

Grade 8 Literature Mini-Assessment

Excerpt from “To Build a Fire” by Jack London

This grade 8 mini-assessment is based on an excerpt from the short story “To Build a Fire” by Jack London. 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 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 eight selected-response questions and two paper/pencil equivalents of a technology-enhanced item that address the Reading Standards listed below, and one optional constructed-response question that addresses the Reading, Writing, and Language Standards listed below.

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.8.6	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.
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.

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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

“To Build a Fire” by Jack London

Today you will read a passage about a man traveling across the Yukon and encountering trouble. 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 return to Part A if you wish.

Take as long as you need to read and answer the questions. If you do not finish when class ends, come see me to discuss the ways you may have additional time.

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

1 The man took a chew of tobacco and proceeded to start a new amber beard. Also, his moist breath quickly powdered with white his mustache, eyebrows, and lashes. There did not seem to be so many springs on the left fork of the Henderson, and for half an hour the man saw no signs of any. And then it happened. At a place where there were no signs, where the soft, unbroken snow seemed to advertise solidity beneath, the man broke through. It was not deep. He wet himself halfway to the knees before he floundered out to the firm crust.

2 He was angry and cursed his luck aloud. He had hoped to get into camp with the boys at six o'clock, and this would delay him an hour, for he would have to build a fire and dry out his foot-gear. This was imperative at that low temperature -- he knew that much; and he turned aside to the bank, which he climbed. On top, tangled in the underbrush about the trunks of several small spruce trees, was a high-water deposit of dry fire-wood -- sticks and twigs, principally, but also larger portions of seasoned branches and fine, dry, last-year's grasses. He threw down several large pieces on top of the snow. This served for a foundation and prevented the young flame from drowning itself in the snow it otherwise would melt. The flame he got by touching a match to a small shred of birch-bark that he took from his pocket. This burned even more readily than paper. Placing it on the foundation, he fed the young flame with wisps of dry grass and with the tiniest dry twigs.

3 He worked slowly and carefully, keenly aware of his danger. Gradually, as the flame grew stronger, he increased the size of the twigs with which he fed it. He squatted in the snow, pulling the twigs out from their entanglement in the brush and feeding directly to the flame. He knew there must be no failure. When it is seventy-five below zero, a man must not fail in his first attempt to build a fire -- that is, if his feet are wet. If his feet are dry, and he fails, he can run along the trail for half a mile and restore his circulation. But the circulation of wet and freezing feet cannot be restored by running when it is seventy-five below. No matter how fast he runs, the wet feet will freeze the harder.

4 All this the man knew. The old-timer on Sulphur Creek had told him about it the previous fall, and now he was appreciating the advice. Already all sensation had gone out of his feet. To build the fire he had been forced to remove his mittens, and the fingers had quickly gone numb. His pace of four miles an hour had kept his heart pumping blood to the surface of his body and to all the extremities. But the instant he stopped, the action of the pump eased down. The cold of space smote the unprotected tip of the planet, and he, being on that unprotected tip, received the full force of the blow. The blood of his body recoiled before it. The blood was alive, like the dog, and like the dog it wanted to hide away and cover itself up from the fearful cold. So long as he walked four miles an hour, he pumped that blood, willy-nilly, to the surface; but now it ebbed away and sank down into the recesses of his body. The extremities were the first to feel its absence. His wet feet froze the faster, and his exposed fingers numbed the faster, though they had not yet begun to freeze. Nose and cheeks were already freezing, while the skin of all his body chilled as it lost its blood.

5 But he was safe. Toes and nose and cheeks would be only touched by the frost, for the fire was beginning to burn with strength. He was feeding it with twigs the size of his finger. In another minute he would be able to feed it with branches the size of his wrist, and then he could remove his wet foot-gear, and, while it dried, he could keep his naked feet warm by the fire, rubbing them at first, of course, with snow. The fire was a success. He was safe. He remembered the advice of the old-timer on Sulphur Creek, and smiled. The old-timer had been very serious in laying down the law that no man must travel alone in the Klondike after fifty below. Well, here he was; he had had the accident; he was alone; and he had saved himself. Those old-timers were rather womanish, some of them, he thought. All a man had to do was to keep his head, and he was all right. Any man who was a man could travel alone. But it was surprising, the rapidity with which his cheeks and nose were freezing. And he had not thought his fingers could go lifeless in so short a time. Lifeless they were, for he could scarcely make them move together to grip a twig, and they seemed remote from his body and from him. When he touched a twig, he had to look and see whether or not he had hold of it. The wires were pretty well down between him and his finger-ends.

6 All of which counted for little. There was the fire, snapping and crackling and promising life with every dancing flame. He started to untie his moccasins. They were coated with ice; the thick German socks were like sheaths of iron halfway to the knees; and the moccasin strings were like rods of steel all twisted and knotted as by some conflagration. For a moment he tugged with his numb fingers, then, realizing the folly of it, he drew his sheath-knife.

7 But before he could cut the strings, it happened. It was his own fault or, rather, his mistake. He should not have built the fire under the spruce tree. He should have built it in the open. But it had been easier to pull the twigs from the brush and drop them directly on the fire. Now the tree under which he had done this carried a weight of snow on its boughs. No wind had blown for weeks, and each bough was fully freighted. Each time he had pulled a twig he had communicated a slight agitation to the tree -- an imperceptible agitation, so far as he was concerned, but an agitation sufficient to bring

about the disaster. High up in the tree one bough capsized its load of snow. This fell on the boughs beneath, capsizing them. This process continued, spreading out and involving the whole tree. It grew like an avalanche, and it descended without warning upon the man and the fire, and the fire was blotted out! Where it had burned was a mantle of fresh and disordered snow.

8 The man was shocked. It was as though he had just heard his own sentence of death. For a moment he sat and stared at the spot where the fire had been. Then he grew very calm. Perhaps the old-timer on Sulphur Creek was right. If he had only had a trail-mate he would have been in no danger now. The trail-mate could have built the fire.

PUBLIC DOMAIN

Questions

1. Which sentence from paragraph 2 **best** explains why the character is frustrated with his situation?
 - A. "He was angry and cursed his luck aloud."
 - B. "He had hoped to get into camp with the boys at six o'clock, and this would delay him an hour, for he would have to build a fire and dry out his foot-gear."
 - C. "This was imperative at that low temperature -- he knew that much; and he turned aside to the bank, which he climbed."
 - D. "He threw down several large pieces on top of the snow."
2. Choose **two** statements that foreshadow the collapse of the snow on the fire the character builds.
 - A. "He wet himself halfway to the knees before he floundered out to the firm crust." (paragraph 1)
 - B. "On top, tangled in the underbrush about the trunks of several small spruce trees, was a high-water deposit of dry fire-wood...." (paragraph 2)
 - C. "He worked slowly and carefully, keenly aware of his danger." (paragraph 3)
 - D. "But the circulation of wet and freezing feet cannot be restored by running when it is seventy-five below." (paragraph 3)
 - E. "He was feeding it with twigs the size of his finger." (paragraph 5)
 - F. "Lifeless they were, for he could scarcely make them move together to grip a twig...." (paragraph 5)
3. The following question has two parts. Answer Part A and then answer Part B.

Part A: Read the following sentence from paragraph 2.

This was imperative at that low temperature – he knew that much; and he turned aside to the bank, which he climbed.

What does the word imperative mean as it is used in this sentence?

- A. obvious
- B. desired
- C. crucial
- D. expected

Part B: How does this word most strongly impact the meaning and tone of the excerpt?

- A. The word supports a purposeful tone by explaining that the task is necessary.
- B. The word supports a passive tone by describing the actions of the character as patient.
- C. The word supports a fearful tone by describing the emotions of the character as he hurries to save himself.
- D. The word supports a casual tone by emphasizing the unconcerned attitude of the character.

4. Read the following sentence from paragraph 4.

To build the fire he had been forced to remove his mittens, and the fingers had quickly gone numb.

How does this incident impact the plot of the story?

- A. The man's action reveals that he is unaware of the dangers facing him on his journey.
- B. The man's action reveals that the temperatures are dropping quickly in the area and he needs to move quickly.
- C. The numbness in the man's fingers emphasizes how important it is that he successfully build the fire.
- D. The numbness in the man's fingers hints that he may be unsuccessful in building the fire he needs to save himself.

5. Read the following sentences from paragraph 4.

The blood of his body recoiled before it. The blood was alive, like the dog, and like the dog it wanted to hide away and cover itself up from the fearful cold.

How does the author use figurative language in these sentences to impact the meaning of the passage?

- A. He uses personification to illustrate the severity of the climate.
- B. He uses hyperbole to describe how the cold temperatures impact the man's ability to think clearly.
- C. He uses a metaphor to compare the man to the dog to show how much they both dislike the cold.
- D. He uses alliteration to draw attention to the man's health.

6. This item has two parts. First answer Part A and then answer Part B.

Part A: How does paragraph 5 help develop a theme of the passage?

- A. It shows that the character feels excessive pride in himself.
- B. It explains how the character overcame the extreme conditions despite the warnings of the old-timer.
- C. It details the precautions the man took to prepare for emergency situations.
- D. It illustrates the conditions the man is facing that is preventing him from moving forward on his journey.

Part B: How does paragraph 8 help develop the same theme of the passage?

- A. It describes how the character continues to feel confident in his strength.
- B. It illustrates the results of the satisfaction the character felt earlier in the passage.
- C. It reveals the effects of the fire being extinguished by the collapse of the snow.
- D. It explains the character's emotions when he realizes what he must do to survive.

7. This item has two parts. First answer Part A and then answer Part B.

Part A: Read the following sentence from paragraph 5.

All a man had to do was to keep his head, and he was all right.

In this sentence, what does the phrase “keep his head” mean?

- A. remain calm
- B. protect from the cold
- C. remember advice
- D. stay alert

Part B: Which sentence from the passage provides the best clue for the meaning of the phrase “keep his head”?

- A. “Toes and nose and cheeks would be only touched by the frost, for the fire was beginning to burn with strength.”
- B. “The old-timer had been very serious in laying down the law that no man must travel alone in the Klondike after fifty below.”
- C. “Well, here he was; he had had the accident; he was alone; and he had saved himself.”
- D. “The wires were pretty well down between him and his finger-ends.”

8. Put a check mark in the correct column, identifying which theme each quotation from the story best helps develop.

Description of Setting	Man vs. Nature	Man vs. Himself	Both
“...where the soft, unbroken snow seemed to advertise solidity beneath, the man broke through.” (paragraph 1)			
“He was angry and cursed his luck aloud.” (paragraph 2)			
“When it is seventy-five below zero...” (paragraph 3)			
“He should not have built the fire under the spruce tree.” (paragraph 7)			

9. Read the following sentence. Choose the words that best complete the sentence and write them in the correct spaces.

The main character in "To Build a Fire" thought the old-timer on Sulphur Creek was _____ and _____; however, based on London's description of the old-timer, the reader is meant to know the old-timer is _____ and _____.

Possible Terms That Describe the Old-Timer
Weak
Fearful
Determined
Wise
Impractical
Experienced

10. This item has two parts. First answer Part A and answer Part B.

Part A: Read the following sentence from paragraph 5.

In another minute he would be able to feed it with branches the size of his wrist, and then he could remove his wet foot-gear, and, while it dried, he could keep his naked feet warm by the fire, rubbing them at first, of course, with snow.

What do these sentences reveal about the character's personality?

- A. He is strong-willed and will do anything to survive.
- B. He is experienced and knows how to overcome problems.
- C. He is unskilled and cannot take care of himself.
- D. He is impatient and does not make sound decisions.

Part B: Which of the following sentences from the passage reveals the same trait in the character?

- A. "He wet himself halfway to the knees before he floundered out to the firm crust." (paragraph 1)
- B. "He worked slowly and carefully, keenly aware of his danger." (paragraph 3)
- C. "No matter how fast he runs, the wet feet will freeze the harder." (paragraph 3)
- D. "For a moment he tugged with his numb fingers, then, realizing the folly of it, he drew his sheath-knife." (paragraph 6)

11. (Optional writing prompt): In the excerpt from “To Build a Fire,” the author describes the travels of a man in the Yukon. Write an essay explaining how the author develops a main theme in the passage. Use textual evidence from the text to help develop your response. Write your response using the lines on next two pages.

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. The excerpt 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 one¹ quantitative measure according to the research-based conversion table provided in the Supplement to Appendix A: New Research on Text Complexity (www.corestandards.org/resources).
2. Place a text or excerpt at a **grade level** based on a qualitative analysis.

Quantitative Analysis

Excerpt from “To Build a Fire”	Quantitative Measure #1	Quantitative Measure #2
	Lexile: 1000-1100L	FK: 5.5

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.



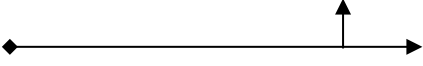
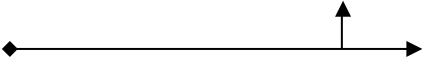
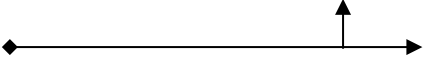
Figure 1: Updated Text Complexity Grade Bands and Associated Ranges from Multiple Measures⁷

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

The quantitative data show a difference between two measures. Qualitative data will help clarify the difference in the two measures and narrow the text complexity to a specific grade level.

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.

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	Excerpt from <i>1984</i>	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 moves from chronological order, an omniscient narrator telling the story, to flashbacks, with the characters inner thoughts being revealed throughout the narrative. In paragraph 5, the students will need to discern between the chronological events of the story, the narrator’s thoughts, and the past. The unconventional text structure may require multiple readings for students to comprehend the text.						
Language Clarity and Conventions	The vocabulary is mostly accessible to students; however, the figurative language (“...proceeded to start a new amber beard.”, “...were like sheaths of iron halfway to his knees;”, “...were like rods of steel all twisted and knotted as by some conflagration.”) is complex and will require the students to use context clues and perhaps conduct multiple readings to determine meaning. Sentence structure is complex, with many compound- complex sentences, and is written in an archaic manner that will require multiple reads.						
Knowledge Demands (life, content, cultural/literary)	The text includes information that may be foreign to students, including harsh weather conditions and how one protects themselves against such weather. Readers may be unfamiliar with snow or the concept that low temperatures require movement to keep blood flowing, but the text lays the concept out clearly (e.g., “...his heart pumping blood to the surface of his body and to all extremities” and “. . . wet feet froze the faster and his exposed fingers numbed the faster,...”						
Levels of Meaning (chiefly literary)/ Purpose (chiefly informational)	There are multiple themes, including the power of nature over humans, the wisdom of elders needs to be respected, and that excessive pride can lead to one’s downfall. None are explicitly stated and must be inferred from close reading.						
Overall placement: Grade 8	Despite quantitative measures indicating a low text complexity, the multiple levels of meaning, challenging text structure, and complex sentence structure make this text most appropriate for grade 8, most likely end of year.						

Question Annotations and Correct Answer and Distractor Rationales

Question Number	Correct Answer(s)	Standards	Rationales for Answer Options
1	B	RL.8.3 RL.8.1	<p>A. Although this sentence does show and the character’s frustration, it does not show how his frustration develops, as the question asks.</p> <p>B. This is the correct answer. This sentence explains why he is frustrated (he will be delayed an hour) and the reason for the delay (he will need to build a fire to dry out his foot-gear).</p> <p>C. Although this sentence explains that the character understands the situation he is in and understands what must be done (to build a fire), it does not reflect his frustration.</p> <p>D. Although this sentence may indicate frustration (“he threw down”), this is not the actual intent of the sentence. This sentence is explaining the process of building a fire.</p>
2	B, C	RL.8.6 RL.8.1	<p>A. Although this statement describes the event leading to the character having to build a fire, it does not foreshadow the collapse of the fire.</p> <p>B. This is a correct answer. This statement indicates that the character is building a fire near the trunks of several small spruce trees, which the reader later discovers, is the source of the collapsed snow.</p> <p>C. This is a correct answer. This statement explains that the character understands the danger of building a fire in the snow, and he is taking precautions to prevent the fire from being extinguished.</p> <p>D. Although this statement describes the character’s dilemma of dealing with cold feet, it does not directly relate to the fire.</p> <p>E. Although the character is carefully building the fire with small twigs, this does not foreshadow the collapse of the snow on the fire. It merely explains how the fire is being built.</p> <p>F. Although this statement reflects the character’s need to build a fire, it does not relate to the snow extinguishing the fire.</p>

3 Part A	C	RL.8.4,	<p>A. Although this need to build a fire to dry his wet foot-gear may be “obvious,” the term “imperative,” as used in this sentence, means “crucial.”</p> <p>B. Although it is likely that building a fire was “desired” when the character’s foot-gear became wet, in order to survive, the character’s foot-gear needed to be dry. Therefore, it was “crucial” that the character build a fire.</p> <p>C. This is the correct answer. Because having wet feet can prove to be fatal in a situation like the one the character is in, it is “crucial” the character build a fire.</p> <p>D. Although the character “expects” to build a fire, it is more than expected; it is “crucial.”</p>
3 Part B	A	RL.8.1	<p>A. This is the correct answer. The word “imperative” creates a purposeful tone because the character must build a fire to survive.</p> <p>B. Although the character may show patience when building a fire, the word “imperative” does not reflect a passive tone.</p> <p>C. Although there may be an element of fear due to the necessity of building a fire to survive, the word “imperative” does not help develop a fearful tone, as at this point in the story the character is confident he will survive.</p> <p>D. Although the character’s actions of climbing the bank can be interpreted as casual, his attitude is not unconcerned, as he understands the need for a fire.</p>
4	C	RL.8.3, RL.8.1	<p>A. Although the numbness indicates the severity of the dangers the man faces, he was clearly aware of them throughout the passage; He just believed he could overcome them.</p> <p>B. Although the temperature is very low in the area, there is no textual support for the temperature continuing to drop.</p> <p>C. This is the correct answer. The fact that the man’s fingers begin to freeze immediately shows how important it is that he build a fire, as without it he will not survive.</p> <p>D. Although numb fingers could hint that the man will be unable to build a fire, it is not his physical inability that eventually leads to his downfall. Rather, it is the snow that drops and puts out the fire.</p>
5	A	RL.8.4 RL.8.1	<p>A. This is the correct answer. The author describes the character’s blood as having life (“recoiled,” “was alive,” “to hide away and cover itself”).</p> <p>B. Although the language may seem like a hyperbole, it does not relate to the man’s ability to think clearly.</p> <p>C. Although the author does compare two things (the blood to the dog), he is not using a metaphor, nor is the comparison used to stress the character’s or his dog’s dislike of cold.</p> <p>D. Although the author uses alliteration (“...blood of his body...”), this is not used to describe the man’s health.</p>

6 Part A	A	RL.8.2	<p>A. This is the correct answer. The character feels he can travel alone, despite the suggestion from the old-timer that one never travels alone. The character brags about how he “saved himself.”</p> <p>B. Although the character overcame conditions in this paragraph despite the warnings of the old-timer, this is not a theme of the passage. In fact, it appears this success was temporary.</p> <p>C. Although the man likely took precautions in preparation for his journey, this is not detailed in paragraph 5 and is not a theme of the passage.</p> <p>D. Although the paragraph does discuss some of the issues preventing the man from continuing his journey, this is not a theme of the passage.</p>
6 Part B	B	RL.8.1	<p>A. Although the character felt confident earlier in the passage, he does not show confidence in paragraph 8.</p> <p>B. This is the correct answer. The character’s over-confidence leads to his downfall shown in paragraph 8.</p> <p>C. Although the effects of the fire collapsing are inferred in paragraph 8, this does not continue the theme developed in paragraph 5.</p> <p>D. Although paragraph 8 does explain the character’s emotions, paragraph 8 does not explain the theme developed in paragraph 5, nor does it explain what the character must do to survive after the fire is extinguished.</p>
7 Part A	A	RL.8.4, RL.8.1	<p>A. This is the correct answer. Based on the context in paragraph 5, a man who could “remain calm” would be successful.</p> <p>B. Although a man protecting himself from the cold would make him “all right,” that is not the meaning of “keep his head.”</p> <p>C. Although the context does mention the previous advice from the old-timer, the context around this sentence does not refer to “remember advice.”</p> <p>D. Although the character did need to “stay alert,” the context around this sentence is referring to his attitude and need to “remain calm.”</p>
7 Part B	C	RL.8.4, RL.8.1	<p>A. Although remaining calm allowed the character to build the fire, this sentence does not directly help define the phrase from Part A.</p> <p>B. Although this sentence provides context about the man remaining calm, it does not help define “keep his head.”</p> <p>C. This is the correct answer. This sentence provides details about how the character remained calm in the face of a difficult situation.</p> <p>D. Although this sentence is an example of a moment where the man should have remained calm, it does not provide clues directly defining the phrase.</p>

8	See column to the right.	RL.8.2 RL.8.1	Description of Setting	Man vs. Nature	Man vs. Himself	Both
			"...where the soft, unbroken snow seemed to advertise solidity beneath, the man broke through." (paragraph 1)	*		
			"He was angry and cursed his luck aloud." (paragraph 2)		*	
			"When it is seventy-five below zero..." (paragraph 3)	*		
			"He should not have built the fire under the spruce tree." (paragraph 7)			*
<p>Row 1: This sentence best develops the theme of man vs. nature because the character, despite the care he took to identify the best path, still fell through the ice. Despite his best efforts, nature won.</p> <p>Row 2: This sentence best develops the theme of man vs. himself because it shows that the man is upset with the choices he made (despite advice from the old timer mentioned later) that led to his unfortunate situation.</p> <p>Row 3: This sentence best develops the theme of man vs. nature because it identifies how the extremely low temperature will impact the character.</p> <p>Row 4: This sentence develops both themes of man vs. nature and man vs. himself. The man made a poor choice that will impact his life, thus developing the theme of man vs. himself. Furthermore, the fact that the man built a fire under trees that will ultimately lead to his demise develops the theme of man vs. nature.</p>						

9	See column to the right.	<p>RL.8.6</p> <p>RL.8.1</p>	<p>The main character in “To Build a Fire” thought the old-timer on Sulphur Creek was <u>weak</u> and <u>fearful</u>; however, based on London’s description of the old-timer, the reader is meant to know the old-timer is <u>wise</u> and <u>experienced</u>.</p> <p>The character states that the old-timer’s advice seemed overly cautious to the point that the character thought the old-timer was ill-advised. Therefore, the old-timer was weak and fearful in the eyes of the character. However, the reader knows how important the advice of the old-timer will prove to be to the character. The old-timer has experience with the environment and is therefore wise. The character would benefit from taking heed of his warnings. Although the character may think that the old-timer is weak and fearful, he does say some of the old-timer’s advice is practical. Furthermore, “determined” is a term that better describes the character, not the old-timer.</p>
10 Part A	B	<p>RL.8.3,</p> <p>RL.8.1</p>	<p>A. Although the character is strong-willed and attempts to take steps to survive by building a fire, this sentence does not detail his will to survive but rather just patient planning based on some likely prior experience.</p> <p>B. This is the correct answer. The character knows that removing his wet foot gear and rubbing his feet with snow he is experienced (suggested by “of course,” indicating rubbing his feet with snow is a common, logical choice in this kind of situation) and can overcome problems.</p> <p>C. Although rubbing snow on frozen feet may not seem like a good idea, the character does know how to build a fire and protect himself.</p> <p>D. Although other points in the text may support the idea that the character is impatient and makes rash decisions, this sentence supports the idea he is making sound decisions.</p>
10 Part B	B	<p>RL.8.3,</p> <p>RL.8.1</p>	<p>A. Although the character is experienced and overcomes problems, this sentence details the cause of a problem.</p> <p>B. This is the correct answer. This sentence shows the character is aware of his problems and how to overcome them using experience.</p> <p>C. Although this sentence describes the character’s experience, it does not show how he overcomes problems.</p> <p>D. Although this sentence describes the character’s action to solve a problem, it is a poor plan.</p>

<p style="text-align: center;">11 (Optional Writing Prompt)</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">See top-score bullets in the right column.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">W.8.2, W.8.4, W.8.9, RL.8.2, RL.8.1, L.8.1, L.8.2, L.8.3</p>	<p>A good student response will include:</p> <p>Claim: The character’s excessive pride led to his downfall. The student may include details like the following to support this claim:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The author explains how the character was more concerned with arriving at camp than his personal safety. (“He was angry and cursed his luck aloud. He had hoped to get into camp with the boys at six o’clock, and this would delay him an hour, for he would have to build a fire and dry out his foot-gear.”) • The author explains how the character did not attend to details when building a fire, instead rushing in order to save time (i.e. building a fire under the trees). • The author explains how the character did not listen to the advice of the experienced old-timer. (“The old-timer had been very serious in laying down the law that no man must travel alone in the Klondike after fifty below. Well, here he was; he had had the accident; he was alone; and he had saved himself. Those old-timers were rather womanish, some of them, he thought.”) • The author describes how the character’s failure to attend to details (like building a fire under the tree, taking a partner along on the journey) and his excessive pride (feeling like he was wiser than the old-timer and he did not need a trail-mate) led to his downfall. <p>Claim: In the struggle of man vs. nature, nature will prevail. The response may include such details as the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Even though the character took precautions to watch for thin ice, he still fell through the ice. (“At a place where there were no signs, where the soft, unbroken snow seemed to advertise solidity beneath, the man broke through.”) • The character found dry wood and began to build a fire, yet the location of the fire proved fatal (under the trees causing snow to collapse). • The character was not impervious to the frigid temperatures, as indicated by his frozen hands and other body parts. • Nature ultimately led to his final demise. <p>Note: Students may identify other themes that may be deem appropriate by the teacher. If student can support another theme with textual evidence and logic, please score appropriately.</p>
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Using the Mini-Assessments with English Language Learners (ELLs)

Mini-Assessment Design and English Language Learners

Each mini-assessment is designed using the best practices of test design. English Language Learners will benefit from the opportunity to independently practice answering questions about grade-level complex texts.

Prior to delivering the mini-assessment, teachers should read through each item. If there is language in the question stems specific to the standards (e.g., plot, theme, point of view), make sure that students have been introduced to these concepts prior to taking the assessment. Teachers should not pre-teach specific vocabulary words tested in the assessment (e.g., words students are asked to define) and should only pre-teach language that would impede students from understanding what the question is asking.

The mini-assessments attend to the needs of all learners, and ELLs specifically, by including texts that:

- *Are brief and engaging:* Texts vary in length, but no individual text is more than three pages long.
- *Embed student-friendly definitions:* Footnotes are included for technical terms or words that are above grade level when those words are not surrounded by context that would help students determine meaning.

Informational text sets, such as those included in the mini-assessment, specifically attend to the needs of ELLs by:

- *Building student knowledge:* Mini-assessments often include multiple texts or stimuli on the same topic:
 - For sets with two texts or stimuli, the first text is generally broader, providing a foundation in the content and introducing key vocabulary, and the second text provides more detail or contrast on the same topic. This allows ELLs to dig into the features of the passage being assessed rather than being inundated with dissimilar content and vocabulary.
 - For sets with more than two texts or stimuli, there is an “anchor” text that provides introductory information on the topic.

- *Containing ideas that lend themselves to discussion from a variety of perspectives:* Often these pairs or sets of texts present multiple perspectives on the same topic.

The mini-assessments attend to the needs of all learners, and ELLs specifically, by including questions that:

- *Feature a variety of academic words:*
 - Each mini-assessment contains at least one vocabulary item. Items assessing vocabulary test one of the following:
 - The meaning of Tier 2 academic words in context.
 - The meaning of a figurative word/phrase in context.
 - The impact of word choice on meaning and/or tone.
 - MOST vocabulary items test Tier 2 words.
 - All tested words are chosen because:
 - They are central to the meaning of the text.
 - They are surrounded by sufficient context to allow students to determine meaning.
- *Highlight “juicy” sentences that feature grade-appropriate complex structures, vocabulary, and language features:* Most mini-assessments include at least one item assessing Reading for Literature or Reading: Informational text standard 5. These items point students to analyze the structure of the text. While standard 5 items specifically focus on the structure of the text, other items require the analysis of language features, vocabulary, and relationships between ideas, all of which build student understanding of texts.
- *Provide graphic organizers to help students capture and reflect on new knowledge:* Most mini-assessments include at least one item mimicking a “technology enhanced item.” These items include things like tables and charts.
- *Provide writing activities that allow students to use new vocabulary and demonstrate knowledge of new concepts:* Most mini-assessments include an optional writing prompt that allows students to write about the text(s).

Administration Guidelines for ELLs

When assessing ELL students, appropriate accommodations may be considered. Modifications to the assessment itself should not be made. According to the *Accommodations Manual: How to Select, Administer, and Evaluate Use of Accommodations for Instruction and Assessment of English Language Learners, First Edition*:

- “Modifications refer to practices or materials that change, lower, or reduce state-required learning expectations. Modifications may change the underlying construct of an assessment.”
- “Accommodations are accessibility supports [that] do not reduce learning expectations. They meet specific needs of students in instruction and assessment and enable educators to know that measures of a student’s work produce valid results.”

Teachers **may** choose to make accommodations that meet the unique needs of ELLs. Prior to delivering any practice assessment, especially if the mini-assessment is to be used in a more formal setting (e.g., as part of a district benchmark assessment), teachers should research what accommodations will be available to students during their state’s summative assessment. For example, some states allow ELLs to use a bilingual dictionary during an assessment; other states do not allow this. Ensure your ELLs are practicing with the accommodations they can expect to see on the summative. Some examples of appropriate accommodations include:

- Reading the directions aloud to students multiple times.
- Providing student directions in student native language.
- Allowing students additional time to complete the mini-assessments.
- Exposing students to item types prior to the assessment.
- Reading the scoring expectations for the writing prompt aloud to students.

Because the goal of literacy mini-assessments is to measure grade-level literacy as students progress toward college- and career-readiness, teachers must be careful **not** to make modifications that may be commonly used in classroom instruction. Examples of modifications that should **not** be used include:

- Reading passages aloud for students.
- Adding student glossaries of unfamiliar terms.
- Pre-teaching tested vocabulary words.

In any testing setting, teachers must be careful to choose accommodations that suit the needs of each individual student.

Additional Resources For Assessment and CCSS Implementation

Shift 1 – Complexity: *Regular practice with complex text and its academic language*

- See Appendix B for examples of informational and literary complex texts
http://www.corestandards.org/assets/Appendix_B.pdf
- See the Text Complexity Collection on www.achievethecore.org

Shift 2 – Evidence: *Reading, writing, and speaking grounded in evidence from text, both literary and informational*

- See Close Reading Exemplars for ways to engage students in close reading on
<http://www.achievethecore.org/steal-these-tools/close-reading-exemplars>
- See the Basal Alignment Project for examples of text-dependent questions
<http://www.achievethecore.org/basal-alignment-project>

Shift 3 – Knowledge: *Building knowledge through content-rich nonfiction*

- See Appendix B for examples of informational and literary complex texts
http://www.corestandards.org/assets/Appendix_B.pdf

Sample Scoring Rubric for Text-Based Writing Prompts:

http://achievethecore.org/content/upload/Scoring_Rubric_for_Text-Based_Writing_Prompts.pdf