

Grade 5 Literary Mini-Assessment

The Summer of the Swans Pair

This grade 5 mini-assessment is based on two texts from the same book: *The Summer of the Swans* by Betsy Byars. These texts are considered to be texts worthy of students' time to read and also meet the expectations for text complexity at grade 5. 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 selected-response questions that address the Reading Standards listed below and one constructed-response question that addresses Reading, Writing, and Language standards. There are also items that replicate how technology may be used on assessments, but in paper and pencil format.

We encourage educators to give students the time that they need to read closely, answer the questions, 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.5.1	Quote accurately from a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text.
RL.5.2	Determine a theme of a story, drama, or poem from details in the text, including how characters in a story or drama respond to challenges or how the speaker in a poem reflects upon a topic; summarize the text.
RL.5.3	Compare and contrast two or more characters, settings, or events in a story or drama, drawing on specific details in the text (e.g., how characters interact).
RL.5.4	Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative language such as metaphors and similes.
RL.5.5	Explain how a series of chapters, scenes, or stanzas fits together to provide the overall structure of a particular story, drama, or poem.
RL.5.6	Describe how a narrator's or speaker's point of view influences how events are described.
RL.5.9	Compare and contrast stories in the same genre (e.g., mysteries and adventure stories) on their approaches to similar themes and topics.
W.5.2	Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas and information clearly.
W.5.4	Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development and organization are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

W.5.9	Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.
L.5.1	Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking.
L.5.2	Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling when writing.
L.5.3	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 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 5 Mini-Assessment – *The Summer of the Swans* Pair

The questions in this mini-assessment are based on two excerpts from *The Summer of the Swans*, published by Viking Press, a division of Penguin Putman Publishing.¹

Excerpt 1: from *The Summer of the Swans* by Betsy Byars

The first excerpt begins on page 121 with the words “Charlie awoke” and ends on page 123 with the words “calling his name.”

Students who have not read the entire book will find the following introduction useful for Excerpt 1:

Due to an illness, ten-year-old Charlie Godfrey cannot speak or write, but he can understand all that his family tells him. His older sister Sara shows Charlie some swans, and he becomes fascinated with them. Later, in the middle of the night, Charlie goes to visit the swans by himself.

Excerpt 2: from *The Summer of the Swans* by Betsy Byars

The second excerpt begins on page 124 with the words “At the top” and ends on page 128 with the words “isn’t that better?”.

Students who have not read the entire book will find the following introduction useful for Excerpt 2:

Charlie is missing, and Sara and her friend, Joe, must find him.

Teacher read aloud: Today you will read two excerpts from *The Summer of the Swans*, a novel by Betsy Byars. 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 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 texts and questions. If you do not finish when class ends, come see me to discuss the ways you may have additional time.

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

¹ The texts are not included in this document due to permissions denial for web rights. The user is solely responsible for any permission that may be necessary to reproduce, distribute, or publicly display the text for purposes of the assessment.

QUESTIONS

1. The following question has two parts. Answer Part A and then answer Part B.

Part A: In paragraph 2 of Excerpt 1, what is the meaning of the word *frenzy*?

- A. an awkward way
- B. a crisscrossing pattern
- C. a wild and excited manner
- D. an exact and planned course

Part B: Which phrase from the text best helps the reader determine the meaning of *frenzy*?

- A. “blank spaces that he could never fill in”
- B. “kneeling on the ground in helpless pain”
- C. “frightened him so much”
- D. “turned and run without direction”

2. Excerpt 1 is told from Charlie’s point of view. Choose two ways that Charlie’s point of view influences the story.

- A. The setting of the story is not revealed until late in the excerpt because Charlie himself does not focus on the setting right away.
- B. The small details Charlie remembers become more and more important to him than the situation he is in.
- C. The conflict is not revealed until the very end of the excerpt because Charlie remains unaware of the problems he is facing.
- D. The challenges Charlie faces in his life appear to be more serious than they really are because Charlie does not understand the details of his situation.
- E. The reader is unable to learn about Charlie’s personality even though he gains some understanding of the difficult condition he is in.
- F. The reader remains unaware of what caused Charlie to become lost because Charlie does not remember the cause of upsetting events.

3. The following question has two parts. Answer Part A and then answer Part B.

Part A: Excerpt 1 from *The Summer of the Swans* explains two events from Charlie's life, one from his past and one from the present. Compare these events in Box 2 below by choosing details from the text that show how Charlie reacted to each event. Complete Box 2 by writing two details from Box 1 to show how Charlie reacted.

Box 1

Details from the story
He turns and runs away.
He is scared to open his eyes.
He feels safe.
He looks for someone he knows.
He cries out so someone might hear him.
He returns to his favorite place.
He forgets to pay attention to his surroundings.

Box 2

Event	Detail 1 showing Charlie's reaction	Detail 2 showing Charlie's reaction
Charlie sees Sara get hurt at the Dairy Queen.		
Charlie is lost and alone.		

Part B: How do the details you chose above help describe Charlie's character?

- A. These details show that Charlie has a difficult time focusing on his surroundings.
- B. These details highlight that Charlie does not trust other people to help him.
- C. These details present Charlie's fear of unknown people and places.
- D. These details illustrate that Charlie tends to panic in stressful situations.

4. The following question has two parts. Answer Part A and then answer Part B.

Part A: What is the purpose of the phrase “gripped her like steel” in paragraph 19 of Excerpt 2?

- A. To emphasize how calm Charlie feels when he sees Sara
- B. To emphasize how strong Charlie’s emotions are when Sara rescues him
- C. To emphasize how fearful Charlie still is after Sara finds him
- D. To emphasize how fast Charlie’s emotions change after Sara hugs him

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

- A. “His face was streaked with dirt and tears. His pajama jacket hung in shreds about his scratched chest.”
- B. “He opened his eyes and as he saw Sara a strange expression came over his face, an expression of wonder and joy and disbelief. . . .”
- C. “She paused, looked down at him, and then, sliding on the seat of her pants, went down the bank and took him in her arms.”
- D. ““It’s all right now, Charlie, I’m here and we’re going home.””

5. The following question has two parts. Answer Part A and then answer Part B.

Part A: Which statement best expresses one of the themes of Excerpt 2?

- A. When people start exploring nature, they find both challenges and excitement.
- B. When people work together as a team, they can eventually solve problems.
- C. When people care deeply about someone, they become determined to help them.
- D. When people listen to the advice of others, they more easily reach success in whatever they do.

Part B: In paragraph 8 of Excerpt 2, underline the sentence that provides the best evidence for the answer to Part A.

6. In what two ways do paragraphs 1–10 of Excerpt 2 contribute to the development of the plot?

- A. These paragraphs show how events caused Charlie to become lost.
- B. These paragraphs show the reasons that Sara must find Charlie.
- C. These paragraphs show Sara’s sense of excitement as she races to Charlie.
- D. These paragraphs show the appearance of the ravine in which Charlie finds himself.
- E. These paragraphs show how strongly Sara feels about the need to find Charlie.
- F. These paragraphs show how fearful Sara is that she may be injured again.

7. Based on information from both excerpts, which statement best expresses how Charlie and Sara feel about each other?

- A. Charlie is afraid of Sara, and Sara is angry that she must find Charlie.
- B. Charlie loves Sara, and Sara loves and wants to take care of Charlie.
- C. Charlie wants independence from Sara, and Sara is overprotective of Charlie.
- D. Charlie feels abandoned by Sara, and Sara believes she caused Charlie to run away.

8. (Optional) These two excerpts from *The Summer of the Swans* are written from the perspective of a different sibling about the same event. Using information from both texts, compare and contrast the characters of Sara and Charlie and their reactions to the event. Be sure to use evidence from both texts in your response. Use the lines provided below and on the next page to record your response.

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.

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 texts for this mini-assessment have been placed at grade 5, and the process used to determine this grade level placement is described below. Appendix A to the CCSS 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 one¹ 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).
2. Place a text or excerpt at a **grade-level** based on a qualitative analysis.

Quantitative Analysis

Excerpt 1 of <i>The Summer of the Swans</i> (data circled in orange)	Quantitative Measure #1	Quantitative Measure #2
	FK: 7.5	Lexile: 1110
Excerpt 2 of <i>The Summer of the Swans</i> (data circled in blue)	FK: 5.0	Lexile: 950

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. **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 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.

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

Common Core Band	ATOS	Degrees of Reading Power®	Flesch-Kincaid ⁵	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

Quantitative data indicate that placement at grades 6 and 8 for Text 1 and grades 4 and 5 for Text 2. Qualitative analysis will help narrow the bands to specific grade levels for the pair.

¹ 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 of Excerpt 1: *The Summer of the Swans*

Category	Notes and comments on text, support for placement in this band	Where to place within the band?				
		Too low	early to mid-4	mid- 4 to low 5	Mid to high 5	NOT suited to band
Structure (both story structure or form of piece)	The structure of this text is moderately complex. The story starts out with the reader not really knowing where the main character is or how he got there, and then it proceeds to a flashback. After the flashback ends, the reader finally learns where Charlie is and can infer how he got there.					
Language Clarity and Conventions (including vocabulary load)	The language used in this excerpt is mostly literal, conversational, and conventional, which helps make the text accessible for students. The sentences are straightforward and mostly simple. The vocabulary should mostly be familiar to students, and words that are unfamiliar are explained either directly or through use of context or are not consequential to comprehension (cigar box).					
Knowledge Demands (life, content, cultural/literary)	No prior knowledge is needed to understand this text, as the author develops each point through sufficient use of evidence.					
Levels of Meaning (chiefly literary)/Purpose (chiefly informational)	There is generally one level of meaning: Charlie has become lost due to his tendency to panic in stressful situations.					
Overall placement: Grade 5	Justification: Although the structure is moderately complex, other aspects make the text accessible to students. The language used should be mostly familiar to students, and the sentences are mostly simple. There is no need for prior knowledge, as the text has all information a student needs for comprehension. There is a single level of meaning as well.					

Qualitative Analysis of Excerpt 2: *The Summer of the Swans*

Category	Notes and comments on text, support for placement in this band	Where to place within the band?				
		Too low	early to mid-4	mid- 4 to low 5	Mid to high 5	NOT suited to band
Structure (both story structure or form of piece)	The main structure of this text is chronological order. The excerpt follows Sara as she searches for her lost brother and finds him.					
Language Clarity and Conventions (including vocabulary load)	The language used in this excerpt is mostly literal, conversational, and conventional, which helps make the text accessible for students. The sentences are straightforward and vary between simple and complex. The vocabulary should mostly be familiar to students, and words that may be unfamiliar (<i>scarcely, cascade, etc.</i>) are explained either directly or through use of context.					
Knowledge Demands (life, content, cultural/literary)	No prior knowledge is needed to understand this text, as the author develops each point through sufficient use of evidence.					
Levels of Meaning (chiefly literary)/ Purpose (chiefly informational)	There is a single level of meaning: Sara loves her brother very much and will not stop looking for him until he has been found.					
Overall placement: Grade 5	Justification: Although the sentence structure and vocabulary for this excerpt are more challenging than that of excerpt 1, the organizational structure is more accessible to students. No prior knowledge is needed and the meaning is straightforward and singular in nature.					

Question Annotations Correct Answer and Distractor Rationales

Question Number	Correct Answer(s)	Standards	Rationales for Answer Options
1 Part A	C	RL.5.4, RL.5.1	A. This option is incorrect. "An awkward way" suggests clumsiness rather than "a wild and excited manner." B. This option is incorrect. "A crisscrossing pattern" indicates some organization to Charlie's path, though there is none because he is in an agitated or "wild" state. C. This is the correct answer. "A wild and excited manner" is the definition of "frenzy." When one is frenzied, he or she is hysterical and uncontrollable and acts "wild and excited." Frenzy is used in the text to describe both Charlie's actions and his mental state when frightened. D. This option is incorrect. "An exact and planned course" indicates forethought and specificity to Charlie's path, but there is neither because he is in an agitated state.
1 Part B	D		A. This option is incorrect. "Blank spaces that he could never fill in" does not help explain "frenzy." The term "blank spaces" refers to Charlie's inability to remember his actions after upsetting events, not his behavior during those events. B. This option is incorrect. "Kneeling on the ground in helpless pain" does not help explain "frenzy." The phrase refers to how Sara responded to being hit in the nose, not how Charlie ran away from the scene of her injury. C. This option is incorrect. "Frightened him so much" does not help explain frenzy. The phrase describes Charlie's feelings about Sara's injury and the cause of his fear, not the manner in which he ran away from the scene of her injury. D. This is the correct answer. "Turned and run without direction" helps the reader know that frenzy is an agitated or "wild" state.

2	A, F	RL.5.6, RL.5.1	<p>A. This is a correct answer. Because Charlie does not remember where he ran to after he became upset, readers do not learn the setting until the second half of the excerpt.</p> <p>B. This option is incorrect. Although Charlie notices small details like his fingernails, the main problem of him lost in the forest is still most important; rather those small details simply help readers better understand Charlie and how his mind works.</p> <p>C. This option is incorrect for two reasons: First, the conflict is revealed at the beginning of the excerpt rather than at the very end. Secondly, Charlie quickly becomes aware that he is lost.</p> <p>D. This option is incorrect, as Charlie seems to fully understand he is lost. Also, Charlie knows that his problem of panicking under stressful conditions gets him into trouble and is a serious concern.</p> <p>E. This option is incorrect in that the reader does learn about Charlie’s personality through his point of view. We learn that he requires routine, and it is because of sudden changes in routine that Charlie is unable to determine where he is and how he got there.</p> <p>F. This is a correct answer. Because Charlie is unable to recall what he does after he is surprised, readers do not know how Charlie became lost in the forest.</p>
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<p style="text-align: center;">3</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Part A</p>	<p>Event 1: Charlie sees Sara get hurt at the Dairy Queen.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • He turns and runs away. • He forgets to pay attention to his surroundings. <p>Event 2: Charlie is lost and alone.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • He is scared to open his eyes. • He cries out so someone might hear him. 	<p style="text-align: center;">RL.5.3, RL.5.1</p>	<p>PAST: When Charlie saw Sara get hurt at the Dairy Queen, “he had turned and run.” He also forgets about his surroundings, as he “ran without direction, in a frenzy, dashing headlong up the street, blind to cars and people.” (Paragraph 2)</p> <p>PRESENT: When Charlie finds himself lost and alone, he “lay for a moment without opening his eyes. He did not remember where he was, but he had a certain dread of seeing it” (Paragraph 1). Also, “he began to cry out in a hoarse excited voice, again and again, screaming now, because he had just heard someone far away calling his name.”</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">3</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Part B</p>	<p>D</p>		<p>A. This option is incorrect. Although the second detail from the past event indicates that Charlie was unfocused, all of these details together support the inference that Charlie’s usual reaction was to become frantic.</p> <p>B. This option is incorrect. These details do not suggest Charlie does not trust others, but rather help readers understand Charlie’s pattern of behavior.</p> <p>C. This option is incorrect. Although Charlie is afraid when he realizes he does not know where he is, that detail is a result of his response to stressful situations rather places in which he is unfamiliar.</p> <p>D. This is the correct answer. These details demonstrate how Charlie responds frantically to two separate events, establishing his typical reaction to stressful situations.</p>

<p style="text-align: center;">4 Part A</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">B</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">RL.5.4, RL.5.1</p>	<p>A. This option is incorrect. When Charlie “gripped her like steel,” he is not calm but rather intensely relieved.</p> <p>B. This is the correct answer. Charlie is intensely relieved to see Sara; the author uses steel, a strong metal, to show how strongly Charlie reacts.</p> <p>C. This option is incorrect. Charlie is not still afraid after Sara finds him; instead, he is intensely relieved.</p> <p>D. This option is incorrect. “Gripped her like steel” does not indicate the speed of Charlie’s changing emotions, but rather the strength.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">4 Part B</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">B</p>		<p>A. This option is incorrect. This detail provides information about Charlie’s appearance rather than describing how relieved he felt by Sara’s presence.</p> <p>B. This is the correct answer. The “wonder and joy” Charlie feels when he sees Sara supports the answer in Part A that Charlie had a strong emotional reaction that caused him to “grip her like steel.”</p> <p>C. This option is incorrect. This details provides information about how Sara feels when she sees Charlie, not how Charlie feels when he sees Sara.</p> <p>D. This option is incorrect. This detail provides information about the comforting words Sara tells Charlie but not the strength of Charlie’s reaction to them.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">5 Part A</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">C</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">RL.5.2, RL.5.1</p>	<p>A. This option is incorrect. Although Sara feels excited while in the woods and is facing a challenge (to find Charlie), she is excited because she has found Charlie, not because nature itself is exciting to her.</p> <p>B. This option is incorrect. Although Joe is accompanying Sara, the excerpt doesn’t focus on his contributions to the search, so teamwork is not one of the themes.</p> <p>C. This is the correct answer. This excerpt focuses on Sara’s love of her brother, which gives her the resolve to find him.</p> <p>D. This option is incorrect. Although Sara comforts Charlie with her own story of being lost, she is not giving him advice but rather comfort. Therefore, listening to the advice of others in order to reach success isn’t a theme of the text.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">5 Part B</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">“Nothing could stop her now.”</p>		<p style="text-align: center;">This quotation supports the theme of Sara’s dogged search for her much beloved brother Charlie, as it describes her attitude after she has heard him but not yet located him.</p>

6	C, E	RL5.5, RL.5.1	<p>A. This statement is incorrect because readers never learn how Charlie became lost.</p> <p>B. This statement is incorrect because paragraphs 1 -10 do not reveal why Sara must find Charlie but rather how she feels as she gets close to finding him and how intensely she is motivated.</p> <p>C. This is a correct answer. These paragraphs describe Sara’s actions and feelings as she comes closer to finding Charlie.</p> <p>D. This statement is incorrect because these paragraphs focus on Sara’s hunt for Charlie, not Charlie’s location.</p> <p>E. This is a correct answer. These paragraphs describe Sara’s drive to locate her brother.</p> <p>F. This statement is incorrect because the author never implies that Sara is afraid of getting hurt, even as she exerts herself to find Charlie.</p>
7	B	RL.5.9, RL.5.3, RL.5.1	<p>A. This statement is incorrect in that Charlie does not fear his sister, nor is there evidence that Sara feels anger about having to hunt for Charlie.</p> <p>B. This statement is the correct answer. Each character acts in an affectionate and caring way toward the other.</p> <p>C. This statement is incorrect in that Charlie depends on his sister to find him, and Sara rescues Charlie from a frightening situation.</p> <p>D. This statement is incorrect because Charlie suspects it was his own actions that led him to be lost, and there is no evidence in the excerpts that Sara believes she caused him to run away.</p>

<p style="text-align: center;">8</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Optional Writing Prompt</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">See right column</p>	<p>W.5.2, W.5.4, W.5.9, RL.5.9, RL.5.3, RL.5.1, L.5.1, L.5.2, L.5.3</p>	<p>Possible Responses</p> <p><u>Similarities between Sara and Charlie and their reactions to the event</u></p> <p>They care for each other.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>the sight of Sara kneeling on the ground in helpless pain had frightened him so much</i> ○ <i>She held him against her for a moment and now the hot tears were in her eyes and on her cheeks and she didn't even notice.</i> <p>Each of them has had the experience of being lost.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>He would find himself in a strange place and not know how he had got there.</i> ○ <i>"I know how you feel," she said. "I know. One time when I had the measles and my fever was real high, I got lost on my way back from the bathroom.</i> <p><u>Differences between Sara and Charlie and their reactions to the event</u></p> <p>Although Charlie is puzzled and worried, he moves slowly for most of the ordeal, while Sara is agitated and moves quickly.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>Slowly he sat up and looked down at his hands. His fingernails were black with earth, two of them broken below the quick, and he got up slowly and sat on the log behind him and inspected his fingers more closely.</i> ○ <i>She let out another whoop of pure joy, turned and ran down the hill in great strides, the puce tennis shoes slapping the ground like rubber paddles, the wind in her face, her hands grabbing one tree trunk after another for support.</i> <p>Charlie relies on Sara for help.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>Then he began to cry out in a hoarse excited voice, again and again, screaming now, because he had just heard someone far away calling his name.</i> ○ <i>"It's all right now, Charlie, I'm here and we're going home."</i> <p>Charlie focuses on memories while lost; Sara focuses on the present.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>Pictures began to drift into his mind; he saw Aunt Willie's cigar box</i> ○ <i>Nothing could stop her now</i>
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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