

Grade 8 Informational Mini-Assessment

“The Long Night of Little Boats” excerpt

This grade 8 mini-assessment is based on an excerpt from “The Long Night of Little Boats” by Basil Heatter. 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. Because the topic of the text is historic, the mini-assessment will measure both Reading Standards for Informational Text as well as Reading Standards for Literacy in History/Social Studies.

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 six selected-response questions and two paper/pencil equivalent of technology enhanced items that address the Reading Standards listed below.

We encourage educators to give students the time that they need to read closely. 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.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.
RI.8.2	Determine a central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text, including its relationship to supporting ideas; provide an objective summary of the text.
RI.8.3	Analyze how a text makes connections among and distinctions between individuals, ideas, or events (e.g., through comparisons, analogies, or categories).
RI.8.4	Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative, connotative, and technical meanings; analyze the impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone, including analogies or allusions to other texts.
RH.6-8.1	Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources.
RH.6-8.5	Describe how a text presents information (e.g., sequentially, comparatively, causally).
RH.6-8.8	Distinguish among fact, opinion, and reasoned judgment in a text.

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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 8 Mini-Assessment – “The Long Night of Little Boats” excerpt

Today you will read a passage about how British citizens helped rescue British troops during World War II. 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.

The Long Night of the Little Boats

By Basil Heatter, 1970

The following excerpt details events that took place one night in 1940, in the early years of World War II. The British army was trapped at Dunkirk, France, surrounded by Germans and preparing for a battle they had little hope of winning. Then the night took a surprising turn, as ordinary English civilians took part in a plan to rescue thousands of soldiers.

1. They poured out of the rivers and harbors and down toward the coast. Some were frowsy and hung with old automobile tires for fenders, others white and gleaming with polished chromium and flying yacht pennants. There were fishing boats, shrimp catchers, ancient car ferries that had never known the touch of salt water. Some had been built before the Boer War¹. There were Thames fire floats, Belgian drifters, and lifeboats from sunken ships. There were bright blue French fishing boats and stumpy little Dutch schouts. There were paddle steamers and tugs pushing barges, and flatboats with ancient kerosene engines. Large and small, wide and narrow, fast and slow, they moved in a motley flood down to the shore. Some had registered with the navy and were under navy command. Others had simply come by themselves, tubby little crafts used for Sunday picnics on the Thames and laid up for years, somehow gotten underway by elderly gentlemen who had left their armchairs and rocking chairs. Down they came, clogging the estuaries², going off to war.

¹ The First Boer War was fought from 1880-1881; the Second Boer War was from 1899-1902.

² An estuary is where a river meets the sea

- 2 There were bankers and dentists, taxi drivers and yachtsmen, old longshoremen and very young boys, engineers, fishermen, and civil servants. There were fresh- faced young Sea Scouts and old men with white hair blowing in the wind. Some were poor, with not even a raincoat to protect them from weather, and others were owners of great estates. A few had machine guns, some had rifles and old fowling pieces, but most had nothing but their own brave hearts.
- 3 Off they went at sundown, more than a thousand boats in all. It was a miracle that so many had been able to assemble at one place at one time, and even more miraculous that crews had been found for them. But now came the best part of the miracle. The sea, as if obedient to suggestion, lay down flat. Ordinarily the English Channel is one of the roughest places in the world – no place at all for a small boat – but suddenly the wind died and the seas subsided, and the little boats went out into a calm night.
- 4 By the hundreds they poured forth. Coming up behind them, bent on missions of their own, were the warships, destroyers, cruisers, and gunboats, racketing full tilt across toward the coast of France. The moon was not yet up, and in the blackness – for no one dared show a light – the destroyers could not see the little boats, and the little boats could not see the warships until the great gleaming bow waves moving at forty knots were right on top of them. But somehow, for the most part, they avoided each other, and the strange armada moved on.
- 5 The wash thrown out by the big ships was a serious matter for the little boats, and they rocked helplessly in the wake of the warships. It was like being on a black highway with fast-moving traffic and no lights showing. A few were rammed and some were swamped, but still they moved on. Behind them, invisible in the blackness, was England. Ahead, glowing faintly from burning oil tanks and flaming artillery, lay the coast of France. On one of the little boats, the man at the wheel put his arm around the shoulders of his twelve-year-old son and hugged him in silent encouragement. On another boat, a girl dressed in man’s clothes, having thought to fool the inspection officers by sticking an empty pipe in her mouth, now took the pipe out again and stuck it between her teeth to keep them from chattering.
- 6 Suddenly out of the night came dozens of aircraft flares dropped by the German bombers, looking like orange blossoms overhead. They lit up a nightmarish scene: wrecked and burning ships everywhere, thousands of British soldiers standing waist deep in the water holding their weapons over their heads, hundreds of thousands more in snakelike lines on the beaches. Through it all, scuttling like water bugs, moved the little boats coming to the rescue.
- 7 As the flares sputtered overhead, the planes came in to the attack. The primary targets were not the little boats but the larger ships – the destroyers and transports – but the people on the little boats fought back all the same, firing rifles and rackety old Lewis guns as the dive-bombers screamed down. Exploding bombs and fiery tracers added their light to the unearthly scene. Through it all, the little boats continued to move in to the beach and began taking aboard the soldiers.

- 8 Those who were there will never forget the long lines of men wearily staggering across the beach from the dunes to the shallows, falling into the little boats, while others, caught where they stood, died among the bombs and bullets.
- 9 The amazing thing was the lack of panic. There was no mad scramble for boats. The men moved slowly forward, neck deep in the water, with their officers guiding them. As the front ranks were dragged aboard the boats, the rear ranks moved up, first ankle deep and then knee deep and finally shoulder deep until at last it was their turn to be pulled up over the side.
- 10 The little boats listed under loads they had never been designed for. Boats that had never carried more than a dozen people at a time were now carrying sixty or seventy. Somehow they backed off the beach, remained afloat, and ferried their loads out to the larger ships waiting offshore and then returned to the beach for more men.
- 11 As the German gunners on the coast and the German pilots overhead saw their prey escaping, they renewed their efforts. The rain of bombs, shells, and bullets grew ever greater until the little boats seemed to be moving through a sea of flame. The strip of beach, from Bergues on the left to Nieuwpoort on the right, was growing smaller under the barrage, and even the gallant rear guard was now being pressed down onto the beaches. The Germans were closing in for the kill. The little boats still went about their business, moving steadily through the water.
- 12 As the situation became even more desperate, the big ships moved in right alongside the little ones, some grounding on the sand and hoping somehow to get off again despite the falling tide. Ropes, ladders, and cargo nets were heaved over the sides to make it possible for the bedraggled men to clamber aboard. Those who were wounded or too weak to climb were picked up by the little boats. Hands slippery with blood and oil clutched at other hands. Strangers embraced as they struggled to haul each other to safety. Now the fight was not only against the Germans but against time as well. The minutes and hours were racing by. Soon the gray light of dawn would be touching the eastern sky, and when it grew light, the German guns and planes could pick off the survivors at their leisure. Every minute counted now; the little boats redoubled their already desperate efforts.
- 13 Orders were shouted but went unheard in that infernal din. The gun batteries shelled without stopping. To the whistle of the shells were added the scream of falling bombs and the roaring of engines, the bursting of anti-aircraft shells, machine-gun fire, the explosions of burning ships, the screaming of the dive-bombers.
- 14 But all this time, as if in contrast to humanity's frenzy, nature had remained calm. All through the spring night, the wind had not risen and the sea had remained flat. That in itself was a factor in the saving of countless lives, for if one of the usual spring gales had come whirling through the Channel, rescue would have been far more difficult, if not impossible.

- 15 All through the long hours, the work went on. The old men and boys who piloted the boats were sagging with exhaustion. There was an endless repetition in what they were doing: pull the men aboard, make the wounded as comfortable as possible, take them out to the larger ships, then return for more. No matter how many times they made the trip, there were still more men, apparently endless files of weary, stumbling, silent men moving down across the beaches into the water, waiting for rescue.
- 16 Sometimes the little boats ran out of gas. And sometimes the engine of a boat that had been laid up for years in a boatyard or quiet backwater simply broke down and quit. When that happened, small individual miracles were performed by grease-stained, sweating, cursing old gentlemen who whacked away in the dark with pliers and screwdrivers at the stubborn metal until some obstruction gave and the asthmatic engines ground back into life.
- 17 Meanwhile, invisible in the night sky, another battle was taking place. R.A.F.³ Spitfires were hurling themselves at 400 miles an hour into the massed ranks of Nazi bombers, scattering them all over the Channel. The fighters flew until they were down to their last pints of fuel and then hurriedly landed, filled their tanks and guns, and took off again. Flitting back and forth, silent as bats and deadly as hawks, they fought their own strange war at great cost to themselves and at an even greater cost to the enemy. It was thanks to them that the Germans were never able to mount a fully sustained air attack on all the motley craft beneath.
- 18 At last the ranks of men on the beach grew thinner. The flood that had once seemed endless was reduced to a trickle. Already the sky was growing light, and soon the little boats would have to scuttle away. None abandoned their position. Steadily they went on with the work. Although every minute lost might mean another life lost, the men on the beach did not panic. Slowly, steadily, silently, responding only to the orders of their officers, the long lines shuffled forward and out into the water toward the helping hands that waited for them on the little boats.

When the operation of the little boats was planned, the hope was to rescue about 30,000 men. What the little boats actually did was take 335,000 men off the beach who then could continue the war against Germany.

From AGAINST ODDS: A BOOK ABOUT THE MANY FORMS OF COURAGE ©1970 by Basil Heatter. Reprinted by permission of Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, LLC. All Rights Reserved.

³ R.A.F. stands for Royal Air Force, the aerial warfare service branch of the British Armed Forces.

QUESTIONS:

1. In paragraph 3, how does the author's use of the word "miracle" impact the tone of the text?

- A. It foreshadows the minimal casualties suffered in the battle.
- B. It implies there are factual inaccuracies that have been reported.
- C. It suggests the odds were high that the rescue operation could have failed.
- D. It introduces the idea that other similar operations were not as successful.

2. What is the effect of the descriptive language in paragraphs 1 and 2?

- A. to demonstrate how the crisis unified all aspects of British society
- B. to illustrate how the English were affected by the war
- C. to explain why so many resources were needed
- D. to summarize the specific aid required by the British army

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

Part A: What was the main purpose for using the small boats in the rescue operation?

- A. The small boats were piloted by regular citizens and therefore allowed the British soldiers to do their job of fighting the German army.
- B. The small boats were harder to see at night and thus could more easily avoid the German attacks from the ground and the air.
- C. The small boats, as a group, could hold a greater number of soldiers than the bigger boats belonging to the British navy.
- D. The small boats could get close to the beach and transfer the soldiers to the bigger boats that had to stay in deep water.

Part B: Which two quotations from paragraphs 10–12 best support the answer to Part A?

- A. "Boats that had never carried more than a dozen people at a time were now carrying sixty or seventy."
- B. "Somehow they backed off the beach, remained afloat, and ferried their loads out to the larger ships waiting offshore and then returned to the beach for more men."
- C. "The rain of bombs, shells, and bullets grew ever greater until the little boats seemed to be moving through a sea of flame."
- D. "The strip of beach, from Bergues on the left to Nieuwpoort on the right, was growing smaller under the barrage, and even the gallant rear guard was now being pressed down onto the beaches."
- E. "The little boats still went about their business, moving steadily through the water."
- F. "As the situation became even more desperate, the big ships moved in right alongside the little ones, some grounding on the sand and hoping somehow to get off again despite the falling tide."

4. Which sentence best describes the structure of paragraph 6?
- A. The paragraph is structured by cause and effect; it explains how the movement of the rescuing boats caused the Germans to increase their attacks.
 - B. The paragraph is structured as a contrast between the violent and confusing situation at the beach and the focused and determined action of the rescuing boats.
 - C. The paragraph is structured as a chronological account of the actions of the British soldiers as they moved toward the rescuing boats.
 - D. The paragraph is structured as problem and solution; it explains what problems the German attack caused and how the rescuing boats solved the problems.

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

Part A: Which statement below best summarizes the central idea of this excerpt?

- A. Military boats and civilian ships struggled to navigate during a nighttime rescue mission.
- B. Civilian sacrifice and good fortune played important roles in a daring rescue of British troops.
- C. The sailors of the little boats were part of the largest rescue operation during World War II.
- D. Each group of rescuers had different motivations for saving the British troops.

Part B: Which sentence from the excerpt provides the best support for the correct answer in Part A?

- A. "Down they came, clogging the estuaries, going off to war."
- B. "Coming up behind them, bent on missions of their own, were the warships, destroyers, cruisers, and gunboats, racketing full tilt across toward the coast of France."
- C. "It was a miracle that so many had been able to assemble at one place at one time, and even more miraculous that crews had been found for them."
- D. "It was like being on a black highway with fast-moving traffic and no lights showing."

6. In paragraph 2, the author writes about the English civilians, "A few had machine guns, some had rifles and old fowling pieces, but most had nothing but their own brave hearts." Circle three pieces of textual evidence the author provides that supports the claim that the rescuers in the small boats were brave.

7. Although the little boats and their pilots played an important role in rescuing the British troops, they had assistance in the rescue. For each group in the chart below, write one sentence from the text that provides a detail about how that group played a role in the rescue.

British Navy	
British Royal Air Force	
British Troops	

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

Part A: Which statement below best summarizes a reasonable judgment that could be made based on the excerpt?

- A. The little boats had to travel a fairly short distance to reach France.
- B. The British Army would lose World War II.
- C. The experience inspired many of the rescuers to later join the British Navy.
- D. The German pilots knew the little boats were coming.

Part B: Which excerpt provides the best support for the correct answer in Part A?

- A. "There were bankers and dentists, taxi drivers and yachtsmen, old longshoremen and very young boys, engineers, fishermen, and civil servants. There were fresh- faced young Sea Scouts and old men with white hair blowing in the wind."
- B. "Behind them, invisible in the blackness, was England. Ahead, glowing faintly from burning oil tanks and flaming artillery, lay the coast of France."
- C. "Suddenly out of the night came dozens of aircraft flares dropped by the German bombers, looking like orange blossoms overhead."
- D. "Those who were there will never forget the long lines of men wearily staggering across the beach from the dunes to the shallows, falling into the little boats, while others, caught where they stood, died among the bombs and bullets."

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 8, 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 one⁴ 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.

“The Long Night of Little Boats”	Quantitative Measure #1	Quantitative Measure #2
	RMM: 8.1	ATOS: 8.2

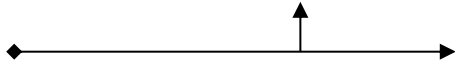
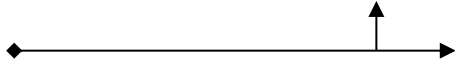
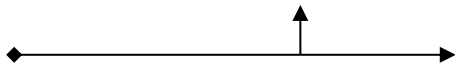
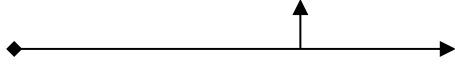
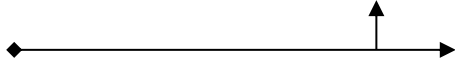
After gathering the quantitative measures, the next step is to place the quantitative scores in the Conversion Table found in the Supplement to Appendix A (www.corestandards.org/resources) and determine the **grade band** of the text. Figure 1 reproduces the conversion table from the Supplement to Appendix A, showing how the initial results from the Reading Maturity and the ATOS measures were converted to grade bands.

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

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

⁴ 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	“The Long Night of Little Boats” excerpt	Where to place within the band?					
Category	Notes and comments on text, support for placement in this band	Too low for grade band	early to mid-6	mid 6 to early 7	mid 7 to early 8	mid to end 8	Too high for grade band
Structure (both story structure or form of piece)	The structure of the excerpt is largely chronological, so it is likely to be accessible to middle school students. The connection of main ideas is relatively explicit, as the narrative moves through the departure of the “strange armada” from England to the dangerous rescue of the troops. Although events in the text are generally chronological, students must also realize that several events happen simultaneously (the soldiers are stranded while the boats organize and travel; the air raids occur while the ships are ferrying soldiers; the dawn approaches as the battle is waged).						
Language Clarity and Conventions	The text contains many complex sentences (see, for example, paragraphs 2 and 11), as well as figurative language (<i>poured forth, like being on a black highway, the rain of bombs</i>). There are also some domain-specific, or Tier 3, words, mostly relating to ships and the military, which students may be unfamiliar with (<i>armored divisions, ferries, schouts</i>). However, there is sufficient context to determine the meaning of the figurative language and the Tier 3 vocabulary.						
Knowledge Demands (life, content, cultural/literary)	To understand the text, it would be helpful for students to have a basic understanding of military operations and ship terminology. Also, prior knowledge of World War II would be beneficial. But even without that knowledge, the information needed to answer the questions lies within the four corners of the text.						
Levels of Meaning (chiefly literary)/ Purpose (chiefly informational)	The main purpose of the text is implied, but readily accessible (see paragraphs 8 and 18): The British citizens were involved in a daring and important rescue mission.						
Overall placement: Grade 8	This text is complex in regard to text structure, vocabulary, and knowledge demands. This mini-assessment may be most appropriate for advanced 8th graders early in the year, all 8th graders later in the year, or even 9th graders in their first semester.						

Question Annotations: Correct Answers and Distractor Rationales

Question Number	Correct Answer(s)	Standards	Rationales for Answer Options
1	C	RI.8.4, RI.8.1	<p>A. Although the author mentions casualties suffered in the rescue elsewhere in the passage, paragraph 3 focuses on the factors that would contribute to the success of the rescue.</p> <p>B. The author uses “miracle” to positively describe the rescue, not to imply there may be inaccuracies in the reported information.</p> <p>C. This is the correct answer. “Miracle” is used to describe the unlikely and fortunate combination of factors that led to the success of the mission.</p> <p>D. Although the conditions on this particular night had to combine perfectly for the operation to be a success, there is no evidence or implication about the success of other similar operations.</p>
2	A	RH.6-8.5, RH.6-8.1	<p>A. This is the correct answer. The variety of boats and rescuers illustrates how the rescue rallied people behind a common cause.</p> <p>B. Although the rescuers were English, these paragraphs focus on only one day, rather than how the British were affected over the entire war.</p> <p>C. Although many boats and people were involved in the rescue, these paragraphs identify the variety of resources rather than the number of resources required.</p> <p>D. These paragraphs identify the kinds of boats and people available to the British army rather than what the army specifically needed.</p>
3 Part A	D	RI.8.3, RI.8.1	<p>A. Regular citizens piloted the small boats because many boats were needed to rescue the British soldiers from the shallow water and narrow beach, not because the soldiers were busy fighting.</p> <p>B. Although darkness inhibited German pilots from seeing the small boats, it was the agility of the boats, rather than their inconspicuousness that was important.</p> <p>C. There is no evidence to suggest that the capacity of the small boats was, in total, larger than the British naval ships.</p> <p>D. This is the correct answer. The small size and weight of the boats allowed them to get closer to the stranded soldiers.</p>

Question Number	Correct Answer(s)	Standards	Rationales for Answer Options
3 Part B	B, F		<p>A. This statement explains how many soldiers the small boats carried rather than the reason they could get to the soldiers.</p> <p>B. This is a correct answer. This statement explains how the small boats transferred soldiers directly from the land to the naval ships that were in deeper water.</p> <p>C. This statement explains the dangers the little boats faced rather than their purpose in the rescue.</p> <p>D. This sentence explains the result of the German attack, not the role of the small boats.</p> <p>E. Although this statement focuses on the little boats, it explains their actions rather than the fact that they were better able to access the beach.</p> <p>F. This is a correct answer. The sentence explains the dangers associated with the large ships getting too close to the beach, demonstrating the need for the little boats.</p>
4	B	RH.6-8.5, RH.6-8.1	<p>A. There is no evidence that the movement of the rescuing boats led to the Germans increasing their attack.</p> <p>B. This is a correct answer. Paragraph 6 describes the conflict on the beach and how the rescuing boats just continued to move forward toward the soldiers.</p> <p>C. Paragraph 6 describes two simultaneous events: The conflict on the beach and the rescuing boats moving toward the soldiers.</p> <p>D. Paragraph 6 does not establish the problem (soldiers are trapped on a beach by attacking Germans), as this problem is established much earlier. Additionally, at this point in the text, the boats are still moving forward to rescue the soldiers, so the problem has not been solved.</p>
5 Part A	B	RI.8.2, RI.8.1	<p>A. Although this detail is explained in paragraph 5, it focuses on one challenge of the rescue rather than how and why the mission succeeded (the central idea of the text.)</p> <p>B. This is the correct answer. The combination of ordinary citizens and extraordinary circumstances led to the successful rescue of British troops.</p> <p>C. Although the number of soldiers to rescue seemed endless, there is no textual evidence to support the assertion that the rescue was the largest in WWII.</p> <p>D. Although the British Navy and R.A.F. were described as “bent on missions of their own” and fighting “their own strange war,” that mission and war were part of the goal to rescue the British Army.</p>
5 Part B	C		<p>A. This statement focuses on the number of civilian vessels used for the mission rather than the unlikely circumstances that led to the successful rescue.</p> <p>B. This statement focuses on the British Navy rather than citizens and circumstances that led to a successful mission.</p> <p>C. This is the correct answer. This statement addresses the unlikely elements that came together to rescue the British troops.</p> <p>D. This statement focuses on one challenge the rescuers faced, rather than the numerous difficulties and positive results of their mission.</p>

Question Number	Correct Answer(s)	Standards	Rationales for Answer Options
6	See possible responses and rationales in right column.	RI.8.3, RI.8.2, RI.8.1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="726 201 2005 354"> <p>• “On another boat, a girl dressed in man’s clothes, having thought to fool the inspection officers by sticking an empty pipe in her mouth, now took the pipe out again and stuck it between her teeth to keep them from chattering.” (paragraph 5) <i>Rationale:</i> This girl had to be brave to join the mission and risk being discovered by the inspection officers in order to volunteer to help the British troops.</p> <li data-bbox="726 370 2005 492"> <p>• “the people on the little boats fought back all the same, firing rifles and rackety old Lewis guns as the dive-bombers screamed down.”(paragraph 7) <i>Rationale:</i> The sailors in the small boats battled the Germans even though they were woefully under armed, demonstrating bravery.</p> <li data-bbox="726 508 2005 630"> <p>• “Through it all, the little boats continued to move in to the beach and began taking aboard the soldiers.” (paragraph 7) <i>Rationale:</i> The citizen sailors continued to risk their lives through the bombings to complete their mission, demonstrating bravery.</p> <li data-bbox="726 646 2005 768"> <p>• “Somehow they backed off the beach, remained afloat, and ferried their loads out to the larger ships waiting offshore and then returned to the beach for more men.” (paragraph 10) <i>Rationale:</i> Under extreme weight, the little boat sailors successfully navigated the troops to safety and bravely returned time and again, despite risks.</p> <li data-bbox="726 784 2005 841"> <p>• “The little boats still went about their business, moving steadily through the water” (paragraph 11) <i>Rationale:</i> The citizen sailors continued to bravely risk their lives through the bombings to complete their mission.</p> <li data-bbox="726 857 2005 946"> <p>• “None abandoned their position.”(paragraph 18) <i>Rationale:</i> The sailors in the small boats persevered through the German bombings to ferry the “apparently endless” number of British troops to safety, demonstrating bravery.</p>

Question Number	Correct Answer(s)	Standards	Rationales for Answer Options	
7	See answers and rationales in right column.	RI.8.3, RI.8.1	British Navy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Coming up behind them, bent on missions of their own, were the warships, destroyers, cruisers, and gunboats, racketing full tilt across toward the coast of France.” <i>Rationale:</i> The British Navy took on the troops the small boats brought out. • “The moon was not yet up, and in the blackness – for no one dared show a light – the destroyers could not see the little boats, and the little boats could not see the warships until the great gleaming bow waves moving at forty knots were right on top of them.” <i>Rationale:</i> The naval ships tried to avoid detection by sailing in darkness. • “But somehow, for the most part, they avoided each other, and the strange armada moved on.” <i>Rationale:</i> The larger ships tried to avoid hitting or capsizing the small boats. • “As the situation became even more desperate, the big ships moved in right alongside the little ones, some grounding on the sand and hoping somehow to get off again despite the falling tide.” <i>Rationale:</i> The British Navy risked being grounded in order to ferry more troops to safety. • “Ropes, ladders, and cargo nets were heaved over the sides to make it possible for the bedraggled men to clamber aboard.” <i>Rationale:</i> The British Navy sailors helped the troops onto the awaiting ships.
			British Royal Air Force	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “R.A.F. Spitfires were hurling themselves at 400 miles an hour into the massed ranks of Nazi bombers, scattering them all over the Channel.” <i>Rationale:</i> British pilots diverted Nazi bombers so the sailors could rescue the troops. • “The fighters flew until they were down to their last pints of fuel and then hurriedly landed, filled their tanks and guns, and took off again.” <i>Rationale:</i> The pilots went to extremes to aid in the rescue mission. • “Flitting back and forth, silent as bats and deadly as hawks, they fought their own strange war at great cost to themselves and at an even greater cost to the enemy.” <i>Rationale:</i> The R.A.F. sustained losses in order to allow the boats time to rescue the troops. • “It was thanks to them that the Germans were never able to mount a fully sustained air attack on all the motley craft beneath.” <i>Rationale:</i> The British pilots limited the damage the Germans did during the rescue.
			British Troops	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “The amazing thing was the lack of panic.” <i>Rationale:</i> Though they were in a terrifying situation, the British troops remained calm. • “There was no mad scramble for boats.” <i>Rationale:</i> The troops waited calmly to be rescued. • “The men moved slowly forward, neck deep in the water, with their officers guiding them.” <i>Rationale:</i> The soldiers followed orders during a frightening time. • “As the front ranks were dragged aboard the boats, the rear ranks moved up, first ankle deep and then knee deep and finally shoulder deep until at last it was their turn to be pulled up over the side.” <i>Rationale:</i> Although every minute lost might mean another life lost, the men on the beach did not panic. • “Slowly, steadily, silently, responding only to the orders of their officers, the long lines shuffled forward and out into the water toward the helping hands that waited for them on the little boats.” <i>Rationale:</i> The soldiers remained focused on their orders, despite the chaos happening on the beach.

Question Number	Correct Answer(s)	Standards	Rationales for Answer Options
8 Part A	A	RH.6-8.8, RH.6-8.1	<p>A. This is the correct answer. The text says, “Behind them, invisible in the blackness, was England. Ahead, glowing faintly from burning oil tanks and flaming artillery, lay the coast of France.” Given that the small boats didn’t have big engines and they had to travel quickly between the two countries, it is clear that they did not have to travel a long distance.</p> <p>B. Although the British Army needed assistance from many groups, there is no evidence to suggest the outcome of WWII.</p> <p>C. Although the success of the rescue mission must have been inspiring, the futures of the sailors of the little boats are not described and there is no evidence they later joined the Navy as a result of their maritime experience.</p> <p>D. Although the German pilots attacked the rescuers, there is no evidence to suggest that the Germans knew in advance that the boats were approaching.</p>
8 Part B	B		<p>A. This statement describes some of the rescuers, not the proximity of Britain to France.</p> <p>B. This is the correct statement. Fires in France were visible to the sailors soon after they left Britain behind.</p> <p>C. This statement describes the German attack on the sailors, not the distance from Britain to France.</p> <p>D. This statement explains the lasting impact of the rescue on the sailors rather than the distance from Britain to France.</p>

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