

Grade 9 Literature Mini-Assessment “Departure” by Sherwood Anderson

This grade 9 mini-assessment is based on the short story “Departure” by Sherwood Anderson. This text is considered to be worthy of students’ time to read and also meets the expectations for text complexity at grade 9. Assessments aligned to the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) will employ quality, complex texts such as this one.

Questions aligned to the CCSS should be worthy of students’ time to answer and therefore do not focus on minor points of the text. 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 five selected-response questions and one paper/pencil equivalent of technology enhanced items that address the Reading Standards listed below. There is also one constructed response item that assesses Reading, Writing, and Language standards.

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

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

The questions align to the following standards:

RL.9-10.1	Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.
RL.9-10.2	Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze in detail its development over the course of the text, including how it emerges and is shaped and refined by specific details; provide an objective summary of the text.
RL.9-10.3	Analyze how complex characters (e.g., those with multiple or conflicting motivations) develop over the course of a text, interact with other characters, and advance the plot or develop the theme.
RL.9-10.4	Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the cumulative impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone (e.g., how the language evokes a sense of time and place how it sets a formal or informal tone.)
RL.9-10.5	Analyze how an author’s choices concerning how to structure a text, order events within it (e.g., parallel plots), and manipulate time (e.g., pacing, flashbacks) create such effects as mystery, tension, or surprise.

W.9-10.2	Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas, concepts, and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.
W.9-10.4	Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.
W.9-10.9	Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.
L.9-10.1	Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking.
L.9-10.2	Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling when writing.
L.9-10.3	Apply knowledge of language to understand how language functions in different contexts, to make effective choices for meaning or style, and to comprehend more fully when 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 9 Mini-Assessment – “Departure”

Today you will read a short story called “Departure” by Sherwood Anderson. You will then answer several questions based on the text. 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 and change your answer to Part A if you want to.

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.

“Departu re”

by Sherwood
Anderson

- 1 Young George Willard got out of bed at four in the morning. It was April and the young tree leaves were just coming out of their buds. The trees along the residence streets in Winesburg are maple and the seeds are winged. When the wind blows they whirl crazily about, filling the air and making a carpet underfoot.
- 2 George came downstairs into the hotel office carrying a brown leather bag. His trunk was packed for departure. Since two o’clock he had been awake thinking of the journey he was about to take and wondering what he would find at the end of his journey. The boy who slept in the hotel office lay on a cot by the door. His mouth was open and he snored lustily. George crept past the cot and went out into the silent deserted main street. The east was pink with the dawn and long streaks of light climbed into the sky where a few stars still shone.
- 3 Beyond the last house on Trunion Pike in Winesburg, there is a great stretch of open fields.
The fields are owned by farmers who live in town and drive homeward at evening along Trunion Pike in light creaking wagons. In the fields are planted berries and small fruits. In the late afternoon in the hot summers when the road and the fields are covered with dust, a smoky haze lies over the great flat basin of land. To look across it is like looking out across the sea. In the spring when the land is green the effect is somewhat different. The land becomes a wide green billiard table on which tiny human insects toil up and down.
- 4 All through his boyhood and young manhood, George Willard had been in the habit of walking on Trunion Pike. He had been in the midst of the great open place on winter nights when it was covered with snow and only the moon looked down at him; he had

been there in the fall when bleak winds blew and on summer evenings when the air vibrated with the song of insects. On the April morning he wanted to go there again, to walk again in the silence. He did walk to where the road dipped down by a little stream two miles from town and then turned and walked silently back again. When he got to Main Street clerks were sweeping the sidewalks before the stores. "Hey, you George. How does it feel to be going away?" they asked.

- 5 The westbound train leaves Winesburg at seven forty-five in the morning. Tom Little is conductor. His train runs from Cleveland to where it connects with a great trunk line railroad with terminals in Chicago and New York. Tom has what in railroad circles is called an "easy run." Every evening he returns to his family. In the fall and spring he spends his Sundays fishing in Lake Erie. He has a round red face and small blue eyes. He knows the people in the towns along his railroad better than a city man knows the people who live in his apartment building.
- 6 George came down the little incline from the New Willard House at seven o'clock. Tom Willard carried his bag. The son had become taller than the father.
- 7 On the station platform everyone shook the young man's hand. More than a dozen people waited about. Then they talked of their own affairs. Even Will Henderson, who was lazy and often slept until nine, had got out of bed. George was embarrassed. Gertrude Wilmot, a tall thin woman of fifty who worked in the Winesburg post office, came along the station platform. She had never before paid any attention to George. Now she stopped and put out her hand. In two words she voiced what everyone felt. "Good luck," she said sharply and then turning went on her way.
- 8 When the train came into the station George felt relieved. He scampered hurriedly aboard. Helen White came running along Main Street hoping to have a parting word with him, but he had found a seat and did not see her. When the train started Tom Little punched his ticket, grinned and, although he knew George well and knew on what adventure he was just setting out, made no comment. Tom had seen a thousand George Willards go out of their towns to the city. It was a commonplace enough incident with him. In the car there was a man who had just invited Tom to go on a fishing trip to Sandusky Bay. He wanted to accept the invitation and talk over details.
- 9 George glanced up and down the car to be sure no one was looking, then took out his pocketbook and counted his money. His mind was occupied with a desire not to appear green. Almost the last words his father had said to him concerned the matter of his behavior when he got to the city. "Be a sharp one," Tom Willard had said. "Keep your eyes on your money. Be awake. That's the ticket. Don't let anyone think you're a greenhorn."
- 10 After George counted his money he looked out of the window and was surprised to see that the train was still in Winesburg.
- 11 The young man, going out of his town to meet the adventure of life, began to think but he did not think of anything very big or dramatic.

- 12 He thought of little things—Turk Smollet wheeling boards through the main street of his town in the morning, Butch Wheeler, the lamp lighter of Winesburg, hurrying through the streets on a summer evening and holding a torch in his hand, Helen White standing by a window in the Winesburg post office and putting a stamp on an envelope.
- 13 The young man’s mind was carried away by his growing passion for dreams. One looking at him would not have thought him particularly sharp. With the recollection of little things occupying his mind, he closed his eyes and leaned back in the car seat. He stayed that way for a long time and when he aroused himself and again looked out of the car window, the town of Winesburg had disappeared and his life there had become but a background on which to paint the dreams of his manhood.

PUBLIC DOMAIN

QUESTIONS:

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

Part A: Early in the morning he plans to leave, how does George feel about his upcoming departure?

- A. He is confident about his future success.
- B. He is regretting the decision to leave.
- C. He is nervous about leaving.
- D. He is thrilled about his future plans.

Part B: Which sentence from the passage provides the best evidence to support the answer in Part A?

- A. "Young George Willard got out of bed at four in the morning."
- B. "George came downstairs into the hotel office carrying a brown leather bag."
- C. "Since two o'clock he had been awake thinking of the journey he was about to take and wondering what he would find at the end of his journey."
- D. "George crept past the cot and went out into the silent deserted main street."

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

Part A: What is the significance of the fact that townspeople have come to the train station to see George off?

- A. It emphasizes that many Winesburg residents think George will find success in the city.
- B. It suggests that to most people of Winesburg, the chance to witness someone leaving is unusual.
- C. It implies that George will stay in touch with those he leaves behind in Winesburg.
- D. It shows that Winesburg residents disapprove of George's choice.

Part B: Based on the passage, which character has a different perspective on George's departure?

- A. Tom Little, the train conductor who is familiar with the many small towns along his route
- B. Gertrude Wilmot, who works at the local post office handling the mail of the small town
- C. Tom Willard, the father who gives advice on how to handle oneself once in the city
- D. Will Henderson, the resident who appears lazy and unmotivated

3. Which three quotations from the passage best show that the townspeople will continue with their old lives after George leaves to pursue his new life?

- A. "Beyond the last house on Trunion Pike in Winesburg, there is a great stretch of open fields."
- B. "Tom Willard carried his bag. The son had become taller than the father."
- C. "On the station platform everyone shook the young man's hand. More than a dozen people waited about. Then they talked of their own affairs."
- D. "In two words she voiced what everyone felt. 'Good luck,' she said sharply and then turning went on her way."
- E. "Helen White came running along Main Street hoping to have a parting word with him, but he had found a seat and did not see her."
- F. "In the car there was a man who had just invited Tom to go on a fishing trip to Sandusky Bay. He wanted to accept the invitation and talk over details."
- G. "After George counted his money he looked out of the window and was surprised to see that the train was still in Winesburg."

4. Follow these directions to complete the chart.

From the list below, write the qualities that best describe the character of George Willard as he is presented in the passage. Then, support each of your choices by paraphrasing a detail from the passage.

George Willard's Qualities	Supporting Detail from Passage

Possible qualities

- Clever
- Ambitious
- Carefree
- Inexperienced
- Emotional
- Artistic
- Solitary

- 5. Which two sentences from the passage best develop a theme of a new beginning?**
- A. "It was April and the young tree leaves were just coming out of their buds."
 - B. "The boy who slept in the hotel office lay on a cot by the door. His mouth was open and he snored lustily."
 - C. "George crept past the cot and went out into the silent deserted main street."
 - D. "The east was pink with the dawn and long streaks of light climbed into the sky where a few stars still shone."
 - E. "The fields are owned by farmers who live in town and drive homeward at evening along Trunion Pike in light creaking wagons."
 - F. "In the late afternoon in the hot summers when the road and the fields are covered with dust, a smoky haze lies over the great flat basin of land."
- 6. Which statement below best describes how the author's choices regarding time and structure help advance a theme of the story?**
- A. The author contrasts George's sociable nature to Winesburg's unfriendliness to suggest that George will be happier elsewhere.
 - B. The author highlights the tension between George and his father by having George experience flashbacks about Winesburg while he rests on the train.
 - C. The author focuses on the many pleasant things about Winesburg in order to emphasize George's fear about leaving his home.
 - D. The author adopts a slow pace with few notable events in order to illuminate how quiet life is for George in a town like Winesburg.

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 text for this mini-assessment has been placed at grade 9, and the process used to determine this grade level placement is described below. “Appendix A of the Common Core” and the “Supplement to Appendix A: New Research on Text Complexity” lay out a research-based process for selecting complex texts.

1. Place a text or excerpt within a **grade band** based on at least 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		
“Departure”	Quantitative Measure #1	Quantitative Measure #2
	Lexile: 1060	DRP: 64

After gathering the quantitative measures, the next step is to place the quantitative scores in the Conversion Table found in the Supplement to Appendix A (www.corestandards.org/resources) and determine the **grade band** of the text.

Figure 1 reproduces the conversion table from the Supplement to Appendix A, showing how the initial results from the Lexile and the Degrees of Reading Power 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 ^s	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

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	“Departure”	Where to place within the band?					
Category	Notes and comments on text, support for placement in this band	Too Low	Early – mid 9	Mid-end 9	Early – mid 10	End 10	NOT suited to band
Structure (both story structure or form of piece)	The third-person narration is simple and conventional, with one shift to Tom Little’s perspective in the middle of the text. The order of events is chronological, though the narrator does refer to George’s childhood walks and his recollections of various townspeople.						
Language Clarity and Conventions	The story includes many complex sentences and much purposeful imagery that ties to the theme. There are many instances of figurative language, which belie the familiar vocabulary. For example, Tom Little, who has an “easy run” represents the simple, predictable lives of the townspeople. Some archaic vocabulary may be challenging to students (e.g., greenhorn, pocketbook, lamp lighter), but strong context is provided.						
Knowledge Demands (life, content, cultural/literary)	The text explores multiple themes that are likely to be understood by the average reader. Some prior knowledge about trains may be helpful, but it is not required for comprehension. Students in this grade band should be familiar with the anxiety a new adventure can cause, a feeling also established and explored throughout the text.						
Levels of Meaning (chiefly literary)/ Purpose (chiefly informational)	There are multiple themes in this text, including: new beginnings are both exciting and frightening; young people must face the world on their own; and the quiet familiarity of hometowns is magnified when contrasted with the strange unknown of a new city. Due to its multiple themes, this text is considered complex.						
Overall placement: Grade 9	The multiple themes, figurative language, and complex sentence structure make this text most appropriate for grade 9, most likely middle of the school year.						

Question Annotations: Correct Answer and Distractor Rationales

Question Number	Correct Answer(s)	Standards	Rationales for Answer Options
1 Part A	C	RL.9-10.3, RL.9-10.1	<p>A. Although at the end of the story George demonstrates a “growing passion for dreams,” the fact that he begins the day by lying awake indicates nervousness, not confidence.</p> <p>B. Although George walks Trunion Pike and thinks of his neighbors the morning he leaves Winesburg, these actions do not indicate any regret over leaving.</p> <p>C. This is the correct response. “Since two o’clock he had been awake thinking of the journey he was about to take . . .” shows that George is nervous about leaving Winesburg. Additionally, in paragraph 4, George seeks the comforts of old habits to calm him by walking down the familiar Trunion Pike.</p> <p>D. Although George has his trunk packed in advance, that action shows a sense of preparedness rather than thrilled feeling of happiness.</p>
1 Part B	C		<p>A. This sentence identifies what time George got out of bed, rather than suggesting his feelings about leaving Winesburg.</p> <p>B. This sentence shows George’s readiness for the journey but does not suggest how he feels about it.</p> <p>C. This is the correct answer. This sentence explains that George had been awake since early morning, considering his upcoming journey.</p> <p>D. This sentence describes some of George’s actions prior to his departure but provides little evidence of his feelings.</p>

Question Number	Correct Answer(s)	Standards	Rationales for Answer Options
2 Part A	B	RL.9-10.3, RL.9-10.1	<p>A. Although Winesburg residents offer George advice and well wishes, none estimate how successful he will be in the city.</p> <p>B. This is the correct answer. More than a dozen people, even someone who was not normally awake at that time, came to see George depart, suggesting that the occasion to witness a departure is unusual in their town.</p> <p>C. Although George thinks about some townspeople as he travels to the city, there is no evidence to suggest that he will keep in contact with anyone.</p> <p>D. Winesburg residents offer George advice and good wishes as he departs, not their disapproval.</p>
2 Part B	A		<p>A. This is the correct answer. Tom Little has seen “a thousand George Willards go out of their towns to the city,” so George’s departure is nothing new to the train conductor.</p> <p>B. Gertrude Wilmot goes to the train station to see George off, suggesting that a departure is an unusual occurrence in Winesburg.</p> <p>C. Tom Willard goes to the train station to see his son off and advise his son as George departs on momentous journey from Winesburg.</p> <p>D. Will Henderson awakes early to see George off, suggesting that it is an unusual occurrence in Winesburg.</p>
3	C, D, F	RL.9-10.3, RL.9-10.1	<p>A. This statement describes part of the setting, rather than focusing on how the townspeople will react to George’s departure.</p> <p>B. Although this sentence explains how George relates to his father, it does not explain how the father will behave after George’s departure.</p> <p>C. This is a correct answer. This sentence demonstrates how townspeople resume their business after saying goodbye to George.</p> <p>D. This is a correct answer. This sentence provides a specific example of a resident who continued with her life after wishing George well.</p> <p>E. Although this sentence describes one resident who came to see George off, it does not explain how she behaves after his departure.</p> <p>F. This is a correct response. Even while George is departing Winesburg, Tom Little is planning a fishing trip.</p> <p>G. This sentence focuses on George and his actions, not the townspeople.</p>

Question Number	Correct Answer(s)	Standards	Rationales for Answer Options		
4	See column on the right for correct answers.	RL.9-10.3, RL.9-10.1	George Willard’s Qualities	Rationale	Supporting Detail from Passage
			Solitary	George spends the majority of the story by himself.	likes to walk by himself OR feels embarrassed by crowd on platform OR sits alone on train
			Ambitious	George has aspirations and does something remarkable by leaving Winesburg and going to the city.	chooses to leave town OR has no regrets over leaving OR feels he is beginning “the adventure of life”
			Inexperienced	George’s father warns him against appearing “green” and George is concerned about this idea as he leaves.	worries about looking “green” in the city
			<p>“Clever” is an incorrect answer, as George is not portrayed as particularly smart or resourceful.</p> <p>“Carefree” is an incorrect answer, as George is concerned about appearing “green” in the city.</p> <p>“Emotional” is an incorrect answer, as although George says goodbye to his father and neighbors, he does not exhibit strong emotions at a significant event.</p> <p>“Artistic” is an incorrect answer; although George is described as having a “growing passion for dreams,” there is no evidence to suggest that he is artistic.</p>		

Question Number	Correct Answer(s)	Standards	Rationales for Answer Options
5	A, D	RL.9-10.2, RL.9-10.4, RL.9-10.1	<p>A. This is a correct answer. The theme of a new beginning is developed through the mention of April and newly budding leaves.</p> <p>B. This sentence focuses on a townspeople, whose life does not change, rather than a new beginning.</p> <p>C. Although this sentence helps develop the idea of solitude that is repeated throughout the passage, it does not develop the theme of a new beginning.</p> <p>D. This is a correct answer. The theme of a new beginning is developed through the dawning of a new day.</p> <p>E. This sentence focuses on Winesburg farmers, whose lives do not change, rather than a new beginning.</p> <p>F. This sentence focuses on the oppression of summer rather than the newness of spring.</p>
6	D	RL.9-10.5, RL.9-10.1	<p>A. Rather than sociable, George is solitary, and Winesburg residents are cordial, if not overly friendly.</p> <p>B. Although George recounts various townspeople as he sits on the train, they do not relate to George's relationship with his father, nor do the father and son have a particularly tense relationship.</p> <p>C. Although George is nervous about leaving, he is not fearful. The author includes details about pleasant things in the town to help establish the setting rather than to characterize George as fearful.</p> <p>D. This is the correct answer. The author establishes the slow pace by capturing George's meandering down Trunion Pike, the overall lack of hurriedness of the citizens and how attentive they are to details, and by showing that the citizens have time to see George off. This slow pace helps build the theme by illustrating why George is seeking a new beginning.</p>

Question Number	Correct Answer(s)	Standards	Rationales for Answer Options
7 (Optional writing prompt)	See bullets for top-score response	W.9-10.2, W.9-10.4, W.9-10.9 RL.9-10.2, RL.9-10.1, L.9-10.1, L.9-10.2 L.9-10.3	<p>A good student response will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The author establishes that Winesburg is a typical small town by describing its landscape and characterizing its people. • The town is rural and small, everyone knows everyone, and life doesn't change much from year to year. • In paragraphs 1–4, the author uses descriptive nature imagery <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The town is pretty and peaceful—trees, stars, fields, the changing seasons ○ The town depends on farming • The author establishes that the town has a timeless feel due to its daily and seasonal routines <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ the farmers' (paragraph 3) ○ George's walks (paragraph 4) ○ Tom Little's (paragraph 5) ○ the people George thinks of in paragraph 12 • Mainly in paragraph 7, the author characterizes townspeople as knowing everyone else's business <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ the people in paragraph 7 come to see George off even if they're not close to him ○ they're either nosy or hungry for excitement of some kind ○ the clerks in paragraph 4 know George is leaving ○ Tom Little, the conductor, knows all about George • Although the author never says anything negative about Winesburg, George's decision to leave is understandable <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ he's most likely not a farmer ○ the jobs mentioned in the passage are not exciting—being a store clerk, working for post office, lighting lamps, etc. ○ he's a young man with dreams (paragraph 13); he likely craves opportunity and freedom, not routine.

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

