Grade 8 Literature Mini-Assessment
"Dulce et Decorum Est" by Wilfred Owen

This grade 8 mini-assessment is based on the poem "Dulce et Decorum Est" by Wilfred Owen. This text is considered to be worthy of students' time to read and also meets the expectations for text complexity at grade 8. 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 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 seven selected-response questions or paper/pencil equivalent of technology enhanced items that address the Reading Standards listed below. There is also one constructed response question that addresses Reading, Writing, and Language standards.

We encourage educators to give students the time that they need to read closely and write to the 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.8.1	Cite the textual evidence that most strongly supports an analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.
RL.8.2	Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text, including its relationship to the characters, setting, and plot; provide an objective summary of the text.
RL.8.3	Analyze how particular lines of dialogue or incidents in a story or drama propel the action, reveal aspects of a character, or provoke a decision.
RL.8.4	Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone, including analogies or allusions to other texts.
RL.8.5	Compare and contrast the structure of two or more texts and analyze how the differing structure of each text contributes to its meaning and style.
RL.8.6	Analyze how differences in the points of view of the characters and the audience or reader (e.g., created through the use of dramatic irony) create such effects as suspense or humor.
RL.8.9	Analyze how an author draws on and transforms source material in a specific work (e.g., how Shakespeare treats a theme or topic from Ovid or the Bible or how a later author draws on a play by Shakespeare).

W.8.2	Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas, concepts, and information through the selection, organization, and analysis of relevant content.
W.8.4	Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.
W.8.9	Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.
L.8.1	Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking.
L.8.2.	Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling when writing.
L.8.3	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 8 Mini-Assessment – "Dulce et Decorum Est"

Today you will read the poem "Dulce et Decorum Est" by Wilfred Owen. You will then answer several questions based on the poem. 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 poem and answer the questions. I encourage you to write notes in the margin as you read.

"Dulce et Decorum Est" by Wilfred Owen

Bent double, like old beggars under sacks,
Knock-kneed, coughing like hags, we cursed through sludge,
Till on the haunting flares we turned our backs,
And towards our distant rest began to trudge.
5   Men marched asleep. Many had lost their boots,
But limped on, blood-shod. All went lame, all blind;
Drunk with fatigue; deaf even to the hoots
Of gas-shells dropping softly behind.

Gas! GAS! Quick, boys! - An ecstasy of fumbling
10   Fitting the clumsy helmets just in time,
But someone still was yelling out and stumbling
And floundr'ring like a man in fire or lime. -
Dim through the misty panes and thick green light,
As under a green sea, I saw him drowning.

15   In all my dreams before my helpless sight
He plunges at me, guttering, choking, drowning.

If in some smothering dreams, you too could pace
Behind the wagon that we flung him in,
And watch the white eyes writhing in his face,
20   His hanging face, like a devil's sick of sin,
If you could hear, at every jolt, the blood
Come gargling from the froth-corrupted lungs
Bitter as the cud
Of vile, incurable sores on innocent tongues, -
25   My friend, you would not tell with such high zest
To children ardent for some desperate glory,
The old Lie: *Dulce et decorum est*
Pro patria mori. [1]

Wilfred Owen

[1] Literal translation: It is sweet and right to die for your country.

QUESTIONS

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

   Part A: What do the first four lines of stanza 1 suggest about the current situation of the soldiers?
   - A. They have come to depend upon each other for their continued survival.
   - B. They are depressed because they failed to achieve the day's objectives.
   - C. They have been at war so long that they can barely remember their former lives.
   - D. They are retreating to their camp to escape the fighting.

   Part B: What does stanza 3 show about the soldiers' situation?
   - A. The soldiers are not really able to leave the battle behind.
   - B. The soldiers learn to fend for themselves during a crisis.
   - C. The soldiers are capable of doing what they have to do.
   - D. The soldiers are so weary that their mental state is affected.

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

   Part A: Based on Stanza 1, which words best describe the soldiers?
   - A. Lonely and frightened
   - B. Weak and exhausted
   - C. Angry and resentful
   - D. Sad and regretful

   Part B: Which three phrases from Stanza 1 best support the answer to Part A?
   - A. "Bent double"
   - B. "cursed through sludge"
   - C. "haunting flares"
   - D. "turned our backs"
   - E. "marched asleep"
   - F. "drunk with fatigue"
   - G. "dropping softly behind"

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

   Part A: Circle two adjoining lines of the poem that show where the speaker begins to focus on the present rather than the past.

   Part B: What do these two lines <u>best</u> reveal about the speaker?
   - A. He wishes he had tried harder to help the man who was gassed.
   - B. He has developed new and intense fears because of the war
   - C. He will likely never fully recover from what he endured in the war.
   - D. He sometimes cannot tell the difference between reality and fantasy.

4. **What shift occurs in stanza 4?**
   - A. The timeline advances to after the war to show the effects the experience had on the speaker.
   - B. The speaker introduces a conflicting point of view and then presents an argument to counter it.
   - C. The point of view changes so that the speaker is addressing the reader directly.
   - D. The scene changes from events that actually occurred to events the speaker imagines.

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

Part A: Think about how the three longer stanzas (1, 2, and 4) function in the poem. Then complete the chart by writing in functions from the list below to their proper place on the chart. One function applies to all three stanzas and should appear on the chart three times. The other functions will each appear once.

The Functions of Each Stanza

stanza 1	stanza 2	stanza 4
1)	1)	1)
2)	2)	2)
3)	3)	

Functions

Builds tone by telling horrific details   Introduces the speaker of the poem

Establishes the war scene   States the speaker's view of war

Propels the action of the poem   Characterizes the soldiers as weary

Part B: How do stanzas 1, 2, and 4 work together to develop the theme of the poem?

   A. By detailing both everyday misery and an agonizing death, the poem suggests that enduring the horrors of war is not wonderful or patriotic.

   B. By considering how war affects both individuals and groups of men, the poem suggests that not everyone is fit to fight in battle.

   C. By focusing on an unexpected and sudden event, the poem suggests that there is no good way to prepare for one's own death.

   D. By describing negative things about being a soldier, the poem suggests that war is ineffective in resolving conflicts between nations.

6. **Which statement best summarizes the central idea of this poem?**

    A. It is one's patriotic duty to fight for one's country, regardless of how unpleasant the consequences.

    B. Those who praise war and promote the involvement of young people are promoting a false image of glory.

    C. Engaging in war involves tremendous sacrifice and bravery for the public good.

    D. All possible methods of resolving conflict should be pursued before young people are asked to fight for their country.

7. **In what <u>three</u> ways does this poem challenge or disagree with the idea that to die for your country is a noble thing to do?**

    A. It treats the outcome of a battle as less important than soldiers' experiences.

    B. It shows the pain soldiers feel when society does not appreciate their sacrifices.

    C. It portrays soldiers as essentially powerless.

    D. It suggests that men are forced to become soldiers against their will.

    E. It implies that soldiers who are truly brave do not care about making sacrifices.

    F. It establishes that the ancient Romans were the last true soldiers.

    G. It denies the possibility of soldiers dying with dignity.

Wilfred Owen wrote "Dulce et Decorum Est" as a contrast to the poem below, which was written to spur young men to join the war efforts.

Who's for the Game? by Jessie Pope

Who's for the game, the biggest that's played,

The red crashing game of a fight?

Who'll grip and tackle the job unafraid?

And who thinks he'd rather sit tight?

Who'll toe the line for the signal to 'Go!'?

Who'll give his country a hand?

Who wants a turn to himself in the show?

And who wants a seat in the stand?

Who knows it won't be a picnic – not much-

Yet eagerly shoulders a gun?

Who would much rather come back with a crutch

Than lie low and be out of the fun?

Come along, lads –

But you'll come on all right –

For there's only one course to pursue,

Your country is up to her neck in a fight,

And she's looking and calling for you.

8. **(Optional writing prompt): In "Dulce et Decorum Est" and "Who's for the Game?" each poet presents a strong point of view about war. Write an essay comparing how each poet develops the point of view and what effect each poem is intended to have on the reader. Use textual evidence from both poems to help develop your response. Write your response using the lines on this and the next page.**

   Your response will be scored on how well you:

   - **Demonstrate your understanding of the ideas of the text**
   - **Use evidence from the text to help develop and support your ideas**
   - **Organize your response in a logical manner**
   - **Demonstrate an appropriate writing style through the use of precise word choice and varied sentences**
   - **Use standard conventions for writing**

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

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. Though it spans grade band levels, the poem in this mini-assessment has been placed at grade 8 to ensure students gain practice with complex texts in the upper portion of the grade band. 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 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).

    Note: Given the unconventional punctuation of non-prose texts like poetry, quantitative measures cannot accurately determine the grade level of a text, and so are omitted below. In these cases, texts are placed based on qualitative analysis.

2. Place a text or excerpt at a **grade level** based on a qualitative analysis.

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 Reading Maturity measure were converted to grade bands.
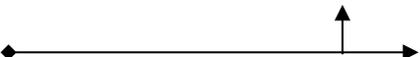
Figure 1: Updated Text Complexity Grade Bands and Associated Ranges from Multiple Measures[7]

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

---

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	"Dulce et Decorum Est"	Where to place within the band?					
Category	Notes and comments on text, support for placement in this band	Too low for grade band	early to mid-6	mid 6 to early 7	mid 7 to early 8	mid to end 8	Too high for grade band
Structure (both story structure or form of piece)	The structural shifts are subtle but should be accessible to middle school students. The point of view shifts from first-person ("we turned our backs") in the first three stanzas to second-person ("My friend, you would not") in the last stanza. There is also a shift in time between the second and third stanzas, from the narrator reliving his past experience as a soldier to his post-war reality.					↑	
Language Clarity and Conventions	The poem contains figurative language ("haunting flares, like a devil's sick of sin") but is written in mostly contemporary, familiar vocabulary. Instances of unconventional syntax, like "And towards our distant rest began to trudge" or spelling ("flound'ring") are challenging, but accessible through context. Overall, the images and phrasing drive the complexity of this text toward the higher end of the range.				↑		
Knowledge Demands (life, content, cultural/literary)	The text should be accessible to all 8th graders, as it describes experiences that are based on common human emotions even though the actual fighting of a war is removed from the experiences of the average student. There is no prior knowledge needed to gain access to the text; students in middle and high school should be familiar with the idea that war is a frightening experience.				↑		
Levels of Meaning (chiefly literary)/ Purpose (chiefly informational)	There are multiple themes in this text, including: Death in war is often dressed as patriotism; the effects of war remain after the battles are fought; and those who never fought in a war do not know the true cost. These multiple themes increase the complexity of the text.				↑		
Overall placement: Grade 8	The multiple themes, use of figurative language, and shifts in time and perspective make this text most appropriate for grade 8, most likely end of year.				↑		

Question Annotations: Correct Answer and Distractor Rationales

Question Number	Correct Answer(s)	Standards	Rationales for Answer Options
1 Part A	**D**	**RL.8.3, RL.8.2, RL.8.1**	A. Although the soldiers are sharing an experience, the first four lines suggest a feeling of retreat rather than survival. B. Although the soldiers are downtrodden and exhausted, there is no evidence to suggest they did not meet their objective. C. The first four lines of the poem focus on the soldiers' current situation rather than their memories. D. This is the correct response. "Turned our backs" on "the haunting flares" indicates that the soldiers are retreating from the battlefield.
1 Part B	**A**		A. This is the correct response. In stanza 3, the events show that even though the soldiers think they are headed for rest and have left the battle behind, they are unable to escape the fighting after all, as the memories haunt their dreams. B. Although the soldiers show evidence of being able to fend for themselves, that evidence is presented in stanza 2 rather than stanza 3. C. Although most of the soldiers are able to react appropriately, this event does not have an effect on their overall situation. D. Although the soldiers are tired and "fumbling," this does not affect their situation.
2 Part A	**B**	**RL.8.4, RL.8.3, RL.8.1**	A. There is a sense of unity, not loneliness, as the soldiers move together and experience the same physical traumas. B. This is the correct response. The soldiers are described as bent in half, coughing, and exhausted. C. Although the soldiers "cursed through sludge," which may signal frustration or anger, the soldiers are repeatedly described as exhausted. D. Although the experience of war is obviously very upsetting, there is no evidence to suggest that the soldiers are sad or regretful.

Question Number	Correct Answer(s)	Standards	Rationales for Answer Options
2 Part B	A, E, F		A. This is a correct response. The soldiers are so weak that they are unable to stand up straight. B. "Cursed through sludge" suggests that the soldiers are angry, rather than weak and exhausted. C. "Haunting flares" describes the battlefield, not the soldiers. D. Although "turned our backs" describes the soldiers, this phrase focuses on their actions, rather than their emotions. E. This is a correct response. "Marched asleep" describes the soldiers' level of exhaustion. F. This is a correct response. "Drunk with fatigue" describes the soldiers' exhaustion and weakness. G. "Dropping softly behind" describes the gas-shells, not the soldiers.
3 Part A	CA = Lines 15-16 (In all my dreams before my helpless sight/He plunges at me, guttering, choking, drowning.)	RL.8.3, RL.8.1	These lines are written in present tense, "He plunges at me," rather than past tense, "I saw him drowning (line 14)."
3 Part B	C		A. "Before my helpless sight" indicates that the speaker knows he was completely helpless in the situation. Therefore, it wasn't lack of effort to assist but rather lack of ability. B. Although "In all my dreams" suggests that the speaker's fear is intense and ongoing, there is no evidence in the poem to suggest that the fear is new. C. This is the correct response. "In all my dreams" indicates that the speaker has been, and will continue to be, haunted by his war experience. D. Evidence in the poem shows that the speaker is able to distinguish reality from dreams.
4	C	RL.8.5, RL.8.1	A. Although Stanza 4 includes the effects of the war on the speaker, these effects are also discussed in Stanza 3. B. The speaker develops and maintains one point of view throughout the poem about the horrors of war. C. This is the correct response. The beginning of Stanza 4,"…you too could pace," begins the speakers' use of second person point of view. D. Although the speaker describes a dream in Stanza 3, there is no suggestion that the speaker is imagining events; he is remembering them.

Question Number	Correct Answer(s)	Standards	Rationales for Answer Options

5 Part A	**See answers and rationales in right-hand column.**	**RL.8.3, RL.8.2, RL.8.1**	Correct answers and textual evidence to support each function:
			
			Stanza 1
			
			1) Builds tone by telling horrific details
			    Evidence: *"coughing like hags"; "many had lost their boots, but limped on, blood-shod"*
			
			2) Establishes the war scene
			    Evidence: *"on the haunting flares we turned our backs"; "the hoots of gas-shells dropping softly behind"*
			
			3) Characterizes the soldiers as weary
			    Evidence: *"bent double"; "men marched asleep"; "drunk with fatigue"*
			
			Stanza 2
			
			1) Builds tone by telling horrific details
			    Evidence: *"flound'ring like a man in fire or lime"; "he plunges at me, guttering, choking, drowning"*
			
			2) Propels the action of the poem
			    Evidence: *"Gas! Gas! Quick, boys"; "I saw him drowning"*
			
			3) Introduces the speaker of the poem
			    Evidence: *"I saw him drowning"; "in all my dreams before my helpless sight/He plunges at me"*
			
			Stanza 4
			
			1) Builds tone by telling horrific details
			    Evidence: *"watch the white eyes writhing in his face"; "the blood come gargling from the froth-corrupted lungs"*
			
			2) States the speaker's view of war
			    Evidence: *"you would not tell with such high zest"; "The old Lie: Dulce et decorum est/Pro patria mori."*

5 Part B	A		A. This is the correct response. The details of the soldiers' daily conditions and the man's death support the theme that "dulce et decorum est pro patria mori" is a lie. B. The poem suggests that war is not worth the human suffering, not that some people are unsuited for it. C. Although Stanza 2 includes an unexpected and sudden event, the poem does not focus on preparing for one's own death. D. Although the poem illustrates negative aspects of being a soldier, it does not focus on resolving conflicts.

Question Number	Correct Answer(s)	Standards	Rationales for Answer Options
6	B	RL.8.2	A. The central idea is that participation in war is not glorious, rather than it is one's patriotic duty to fight. B. This is the correct response. The last line of the poem says that "dulce et decorum est pro patria mori" is a lie. C. Although the poem does detail the sacrifice required by war, it does not suggest that sacrifice is for the public's benefit. D. Although it is possible the speaker would agree with this statement, the central idea is that war should not be glorified.
7	A, C, G	RL.8.9	A. This is a correct response. The majority of the poem focuses on the death of a soldier and the aftermath of war for the speaker, rather than the outcome of the battle. B. Although the poem focuses on soldiers' pain, the pain is caused by warfare, not society's reaction to the solders. C. This is a correct response. The soldiers are described as physically broken and unable to control even their dreams. D. The poem does not explain why the men became soldiers. E. There is no evidence to suggest that the men who are weary from physical and emotional traumas of war are not brave. F. The poem presents the Roman belief about war as a fallacy, not an ideal. G. This is a correct response. The dying soldier is presented as grotesque and helpless, rather than dignified.

Question Number	Correct Answer(s)	Standards	Rationales for Answer Options
8 (Optional Writing Prompt)	**See top-score bullets in the right column.**	**W.8.2, W.8.4, W.8.9, RL.8.6, RL.8.1, L.8.1, L.8.2, L.8.3**	A good student response will include: Pope presents war as a game to be won to entice young men (his intended audience) to join the war effort. • "Who's for the game, the biggest that's played" • "The red crashing game" • "Who wants a turn to himself in the show?" Pope develops this point of view by: • speaking directly to the reader ("Who's for the game; Come along, lads") • presenting two roles for young men: hero and bystander ("Who would much rather come back with a crutch/Than lie low and be out of the fun?") • using rhetorical questions ("Who'll toe the line for the signal to 'Go!'?") • writing in positive generalities ("it won't be a picnic –not much") Owen presents war as a gruesome, never-ending nightmare to illustrate the realities of war. • "All went lame, all blind" • "In all my dreams before my helpless sight/He plunges at me, guttering, choking, drowning" • "The old lie: Dulce et decorum est pro patria mori" Owen develops this point of view by: • presenting specific soldiers ("like old beggars under sacks; the white eyes writing in his face") • describing realistic traumas of battle ("but limped on, blood-shod; flound'ring like a man in fire or lime") • moving from consequences on group, individual, to speaking directly to audience ("we cursed through sludge; But someone still was yelling out and stumbling; If you could hear…")

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:

19

- *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

This mini-assessment can be used as an independent activity or as part of a follow-up to the accompanying sample lesson found on the following link:

http://achievethecore.org/page/23/dulce-et-decorum-est-by-wilfred-owen-detail-pg