to begin; for those students who readily create imaginative experiences, the source provides a means to “jump off” and innovate.
- Focuses on students applying their *knowledge of language and conventions* when writing (an expectation for both college and careers).

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**A** Grade 6 Evidence-Based Selected-Response Item #1

Part A  
What does the word “regal” mean as it is used in the passage?  
 a. generous  
 b. threatening  
 c. kingly\*  
 d. uninterested

Part B  
Which of the phrases from the passage best helps the reader understand the meaning of “regal?”  
 a. “wagging their tails as they awoke”  
 b. “the wolves, who were shy”  
 c. “their sounds and movements expressed goodwill”  
 d. “with his head high and his chest out”\*

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**A** Aligns to the Standards and Reflects Good Practice

- Specific CCSS alignment to:
  - RL.6.1 (use of evidence).
  - RL.6.4 (meaning of words and phrases).
  - RL.6.10 (complex texts).
- Reflects a key shift, namely focusing on the words that matter most, not obscure vocabulary, but the *academic language* that pervades complex texts.
- Rewards *careful, close reading* rather than requiring the students to race through the passage to determine the meaning of an academic word by showing the context within the passage that helped them determine the meaning of the word.

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**A** Grade 6 Evidence-Based Selected-Response Item #2

**Part A**  
Based on the passage from *Jule of the Wolves*, how does Miyax feel about her father?

- a. She is angry that he left her alone.
- b. She blames him for her difficult childhood.
- c. She appreciates him for his knowledge of nature.\*
- d. She is grateful that he planned out her future.

**Part B**  
Which sentence from the passage best shows Miyax’s feelings for her father?

- a. "She had been lost without food for many sleeps on the North Slope of Alaska."
- b. "This could be done she knew, for her father, an Eskimo hunter, had done so."\*
- c. "Unfortunately, Miyax’s father never explained to her how he had told the wolf of his needs."
- d. "And not long afterward he paddled his kayak into the Bering Sea to hunt for seal, and he never returned."

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**A** Aligns to the Standards and Reflects Good Practice

- Specific CCSS alignment to:
  - RL.6.1 (use of evidence).
  - RL.6.3 (how characters respond).
  - RL.6.10 (complex texts).
- Rewards *careful, close reading* to find specific information and applying understanding of a text.
- Focuses students on *rigorously citing evidence* for their answer; students must provide the context used to establish the accuracy of their answer or they don’t receive credit for the item.
- Asks students to *delve deeply* into how the main character is feeling as she reflects on her predicament, helping students gather information and details for use on the Prose Constructed Response.

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**Grade 6 Technology-Enhanced Selected-Response Item**

**Part A**  
Choose one word that describes Miyax based on evidence from the text. There is more than one correct choice listed below.

- A. reckless
- B. lively
- C. imaginative\*
- D. observant\*
- E. impatient
- F. confident

**Part B**  
Find a sentence in the passage with details that support your response to Part A. Click on that sentence and drag and drop it into the box below.

**Part C**  
Find a second sentence in the passage with details that support your response to Part A. Click on that sentence and drag and drop it into the box below.

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**Aligns to the Standards and Reflects Good Practice**

- Specific CCSS alignment to:
  - RL.6.1 (use of evidence).
  - RL.6.3 (how characters respond).
  - RL.6.10 (complex texts).
- Rather than a single right answer, this item allows students to explore different solutions and *generate varying insights* about a multi-dimensional character, choosing the word they most strongly feel they can defend.
- The item also insists on students *rigorously substantiating their conclusions/insights* about the character of Miyax with two details drawn from the text, helping students gather information and details for use on the Prose Constructed Response.
- Technology enables students to “drag and drop” evidence that supports their understanding.

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**End-of-Year Assessment (Grade 3):  
“How Animals Live”**

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### Understanding the End-of-Year Assessment

- Students will be given several passages to read closely.
- EBSR and TECR questions will be sequenced in a way that they will draw students into deeper encounters with the texts and will result in thorough comprehension of the concepts to provide models for the regular course of instruction.
- Will draw on higher order skills such as critical reading and analysis, the comparison and synthesis of ideas within and across texts, and determining the meaning of words and phrases in context.

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### Texts Worth Reading?

- **Range:** Follows the requirements in the standards to make use of informational texts, including history, science, and technical passages (50% of the points in grades 3-5 are to come from informational texts).
- **Quality:** This is an example of a science passage from a third-grade textbook.
- **Complexity:** Quantitatively and qualitatively, the passages have been validated and deemed suitable for use at grade 3.

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### Questions Worth Answering?

On the following pages there is one Evidence-Based Selected-Response Item and one Technology Enhanced Constructed-Response Item that challenge students' command of evidence with complex texts.

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**Grade 3 Evidence-Based Selected-Response Item #1**

Part A	Part B
<p>What is one main idea of "How Animals Live?"</p> <p>a. There are many types of animals on the planet.</p> <p>b. Animals need water to live.</p> <p>c. There are many ways to sort different animals.*</p> <p>d. Animals begin their life cycles in different forms.</p>	<p>Which sentence from the article best supports the answer to Part A?</p> <p>a. "Animals get oxygen from air or water."</p> <p>b. "Animals can be grouped by their traits."*</p> <p>c. "Worms are invertebrates."</p> <p>d. "All animals grow and change over time."</p> <p>e. "Almost all animals need water, food, oxygen, and shelter to live."</p>

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**Aligns to the Standards and Reflects Good Practice**

- Specific CCSS alignment to:
  - RI.3.1 (evidence).
  - RI.3.2 (main idea).
  - RI.3.10 (complex text).
- While this is an example of a less complex item—one where the main idea and details to support it are explicit and readily found—students must *provide evidence* for the accuracy of their answer in Part B, illustrating one of the key shifts: use of textual evidence.

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**Grade 3 Technology-Enhanced Constructed-Response Item**

Drag the words from the word box into the correct locations on the graphic to show the life cycle of a butterfly as described in "How Animals Live."

Words:

Pupa	Adult
Egg	Larva

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Aligns to the Standards and Reflects Good Practice

- Specific CCSS alignment to:
  - RI.3.1 (use of evidence).
  - RI.3.3 (relationship between events).
  - RI.3.10 (complex texts).
- Reflects the key shift of *building knowledge from informational text*:
  - students must apply their understanding of the text to complete the graphic.
  - requires explicit references to the text as the basis for the answers rather than simply guessing.
- Whereas traditional items might have asked students to “fill in one blank” on a graphic (with three steps already provided), this technology enhanced item allows students to demonstrate *understanding of the entire sequence* of the life cycle because none of the steps are ordered for them.

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