

Grade 4 Literary Mini-Assessment

Paired excerpts from *Yang the Eldest and His Odd Jobs* and *Out of the Dust*

This grade 4 mini-assessment is based on excerpts from two novels, *Yang the Eldest and His Odd Jobs* by Lensey Namioka and *Out of the Dust* by Karen Hesse. This set of texts is considered to be worthy of students' time to read and also meet the expectations for text complexity at grade 4. Assessments aligned to the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) will employ quality, complex texts such as these.

Questions aligned to the CCSS should be worthy of students' time to answer and therefore do not focus on minor points of the texts. Questions also may address several standards within the same question because complex texts tend to yield rich assessment questions that call for deep analysis. Not all questions included in the set refer to both texts, given that it is necessary for students to read and understand each text independently as they are synthesizing across texts. In this mini-assessment there are five selected-response questions and three paper/pencil equivalents of technology enhanced items that address the Reading Standards listed below. Additionally, there is an optional writing prompt, which is aligned to both the Reading Standards for Literature and the Writing Standards.

We encourage educators to give students the time that they need to read closely and write to the source. While we know that it is helpful to have students complete the mini-assessment in one class period, we encourage educators to allow additional time as necessary.

*Note for teachers of English Language Learners (ELLs): This assessment is designed to measure students' ability to read and write in English. Therefore, educators will not see the level of scaffolding typically used in instructional materials to support ELLs—these would interfere with the ability to understand their mastery of these skills. If ELL students are receiving instruction in grade-level ELA content, they should be given access to unaltered practice assessment items to gauge their progress. Passages and items should not be modified; however, **additional information about accommodations you may consider when administering this assessment to ELLs is available in the teacher section of this resource.***

The questions align to the following standards:

RL.4.1	Refer to details and examples in a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text.
RL.4.2	Determine a theme of a story, drama, or poem from details in the text; summarize the text.
RL.4.3	Describe in depth a character, setting, or event in a story or drama, drawing on specific details in the text (e.g., a character's thoughts, words, or actions).
RL.4.4	Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including those that allude to significant characters found in mythology (e.g., Herculean).
RL.4.5	Explain major differences between poems, drama, and prose, and refer to the structural elements of poems (e.g., verse, rhythm, meter) and drama (e.g., casts of characters, settings, descriptions, dialogue, stage directions) when writing or speaking about a text.
RL.4.6	Compare and contrast the point of view from which different stories are narrated, including the difference between first- and third-person narrations.
RL.4.9	Compare and contrast the treatment of similar themes and topics (e.g., opposition of good and evil) and patterns of events (e.g., the quest) in stories, myths, and traditional literature from different cultures.

W.4.2	Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas and information clearly.
W.4.9	Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.
L.4.1	Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking.
L.4.2	Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling when writing.
L.4.3	Use knowledge of language and its conventions when writing, speaking, reading, or listening.

Contents

Grade 4 Mini-Assessment <i>Yang the Eldest and His Odd Jobs</i> and <i>Out of the Dust</i> (<u>Print for students</u>)....	4
Information for Teachers: Quantitative and Qualitative Analyses of the Texts	17
Question Annotations: Correct Answers and Distractor Rationales.....	20
Using the Mini-Assessments with English Language Learners.....	24
Additional Resources for Assessment and CCSS Implementation	27

The assessment questions in this document align with the CCSS and reflect the instructional shifts implied by the standards. To learn more about these topics, please go to the following link:

www.achievethecore.org

Grade 4 Mini-Assessment – Paired excerpts from *Yang the Eldest and His Odd Jobs* and *Out of the Dust*

Today you will read two texts about people who love to play music. You will then answer questions based on these texts. I will be happy to answer questions about the directions, but I will not help you with the answers to any questions. You will notice as you answer the questions that some of the questions have two parts. You should answer Part A of the question before you answer Part B.

Take as long as you need to read and answer the questions. If you do not finish when class ends, come see me to discuss when you may have additional time.

Now read the passages and answer the questions. I encourage you to write notes in the margin as you read the passages.

Text 1: An excerpt from *Yang the Eldest and His Odd Jobs*

by Lensey Namioka

Eldest Brother, a talented musician, discovers the violin he has been working so hard to purchase has been sold. Also, he has hurt his hand so badly at work that playing the violin is now difficult, but he is too sad to do the exercises that would make him able to play the violin without pain.

The below questions rely on an excerpt from “Yang the Eldest and his odd jobs” by Leslie Namioka. The excerpt begins on pg. 99 with the line “Now that Eldest Brother...” and concludes on page 104 with the lines “Eldest Brother started his rehab exercises that very night.

Text 2: Excerpt from *Out of the Dust*

by Karen Hesse

In this excerpt, Billie Jo, a teenager living through a hard time in American history, explains how she feels while she plays the piano.

On Stage

1 When I point my fingers at the keys,

the music

springs straight out of me.

Right hand

5 playing notes sharp as

tongues,

telling stories while the

smooth

buttery rhythms back me up

10 on the left.

Folks sway in the

Palace aisles

grinning and stomping and

out of breath,

15 and the rest, eyes shining,

fingers snapping,

feet tapping. It's the best

I've ever felt,
playing hot piano,
20 sizzling with
Mad Dog,
swinging with the Black Mesa Boys,
or on my own,
crazy,
25 pestering the keys.

That is
heaven.

How supremely
heaven
30 Playing piano
can be.

January 1934

From OUT OF THE DUST by Karen Hesse. Copyright ©1997 by Karen Hesse. Reprinted by permission of Scholastic Inc.

QUESTIONS:

1. This item has two parts. Answer Part A, and then answer Part B.

Part A: In paragraph 14 of Text 1, what does the word audition mean?

- A. perform for
- B. copy the style of
- C. learn from
- D. enjoy the music of

Part B: Which two details from the text best help the reader understand the meaning of the word audition?

- A. "Matthew cleared his throat."
- B. "...I'm thinking of playing a movement of this."
- C. "He held out the sheet music."
- D. "After a few seconds, Eldest Brother heaved himself up..."
- E. "Then he looked more closely."
- F. "I thought I'd impress the conductor," Matthew said."

2. Which two sentences from Text 1 best show that the narrator's home is always filled with music?

- A. "When some of Father's fellow musicians came over to play quartets and trios, Eldest Brother didn't even go downstairs to listen."
- B. "I thought about what Fourth Brother had said: Eldest Brother had to *want* to play again."
- C. "He also missed playing in our family quartet."
- D. "After a few seconds, Eldest Brother heaved himself up and glanced at the music."
- E. "We had all known for some time that Matthew was talented, so I was not surprised at the musicianship he showed."
- F. "Eldest Brother's recovery meant almost as much to him as it did to our family."

3. Circle two different paragraphs in Text 1 that show that Eldest Brother feels upset about hurting his hand and losing the chance to buy the violin he wanted.

4. From the list called “The Narrator’s Qualities,” choose the two qualities that best describe the narrator in Text 1 and write them in the chart. Then choose one supporting detail for each quality and write the detail in its place in the chart.

The Narrator’s Qualities	Supporting Detail
1.	
2.	

<u>The Narrator’s Qualities</u>		
clever	curious	talented
bossy	shy	caring

<u>Supporting Details</u>	
Tries not to laugh at Matthew	Worries about Eldest Brother
Asks Eldest Brother about his money	Wants Fourth Brother to help her
Tells Matthew to play badly	Enjoys Matthew’s playing

5. This item has two parts. Answer Part A, and then answer Part B.

Part A: Read the lines from Text 2.

or on my own/crazy,/pestering the keys.

What does the word pestering mean as it is used in these lines?

- A. pretending to know
- B. being mean or cruel to
- C. touching over and over
- D. asking for help

Part B: How does the poet’s use of the word pestering help the reader better understand the poem?

- A. It shows that the speaker is not always a kind person.
- B. It shows that the speaker plays in a quick and forceful way.
- C. It shows that the speaker talks a lot during her music lessons.
- D. It shows that the speaker has trouble with certain pieces of music.

6. This item has two parts. Answer Part A, and then answer Part B.

Part A: In Text 2, what does the speaker seem to be most aware of as she plays?

- A. whether she is hitting the right notes
- B. how people are enjoying her music
- C. the fact that everyone is watching her
- D. her memories of past performances

Part B: Which detail from the poem best supports the answer to Part A?

- A. She says playing the piano is “supremely heaven.”
- B. She mentions people she has played music with.
- C. She explains how she uses her hands as she plays.
- D. She describes everything her audience is doing.

7. Which statement best describes how Text 1 and Text 2 convey events?

- A. Text 1 uses narration and dialogue, while Text 2 uses narrated rhythmic stanzas.
- B. Text 1 uses dialogue and stage directions, while Text 2 uses repeated words and phrases.
- C. Both texts use description, but Text 1 uses narration and Text 2 uses rhyming verse.
- D. Both texts use multiple scenes, but Text 1 uses long speeches and Text 2 uses short lines.

8. From the list of themes, choose the main theme shared by Text 1 and Text 2 and write it in the correct place on the chart. Then, choose one statement from Text 1 and one statement from Text 2 that support this theme. Write the supporting statements to their correct place on the chart.

Main Theme in Both Texts	Support from Text 1	Support from Text 2

<u>Themes</u>
Musicians enjoy being around each other.
Musicians need a lot of admiration and support.
Music can bring happiness to people’s lives.
Musicians must practice in order to play well.

<u>Support in Text 1</u>
I thought about what Fourth Brother had said: Eldest Brother had to <i>want</i> to play again.
Matthew was eager to be part of the plan.
He had obviously practiced hard on the piece, and he went into it without having to worry about the notes.
I glanced at Eldest Brother and saw that tears were rolling down his cheeks.

<u>Support in Text 2</u>
the music/springs straight out of me.
and the rest, eyes shining/fingers snapping,
It’s the best/ I’ve ever felt/playing hot piano,
swinging with the Black Mesa Boys,

Information for Teachers: Quantitative and Qualitative Analyses of the Texts

Regular practice with complex texts is necessary to prepare students for college and career readiness, as outlined in Reading Standard 10. The set of texts for this mini-assessment has been placed at grade 4, and the process used to determine this grade level placement is described below. “Appendix A of the Common Core” and the “Supplement to Appendix A: New Research on Text Complexity” lay out a research-based process for selecting complex texts.

1. Place a text or excerpt within a **grade band** based on at least one³ quantitative measure according to the research-based conversion table provided in the Supplement to Appendix A: New Research on Text Complexity (www.corestandards.org/resources). Note: Given the unconventional punctuation of non-prose texts like poetry, quantitative measures cannot accurately determine the grade level of a text, and so are omitted below.
2. Place a text or excerpt at a **grade level** based on a qualitative analysis.

<i>Yang the Eldest and His Odd Jobs</i> excerpt	Quantitative Measure #1	Quantitative Measure #2
	Flesch-Kincaid: 4.3	Lexile: 850

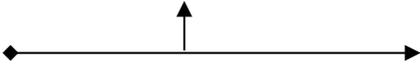
After gathering the quantitative measures, the next step is to place the quantitative scores in the Conversion Table found in the Supplement to Appendix A (www.corestandards.org/resources) and determine the grade band of the text. Figure 1 reproduces the conversion table from the Supplement to Appendix A, showing how the initial results from the Flesch-Kincaid and the Lexile measures were converted to grade bands.

Figure 1: Updated Text Complexity Grade Bands and Associated Ranges from Multiple Measures⁷

Common Core Band	ATOS	Degrees of Reading Power [®]	Flesch-Kincaid [‡]	The Lexile Framework [®]	Reading Maturity	SourceRater
2 nd – 3 rd	2.75 – 5.14	42 – 54	1.98 – 5.34	420 – 820	3.53 – 6.13	0.05 – 2.48
4 th – 5 th	4.97 – 7.03	52 – 60	4.51 – 7.73	740 – 1010	5.42 – 7.92	0.84 – 5.75
6 th – 8 th	7.00 – 9.98	57 – 67	6.51 – 10.34	925 – 1185	7.04 – 9.57	4.11 – 10.66
9 th – 10 th	9.67 – 12.01	62 – 72	8.32 – 12.12	1050 – 1335	8.41 – 10.81	9.02 – 13.93
11 th – CCR	11.20 – 14.10	67 – 74	10.34 – 14.2	1185 – 1385	9.57 – 12.00	12.30 – 14.50

- 3 For higher-stakes tests, it is recommended that two corresponding text complexity measures be used to place a text in a grade band. When two measures are used, both placing the text in the same **band**, the results provide additional assurance that the text selected is appropriate for the band.

To find the **grade level** of the text within the designated grade band, engage in a systematic analysis of the characteristics of the text. The characteristics that should be analyzed during a qualitative analysis can be found in Appendix A of the CCSS. (www.corestandards.org)

Qualitative Analysis	<i>Yang the Eldest and His Odd Jobs</i> excerpt	Where to place within the band?					
Category	Notes and comments on texts, support for placement in this band	Too low for grade band	early 4 to mid 4	mid 4 to early 5	early 5 to mid 5	mid 5 to end 5	Too high for grade band
Structure (both story structure or form of piece)	The structure of the text is chronological, with a gap between paragraphs six and seven to indicate the passing of time. The first section introduces the conflict, Eldest Brother’s abandonment of music, while the second section explains how his family and Matthew bring him back to his music.						
Language Clarity and Conventions	The language conventions in the text are largely explicit and easy to understand. The vocabulary is mostly contemporary and familiar to the average reader, with a few instances of tier 3 vocabulary related to music (<i>partita, gigue, measures, lyrical</i>). The text is comprised primarily of simple and compound sentences.						
Knowledge Demands (life, content, cultural/literary)	No prior knowledge is needed to understand this text, as the author develops the narrative using common human emotions; however, readers familiar with the emotions of seeing someone not fulfill their dreams will be advantaged. Although knowledge of musical terms is a benefit, it is not necessary for comprehension.						
Levels of Meaning (chiefly literary)/ Purpose (chiefly informational)	The theme of the text is implicit and is revealed early the story. From paragraph 6: <i>What if he decided to give up music entirely?...On that thought, I wanted to cry.</i> Eldest Brother has a gift for music, and his abandonment of his violin affects many people.						
Overall placement: Grade 4	Justification: The chronological organizational structure, straightforward vocabulary, and moderately complex sentence structure of this text make it appropriate for the average 4th grader.						

Qualitative Analysis	<i>Out of the Dust</i> excerpt	Where to place within the band?					
Category	Notes and comments on texts, support for placement in this band	Too low for grade band	early 4 to mid 4	mid 4 to early 5	early 5 to mid 5	mid 5 to end 5	Too high for grade band
Structure (both story structure or form of piece)	This poem is written in free verse, which may be challenging to students unfamiliar with this type of poetry. The first person point of view captures a singular experience the narrator has playing piano on stage. The poem includes a title and date, providing important context to the reader.						
Language Clarity and Conventions	The poem contains many examples of figurative language, including personification (<i>the music/springs straight out of me, telling stories</i>), simile (<i>notes sharp as/tongues</i>), and imagery (<i>buttery rhythms, sizzling with/Mad Dog</i>). The vocabulary is mostly contemporary and familiar to the average reader, with a few instances of tier 3 vocabulary related to music (<i>keys, playing notes sharp, rhythms</i>).						
Knowledge Demands (life, content, cultural/literary)	No prior knowledge is needed to understand this text; however, readers familiar with feeling pride in a performance will be advantaged. Although knowledge of musical terms is a benefit, it is not necessary for comprehension.						
Levels of Meaning (chiefly literary) / Purpose (chiefly informational)	The theme of the text is explicit and is revealed at the end of the poem: <i>How supremely/heaven/Playing piano/can be</i> . The narrator finds her bliss playing piano on stage.						
Overall placement: Grade 4	Justification: Although the poem is written in free verse and contains very complex language features, the moderately complex meaning and knowledge demands make it appropriate for the average 4th grader.						

Question Annotations & Correct Answer and Distractor Rationales

Question Number	Correct Answer(s)	Standards	Rationales for Answer Options
1 Part A	A	RL.4.4, RL.4.1	<p>A. This is the correct answer. “Perform for” explains the action Matthew will take when auditioning for the All-City Orchestra.</p> <p>B. Although Matthew is part of the narrator’s plan to trick Eldest Brother into playing an instrument again, Mathew plays to his own ability and style.</p> <p>C. “Learn from” refers to Matthew listening to Eldest Brother play the gigue correctly, not that Matthew will try out for the orchestra.</p> <p>D. While all the characters “enjoy music,” Matthew hopes to play in the orchestra, not only listen to it.</p>
1 Part B	B, F		<p>A. Although Matthew clears his throat right before announcing he is trying out for the All-City Orchestra, this action suggests his nervousness in his current situation rather than his future audition.</p> <p>B. This is a correct answer. “...I’m thinking of playing a movement of this” explains the music selection Matthew will perform during his audition.</p> <p>C. Although Matthew says he plans to play the gigue at his audition, the sheet music he holds out is part of the plan to get Eldest Brother to play his violin again, not the music Matthew will play at his audition.</p> <p>D. “After a few seconds, Eldest Brother heaved himself up” refers to the brother rising from the bed rather than Matthew’s audition for the orchestra.</p> <p>E. “Then he looked more closely” refers to Eldest Brother reviewing Matthew’s challenging music selection, not Matthew’s upcoming audition.</p> <p>F. This is a correct answer. “I thought I’d impress the conductor” refers to Matthew’s performance to make the All-City Orchestra.</p>
2	A, C	RL.4.3, RL.4.1	<p>A. This is a correct answer. This sentence explains how visitors and Father play music together in the family home.</p> <p>B. Although this sentence talks about Eldest Brother and music, it explains why Eldest Brother is not playing music.</p> <p>C. This is a correct answer. This sentence shows the importance of music to both the family and Matthew.</p> <p>D. Although Eldest Brother looks at the sheet music, he does not play his violin at this time.</p> <p>E. Although Matthew is playing his violin, this sentence focuses on one time there was music in the home, rather than repeated, on-going occasions.</p> <p>F. This sentence focuses on why Eldest Brother has stopped playing music, not the constant presence of music in the home.</p>

Question Number	Correct Answer(s)	Standards	Rationales for Answer Options																	
3	<p>Possible responses:</p> <p>Paragraph 4</p> <p>Paragraph 5</p> <p>Paragraph 13</p>	<p>RL.4.3,</p> <p>RL.4.1</p>	<p>Para 4: “He turned on me savagely. ‘Stop nagging me! I’m sick and tired of hearing you go on and on about renting a violin!’” <i>Rationale: This paragraph conveys Eldest Brother’s anger about his injury and losing his chance to buy a violin.</i></p> <p>Para 5: “In the weeks that followed, Eldest Brother seemed to have lost interest in music. When some of Father’s fellow musicians came over to play quartets and trios, Eldest Brother didn’t even go downstairs to listen.” <i>Rationale: This paragraph demonstrates Eldest Brother’s withdrawal from music and his music community.</i></p> <p>Para 13: “So Matthew, Fourth Brother, and I trooped into Eldest Brother’s room. We found him lying in bed, looking at the ceiling. His pay stubs were stacked in a neat pile on his desk next to a calculator. His violin was nowhere to be seen. ‘What do you want?’ he snapped.” <i>Rationale: This paragraph shows Eldest Brother withdrawn from his family and music and lashing out at his siblings.</i></p>																	
4	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>The Narrator’s Qualities</th> <th>Supporting Detail</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>1. Caring</td> <td>Worries about Eldest Brother</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2. Clever</td> <td>Tells Matthew to play badly</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	The Narrator’s Qualities	Supporting Detail	1. Caring	Worries about Eldest Brother	2. Clever	Tells Matthew to play badly	<p>RL.4.3,</p> <p>RL.4.1</p>	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>The Narrator’s Qualities</th> <th>Supporting Detail</th> <th>Rationale</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>1. Caring</td> <td>Worries about Eldest Brother</td> <td>The narrator’s concern for Eldest Brother is evident through her despair at the possibility of him abandoning music. “What if he decided to give up music entirely? He might want to become a full-time carpenter instead, like Mr. Conner. Or he might open up a restaurant, make polyester shingles, sell felt tents and silk parkas... On that thought, I wanted to cry.”</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2. Clever</td> <td>Tells Matthew to play badly</td> <td>The narrator refines the plan to target Eldest Brother’s love of music by having Matthew ruin his selection. “I liked his idea, but I added a twist. ‘Let’s ask Matthew to play a piece that’s way too hard for him. Then Eldest Brother will have to pick up his violin to help.’”</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	The Narrator’s Qualities	Supporting Detail	Rationale	1. Caring	Worries about Eldest Brother	The narrator’s concern for Eldest Brother is evident through her despair at the possibility of him abandoning music. “What if he decided to give up music entirely? He might want to become a full-time carpenter instead, like Mr. Conner. Or he might open up a restaurant, make polyester shingles, sell felt tents and silk parkas... On that thought, I wanted to cry.”	2. Clever	Tells Matthew to play badly	The narrator refines the plan to target Eldest Brother’s love of music by having Matthew ruin his selection. “I liked his idea, but I added a twist. ‘Let’s ask Matthew to play a piece that’s way too hard for him. Then Eldest Brother will have to pick up his violin to help.’”		
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5 Part A	C	<p>RL.4.4,</p> <p>RL.4.1</p>	<p>A. Although the speaker knows the piano keys very well, “pestering” explains how she strikes the piano keys as she performs.</p> <p>B. Although “pester” means to harass, in this line it is used to illustrate how the speaker touches the piano keys, not that she is being mean to someone.</p> <p>C. This is the correct answer. The speaker repeatedly strikes the piano keys as she plays.</p> <p>D. “On my own” refers to the speaker playing solo rather than bothering someone for help.</p>																	
5 Part B	B		<p>A. “Pester” describes how the speaker plays the piano, not how she treats others.</p> <p>B. This is the correct answer. “Pester” illustrates how the speaker touches the piano keys.</p> <p>C. “Pester” explains how the speaker plays the piano rather than how much she talks.</p> <p>D. “Pester” explains what the speaker does to the piano keys rather than how pieces of music affect her.</p>																	

Question Number	Correct Answer(s)			Standards	Rationales for Answer Options				
6 Part A	B			RL.4.3, RL.4.1	<p>A. The speaker says, “the music springs straight out of me,” suggesting the music has a mind of its own, rather than the speaker being worried about hitting the correct notes.</p> <p>B. This is the correct answer. The speaker notes listeners “grinning and stomping,” “out of breath,” and “fingers snapping.”</p> <p>C. Although the speaker is aware of her audience’s actions, her awareness focuses on their enjoyment of the music rather than the audience watching her.</p> <p>D. Although the speaker notes that this experience is “the best I’ve ever felt playing hot piano,” she is most aware of how the audience is enjoying her performance.</p>				
6 Part B	D				<p>A. This statement focuses on the speaker’s enjoyment of being on stage rather than how the audience is enjoying her music.</p> <p>B. Although the speaker mentions other musicians she has performed with, she focuses on the audience’s enjoyment of her performance.</p> <p>C. Although the speaker explains how she uses her hands, she focuses mainly on audience member’s actions.</p> <p>D. This is the correct answer. The speaker notes how audience members positively respond to her performance.</p>				
7	A			RL.4.5, RL.4.1	<p>A. This is the correct answer. Text 1 is a narrative text that uses dialogue to convey characters’ ideas while Text 2 is a free verse poem.</p> <p>B. Although Text 1 does use dialogue, it does not use stage directions and Text 2 only repeats one significant word (“heaven”).</p> <p>C. Although both texts use description, Text 2 does not contain rhyming words.</p> <p>D. Although Text 2 uses short lines, it only contains one scene, while Text 1 does use multiple scenes.</p>				
8	Theme in Both Texts	Support from Text 1	Support from Text 2	RL.4.2, RL.4.9, RL.4.1	Theme in Both Texts	Support from Text 1	Rationale	Support from Text 2	Rationale
	Music can bring happiness to people’s lives.	I glanced at Eldest Brother and saw that tears were rolling down his cheeks.	It’s the best/ I’ve ever felt/playing hot piano,		Music can bring happiness to people’s lives.	“I glanced at Eldest Brother and saw that tears were rolling down his cheeks.”	Eldest Brother has a strong and emotional reaction to Matthew’s performance.	“It’s the best/ I’ve ever felt/playing hot piano,”	The speaker notes that this performance is “the best I’ve ever felt” and her description “hot piano” conveys excitement and passion.

Question Number	Correct Answer(s)	Standards	Rationales for Answer Options
9 (Optional CR)	See top-score bullets in right column.	W.4.2, W.4.9, RL.4.6, RL.4.9, RL.4.1, L.4.1, L.4.2, L.4.3	<p>A good student response will include all or most of the following points from the story:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Both texts have 1st person narrator; Billie Jo in Text 2 (the poem), Eldest Brother’s sister in Text 1 • In Text 2, Billie Jo tells the reader what she is thinking and feeling • Her words show she is comfortable performing: she describes her “smooth rhythms” and refers to past performances • Her words show she loves music: she says “It’s the best I’ve ever felt” and that playing piano is “supremely heaven” • Although Text 1 has a 1st person narrator, it is not Eldest Brother, but rather his sister • The reader never hears Eldest Brother’s thoughts, but learns a lot about him through the narrator • Narrator describes how he snaps at her and just lies around, which suggests he is unhappy • At the end of the excerpt, narrator describes Eldest Brother’s tears after Matthew plays • Narrator sees what Eldest Brother is too unhappy to see—that not playing makes him miserable

Using the Mini-Assessments with English Language Learners (ELLs)

Mini-Assessment Design and English Language Learners

Each mini-assessment is designed using the best practices of test design. English Language Learners will benefit from the opportunity to independently practice answering questions about grade-level complex texts.

Prior to delivering the mini-assessment, teachers should read through each item. If there is language in the question stems specific to the standards (e.g., plot, theme, point of view), make sure that students have been introduced to these concepts prior to taking the assessment. Teachers should not pre-teach specific vocabulary words tested in the assessment (e.g., words students are asked to define) and should only pre-teach language that would impede students from understanding what the question is asking.

The mini-assessments attend to the needs of all learners, and ELLs specifically, by including texts that:

- *Are brief and engaging:* Texts vary in length, but no individual text is more than three pages long.
- *Embed student-friendly definitions:* Footnotes are included for technical terms or words that are above grade level when those words are not surrounded by context that would help students determine meaning.

Informational text sets, such as those included in the mini-assessment, specifically attend to the needs of ELLs by:

- *Building student knowledge:* Mini-assessments often include multiple texts or stimuli on the same topic:
 - For sets with two texts or stimuli, the first text is generally broader, providing a foundation in the content and introducing key vocabulary, and the second text provides more detail or contrast on the same topic. This allows ELLs to dig into the features of the passage being assessed rather than being inundated with dissimilar content and vocabulary.
 - For sets with more than two texts or stimuli, there is an “anchor” text that provides introductory information on the topic.
- *Containing ideas that lend themselves to discussion from a variety of perspectives:* Often these pairs or sets of texts present multiple perspectives on the same topic.

The mini-assessments attend to the needs of all learners, and ELLs specifically, by including questions that:

- *Feature a variety of academic words:*

- Each mini-assessment contains at least one vocabulary item. Items assessing vocabulary test one of the following:
 - The meaning of Tier 2 academic words in context.
 - The meaning of a figurative word/phrase in context.
 - The impact of word choice on meaning and/or tone.
- MOST vocabulary items test Tier 2 words.
- All tested words are chosen because:
 - They are central to the meaning of the text.
 - They are surrounded by sufficient context to allow students to determine meaning.
- *Highlight “juicy” sentences that feature grade-appropriate complex structures, vocabulary, and language features:* Most mini-assessments include at least one item assessing Reading for Literature or Reading: Informational text standard 5. These items point students to analyze the structure of the text. While standard 5 items specifically focus on the structure of the text, other items require the analysis of language features, vocabulary, and relationships between ideas, all of which build student understanding of texts.
- *Provide graphic organizers to help students capture and reflect on new knowledge:* Most mini-assessments include at least one item mimicking a “technology enhanced item.” These items include things like tables and charts.
- *Provide writing activities that allow students to use new vocabulary and demonstrate knowledge of new concepts:* Most mini-assessments include an optional writing prompt that allows students to write about the text(s).

Administration Guidelines for ELLs

When assessing ELL students, appropriate accommodations may be considered. Modifications to the assessment itself should not be made.

According to the Accommodations Manual: How to Select, Administer, and Evaluate Use of Accommodations for Instruction and Assessment of English Language Learners, First Edition:

- “Modifications refer to practices or materials that change, lower, or reduce state-required learning expectations. Modifications may change the underlying construct of an assessment.”
- “Accommodations are accessibility supports [that] do not reduce learning expectations. They meet specific needs of students in instruction and assessment and enable educators to know that measures of a student’s work produce valid results.”

Teachers **may** choose to make accommodations that meet the unique needs of ELLs. Prior to delivering any practice assessment, especially if the mini-assessment is to be used in a more formal setting (e.g., as part of a district benchmark assessment), teachers should research

what accommodations will be available to students during their state’s summative assessment. For example, some states allow ELLs to use a bilingual dictionary during an assessment; other states do not allow this. Ensure your ELLs are practicing with the accommodations they can expect to see on the summative. Some examples of appropriate accommodations include:

- Reading the directions aloud to students multiple times.
- Providing student directions in student native language.
- Allowing students additional time to complete the mini-assessments.
- Exposing students to item types prior to the assessment.
- Reading the scoring expectations for the writing prompt aloud to students.

Because the goal of literacy mini-assessments is to measure grade-level literacy as students progress toward college- and career-readiness, teachers must be careful **not** to make modifications that may be commonly used in classroom instruction. Examples of modifications that should **not** be used include:

- Reading passages aloud for students.
- Adding student glossaries of unfamiliar terms.
- Pre-teaching tested vocabulary words.

In any testing setting, teachers must be careful to choose accommodations that suit the needs of each individual student.

Additional Resources for Assessment and CCSS Implementation

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

- See Appendix B for examples of informational and literary complex texts:
http://www.corestandards.org/assets/Appendix_B.pdf
- See the Text Complexity Collection on www.achievethecore.org

Shift 2 – Evidence: *Reading, writing, and speaking grounded in evidence from text, both literary and informational*

- See Close Reading Exemplars for ways to engage students in close reading on <http://www.achievethecore.org/steal-these-tools/close-reading-exemplars>
- See the Basal Alignment Project for examples of text-dependent questions:
<http://www.achievethecore.org/basal-alignment-project>

Shift 3 – Knowledge: *Building knowledge through content-rich nonfiction*

- See Appendix B for examples of informational and literary complex texts:
http://www.corestandards.org/assets/Appendix_B.pdf

Sample Scoring Rubric for Text-Based Writing

Prompts: http://achievethecore.org/content/upload/Scoring_Rubric_for_Text-Based_Writing_Prompts.pdf