



# ***New York State Testing Program***

---

## **Educator Guide to the 2014 Grade 8 Common Core English Language Arts Test**

**engage<sup>ny</sup>**

---

**Our Students. Their Moment.**

# THE UNIVERSITY OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK

## Regents of The University

MERRYL H. TISCH, <i>Chancellor</i> , B.A., M.A., Ed.D. ....	New York
ANTHONY S. BOTTAR, <i>Vice Chancellor</i> , B.A., J.D. ....	Syracuse
ROBERT M. BENNETT, <i>Chancellor Emeritus</i> , B.A., M.S. ....	Tonawanda
JAMES C. DAWSON, A.A., B.A., M.S., Ph.D. ....	Plattsburgh
GERALDINE D. CHAPEY, B.A., M.A., Ed.D. ....	Belle Harbor
HARRY PHILLIPS, 3rd, B.A., M.S.F.S. ....	Hartsdale
JAMES R. TALLON, Jr., B.A., M.A. ....	Binghamton
ROGER B. TILLES, B.A., J.D. ....	Woodbury
CHARLES R. BENDIT, B.A. ....	Manhattan
BETTY A. ROSA, B.A., M.S. in Ed., M.S. in Ed., M.Ed., Ed.D. ....	Bronx
LESTER W. YOUNG, Jr., B.S., M.S., Ed.D. ....	Brooklyn
CHRISTINE D. CEA, B.A., M.A., Ph.D. ....	Staten Island
WADE S. NORWOOD, B.A. ....	Rochester
JAMES O. JACKSON, B.S., M.A., Ph.D. ....	Albany
KATHLEEN M. CASHIN, B.S., M.S., Ed.D. ....	Brooklyn
JAMES E. COTTRELL, B.S., M.D. ....	Brooklyn
T. ANDREW BROWN, B.A., J.D. ....	Rochester

### **President of The University and Commissioner of Education**

DR. JOHN B. KING, JR.

### **Deputy Commissioner of Education, P-12**

KEN SLENTZ

### **Deputy Commissioner, Office of Curriculum, Assessment and Educational Technology**

KEN WAGNER

### **Assistant Commissioner, Office of Assessment, Standards and Curriculum**

CANDACE H. SHYER

### **Director, Office of State Assessment**

STEVEN E. KATZ

The State Education Department does not discriminate on the basis of age, color, religion, creed, disability, marital status, veteran status, national origin, race, gender, genetic predisposition or carrier status, or sexual orientation in its educational programs, services, and activities. Portions of this publication can be made available in a variety of formats, including Braille, large print, or audio tape, upon request. Inquiries concerning this policy of nondiscrimination should be directed to the Department's Office for Diversity, Ethics, and Access, Room 530, Education Building, Albany, NY 12234.

Copyright © 2013 by the New York State Education Department. Permission is hereby granted for school administrators and educators to reproduce these materials, located online at <http://www.p12.nysed.gov/assessment/>, in the quantities necessary for their schools' use, but not for sale, provided copyright notices are retained as they appear in these publications. This permission does not apply to distribution of these materials, electronically or by other means, other than for school use.

## **Table of Contents**

---

<b>2014 Common Core English Language Arts Tests</b> .....	1
<b>Common Core Learning Standards for English Language Arts</b> .....	2
Reading .....	2
Writing .....	2
Language .....	3
Speaking and Listening .....	3
<b>Assessing the Common Core Learning Standards for English Language Arts</b> .....	4
Reading, Writing, and Language .....	4
Speaking and Listening .....	4
What It Means to Use Authentic Texts .....	5
Rigorous Texts .....	6
Range of Informational Texts .....	7
<b>The 2014 Grade 8 Common Core English Language Arts Test</b> .....	8
Testing Sessions and Times .....	8
When Students Have Completed Their Tests .....	9
Test Design .....	9
Test Blueprint .....	10
Question Formats .....	10
<i>Multiple-Choice Questions</i> .....	10
<i>Short-Response Questions</i> .....	11
<i>Extended-Response Questions</i> .....	11
Sample Questions .....	11

New English Language Arts Rubrics.....	12
<i>Short-Response (2-Point) Holistic Rubric</i> .....	12
<i>Extended-Response (4-Point) Holistic Rubric</i> .....	13

## Foreword

---

Beginning with the 2012–13 school year, the New York State Education Department (NYSED) [redesigned its assessment program](#) to measure what students know and can do relative to the grade-level Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) for English Language Arts. The CCLS for English Language Arts make up a broad set of literacy expectations for students. The CCLS English Language Arts Standards define literacy as integrated comprehension, analysis, and communication of information gleaned from reading, regardless of the text type.

The Grade 8 Common Core English Language Arts Test is designed to measure student literacy as defined by the CCLS.

Many of the questions on the 2014 Grade 8 Common Core English Language Arts Test are more advanced and complex than those found on prior assessments that measured prior grade-level standards. Answer choices will not jump out; rather, students will need to make hard choices between “fully correct” and “plausible but incorrect” answers that are designed specifically to determine whether students have comprehended the entire passage and are proficient with the deep analyses specified by the standards.

To answer ELA questions correctly, students will need to read and analyze each passage completely and closely, and be prepared to carefully consider responses to multiple-choice questions. In many cases, if the student has not read and comprehended the entire passage, the answer choices may not make sense. For constructed response items, students will need to make inferences that can be defended with evidence gathered from rigorous literary and informational passages. Some passages will express an author’s point of view with which not all readers will agree.

This guide details many of the changes involved with both instruction and the newly designed tests that measure the Common Core Learning Standards for English Language Arts. While reading about each of the changes will help to understand how to prepare students for the upcoming test, it is important to remember that research has consistently demonstrated that students perform best on local, regional, statewide, or national tests when they have a great teacher delivering high-quality instruction aligned to rigorous standards.<sup>1</sup> Rote test prep practices are incompatible with highly effective teaching and lead to lower student performance.<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> See, for example, <http://ccsr.uchicago.edu/publications/authentic-intellectual-work-and-standardized-tests-conflict-or-coexistence>.

<sup>2</sup> See, for example, [http://metproject.org/downloads/MET\\_Gathering\\_Feedback\\_Research\\_Paper.pdf](http://metproject.org/downloads/MET_Gathering_Feedback_Research_Paper.pdf).

## 2014 Common Core English Language Arts Tests

---

As part of the New York State Board of Regents Reform Agenda, NYSED has embarked on a comprehensive initiative to ensure that schools prepare students with the knowledge and skills they need to succeed in college and in their careers. To realize the goals of this agenda, changes have occurred in standards, curricula, and assessments. These changes will impact pedagogy and, ultimately, student learning.

The New York State P–12 Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) for English Language Arts & Literacy call for changes in what is expected from a teacher’s instructional approach. In English Language Arts, these shifts will be characterized by an intense focus on complex, grade-appropriate nonfiction and fiction texts that require rigorous textual analysis, the application of academic language, and other key college- and career- readiness skills.

More specifically, the changes around which teachers should expect to focus their instruction will involve six key shifts each in English Language Arts & Literacy. (A more detailed description of these shifts can be found at <http://engageny.org/resource/common-core-shifts/>).

<b>Shifts in English Language Arts &amp; Literacy</b>		
Shift 1	Balancing Informational & Literary Text	Students read a true balance of informational and literary texts.
Shift 2	Knowledge in the Disciplines	Students build knowledge about the world (domains/content areas) primarily through <i>text</i> rather than through the teacher or other activities.
Shift 3	Staircase of Complexity	Students read the central, grade-appropriate text around which instruction is centered. Teachers are patient, and create more time, space, and support in the curriculum for close reading.
Shift 4	Text-based Answers	Students engage in rich and rigorous evidence-based conversations about text.
Shift 5	Writing from Sources	Writing emphasizes use of evidence from sources to inform or make an argument.
Shift 6	Academic Vocabulary	Students continuously build the transferable vocabulary they need to access grade-level complex texts. This can be done effectively by spiraling like content in increasingly complex texts.

The Grades 3–8 English Language Arts and Mathematics New York State Testing Program (NYSTP) has been redesigned to measure student learning aligned with the instructional shifts necessitated by the CCLS. This document provides specific details about the 2014 Grade 8 Common Core English Language Arts Test and the standards that it measures.

## **Common Core Learning Standards for English Language Arts**

---

The New York State P–12 Common Core Learning Standards for English Language Arts & Literacy define general, cross-disciplinary literacy expectations that must be met for students (Standards) and characteristics of CCLS instruction (“Note on range and content”). The standards are organized into four overlapping strands: Reading, Writing, Language, and Speaking/Listening. In each of these strands, the shifts are borne out in the specific fluency, comprehension, analytic, and communication expectations stated in the standards. The CCLS present an integrated model of literacy in which standards mutually inform one another and progress fluidly across grades. A successful integration of the standards will provide students with the fluency, comprehension, analytic, and communication skills necessary to be on track for college and career readiness.

As detailed in the “Note on range and content” (found alongside the Grade 6-8 Anchor Standards), Common Core teaching and learning have certain distinct characteristics. The characteristics, detailed below by strand, further articulate what New York means by the instructional “Shifts” demanded by these standards. The information below is meant to provide the context and expectations to enable student success and inform teacher practice.

### **Reading**

To become college and career ready, students must grapple with works of exceptional craft and thought whose range extends across genres, cultures, and centuries. Such works offer insights into the human condition and serve as models for students’ own thinking and writing. Along with high-quality contemporary works, these texts should be chosen from among influential U.S. documents, classics of American literature, and timeless works from a diverse range of authors. Through wide and deep reading of literature and nonfiction of steadily increasing sophistication, students gain

- a reservoir of literary and cultural knowledge, references, and images (Shift 1: Balancing Informational & Literary Text; Shift 2: Knowledge in the Disciplines; Shift 3: Staircase of Complexity; Shift 6: Academic Vocabulary); and
- the ability to evaluate intricate arguments (Shift 1: Balancing Informational & Literary Text; Shift 2: Knowledge in the Disciplines; Shift 5: Writing from Sources).

### **Writing**

For students, writing is a key means of asserting and defending claims, showing what they know about a subject, and conveying what they have experienced, imagined, thought, and felt. To become college- and career-ready writers, students

- must take the task, purpose, and audience into careful consideration, choosing words, information, structures, and formats deliberately (Shift 5: Writing from Sources);
- need to know how to combine elements of different kinds of writing—for example, to use narrative strategies within argument and explanation within narrative—to produce complex and nuanced writing (Shift 4: Text-based Answers; Shift 5: Writing from Sources);

- need to be able to use technology strategically when creating, refining, and collaborating on writing;
- have to become adept at gathering information, evaluating sources, and citing material accurately, reporting findings from their research and analysis of sources in a clear and cogent manner (Shift 4: Text-based Answers; Shift 5: Writing from Sources); and
- must have the flexibility, concentration, and fluency to produce high-quality, first-draft text under a tight deadline, as well as the capacity to revisit and make improvements to a piece of writing over multiple drafts when circumstances encourage or require it (Shift 4: Text-based Answers; Shift 5: Writing from Sources).

## **Language**

To become college and career ready, students

- must have firm control over the conventions of standard English;
- must come to appreciate that language is at least as much a matter of craft as of rules and be able to choose words, syntax, and punctuation to express themselves and achieve particular functions and rhetorical effects;
- must have extensive vocabularies built through reading and study, enabling them to comprehend complex texts and engage in purposeful writing about and conversations around content (Shift 1: Balancing Informational & Literary Text; Shift 2: Knowledge in the Disciplines);
- need to become skilled in determining or clarifying the meaning of words and phrases they encounter, choosing flexibly from an array of strategies to aid them (Shift 6: Academic Vocabulary); and
- must learn to see an individual word as part of a network of other words—words, for example, that have similar denotations but different connotations (Shift 6: Academic Vocabulary).

## **Speaking and Listening**

To become college and career ready, students

- must have ample opportunities to take part in a variety of rich, structured conversations—as part of a whole class, in small groups, and with a partner—built around important content in various domains (Shift 2: Knowledge in the Disciplines); and
- must be able to contribute appropriately to these conversations, make comparisons and contrasts, and analyze and synthesize a multitude of ideas in accordance with the standards of evidence appropriate to a particular discipline. Whatever their intended major or career, high school graduates will depend heavily on their ability to listen attentively to others so that they will be able to build on others’ meritorious ideas while expressing their own ideas clearly and persuasively (Shift 4: Text-based Answers).

**The complete CCLS for English Language Arts & Literacy are available at <http://engageny.org/resource/new-york-state-p-12-common-core-learning-standards/>.**

## **Assessing the CCLS for English Language Arts**

---

The 2014 Grade 8 Common Core English Language Arts Test will focus entirely on the Grade 8 CCLS for English Language Arts & Literacy. As such, the tests will approach reading, writing, and language differently from past assessments.

### **Reading, Writing, and Language**

The 2014 Grade 8 Common Core English Language Arts Test will assess Reading, Writing, and Language Standards using multiple-choice, short-response, and extended-response questions. All questions will be based on close reading of informational, literary, or paired texts. All texts will be drawn from authentic, grade-level works that are worthwhile to read. Texts on the 2014 Grade 8 Common Core English Language Arts Test will typically be 900–1000 words in length. Please see pages 5–7 for further information about authentic texts and text selection.

Reading and Language Standards will be assessed using multiple-choice questions. Short-response (2-point) questions will primarily assess reading, but will also require writing and command of language. Extended-response (4-point) questions will assess Writing from Sources, whereby student responses will be rated on the degree to which they can communicate a clear and coherent analysis of one or two texts.

### **Speaking and Listening**

While Speaking and Listening Standards will **NOT** be assessed on the state test, they remain two of the most important components of college and career readiness. In early grades, Speaking and Listening Standards provide the dialogic building blocks that directly support students in acquiring the necessary skills and knowledge to *Read to Learn*. In Grades 6–8, Speaking and Listening Standards (practiced daily in evidence-based conversations about text) add to the foundation built in the early grades' instruction by strengthening and evolving habits, models, and developmental supports for students so that they are prepared to write from sources. Only through rigorous, structured classroom discourse will students gain valuable experiences interrogating texts they need in order to meet the rigors of what is required in writing. It is imperative that teachers continue to instruct and assess the Speaking and Listening Standards in the classroom. Instructional resources and examples of formative assessments for the Speaking and Listening Standards can be found in the Grade 8 curriculum materials located at EngageNY.org.

**For more information about Curriculum Materials, please refer to EngageNY at <http://engageny.org/common-core-curriculum/>.**

## What It Means to Use Authentic Texts

State testing programs use either commissioned or authentic texts, or a combination thereof, as passages for questions. Commissioned texts are authored by test developers or writers and are developed specifically for use in standardized tests. In contrast, authentic texts are published works that are typically encountered by students in daily life, such as in magazines, books or newspapers. The 2014 Grade 8 Common Core English Language Arts Test will use only authentic texts.

The transition to authentic texts and the CCLS for English Language Arts means that Common Core English Language Arts Tests will be experienced differently than past state tests. Many of the Common Core *Reading for Information* Standards require students to recognize how authors support their opinions, to understand the author’s point of view and purpose, and to be able to discern well-supported arguments from those that are not. In order to assess these standards on the test, we must include text passages that express opinions and theories with which not all readers may agree. Students must demonstrate their ability to determine point of view, purpose, and success of argumentation with supporting evidence in subjects that they will encounter both in other academic classes and in their daily lives.

The move to using authentic texts allows for the inclusion of works of literature that are worthy of reading outside an assessment context. The use of authentic, meaningful texts may mean that some texts are more emotionally charged or may use language outside of a student’s particular cultural experience, including intentional and unintentional use of incorrect grammar and spelling. While all assessments will include appropriate texts, please be aware that authentic texts will likely prompt real responses—perhaps even strong disagreement—among our students. Students need to be prepared to respond accordingly while engaging with the test. The alternative would be to exclude many authors and texts that are capable of supporting the rigorous analysis called for by the Common Core.

For example, selections from Mark Twain’s *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* or Betty Smith’s *A Tree Grows in Brooklyn* may appear on Common Core tests even though the complete works from which they would be drawn include controversial ideas and language that some may find provocative. Additionally, selections from these authors would likely include writing that contains incorrect grammar and spelling. Both Twain and Smith intentionally use incorrect grammar and/or spelling to develop characters, themes, and settings. However, both of these texts are foundational texts for the grade-band. While passages from these examples do not appear on this year’s test, passages drawn from similarly great works will be read in classrooms across the state, and some of them may end up on future tests.

The use of authentic, meaningful texts may also mean that some students have read texts included on the 2014 Grade 8 Common Core English Language Arts Test prior to administration. For the very reasons that texts were selected for use on the assessment, it is possible that teachers have selected the same texts for use in their classrooms and students may have read the books that passages were drawn from for their personal reading.

Additionally, the use of authentic passages also means that students may encounter passages drawn from works commonly taught at higher grades. Oftentimes, parts of larger, more complex works are perfectly suited for younger readers.

## Rigorous Texts

Selecting high-quality, grade-appropriate texts requires both objective text complexity metrics and expert judgment. For the 2014 Grade 8 Common Core English Language Arts Test, both qualitative and quantitative measures are used to determine the complexity of the texts.

Based on research and the guidance of nationally recognized literacy experts,<sup>3</sup> the following ranges for quantitative measures were used to guide text selection:

**Common Scale for Band Level Text Difficulty Ranges<sup>4</sup>**

Common Core Band	Text Analyzer Tool					
	ATOS	DRP	FK	LEXILE	SR	RM
2nd–3rd	2.75–5.14	42–54	1.98–5.34	420–820	0.05–2.48	3.53–6.13
4th–5th	4.97–7.03	52–60	4.51–7.73	740–1010	0.84–5.75	5.42–7.92
6th–8th	7.00–9.98	57–67	6.51–10.34	925–1185	4.11–10.66	7.04–9.57
9th–10th	9.67–12.01	62–72	8.32–12.12	1050–1335	9.02–13.93	8.41–10.81
11th–12th	11.20–14.10	67–74	10.34–14.20	1185–1385	12.30–14.50	9.57–12.00

Key	
ATOS	ATOS® (Renaissance Learning)
DRP	Degrees of Reading Power® (Questar)
FK	Flesch-Kincaid®
LEXILE	Lexile Framework® (MetaMetrics)
SR	Source Rater© (Educational Testing Service)
RM	Pearson Reading Maturity Metric© (Pearson Education)

**For more information about passage selection, please refer to Passage Selection Resources and Appendix B of the CCLS for English Language Arts at**

<http://engageny.org/resource/new-york-state-passage-selection-resources-for-grade-3-8-assessments>

**and**

<http://engageny.org/resource/appendix-b-common-core-standards-for-elaliteracy-text-exemplars-and-sample-performance/>.

---

<sup>3</sup> Nelson, Jessica; Perfetti, Charles; Liben, David; and Liben, Meredith, “Measures of Text Difficulty: Testing Their Predictive Value for Grade Levels and Student Performance,” 2012.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

## Range of Informational Texts

One of the major shifts of the CCLS is an emphasis on developing skills for comprehending and analyzing informational texts. The CCLS for English Language Arts calls for a balance of literary and informational texts. This balance is reflected in the standards, instruction, and texts selected for the Grade 8 test.

Increased exposure to informational texts better prepares students for what they will encounter in college and the workplace. The array of passages selected for the 2014 tests will assess whether students can comprehend and analyze a range of informational texts.

The 2014 Grade 8 Common Core English Language Arts Test will have questions on a variety of informational texts. Each of these has unique characteristics and can be grouped by general similarities in structure and purpose. The chart below categorizes common informational texts according to their structure.

EXPOSITORY	ARGUMENTATIVE	INSTRUCTIONAL	NARRATIVE
Textbooks (science)	Opinion/Editorial Pieces	Training Manuals	(Auto)Biographies
Textbooks (humanities)	Speeches (including those from seated politicians)	Contracts	Histories
Reports	Advertisements	User Guides/Manuals	Correspondence
Tourism Guides	Political Propaganda	Legal Documents	Curriculum Vitae
Product Specifications	Journal Articles	Recipes	Memoirs
Product/Service Descriptions	Government Documents	Product/Service Descriptions	News Articles
Magazine Articles	Legal Documents		Essays
Company Profiles	Tourism Guides		Interviews
Legal Documents	Correspondence		Agendas
Agendas	Essays		
Correspondence	Reviews		
Essays	Memoirs		
Interviews			
Government Documents			
News Articles			

**For more information about informational texts, please refer to Appendix B of the CCLS for English Language Arts at <http://engageny.org/resource/appendix-b-common-core-standards-for-elaliteracy-text-exemplars-and-sample-performance/>.**

# The 2014 Grade 8 Common Core English Language Arts Test

---

## Testing Sessions and Times

The 2014 Grade 8 Common Core English Language Arts Test will consist of **three books** that are administered over **three days**. **Day 1 will consist of Book 1. Day 2 will consist of Book 2. Day 3 will consist of Book 3.** The 2014 Grade 8 Common Core English Language Arts Test is designed so that most students will complete Day 1 testing in about 70 minutes, Day 2 testing in about 60 minutes, and Day 3 testing in about 50 minutes. While it is likely that most students will complete testing within these times, students will be permitted 90 minutes to complete the test each day. This design provides ample time for students who work at different paces. For more information regarding what students may do once they have completed their work, please refer to the section “When Students Have Completed Their Tests.”

**Grade 8 Estimated Time on Task**

<b>Book</b>	<b>Day Administered</b>	<b>Estimated Time on Task</b>
1	1	70*
2	2	60*
3	3	50*
Total Estimated Time on Task		180

\* Each Testing Day will be scheduled to allow 90 minutes for completion.

The tests must be administered under standard conditions, and the directions must be followed carefully. The same test administration procedures must be used with all students so that valid inferences can be drawn from the test results.

NYSED devotes great attention to the security and integrity of the NYSTP. School administrators and teachers involved in the administration of State Assessments are responsible for understanding and adhering to the instructions set forth in the *School Administrator’s Manual* and the *Teacher’s Directions*. These resources will be found at

<http://www.p12.nysed.gov/assessment/ei/eigen.html>.

## When Students Have Completed Their Tests

Students who finish their assessment before the allotted time expires should be encouraged to go back and check their work. Once the student checks his or her work, or chooses not to, examination materials should be collected by the proctor. After a student's assessment materials are collected, that student may be permitted to read silently.\* This privilege is granted at the discretion of each school. No talking is permitted, and no other schoolwork is permitted.

\*For more detailed information about test administration, including proper procedures for talking to students during testing and handling reading materials, please refer to the *School Administrator's Manual* and the *Teacher's Directions*.

## Test Design

The chart below illustrates the test design for the 2014 Grade 8 Common Core English Language Arts Test. This chart details the number of passages and the type(s) of questions in each book. Book 1 consists of passages with multiple-choice questions only. Book 2 consists of one passage with multiple-choice questions and two passages followed by short- and/or extended-response questions. Book 3 consists of passages with short- and extended-response questions only.

Also noted in the chart below is the approximate number of informational and literary passages present on the 2014 test. Please note that embedded field test questions and passages are included in the design. It will not be apparent to students whether a question is an embedded field test question that does not count toward their score or an operational test question that does count toward their score.

<b>Passages</b>	6	1	2	3	<b>12</b>
<b>Multiple-Choice Questions</b>	42	7			<b>49</b>
<b>Short-Response Questions</b>			3	5	<b>8</b>
<b>Extended-Response Questions</b>			1	1	<b>2</b>
	<b>Total Number of Literary Passages</b>				<b>3-8</b>
	<b>Total Number of Informational Passages</b>				<b>4-10</b>

## Test Blueprint

The chart below shows the percentage of points that relate to Reading, Language, and Writing Standards. When reading these charts, it is essential to remember that most questions assess many standards simultaneously. Additionally, Reading Standards are divided by focus (Key Ideas, Craft and Structure, and Integration of Knowledge) to help guide instruction.

Area of Focus		Approximate Percentage of Points
Reading Standards (RL and RI)		100% of points require close reading
Language and Writing Standards		Up to 45% of points require writing and command of language
Approximate Percent of Reading Points		
Key Ideas and Details	Craft and Structure	Integration of Knowledge and Ideas
Up to 60%	Up to 40%	Up to 40%

It should be noted that Standards RL8.1 and RI8.1 undergird all questions on the tests, as all will require text-based responses. Likewise, Standards RL8.10 and RI8.10 form the heart of all text-based CCLS instruction. While not assessed directly in questions, Standards RL8.10 and RI8.10 are present on the test in the form of rigorous, worthwhile texts.

## Question Formats

### Multiple-Choice Questions

Multiple-choice questions are designed to assess Common Core Reading and Language Standards. They will ask students to analyze different aspects of a given text, including central idea, style elements, character and plot development, and vocabulary. Almost all questions, including vocabulary questions, will only be answered correctly if the student comprehends and makes use of the whole passage. For multiple-choice questions, students will select the correct response from four answer choices.

Multiple-choice questions will assess Reading Standards in a range of ways. Some will ask students to analyze aspects of text or vocabulary. Many questions will require students to combine skills. For example, questions may ask students to identify a segment of text that best supports the central idea. To answer correctly, a student must first comprehend the central idea and then show understanding of how that idea is supported. Questions will require more than rote recall or identification. Students will also be required to negotiate plausible, text-based distractors.<sup>5</sup> Each distractor will require students to comprehend the whole passage.

---

<sup>5</sup> A distractor is an incorrect response that may appear to be a plausible correct response to a student who has not mastered the skill or concept being tested.

## Short-Response Questions

Short-response questions are designed to assess Common Core Reading and Language Standards. These are single questions in which students use textual evidence to support their own answers to an inferential question. These questions ask the student to make an inference (a claim, position, or conclusion) based on his or her analysis of the passage, and then provide two pieces of text-based evidence to support his or her answer.

### Sample Two-Credit Question:

*What is the main purpose of the 2014 Test Guide? Provide two text-based details to support your answer.*

*Sample Response: The guide is designed to help teachers prepare students to be assessed on their mastery of the CCLS for ELA. The guide provides an overview of the CCLS for ELA and specific information about how the CCLS for ELA will be assessed, including Test Blueprint and Question Formats.*

The purpose of the short-response questions is to assess a student's ability to comprehend and analyze text. In responding to these questions, students will be expected to write in complete sentences. Responses should require no more than three complete sentences. The rubric used to evaluate these types of responses is provided on page 12. It is important to note that students who answer the question only using details from the text will NOT receive full credit. A full-credit response is characterized by both an inference and textual support.

## Extended-Response Questions

Extended-response questions are designed to assess *Writing from Sources*. They will focus primarily on Common Core Writing Standards. Extended-response questions will require comprehension and analysis of either an individual text or paired texts. Paired texts require students to read and analyze two related texts. Paired texts are related by theme, genre, tone, time period, or other characteristics. Many extended-response questions will ask students to express a position and support it with text-based evidence. For paired texts, students will be expected to synthesize ideas between and draw evidence from both texts. Extended-response questions allow students to demonstrate their ability to write a coherent essay using textual evidence to support their ideas.

Student responses will be evaluated based on Common Core Writing Standards and a student's command of evidence to defend his or her point.

## Sample Questions

**Sample Questions for the Grade 8 Common Core English Language Arts Tests are available at**

<http://www.engageny.org/resource/new-york-state-common-core-sample-questions>

## New English Language Arts Rubrics

The 2014 Grade 8 Common Core English Language Arts Test will be scored using new rubrics. Both the English Language Arts 2-Point and 4-Point Rubrics have changed to reflect the new demands called for by the CCLS.

### Short-Response (2-Point) Holistic Rubric

Short-response questions will ask students to make a claim, take a position, or draw a conclusion, and then support it with details. This structure forms the foundation of the CCLS. As such, the 2-point Rubric focuses on both the inference and evidence a student provides. This structure allows students to have wide latitude in responding to each prompt so long as their response is supported by the text.

Additionally, the expectation for all short responses will be complete, coherent sentences. By weaving these elements together, the questions, responses, and scores remain firmly focused on student reading ability.

#### 2-Point Rubric—Short Response

Score	Response Features
<b>2 Point</b>	The features of a 2-point response are <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Valid inferences and/or claims from the text where required by the prompt</li><li>• Evidence of analysis of the text where required by the prompt</li><li>• Relevant facts, definitions, concrete details, and/or other information from the text to develop response according to the requirements of the prompt</li><li>• Sufficient number of facts, definitions, concrete details, and/or other information from the text as required by the prompt</li><li>• Complete sentences where errors do not impact readability</li></ul>
<b>1 Point</b>	The features of a 1-point response are <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• A mostly literal recounting of events or details from the text as required by the prompt</li><li>• Some relevant facts, definitions, concrete details, and/or other information from the text to develop response according to the requirements of the prompt</li><li>• Incomplete sentences or bullets</li></ul>
<b>0 Point*</b>	The features of a 0-point response are <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• A response that does not address any of the requirements of the prompt or is totally inaccurate</li><li>• A response that is not written in English</li><li>• A response that is unintelligible or indecipherable</li></ul>

- If the prompt requires two texts and the student only references one text, the response can be scored no higher than a 1.

\* Condition Code A is applied whenever a student who is present for a test session leaves an entire constructed-response question in that session completely blank (no response attempted).

## Extended-Response (4-Point) Holistic Rubric

Within the Common Core, writing does not take place in a vacuum. To be college and career ready, one must be able to write for a purpose using information from textual sources. Extended-response questions on the 2014 Common Core English Language Arts Tests will ask students to analyze texts and address meaningful questions using strategic, textual details. Scores for extended responses will be based on four overarching criteria:

- **Content and Analysis**—the extent to which the essay conveys complex ideas and information clearly and accurately in order to support claims in an analysis of topics or texts
- **Command of Evidence**—the extent to which the essay presents evidence from the provided texts to support analysis and reflection
- **Coherence, Organization, and Style**—the extent to which the essay logically organizes complex ideas, concepts, and information using formal style and precise language
- **Control of Conventions**—the extent to which the essay demonstrates command of the conventions of standard English grammar, usage, capitalization, punctuation, and spelling

These four characteristics combined make up the focus of the 4-point, extended-response tasks, *Writing from Sources*. Whether in response to an individual text or a paired selection, a student will be asked to synthesize, evaluate, and evidence his or her thinking in a coherent and legible manner. Please note the holistic 4-point rubric for Writing in Grades 6-8 on page 14.

## New York State Grades 6-8 Writing Evaluation Rubric

CRITERIA	CCLS	SCORE				Essays at this level: —introduce a topic in a manner that does not logically follow from the task and purpose —demonstrate little understanding of the text(s)	Essays at this level: —provide no evidence or provide evidence that is completely irrelevant
		4	3	2	1		
<b>CONTENT AND ANALYSIS:</b> the extent to which the essay conveys complex ideas and information clearly and accurately in order to support claims in an analysis of topics or texts	W.2 R.1-9	<b>Essays at this level:</b> —clearly introduce a topic in a manner that is compelling and follows logically from the task and purpose —demonstrate insightful analysis of the text(s)	<b>Essays at this level:</b> —clearly introduce a topic in a manner that follows from the task and purpose —demonstrate grade-appropriate analysis of the text(s)	<b>Essays at this level:</b> —introduce a topic in a manner that follows generally from the task and purpose —demonstrate a literal comprehension of the text(s)	<b>Essays at this level:</b> —introduce a topic in a manner that does not logically follow from the task and purpose —demonstrate little understanding of the text(s)	<b>Essays at this level:</b> —demonstrate a lack of comprehension of the text(s) or task	
		—develop the topic with relevant, well-chosen facts, definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information and examples from the text(s) —sustain the use of varied, relevant evidence	—develop the topic with relevant facts, definitions, details, quotations, or other information and examples from the text(s) —sustain the use of relevant evidence, with some lack of variety	—partially develop the topic of the essay with the use of some textual evidence, some of which may be irrelevant —use relevant evidence with inconsistency	—demonstrate an attempt to use evidence, but only develop ideas with minimal, occasional evidence which is generally invalid or irrelevant	—provide no evidence or provide evidence that is completely irrelevant	
<b>COMMAND OF EVIDENCE:</b> the extent to which the essay presents evidence from the provided texts to support analysis and reflection	W.9 R.1-9	—exhibit clear organization, with the skillful use of appropriate and varied transitions to create a unified whole and enhance meaning	—exhibit clear organization, with the use of appropriate transitions to create a unified whole	—exhibit some attempt at organization, with inconsistent use of transitions	—exhibit little attempt at organization, or attempts to organize are irrelevant to the task	—exhibit no evidence of organization	
		—establish and maintain a formal style, using grade-appropriate, stylistically sophisticated language and domain-specific vocabulary with a notable sense of voice	—establish and maintain a formal style using precise language and domain-specific vocabulary	—establish but fail to maintain a formal style, with inconsistent use of language and domain-specific vocabulary	—lack a formal style, using language that is imprecise or inappropriate for the text(s) and task	—use language that is predominantly incoherent or copied directly from the text(s)	
<b>COHERENCE, ORGANIZATION, AND STYLE:</b> the extent to which the essay logically organizes complex ideas, concepts, and information using formal style and precise language	W.2 L.3 L.6	—provide a concluding statement or section that is compelling and follows clearly from the topic and information presented	—provide a concluding statement or section that follows from the topic and information presented	—provide a concluding statement or section that follows generally from the topic and information presented	—provide a concluding statement or section that is illogical or unrelated to the topic and information presented	—do not provide a concluding statement or section	
		—demonstrate grade-appropriate command of conventions, with few errors	—demonstrate grade-appropriate command of conventions, with occasional errors that do not hinder comprehension	—demonstrate emerging command of conventions, with some errors that may hinder comprehension	—demonstrate a lack of command of conventions, with frequent errors that hinder comprehension	—are minimal, making assessment of conventions unreliable	
<b>CONTROL OF CONVENTIONS:</b> the extent to which the essay demonstrates command of the conventions of standard English grammar, usage, capitalization, punctuation, and spelling	W.2 L.1 L.2						

- If the prompt requires two texts and the student only references one text, the response can be scored no higher than a 2.
- If the student writes only a personal response and makes no reference to the text(s), the response can be scored no higher than a 1.
- Responses totally unrelated to the topic, illegible, or incoherent should be given a 0.
- A response totally copied from the text(s) with no original student writing should be scored a 0.

\* Condition Code A is applied whenever a student who is present for a test session leaves an entire constructed-response question in that session completely blank (no response attempted).