

# Grade 6 Literature Mini-Assessment

## Excerpts from *Counting on Grace* and *Iqbal*

This grade 6 mini-assessment is based on excerpts from the books *Counting on Grace* by Elizabeth Winthrop and *Iqbal* by Francesco D’Adamo. These texts are considered to be texts worthy of students’ time to read and also meet the expectations for text complexity at grade 6. 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. In this mini-assessment there are 10 questions that address the Reading Standards listed below and one constructed response question that addresses Reading, Writing, and Language Standards. We encourage educators to give students the time that they need to read closely and write to the sources. 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.***

**NOTE: For teachers who wish to assess only *Counting on Grace* (a single text), there is a version on [achievethecore.org](http://achievethecore.org) to meet your needs.**

**The questions align to the following standards:**

|               |   |
|---------------|---|
| <b>RL.6.1</b> | Cite textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.   |
| <b>RL.6.2</b> | Determine a theme or central idea of a text and how it is conveyed through particular details; provide a summary of the text distinct from personal opinions or judgments.              |
| <b>RL.6.3</b> | Describe how a particular story’s or drama’s plot unfolds in a series of episodes as well as how the characters respond or change as the plot moves toward a resolution.                |
| <b>RL.6.4</b> | Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the impact of a specific word choice on meaning and tone. |
| <b>RL.6.5</b> | Analyze how a particular sentence, chapter, scene, or stanza fits into the overall structure of a text and contributes to the development of the theme, setting, or plot.               |
| <b>RL.6.6</b> | Explain how an author develops the point of view of the narrator or speaker in a text.  |
| <b>RL.6.9</b> | Compare and contrast texts in different forms or genres (e.g., stories and poems; historical novels and fantasy stories) in terms of their approaches to similar themes and topics.     |

|              |  |
|--------------|--|
| <b>W.6.3</b> | Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, relevant descriptive details, and well-structured event sequences. |
| <b>W.6.4</b> | Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.                             |
| <b>W.6.9</b> | Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.  |
| <b>L.6.1</b> | Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking.   |
| <b>L.6.2</b> | Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English capitalization punctuation, and spelling when writing.  |
| <b>L.6.3</b> | Use knowledge of language and its conventions when writing, speaking, reading, or listening.   |

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The assessment questions in this document align with the Common Core and other college- and career-ready standards, and reflect the instructional Shifts implied by the standards. To learn more about the standards and Shifts, please visit: [www.achievethecore.org](http://www.achievethecore.org)

## Grade 6 Mini-Assessment – excerpts from *Counting on Grace* and *Iqbal*

Today you will read two excerpts: one from *Counting on Grace*, a novel by Elizabeth Winthrop, and one from *Iqbal*, by Francesco D’Adamo. You will then answer several questions based on the 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, but you may go back to Part A if you wish.

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

### Text 1: from *Counting on Grace* by Elizabeth Winthrop-Chapter 10, “The Letter”

*The setting is the early 1900s, a time when child labor laws were sometimes ignored in the United States. Grace is the twelve-year-old narrator. She and Arthur work in the mill during the day, and Miss Lesley is their teacher after work.*

- (1) Miss Lesley nods to Arthur and he pulls out the paper and smooths the wrinkles he made when he crunched it up.
- (2) “Read it to her,” Miss Lesley says.
- (3) “Are you practicing your writing?” I ask.
- (4) “Grace, hush for once in your life and listen.”
- (5) It’s a letter. Arthur’s doing the writing. It goes this way.
- (6) *To Miss Anna Putnam, National Child Labor Committee, Vermont Chapter, Bennington, Vermont.*
- (7) *Dear Madam,*
- (8) *This is to inform you that there are underage children working in the cotton mill in the town of North Pownal, Vermont. These children range in age from eight to thirteen. They are employed in the following dangerous tasks.*
- (9) It stops there.
- (10) “That’s as far as we got,” Arthur says. “Before you barged in.”
- (11) “So now you can help us, Grace.”
- (12) My brain is whirling around. My feet start shifting under the desk.
- (13) “What is that child labor comm-thing?”

- (14) “They investigate places where children are not supposed to be working because they are too young. Believe it or not, there are laws against child labor. They’re just not enforced,” Miss Lesley says.
- (15) “But we need to work. For the money.” I can hear Mamère’s voice speaking right through my lips.
- (16) “Yes, Grace. But you also need your education. Then when you get older, you’ll have a job that makes you much more money than you’ll ever get working in the mill.”
- (17) “Stop arguing,” Arthur says to me. “You wanna leave?”
- (18) I don’t. This is more interesting than reading *la Justice* to Pépé for the third time this week. Or doing laundry with Mamère. Or weeding.
- (19) I’ll help them write their dumb old letter. What difference does it make? When that inspector comes, we’ll just hide in the elevator the way we always do until he leaves the premises. That’s a fancy word Mr. Wilson uses for the mill.
- (20) “So back to the letter. What jobs do children do in the mill?”
- (21) “Doffing,”<sup>1</sup> I say.
- (22) “Besides doffing,” says Miss Lesley.
- (23) “Sweeping,” says Arthur. “And carrying the bobbin boxes. They’re heavy.”
- (24) “Good. Write that down. What else, Grace?”
- (25) I’m thinking hard. This is like a test and I want to do well on it. “Some of the boys work in the warping room.”
- (26) Arthur writes.
- (27) “And what about Thomas?” Miss Lesley asks.
- (28) “He was fooling around at the time,” I tell her. “He was standing too close to that gearbox.”
- (29) “More accidents happen because of the number of children working in the mill. But Thomas was legally old enough to be working so we’ll forget him for now. What else?”
- (30) “We clean the machines on Saturdays. And some other times if the roving<sup>2</sup> gets too bunched up. Delia’s got scars on her fingers from the cleaning hook.”
- (31) “Perfect,” says Miss Lesley, and I smile. I’m passing the test. “Arthur, put down machine maintenance.”
- (32) Then she writes out that big word for him so he can copy it.
- (33) “Why aren’t you writing the letter to the committee place?” I ask Miss Lesley.
- (34) “She’ll get fired if they find out it’s coming from her,” Arthur says, and rolls his eyes at me as if everybody is supposed to know that. “You’d better not tell.”
- (35) “Who will fire her?”
- (36) “The mill owners,” Arthur spits. “They own the mill school.”

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<sup>1</sup> Doffing: Removing objects from a textile machine

<sup>2</sup> Roving: Soft fibers ready to be twisted into yarn

- (37) “Hush, Arthur,” says Miss Lesley. “Nobody’s going to be firing me as long as we keep this quiet. Now sign it this way.” She writes out another big word for him to copy. It says Anonymous.

*From COUNTING ON GRACE: A NOVEL by Elizabeth Winthrop, copyright © 2006 by Elizabeth Winthrop. Used by permission of Wendy Lamb Books, an imprint of Random House Children's Books, a division of Random House, Inc.*

## **Text 2: From *Iqbal* by Fransesco D’Adamo**

*Set in modern day Pakistan, the novel Iqbal tells the story of children forced to work in a carpet factory to pay off the debt of their parents. Iqbal, one of the main characters, dreams of a better life, one where he lives not shackled to a loom. He defies the owners of the carpet factory at every turn, even running away repeatedly, despite being punished severely for the action.*

- 1 A year had passed since Iqbal’s arrival, and something had changed. Before we were a group of children facing the same sad fate, each of us just trying to survive. Now we were united, strong, friends and something more.
- 2 Maria’s efforts were greatly rewarded one night, when we finally managed to decipher the handout Iqbal had brought back from his first escape. It seemed as if suddenly and miraculously, all those little marks we had drawn on the sand, those strange, incomprehensible pothooks, assumed meaning. We saw a sentence form on the paper, all by itself – I swear, we didn’t do anything. It just came together, and it told us things.
- 3 I remember my heart beating like crazy. I couldn’t believe my eyes! This, then, was reading. It looked like something dead and suddenly it came to life and it spoke to you, like a person.
- 4 We yelled “Hooray!” and then we scurried back to our beds, because of course we had awakened the mistress.
- 5 We read the flyer out loud so many times that I can still remember what was written.
- 6 **STOP THE EXPLOITATION OF CHILD LABOR!!**
- 7 **In Pakistan more than 700,000 children live like slaves, forced to work in the fields, in the brick-making kilns, in the carpet factories, for greedy and unscrupulous<sup>3</sup> masters. They are chained, beaten, tortured in every way. They work from sunrise to sunset! For their work, they sometime receive one rupee a day – more often not even that. Their masters get rich selling their prized carpets to foreign buyers. The police know what’s going on and don’t intervene because of corruption. But now there’s a law in our country that makes these clandestine<sup>4</sup> factories illegal. Their owners should be arrested. Let’s make them comply with**

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<sup>3</sup> Unscrupulous: corrupt and lacking morals

<sup>4</sup> Clandestine: secret

**the law! Let's end this shameful and terrible crime, which exploits our children and dishonors our country! Our children have the right to be free children!**

**8 JOIN US! FIGHT WITH US! BONDED LABOR LIBERATION FRONT OF PAKISTAN**

9 And at the bottom of the flyer there was the address we had looked for, too. Now the problem was how to get there.

10 The brawl broke out without warning, while everyone was calmly enjoying the sunshine. When explaining the brawl to Hussain, some said that Mohammed, who was clumsy, had bumped into Salman, spilling Salman's bowl of lentil soup. Others said that Salman, who always tended to bully people, had started to tease Mohammed about his big feet, and the boy from the mountains had lost his temper. . . .

11 When we finished, Karim made us line up like so many little soldiers to go back into the workshop. After we started work, he slowly checked on everything. Then he went outside, thought for a moment, scratched his head, and spat in the dust two or three times. Taking his time, he strolled across the courtyard, hiking up his pants as he walked, and knocked on the master's door. Then, to a shocked and angry Hussain Khan, he broke the news that one worker was missing.

12 Iqbal had taken advantage of the confusion to climb over the wall at the back of the courtyard. He took the path through the gardens and escaped again. He had just a small lead over his pursuers, but it would be enough.

13 Iqbal came back the next day, and he wasn't alone. We recognized the man with the clean white shirt as the man Iqbal had seen giving a speech at the market for the Bonded Labor Liberation Front. His name was Eshan Khan. He was a tall, thin man who gave the impression of force and determination. His beard and his mustache were well groomed, and he was again wearing those immaculate white clothes. He had dedicated his life to the liberation of the child-slaves. He had been threatened, beaten, imprisoned; yet after each time, he had started afresh, driven by enthusiasm and perseverance.

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## QUESTIONS

1. Based on paragraph 14 of Text 1: *Counting on Grace*, what is the meaning of the phrase “not enforced”?
  - A. not well liked
  - B. not strictly followed
  - C. not useful for children
  - D. not applied fairly

2. This question has two parts. First answer Part A, and then answer Part B.

**Part A:** In Text 1, how does Arthur respond when Miss Lesley asks Grace to help with the letter?

- A. He worries that Grace may reveal that Miss Lesley helped write the letter.
- B. He appreciates that Grace is helping him think of details to include in the letter.
- C. He believes Grace will help make the activity go faster so they can get back to work.
- D. He thinks it is good for Grace to learn about the Child Labor Committee.

**Part B:** Which sentence from Text 1 best shows Arthur’s reaction?

- A. “Grace, hush for once in your life and listen.”
- B. “That’s as far as we got,” Arthur says.
- C. “Stop arguing,” Arthur says to me.
- D. “You’d better not tell.”

3. Reread paragraph 12 of Text 1.

“My brain is whirling around. My feet start shifting under the desk.”

**How does this paragraph move the plot of the story forward?**

- A. Now Grace thinks about leaving and helping her mother with the work at home.
- B. Now Grace starts hoping that the letter will change conditions at the mill.
- C. Now Grace understands why Arthur and Miss Lesley are writing the letter.
- D. Now Grace starts thinking about writing a similar letter by herself.

4. This question has two parts. First answer Part A, and then answer Part B.

**Part A:** In Text 1, what is Miss Lesley’s point of view about child labor?

- A. People should learn to accept that child labor is needed.
- B. The mill owners will stop hiring children very soon.
- C. Child labor will gradually go away by itself.
- D. Child labor is wrong and should be stopped.



**Part B: What are two reasons Miss Lesley provides to support her point of view?**

- A. Children spend too much time away from their families because they are working.
- B. Children should be spending time in school instead of working.
- C. It is important that children earn money to help their families.
- D. Having so many children working at the mill makes accidents more likely.
- E. The equipment in the mill is too complicated for children to use.
- F. Children are not responsible enough to perform the duties they are given in the mill.
- G. There are not enough jobs to keep both children and adults employed.

5. In Text 1, Grace and Arthur have different points of view about the letter. Which paragraph in Text 1 provides the best evidence for each character’s point of view? Write the correct paragraph number from Text 1 into each box below.

*Grace’s point of view:* She believes the letter will not change anything.

Paragraph Number of Evidence for Grace’s Point of View:

*Arthur’s point of view:* He believes the letter may cause problems for Miss Lesley.

Paragraph Number of Evidence for Arthur’s Point of View:

6. What is one of the themes of Text 1?

- A. Taking a risk is worthwhile when trying to change a bad situation.
- B. True friendships remain strong during difficult times.
- C. A person should make his or her own decisions in the face of peer pressure.
- D. No sacrifice is too big to make in order to help one’s family.

7. Part A: In paragraph 2 of Text 2, *Iqbal*, the narrator says that they, “finally managed to decipher the handout . . . .” What phrase gives the best definition of the word *decipher* as it is used in Text 2?

- A. translate into another language
- B. make additional copies of

- C. make sense of
- D. reveal the existence of

**Part B: In paragraphs 2 and 3 of Text 2, included below, circle three of the underlined sections that help the reader determine the meaning of the word *decipher*.**

2 Maria’s efforts were greatly rewarded one night, when we finally managed to decipher the handout Iqbal had brought back from his first escape. It seemed as if suddenly and miraculously, all those little marks we had drawn on the sand, those strange, incomprehensible pothooks, assumed meaning. We saw a sentence form on the paper, all by itself – I swear, we didn’t do anything. It just came together, and it told us things.

3 I remember my heart beating like crazy. I couldn’t believe my eyes! This, then, was reading. It looked like something dead and suddenly it came to life and it spoke to you, like a person.

**8. In Text 2, the author includes the event describing the children getting into a fight to show that**

- A. the children feel helpless when they find out that many other children live as slaves.
- B. the children will do anything to avoid returning to work after their break.
- C. the children have to work like adults, but they still act like children when they can.
- D. the children know they must create a distraction so one of them can escape and contact authorities.

**9. Part A: In Text 2, what central idea is developed?**

- A. The children are becoming stronger since Iqbal’s arrival.
- B. The worst effect of child labor is that children are deprived of a quality education.
- C. The living conditions force the children to use things in their environment to meet basic needs.
- D. Iqbal’s values changed when he was exposed to the outside world.

**Part B: Which event in Text 2 best helps develop the central idea that is the correct answer to Part A?**

- A. Maria teaches the other children to read
- B. The children must draw in the sand instead of using paper.
- C. At first, none of the children can understand the flier.
- D. Iqbal brings someone new to the workshop.

**10. Which sentence best describes an approach used by both authors to discuss the topic of child labor?**

- A. The settings of the books were chosen to be familiar to the reader to allow him or her to visualize how the children lived and worked.
- B. Most of the characters are male to show that child labor impacted mostly young boys.
- C. A theme of children struggling to learn is used to emphasize the lack of education that drove children to work in factories.
- D. The books are narrated in first person by characters who are child laborers to show the reader a realistic example of each narrator's experiences.

**11. (Optional Writing prompt):** Imagine that Grace from *Counting on Grace* and the narrator of *Iqbal* met each other. Based on what you learned of each character, write out the conversation they might have had with each other about child labor. As you write the dialogue of the conversation, be sure that you make it clear: 1) whether they agree or disagree on the use of child labor, and 2) the arguments each one would use for or against it. Use details and events from the texts to guide your response so the characters you create remain similar to those that the original authors created. Your writing will be scored on how well you:

- show that you understood the ideas in the passage.
- use ideas from the passage as part of your own story.
- use words and sentences to create images for the reader.
- use periods, capital letters, and correct grammar.

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## Information for Teachers: Quantitative and Qualitative Analyses of the Text

Regular practice with complex texts is necessary to prepare students for college and career readiness, as outlined in Reading Standard 10. The excerpts for these mini-assessment have been placed at grade 6, and the process used to determine this grade level placement is described below. Appendix A 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 one<sup>1</sup> 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](http://www.corestandards.org/resources)).
2. Place a text or excerpt at a grade-**level** based on a qualitative analysis.

### Quantitative Analysis

| Excerpt from <i>Counting on Grace</i><br>(noted in orange) | Quantitative Measure #1 | Quantitative Measure #2 |
|--|-------------------------|-------------------------|
|  | FK: 2.6                 | Lexile: 460             |
| Excerpt from <i>Iqbal</i><br>(noted in blue)               | Quantitative Measure #1 | Quantitative Measure #2 |
|  | FK: 6.1                 | Lexile: 870             |

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.coresstandards.org/resources](http://www.coresstandards.org/resources)) and determine the grade-**band** of the text. **Note: *With literature, it is sometimes true that the quantitative measures indicate grade bands that are lower than one would expect. In these rare cases, qualitative reviews will show the text really belongs in a higher grade band.***

**Figure 1: Updated Text Complexity Grade Bands and Associated Ranges from Multiple Measures<sup>7</sup>**

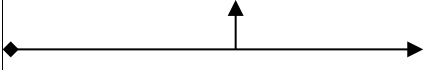


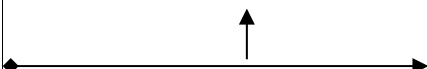

| Common Core Band                   | ATOS          | Degrees of Reading Power® | Flesch-Kincaid <sup>5</sup> | The Lexile Framework® | Reading Maturity | SourceRater   |
|------------------------------------|---------------|---------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------|------------------|---------------|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

Figure 1 reproduces the conversion table from the Supplement to Appendix A, showing how the initial results from Flesch-Kincaid and the Lexile measure were converted to grade bands.

<sup>1</sup> 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](http://www.corestandards.org))

| Qualitative Analysis                                 | Excerpt from <i>Counting on Grace</i>   | Where to place within the band? |                |                  |                  |              |                         |
|--|---|---------------------------------|----------------|------------------|------------------|--------------|-------------------------|
| Category   | Notes and comments on text, support for placement in this band  | Too low for grade band          | early to mid 6 | mid 6 to early 7 | mid 7 to early 8 | mid to end 8 | Too high for grade band |
| Structure (both story structure or form of piece)    | The structure is largely explicit and chronological, but students have to orient themselves quickly to the situation for the structure to become clear  |                                 |                |                  |                  |              |                         |
| Language Clarity and Conventions                     | While most of the words in the text are familiar, some are specific to weaving or the historical era and may therefore be challenging. The sentence structures are mostly simple but the many lines of unattributed dialogue add much complexity to the language demands of this piece. Students have to engage in a significant amount of inference in order to understand the plot and characterization. As can be the case with literary pieces (e.g., Steinbeck’s work), the mathematically calculated readabilities underestimate the actual complexity of the text. |                                 |                |                  |                  |              |                         |
| Knowledge Demands (life, content, cultural/literary) | While it might be helpful for students to know about the use of child labor earlier in American history, the lack of knowledge in that area will not prevent them from being able to recognize the problem being outlined in the excerpt.   |                                 |                |                  |                  |              |                         |
| Levels of Meaning/ Purpose                           | The text has a single purpose, A group of individuals takes action to try to stop the use of child labor.   |                                 |                |                  |                  |              |                         |
| Overall placement: Grade 6                           | Although the quantitative measures place this text in the elementary grade band, the overall qualitative complexity, especially the level of inference required to understand the text, justifies placement at grade 6. This pattern is not unusual when placing literature at a grade level.   |                                 |                |                  |                  |              |                         |

| Qualitative Analysis                                 | Excerpt from <i>Iqbal</i>  | Where to place within the band?   |                |                  |                  |              |                         |
|--|--|---|----------------|------------------|------------------|--------------|-------------------------|
| Category   | Notes and comments on text, support for placement in this band   | Too low for grade band  | early to mid 6 | mid 6 to early 7 | mid 7 to early 8 | mid to end 8 | Too high for grade band |
| Structure (both story structure or form of piece)    | The text structure can best be described as chronological, but because students must infer the relationships between the various events, the passage becomes more challenging. Additionally, the inclusion of the flier in the middle of the text somewhat interrupts the flow of ideas, adding some further complexity. |    |                |                  |                  |              |                         |
| Language Clarity and Conventions                     | The text uses mostly familiar words, but there are some challenging terms as well throughout the text. The sentence structures range from simple to complex.   |    |                |                  |                  |              |                         |
| Knowledge Demands (life, content, cultural/literary) | It would help students to know that the use of child labor is real and of great concern to many, but even without that knowledge the text is self-contained and requires no prior knowledge.   |    |                |                  |                  |              |                         |
| Levels of Meaning/ Purpose                           | The purpose of the text is implicit, and students often must make inferences about the links between events in the excerpt. Additionally, complexity is added in that Iqbal's fight for freedom is not directly stated until the end of the piece.   |    |                |                  |                  |              |                         |
| Overall placement:<br>Grade 6                        | Although the quantitative measures place this text in the elementary grade band, the overall qualitative complexity, especially the level of inference required to understand the text, justifies placement of the text at grade 6.  |  |                |                  |                  |              |                         |

## Question Annotations & Correct Answer and Distractor Rationales

| Question Number | Correct Answer(s) | Standards                 | Rationales for Answer Options  |
|-----------------|-------------------|---------------------------|--|
| <b>1</b>        | <b>B</b>          | <b>RL.6.4,<br/>RL.6.1</b> | <p><b>A.</b> Although the passage suggests that Miss Lesley does not like the idea of child labor, the context for “not enforced” shows that the meaning is option B.</p> <p><b>B.</b> This is the correct answer. Miss Lesley’s statement about investigations and children who are not supposed to be working provide context for the meaning of laws not being enforced as “not strictly followed.”</p> <p><b>C.</b> Although the passage suggests that the laws regarding child labor are not being followed, there is no suggestion that the laws are not useful.</p> <p><b>D.</b> Although the passage suggests that it is unfair for children to be working in a mill, the context for “not enforced” shows that the meaning is option B.</p> |
| <b>2 Part A</b> | <b>A</b>          | <b>RL.6.3,<br/>RL.6.1</b> | <p><b>A.</b> This is the correct answer. Arthur has crumpled up the letter because Grace enters the room, trying to prevent her from learning the secret, and he later tells her that Miss Lesley is risking her job at the mill.</p> <p><b>B.</b> Although at Miss Lesley’s request Grace participates in filling in details for the letter, there is no textual evidence supporting the idea that Arthur is appreciative.</p> <p><b>C.</b> Although having Grace’s help may make the activity go faster, there is no evidence that Arthur believes this to be true.</p> <p><b>D.</b> Although Arthur may believe that it is good for Grace to learn about the commission, there is not textual evidence for this idea.</p>                         |
| <b>2 Part B</b> | <b>D</b>          |                           | <p><b>A.</b> Although Arthur speaks these words to Grace, they reflect his annoyance at her barging in, not his fear that she will tell the secret.</p> <p><b>B.</b> Although Arthur also speaks these words to Grace, they explain the current status of the letter and not his fear that Grace will tell the secret.</p> <p><b>C.</b> Although Arthur also speaks these words to Grace, they are meant to silence her protests about the need for children to work.</p> <p><b>D.</b> This is the correct answer. Arthur is warning Grace out of fear that she will betray the secret.</p>  |



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| 3        | C    | RL.6.5,<br>RL.6.1            | <p>A. Although Grace initially talks about what she could be doing at home, this thought does not advance the plot because Grace does not act on it but instead stays to help.</p> <p>B. Although the purpose of the letter is to try to change conditions at the mill, Grace is not hopeful at this point, and this idea is unrelated to the plot. In fact, later Grace indicates that she believes the letter will not make any changes.</p> <p>C. This is the correct answer. The cited paragraph shows the physical manifestations of Grace’s realization that the letter is about the issue of child labor. This realization moves the plot forward because Grace can now begin contributing to the content of the letter.</p> <p>D. Although Grace enjoys contributing to the letter, there is no textual evidence that she intends to write a letter by herself, so this idea is unrelated to the plot.</p>  |
| 4 Part A | D    |                              | <p>A. Although Grace’s initial statements about child labor reflect this point of view, it is not Miss Lesley’s.</p> <p>B. Although it is possible that the letter will bring changes to the mill, there is no indication that Miss Lesley believes that change will happen soon.</p> <p>C. The fact that Miss Lesley is writing the letter shows that she believes it is necessary to take action, that child labor may not go away by itself.</p> <p>D. This is the correct answer. Miss Lesley’s actions and words make it clear that she opposes child labor.</p>   |
| 4 Part B | B, D | RL.6.2,<br>RL.6.6,<br>RL.6.1 | <p>A. Although it is probably true that children spend too much time away from their families because they are working, Miss Lesley does not advance this idea, and, in fact, Grace talks about spending time with her family.</p> <p>B. This is a correct response. Miss Lesley speaks clearly about the need for children to receive an education instead of just working.</p> <p>C. Although Grace voices this idea early in the excerpt, Miss Lesley does not support the idea that children should be earning money to support their families; otherwise, she would not be writing the letter.</p> <p>D. This is a correct response. Miss Lesley indicates that accidents are more common when children are working in the mill.</p> <p>E. Although Grace and Arthur make it clear that children are being asked to undertake tasks that are not appropriate, Miss Lesley does not indicate that the dangers come from children being irresponsible.</p> <p>F. Although it might be logical to assume that children are taking jobs away from adults, this concept is not found within the text.</p> |

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| 5        | Grace: Paragraph 19<br>Arthur: Paragraph 34                                  | RL.6.6,<br>RL.6.1 | The correct responses clearly support the given points of view of both characters in a more direct way than is done by any other paragraphs in the text.  |
| 6        | A  | RL.6.2,<br>RL.6.1 | <p>A. This is the correct answer. The events of the excerpt show that all three characters come to see that while Miss Lesley risks losing her job, writing the letter is important to try to bring about change.</p> <p>B. Although the excerpt shows friendships between Grace and Arthur and teacher-student friendships between Miss Lesley and the children, the primary theme of the passage is not about friendship but is about taking action to bring about change.</p> <p>C. Although the interplay between Grace and Arthur could be characterized as peer pressure, the primary theme of the passage is not about this topic but about trying to change a bad situation.</p> <p>D. Although Grace makes it clear that her work at the mill helps her family’s situation, the primary theme of the passages is not about making sacrifices but about taking steps to bring change.</p> |
| 7 Part A | C  | RL.6.4,<br>RL.6.1 | <p>A. Although sometimes making sense of a document may involve translation into another language, in this case the flier was already in a language the children understood.</p> <p>B. The children did make additional copies of the flier, and the context shows us that decipher means “make sense of.”</p> <p>C. This is the correct answer. Based on the context of the passage, “decipher” shows the children could “make sense of” the flier.</p> <p>D. Iqbal revealed the existence of the flier, but the children then had to “decipher,” or “make sense of” it.</p>   |
| 7 Part B | <p>“assumed meaning”</p> <p>“it told us things”</p> <p>“it spoke to you”</p> |                   | <p><b>Correct answers:</b><br/>“Assumed meaning,” “it told us things,” and “it spoke to you” all offer contextual meaning for the meaning of “decipher” – “make sense of.”</p> <p><b>Incorrect answers:</b><br/>“Efforts were greatly rewarded” tells the reader that Maria had been working hard with the children but not specifically on the task of reading.<br/>“Brought back from his first escape” tells the reader how the flier arrived in the children’s hands, not that they could read it.</p>  |

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|          |   |                   | <p>“We had drawn on the sand” shows the reader the process the children used to learn to read and write, not that they finally figured out how to read the flier.</p> <p>“Strange, incomprehensible pothooks” explains to the reader what letters looked like before the children could decipher the flier.</p> <p>“My heart beating like crazy” tells the reader how the narrator felt once making sense of the flier.</p> <p>“Looked like something dead” explains what little sense the flier made before the children could “decipher” it. These words by themselves focus only on what letters look like when they are not understood, not what they look like once one can read.</p>  |
| 8        | D | RL.6.5,<br>RL.6.1 | <p><b>A.</b> The speaker states that the problem was “how to get there” (referring to the address), indicating that they felt action was possible. As such, the fight was meant to create a distraction so Iqbal could escape.</p> <p><b>B.</b> Although the children disliked their jobs and conditions, they created the fight so Iqbal could escape, not to avoid going back to work.</p> <p><b>C.</b> Although the children performed jobs of adults, the fight was staged so Iqbal could escape, not to show that the children still acted their ages.</p> <p><b>D.</b> This is the correct answer. The children wanted Iqbal to escape so he could notify authorities of the use of child labor in the factory where they worked.</p>   |
| 9 Part A | A | RL.6.2,<br>RL.6.1 | <p><b>A.</b> This is the correct answer. Iqbal’s arrival has inspired the children in many ways, from Maria making an effort to teach the children to read and the children cooperating, to organizing a fight to allow Iqbal to escape. They have grown stronger individually and as a unit.</p> <p><b>B.</b> Although the children have been deprived of a quality education, there is no evidence in the text that this lack of education is the worst effect of child labor.</p> <p><b>C.</b> Although the children had to learn to write by drawing in the sand, this is a detail used to demonstrate the children’s living conditions, as opposed to the central idea about Iqbal’s impact on the group.</p> <p><b>D.</b> Although Iqbal learned about the existence of people who fought against slavery by escaping to the outside world, his values did not change: He hated the practice before the children were able to read the flier.</p> |
| 9 Part B | A |                   | <p><b>A.</b> This is the correct answer. The act of Maria teaching the children to read shows that not only is she willing to help the group but they are willing to work together toward a shared purpose, which they didn’t have before Iqbal’s arrival.</p> <p><b>B.</b> Although the children had to write in the sand, this was a detail and does not relate to the central idea that they’ve grown stronger as a group.</p>   |

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|   |                          |  | <p><b>C.</b> Although none of the children understood the flier at first, the idea of them growing stronger isn't developed by this detail. Instead Maria's willingness to teach and the children to read drives the central idea that they've grown stronger.</p> <p><b>D.</b> Although Iqbal brings someone new to the shop, this fact does not show that the children have grown stronger, as Iqbal has already shown he is daring by staging a multiple escape attempts.</p>  |
| <b>10</b>                                       | <b>D</b>                 | <b>RL.6.9,<br/>RL6.1</b>   | <p><b>A.</b> Although students may be familiar with the idea of factories, it is unlikely they would be familiar with mills from the time period of <i>Counting on Grace</i> or Middle-Eastern carpet factories in <i>Iqbal</i>.</p> <p><b>B.</b> Though both texts include male children who are part of a child labor system, there is no textual evidence to indicate that the majority of the characters are male.</p> <p><b>C.</b> Although both excerpts mention education, it is not mentioned that the lack of education is what drove the children to working in factories.</p> <p><b>D.</b> This is the correct answer. Both excerpts are told in first person (Grace in <i>Counting on Grace</i> and a narrator in <i>Iqbal</i>), and this approach allows the reader to experience all the feelings of the characters.</p>  |
| <b>11<br/>(Optional<br/>Writing<br/>Prompt)</b> | <b>See right column.</b> | <b>W.6.3,<br/>W.6.4<br/>W.6.9,<br/>RL.6.6,<br/>RL.6.1,<br/>L.6.1,<br/>L.6.2,<br/>L.6.3</b> | <p>A good student response will include most or all of the following points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Grace would say that she may be leaning toward stopping the use of child labor but also sees how it might be necessary in some cases, while the narrator of <i>Iqbal</i> would argue to abolish the practice. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Evidence includes Grace's point that the incomes help families. But she also points out acts that are dangerous to children, thus the conflict in her thoughts.</li> <li>○ Evidence includes actions taken by the children in <i>Iqbal</i> to stop the practice (learning to read so they can understand the flier, organizing a fight to allow Iqbal to escape and notify authorities)</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Grace would state her belief that inspectors/authorities won't make a difference (she mentions the children hide when inspectors arrive), but the narrator of <i>Iqbal</i> would explain that authorities will make a difference and stages a fight so that Iqbal can escape notify them.)</li> <li>• Both characters would agree that education suffers. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Grace believes Miss Lesley when she mentions the importance of an education.</li> <li>○ The children in <i>Iqbal</i> have to teach each other to read without any formal schooling or supplies.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> |

## 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](http://www.corestandards.org/assets/Appendix_B.pdf)
- See the Text Complexity Collection on [www.achievethecore.org](http://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](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](http://achievethecore.org/content/upload/Scoring_Rubric_for_Text-Based_Writing_Prompts.pdf)