Grade 3 Informational Mini-Assessment

Astronaut Set

This grade 3 mini-assessment is based on two texts that focus on the topic of the first United States astronauts. These texts are considered to be texts worthy of students' time to read and also meet the expectations for text complexity at grade 3. 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 the Reading, Writing, and Language Standards. There are also items that replicate how technology may be used on assessments, but adapted to 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 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.**

The questions align to the following standards:

RI.3.1	Ask and answer questions to demonstrate understanding of a text, referring explicitly to the text as the basis for the answers.
RI.3.2	Determine the main idea of a text; recount the key details and explain how they support the main idea.
RI.3.3	Describe the relationship between a series of historical events, scientific ideas or concepts, or steps in technical procedures in a text, using language that pertains to time, sequence, and cause/effect.
RI.3.4	Determine the meaning of general academic and domain-specific words and phrases in a text relevant to a grade 3 topic or subject area.
RI.3.5	Use text features and search tools (e.g., key words, sidebars, hyperlinks) to locate information relevant to a given topic efficiently.
RI.3.7	Use information gained from illustrations (e.g., maps, photographs) and the words in a text to demonstrate understanding of the text (e.g., where, when, why, and how key events occur).
RI.3.8	Describe the logical connection between particular sentences and paragraphs in a text (e.g., comparison, cause/effect, first/second/third in a sequence).
RI.3.9	Compare and contrast the most important points and key details presented in two texts on the same topic.
W.3.1	Write opinion pieces on topics or texts, supporting a point of view with reasons.

W.3.4	With guidance and support from adults, produce writing in which the development and organization are appropriate to task and purpose. (Grade-specific expectations for writing types are defined in standards 1–3 above.)
L.3.1	Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking.
L.3.2	Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling when writing.
L.3.3	Use knowledge of language and its conventions when writing, speaking, reading, or listening.

Contents

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 3 Mini-Assessment – First U.S. Astronauts Pair

Today you will read two articles about the first astronauts in the United States. 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.

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 the ways you may have additional time.

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

Text 1: What Was Project Mercury?

1   Project Mercury was a NASA[1] program. It launched the first Americans into space.

2   Astronauts made six flights during the Mercury project. Two of those went to space and came right back down. Four of them went into orbit and circled Earth. The first of the six flights was in 1961. The last flight was in 1963.

What Spacecraft Was Used for Project Mercury?

3   The Mercury capsule was small. It only held one person. The capsule had very little room inside. The astronaut had to stay in his seat.

4   Two types of rockets were used for Mercury launches. The first two of the six flights with an astronaut on board used a Redstone rocket. The other four manned flights used an Atlas rocket. Both rockets were first built as missiles for the military.

5   The project was named Mercury after a Roman god who was very fast. Each astronaut named his spacecraft. Alan Shepard included a 7 in the name of his capsule. This was because it was the seventh one made. The other astronauts included a 7 also. This was in honor of the seven astronauts chosen for the project.

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[1] NASA: the government agency responsible for the United States space program

Who Were the Mercury Astronauts?

6   NASA chose seven astronauts for Project Mercury in 1959. It was one of the first things NASA did. NASA was only six months old.

The seven Mercury astronauts were (from left) Wally Schirra, Alan Shepard, Deke Slayton, Gus Grissom, John Glenn, Gordon Cooper and Scott Carpenter. **Credits: NASA**

7   Alan Shepard made the first Mercury flight. He was the first American in space. He named his spacecraft Freedom 7. The 15-minute flight went into space and came back down. Shepard later walked on the moon during the Apollo 14 mission.

8   Gus Grissom was the second astronaut to fly in Project Mercury. Grissom named his capsule Liberty Bell 7. The third person to fly was John Glenn. In 1962, he was the first American to orbit Earth. His capsule was Friendship 7.

9   The second American to orbit Earth was Scott Carpenter. He flew on Aurora 7. Wally Schirra (Shuh-RAH) was next, on Sigma 7. Gordon Cooper flew on the last Mercury mission. He spent 34 hours circling Earth. His capsule was Faith 7.

10   Deke Slayton was also one of the "Mercury Seven" astronauts. A health problem stopped him from flying a Mercury mission. He flew into space in 1975 on a different mission.

How Did NASA Make Sure Mercury Was Safe?

11   Before astronauts flew, NASA had test flights. People were not on these launches. The flights let NASA find and fix problems.

12   The first Atlas rocket that launched with a Mercury capsule exploded. The first Mercury-Redstone launch only went about four inches off the ground. NASA learned from these problems. NASA learned how to fix them. NASA made the rockets safer.

13   Three other "astronauts" also helped make Mercury safer. A rhesus monkey, Sam, and two chimpanzees, Ham and Enos, flew in Mercury capsules. Enos even made two orbits around Earth. Since the monkey and the chimpanzees made it back safely, NASA knew it was safe for astronauts.

Ham the chimpanzee made his Mercury flight in a special seat. **Credits: NASA**

Why Was Project Mercury Important?

14   NASA learned a lot from Project Mercury. NASA learned how to put people in orbit. It learned how people could live and work in space. NASA learned how to fly a spacecraft. These lessons were very important. NASA used them in later space projects.

15   After Mercury came the Gemini program. The Gemini spacecraft had room for two astronauts. NASA learned even more with Gemini. Together, Mercury and Gemini prepared NASA for the Apollo program. During Apollo, NASA landed human beings on the moon for the first time.

www.nasa.gov

Text 2: Who Was Alan Shepard?

1   Alan Shepard was the first American in space. He was one of NASA's first
     seven astronauts. He also walked on the moon.

What Was Shepard's Early Life Like?

2   Alan Shepard was born on Nov. 18, 1923. He worked on a ship during World
     War II. After the war, Shepard went back to school. He became a test pilot.
     Test pilots try out new aircraft. The pilots make sure the airplanes are safe. In
     April 1959, Shepard became an astronaut.

What Happened on Alan Shepard's First Spaceflight?

3   On May 5, 1961, Alan Shepard became the first American in space. He flew
     on a Mercury spacecraft. There was just enough room for one person. He
     named his capsule Freedom 7. It launched on a Redstone rocket. The Army
     first used the Redstone as a missile. On this flight, Shepard did not orbit
     Earth. He flew 116 miles high. Then he came back down. The flight lasted
     about 15 ½ minutes. The mission was a success.

The launch of Freedom 7
Credits: NASA

What Happened on Alan Shepard's Second Spaceflight?

4   Shepard's second spaceflight was Apollo 14. This mission went to the moon. Shepard was the commander. Stuart Roosa and Edgar Mitchell were on Apollo 14, too. The Apollo spacecraft launched on a Saturn V rocket.

5   On Feb. 15, 1971, Shepard and Mitchell landed on the moon. Roosa stayed in the crew capsule. It stayed in orbit around the moon. Shepard and Mitchell went on two moonwalks. They collected more than 100 pounds of moon rocks. They did science experiments on the lunar surface. Shepard had some fun, too. He became the first person to hit a golf ball on the moon. It showed how far the ball would go in the moon's lower gravity. So that was science, too.

What Happened After Shepard's Second Spaceflight?

6   Alan Shepard had flown on two space missions. He also worked as the head of the Astronaut Office. He left NASA in 1974. Shepard still worked to support space exploration. He also helped students. He died in 1998.

www.nasa.gov

QUESTIONS:

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

   Part A: In paragraph 1 of Text 1, "What Was Project Mercury?," what does the word *launched* **mean?**

   A. tried a small experiment
   B. began brand new
   C. pushed bravely forward
   D. sent in a powerful way

   Part B: Which detail from Text 1 best helps the reader determine the meaning of *launched*?

   A. "Two types of rockets"
   B. "first things NASA did"
   C. "The 15-minute flight"
   D. "made the rockets safer"

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

   Part A: Based on information from Text 1, what is the relationship between Project Mercury and the fact that humans eventually walked on the moon?

   A. The knowledge NASA gained from Project Mercury led to better understanding of space travel so that during the Apollo program, people could walk on the moon.
   B. Project Mercury was used to train the astronauts how to survive space travel and about the conditions on the moon so they could safely walk on it during the Apollo program.
   C. The Apollo program was created to allow Deke Slayton an opportunity to walk on the moon since he got sick during Project Mercury and could not participate.
   D. Project Mercury was a series of test flights using animals so that during the Apollo program humans could safely travel to walk on the moon.

   Part B: Which section of Text 1 provides the best information about answer the question in Part A correctly?

   A. What Spacecraft Was Used for Project Mercury?
   B. Who Were the Mercury Astronauts?
   C. How Did NASA Make Sure Mercury Was Safe?
   D. Why Was Project Mercury Important?

3. Complete the chart below by choosing the correct name from the Names of Astronauts table and writing it next to each of his contributions to the space program. One name will be used twice.

Contribution to the space program	Name of astronaut
First American to orbit Earth	
Second American to orbit Earth	
Flew the second mission to space	
First American to travel to space	
Flew a later mission in 1975	
Flew the last Mercury flight	
Walked on the moon	
The third Project Mercury astronaut to orbit Earth	

Name of astronaut
Alan Shepard
Gus Grissom
John Glenn
Scott Carpenter
Wally Schirra
Gordon Cooper
Deke Slayton

4. Which section of Text 1 helps the reader find information about when NASA started Project Mercury?

A. What Spacecraft Was Used for Project Mercury?
B. Who Were the Mercury Astronauts?
C. How Did NASA Make Sure Mercury Was Safe?
D. Why Was Project Mercury Important?

5. **Read these sentences from Text 1.**

> **Both rockets were first built as missiles for the military. (Paragraph 4)**
> **The project was named Mercury after a Roman god who was very fast. (Paragraph 5)**

What is the connection between these two sentences?

A. The sentences work together to develop the idea that rockets and space travel have been important throughout history.

B. The sentence from paragraph 5 explains where the military got the idea for the missiles mentioned in the sentence from paragraph 4.

C. The sentences work together to develop the idea that the rockets were meant to get the astronauts into space quickly.

D. The sentence from paragraph 5 shows that Romans were the first to think about space travel and that later the military, mentioned in the sentence from paragraph 4, invented the missiles that would take astronauts to space.

6. **Which two sentences from Text 1 best help to develop the idea that it was important to test the rockets?**

A. "The astronaut had to stay in his seat."

B. "This was because it was the seventh one made."

C. "The 15-minute flight went into space and came back down."

D. "The first Atlas rocket that launched with a Mercury capsule exploded."

E. "A rhesus monkey, Sam, and two chimpanzees, Ham and Enos, flew in Mercury capsules."

F. "Since the monkey and the chimpanzees made it back safely, NASA knew it was safe for astronauts."

7. **What is the main idea of Text 1?**

A. There were seven human astronauts involved in Project Mercury, and each man named his own spacecraft.

B. Because of Project Mercury and the first astronauts, NASA was able to learn much about space and space travel.

C. Because of safety concerns and the small capsules NASA used as part of Project Mercury, being an astronaut was a dangerous job.

D. Animals like monkeys and chimpanzees were used to test the rockets in the early days of the Project Mercury space program.

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

Part A: In paragraph 6 of Text 2, "Who Was Alan Shepard?," what does the word *exploration* mean?

   A. the act of studying a new subject to prove earlier beliefs are wrong
   B. the act of researching a topic in order to be prepared to speak about it
   C. the act of traveling in or through an unfamiliar area to learn more about it
   D. the act of leading a team of experts on a special mission to discover new information

Part B: Which sentence from Text 2 **best** shows Alan Shepard participating in *exploration*?

   A. "Shepard was the commander."
   B. "Shepard and Mitchell went on two moonwalks."
   C. "He also worked as the head of the Astronaut Office."
   D. "He also helped students."

9. Under which section of Text 2 would the reader find information about what events led to Shepard becoming an astronaut?

   A. What Was Shepard's Early Life Like?
   B. What Happened on Alan Shepard's First Spaceflight?
   C. What Happened on Alan Shepard's Second Spaceflight?
   D. What Happened After Shepard's Second Spaceflight?

10. How does the photograph included with Text 2 better help the reader understand the information in the article?

   A. It explains where the astronauts sat during each mission.
   B. It shows the design of the rockets used first in the space program.
   C. It explains how the rocket was recaptured as it landed.
   E. It shows that Shepard's first mission was successful.

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

Part A: What is the main idea of Text 2?

A. Alan Shepard's work on the moon led to many scientific discoveries about gravity.

B. Alan Shepard's experience as a soldier during World War II prepared him for his later acts of bravery.

C. Alan Shepard had a long and successful career in the space program.

D. Alan Shepard's flew two missions into space.

Part B: Which sentences from Text 2 best supports the correct answer to Part A?

A. "Alan Shepard was the first American in space. He was one of NASA's first seven astronauts."

B. "He worked on a ship during World War II. After the war, Shepard went back to school."

C. "He became the first person to hit a golf ball on the moon. It showed how far the ball would go in the moon's lower gravity."

D. "Alan Shepard had flown on two space missions. He also worked as the head of the Astronaut Office."

12. **What information about Alan Shepard is discussed in more detail in Text 2 than in Text 1?**

A. What spacecraft Shepard flew on his first space flight

B. Who went into space before Shepard

C. What Shepard did while on the moon

D. How long Shepard's first flight to space lasted

13. **Optional Writing Prompt: You've read two texts about the early space program and astronauts who were part of the missions. Some people argue that early space travel was too expensive and we did not learn enough from it. Write an opinion essay arguing that there are actually many benefits to early space travel. Be sure to use details from both texts as you write the opinion.**

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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Regular practice with complex texts is necessary to prepare students for college and career readiness, as outlined in Reading Standard 10. The articles for this mini-assessment have been placed at grade 3, 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 one[1] 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

	Quantitative Measure #1	**Quantitative Measure #2**
"What Was Project Mercury?" (data circled in orange)	FK: 5.8	ATOS: 5.6
"Who was Alan Shepard?" (data circled in blue)	FK: 4.7	ATOS: 3.4

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 informational texts, it is sometimes true that the quantitative measures indicate grade bands that a bit higher than one would expect due to proper nouns. In these rare cases, qualitative reviews will show the text really belongs in a lower grade band.*

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

Figure 1: Updated Text Complexity Grade Bands and Associated Ranges from Multiple Measures[7]

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

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[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 Text 1: "What Was Project Mercury?"

Category	Notes and comments on text, support for placement in this band	Where to place within the band?				
		Too low	early to mid-2	mid-2 to low 3	mid to high 3	**NOT suited to band**
Structure: (both story structure or form of piece)	The structure of this text is question/answer, but the author also uses chronological order. While the article explains Project Mercury, it also explains the spacecraft used for launches, the first astronauts and their accomplishments, how NASA honored the safety of the first astronauts, and why the project was so important to the space program. The section headings will help students navigate the question and answer structure.			↓		
Language Clarity and Conventions (including vocabulary load)	Most of the vocabulary in the passage will be readily accessible for students, and more challenging words like "orbit" and "launch" are surrounded by context. However, there are many proper nouns in this text, which students may have difficulty tracking. The sentences are straightforward and mostly simple.				↓	
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)	Although the title implies that the main purpose is simply to explain Project Mercury, the author actually wants students to understand who the astronauts were, the design and power of the rockets (and risks associated, clearly, since safety is mentioned several times), and the overall benefits of the successful missions.				↓	
Overall placement Grade 3	**Justification: Although the language may be challenging because of the numerous proper nouns, and the purpose goes beyond what is implied by the title, this text should be accessible to the average 3rd grade student.**				↓	

Qualitative Analysis of Text 2: "Who Was Alan Shepard?"

Category	Notes and comments on text, support for placement in this band	Where to place within the band?				
		Too low	early to mid-2	mid-2 to low 3	Mid to high 3	NOT suited to band
Structure: (both story structure or form of piece)	The structure of this text is chronological, but the author also uses question/answer to divide the major events in Shepard's life. The article answers "Who is Alan Shepard?" by first discussing Shepard's early life, then his first and second spaceflights, and finally what his life was like after his space flights.		↓			
Language Clarity and Conventions (including vocabulary load)	The language used in this excerpt is mostly on grade level, which helps make the text accessible for students. The sentences are straightforward and mostly simple.		↓			
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)	The single purpose of the text is explained by the title: The author's purpose is to tell readers about Alan Shepard's life.			↓		
Overall placement Grade 3	**Justification: The chronological structure, on grade-level vocabulary, lack of demand for prior knowledge, and singular purpose of this text make it appropriate for grade 3 students.**			↓		

Question Annotation: Correct Answers and Distractor Rationales

Question Number	Correct Answer(s)	Standards	Rationales for Answer Options
1, Part A	**D**	**RI.3.4, RI.3.1**	**A.** In Text 1, "launched" does not mean "tried a small experiment." Instead, the word is used to introduce the idea of sending astronauts to space via powerful rockets. **B.** Although when a person "launches" a project, it means he or she is "beginning something new," in Text 1 the word is used to introduce the idea of sending astronauts to space via powerful rockets. **C.** Although the astronauts did need to "push bravely forward" as they worked in the new space program, the word "launched" in Text 1 is used to introduce the idea of sending astronauts to space via powerful rockets. **D.** This is the correct answer. The word "launched" in Text 1 is used to introduce the idea of sending, or "launching," "the first Americans into space" on powerful rockets.
1, Part B	**A**		**A.** This is the correct answer. "Two types of rockets" emphasizes the idea of power in that Text 1 explains the rockets were "missiles" and went "very fast" as they were "launched" into space. **B.** Although one of the "first things NASA did" as an organization was to "launch" the astronauts into space, those words do not help the reader understand the meaning of "launched" as used in Text 1, as they speak only to the order of events. **C.** Although one of the "launched" spacecraft took a "15-minute flight," those words do not help the reader understand the meaning of "launched" as used in Text 1, as they speak only to how long the mission lasted. **D.** Although NASA "made the rockets safer" by practicing launches, those words do not help the reader understand the meaning of "launched" as used in Text 1, as they speak to safety measures rather than power of the launches.

Question Number	Correct Answer(s)	Standards	Rationales for Answer Options
2, Part A	A	RI.3.3, RI.3.5, RI.3.1	**A.** This is the correct answer. Text 1 says that "Together, Mercury and Gemini prepared NASA for the Apollo program. During Apollo, NASA landed human beings on the moon for the first time," showing that the information learned from Mercury helped astronauts be prepared for the missions to the moon. **B.** Although Project Mercury helped the astronauts understand how to survive space travel, the project did not expose them to lunar landings so it did not lead to understanding about conditions on the moon that would allow them to explore safely. **C.** Although Deke Slayton was selected to be one of the first seven U.S. astronauts and sickness prevented him from launching, the Apollo program was not created to make up for that lost opportunity. **D.** Although there were some animals on test flights during Project Mercury, humans were also part of the program. Further, Mercury was not solely created as a series of test flights: the astronauts had specific missions to accomplish.
2, Part B	D		**A.** "What Spacecraft Was Used for Project Mercury?" focuses on the design of the spacecraft used for the program rather than how the project later led to people traveling to the moon. **B.** "Who Were the Mercury Astronauts?" focuses on the seven astronauts chosen for Project Mercury and their various accomplishments. It does not explain the relationship between Project Mercury and the fact that humans eventually walked on the moon. **C.** "How Did NASA Make Sure Mercury Was Safe?" focuses on test flights early in the mission before astronauts were allowed to travel to space. Although those test missions led to safer space travel, in "Why Was Project Mercury Important?," Text 1 explicitly states that Mercury was important because knowledge gained during the program led to astronauts being prepared to land on the moon the first time. **D.** This is the correct answer. "Why Was Project Mercury Important?" explains the relationship between Project Mercury and the eventual moon landing: "Together, Mercury and Gemini prepared NASA for the Apollo program. During Apollo, NASA landed human beings on the moon for the first time."

Question Number	Correct Answer(s)	Standards	Rationales for Answer Options
3	John Glenn Scott Carpenter Gus Grissom Alan Shepard Deke Slayton Gordon Cooper Alan Shepard Wally Schirra	RI.3.2, RI.3.1	John Glenn - First American to orbit Earth: The text states that, "The third person to fly was John Glenn. In 1962, he was the first American to orbit Earth." Scott Carpenter – Second American to orbit Earth: The text states that, "The second American to orbit Earth was Scott Carpenter." Gus Grissom – Flew the second mission to space: The text states that, "Gus Grissom was the second astronaut to fly in Project Mercury." Alan Shepard – First American to travel to space: The text states that, "He was the first American in space." Deke Slayton – Flew a later mission in 1975: The text states that, "He flew into space in 1975 on a different mission." Gordon Cooper – Flew the last Mercury mission: The text states that, "Gordon Cooper flew on the last Mercury mission." Alan Shepard – Walked on the moon: The text states that, "Shepard later walked on the moon during the Apollo 14 mission." Wally Schirra – The third Project Mercury astronaut to orbit Earth: The text states that, "The second American to orbit Earth was Scott Carpenter. He flew on Aurora 7. Wally Schirra (Shuh-RAH) was next, on Sigma 7."
4	B	RI.3.5, RI.3.1	A. "What Spacecraft Was Used for Project Mercury?" focuses on the design of the spacecraft used for the program rather than when NASA started Project Mercury. B. This is the correct answer. "Who Were the Mercury Astronauts?" focuses on the seven astronauts chosen for Project Mercury and their various accomplishments, explaining that they were chosen almost immediately after NASA was created: "NASA chose seven astronauts for Project Mercury in 1959. It was one of the first things NASA did." C. "How Did NASA Make Sure Mercury Was Safe?" focuses on test flights early in the mission before astronauts were allowed to travel to space. Although those test flights came early in the project, the specific mention of 1959 in the previous section provides more information about when NASA started Project Mercury. D. "Why Was Project Mercury Important?" explains the many benefits of Project Mercury, including the relationship between Project Mercury and the eventual moon landing. It speaks to the results of the project rather than when it started.

Question Number	Correct Answer(s)	Standards	Rationales for Answer Options
5	C	RI.3.8, RI.3.1	**A.** Although the Romans worshipped a god named Mercury, the text does not say they were interested in space travel. Additionally, the building of missiles for the military was not intended to lead to space travel. **B.** Although missiles were fast, the military did not get their design ideas from the name of a Roman god. **C.** This is the correct answer. Missiles are fast, which is why they were used to launch spacecraft. And Project Mercury was named after a Roman god who was very fast, further developing the idea that rockets were meant to get astronauts to space quickly and powerfully. **D.** Although the Romans had a god named Mercury, the text does not imply they were the first to think about space travel.
6	D, F	RI.3.8, RI.3.1	**A.** Although staying in one's seat would likely keep an astronaut safe, the sentence is not used to develop the idea that rockets needed to be tested. **B.** Although the first rocket in space was the seventh one made, showing that others were tested prior to the first successful launch into space, the sentence does not explain why it was important to test the rockets. **C.** Although there was a 15-minute flight, it was not a test flight but rather an actual launch with an astronaut. **D.** This is a correct answer. The Mercury capsule on the first Atlas rocket exploded, showing space travel could be dangerous. Therefore, the rockets needed to be tested before humans could safely use them for space travel. **E.** Although animals were used during the tests of the rockets, this sentence does not explain why they were an important part of testing, or why testing the rockets was important. **F.** This is a correct answer. Although the animals made it safely back to Earth, this sentence does not explain why it was important to test the rockets before humans could use them for space travel.
7	B	RI.3.2, RI.3.1	**A.** Although there were seven human astronauts involved in Project Mercury, and each man named his own spacecraft, that is not the main idea of Text 1. **B.** This is the correct answer. Because of the astronauts involved in the first space program, Project Mercury, much was learned about space and space travel. **C.** Although it is likely that the first astronauts had a dangerous job, that danger was not the main idea of Text 1. **D.** Although animals were used to test the first rockets, this is a detail that supports the main idea that Project Mercury was a learning experience for NASA.

Question Number	Correct Answer(s)	Standards	Rationales for Answer Options
8, Part A	C	RI.3.4, RI.3.1	**A.** Although a person, to disprove a previous belief, might study a subject while exploring, the word "exploration" in Text 2 is not used in that manner. There is no mention of disproving prior beliefs. **B.** Although research most likely happens during "exploration," exploration is not meant to prepare a person to speak about a topic. **C.** This is the correct answer. "Exploration" is the act of going to an unfamiliar area to make new discoveries or learn more about it. **D.** Although sometimes teams of experts go on an "exploration," leading the team isn't the same as exploring, or going to a new area to learn new things.
8, Part B	B		**A.** This sentence was included in Text 2 to explain Shepard's role during a space mission and does not show him actually exploring. **B.** This is the correct answer. When Shepard and Mitchell went for moonwalks, few had ever been on the moon. Therefore, they were "exploring" a new and unfamiliar area to learn more about it. **C.** This sentence tells what Shepard did after he finished exploring space. It does not show him participating in "exploration." **D.** This sentence also explains what Shepard did after he finished exploring space. It does not show him participating in "exploration."
9	A	RI.3.5, RI.3.1	**A.** This is the correct answer. "What Was Shepard's Early Life Like?" describes what happened in Shepard's life before he became an astronaut and explains what prepared him for being able to fly to space. **B.** "What Happened on Alan Shepard's First Spaceflight?" focuses on the first time Shepard went to space, but the section does not explain what events led to him becoming an astronaut. **C.** "What Happened on Alan Shepard's Second Spaceflight?" focuses on the second time Shepard went to space, but the section does not explain what events led to him becoming an astronaut. **D.** "What Happened After Shepard's Second Spaceflight?" explains what life was like after Shepard had finished all of his missions to space, but the section does not explain what events led to him becoming an astronaut.

Question Number	Correct Answer(s)	Standards	Rationales for Answer Options
10	B	RI.3.7, RI.3.1	**A.** Although the photograph shows the complete spacecraft, it does not indicate where the astronauts sat during each mission. **B.** This is the correct answer. Text 2 describes the Freedom 7 as launching on a Redstone rocket, and that that particular type of rocket had been designed originally as a missile. The photograph helps the reader understand what rockets looked like during the early days of the space program. **C.** The photograph shows the rocket launching, not landing. **D.** The photograph does not provide details about whether Shepard's mission was a success.
11, Part A	C	RI.3.2, RI.3.1	**A.** Although it is likely that Shepard's work on the moon led to a better understanding of gravity, that is not a main idea of Text 2. **B.** Although it is likely that Shepard had to be brave as a soldier during the war, the main idea of the text isn't how this bravery played out during his time as an astronaut. **C.** This is the correct answer. Text 2 explains both of Shepard's successful missions to space and then discusses how he continued to contribute to the space program in other ways after his space missions had been completed. **D.** Although Shepard did complete two missions to space, he made many other contributions as well when he worked at NASA later. Those contributions are important to the main idea of the text: Shepard had a long and successful career in the space program.
11, Part B	D		**A.** These two sentences only tell about part of Shepard's accomplished career and do not develop the main idea as well as option D, which speaks to not only his missions in space but his life after those missions were completed. **B.** These two sentences provide information about Shepard's early life rather than establishing the main idea that he had a long and successful career in the space program. **C.** These two sentences provide information about one experiment Shepard did while walking on the moon. It does not provide support for the idea that his career in the space program was long and successful. **D.** This is the correct answer. These two sentences mention both Shepard's successful career as an astronaut as well as how he continued to help the space program after those missions were complete.

Question Number	Correct Answer(s)	Standards	Rationales for Answer Options
12	C	RI.3.9, RI.3.1	**A.** Both texts provide the same level of detail about what spacecraft Shepard flew as part of the Mercury Project. **B.** Both texts clearly state Shepard was the first man in space. Text 1 rather than Text 2 provides information about animals traveling to space before Shepard. **C.** This is the correct answer. Text 1 only mentions that Shepard "later walked on the moon," but Text 2 describes some of his actions taken during the walk (e.g., collecting moon rocks, hitting golf balls). **D.** Both texts mention that Shepard's first flight lasted about 15 minutes.

Question Number	Correct Answer(s)	Standards	Rationales for Answer Options
13	See right column.	W.3.4, W.3.1, RI.3.9, RI.3.1, L.3.3, L.3.2, L.3.1	A top-score response may include the following details: Text 1: • NASA learned much about improving spacecraft. Test flights "let NASA find and fix problems." For example, the first Atlas rocket exploded, and the first Mercury-Redstone launch didn't lift off. "NASA made the rockets safer." Monkeys and chimps were also used to make space travel safer. (paragraph 12) Also, in paragraph 15, we learn that because of the Mercury program and the lessons learned, the Gemini, a later spacecraft, had "room for two astronauts." • In paragraph 14, the article states "NASA learned how to put people in orbit." "It learned how people could live and work in space." "It learned how to fly a spacecraft." All of these lessons were then used in "later space projects." • Without the lessons learned from early missions like Mercury and Gemini, we could not have landed on the moon during Apollo missions. (paragraph 15) Text 2: • NASA learned humans could survive in space when Alan Shepard flew "116 miles high" and "came back down." (paragraph 3) • On Apollo 14, Shepard and Edgar Mitchell "collected more than 100 pounds of moon rocks" to be studied. (paragraph 5) We know that those rocks would be returned to Earth to be studied. • Shepard and Mitchell did science experiments while on the moon's surface. (paragraph 5) • They also did an experiment about the moon's gravity when Shepard hit a golf ball. (paragraph 5) • Shepard used his knowledge to later work as the head of the Astronaut office, which helped later space travelers. (paragraph 6) • Shepard used his knowledge to support space exploration even after he left NASA. (paragraph 5)

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