



WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT OF  
**PUBLIC INSTRUCTION**

# **English Language Arts Item Sampler Grade 6**



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## OVERVIEW

This document contains samples of stimulus passages and test items similar to those on the Wisconsin Forward English Language Arts Exam. Each sample test item has been through a rigorous review process by DRC, Wisconsin educators, and a third party to ensure alignment with the Wisconsin Academic Standards. These items will not be used on the state assessment and may, therefore, be used in Wisconsin for professional development and student practice. The items in this document illustrate a sample of the content and types of items that students will encounter on the Forward Exam. A Summary Data table in the Appendices section identifies the alignment (standard measured), answer key, depth of knowledge, and annotations for each item.

## CONNECTION TO THE STANDARDS

Wisconsin Academic Standards for English Language Arts are available on the [DPI webpage](#). Test items require students to prove their knowledge and abilities as stated in the standards.

## TEXT COMPLEXITY CONSIDERATIONS

As part of the reading and listening passage development process, a passage's text complexity is analyzed so that an appropriate grade-level placement for each passage can be made. Data Recognition Corporation uses a process that measures (1) the quantitative evaluation of the text and (2) the qualitative evaluation of the text, which is reported out on a passage placemat. Passages along with their respective placemats may be submitted to DPI during initial passage reviews. In addition, a third component, matching reader/listener to text and task, is also taken into consideration during passage evaluation and teacher committee reviews.

## HOW DO I USE THIS BOOK?

### Professional Development

Sample items are useful as educators engage in conversations about what students are expected to know and be able to do to demonstrate proficiency on the state assessments relative to the Wisconsin Academic Standards. Sample items can inform discussions about state and local standards, curriculum, instruction, and assessment.

### Improving Instruction

Teachers may use sample items in classroom activities that help students understand how to

- review key vocabulary;
- solve problems;
- determine which answer choices are correct, which are incorrect, and why;
- approach long and/or multistep tasks;
- use good test-taking strategies.

## Student Practice

Students may perform better and with less anxiety if they are familiar with the format of the test and with the types of items they will be required to answer. The Forward Exam is an online assessment; students will benefit from the use of the [Online Tools Training](#) in order to work within the system interface to answer items as they will appear on the assessment, as well as utilize the tools available to them in the online system.

**Note:** A student's score on the practice test cannot be converted to a scale score, used to predict performance on the Forward Exam, or used to make inferences about the student's learning.

## Test Preparation

While using the Item Sampler for test preparation, care should be taken that this is done in a balanced manner and one that helps to enhance student knowledge of subject matter as well as test performance. Please note that test preparation is only useful to the extent that it is also teaching content area knowledge and skills. Therefore, the use of this resource for test preparation is of limited value to students due to the narrow opportunity for content learning. It is very important to ensure that teachers are teaching to the curriculum and not to the test, as teaching to the test narrows the focus of instruction to only that content covered by the test.

## CONSIDERATIONS FOR LISTENING PASSAGES

In order to closely mimic the student experience of the online Forward Exam, educators should read the Listening Passage for Session 3 found in Appendix A out loud to students. Educators should NOT read the items out loud, only the passage. Educators may read the passage more than once as needed.

DEPTH OF KNOWLEDGE

Hess' Cognitive Rigor Matrix & Curricular Examples: Applying Webb's Depth-of-Knowledge Levels to Bloom's Cognitive Process Dimensions – ELA

Revised Bloom's Taxonomy	Webb's DOK Level 1 Recall & Reproduction	Webb's DOK Level 2 Skills & Concepts	Webb's DOK Level 3 Strategic Thinking/ Reasoning	Webb's DOK Level 4 Extended Thinking
<b>Remember</b> Retrieve knowledge from long-term memory, recognize, recall, locate, identify	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Recall, recognize, or locate basic facts, details, events, or ideas explicit in texts</li> <li>Read words orally in connected text with fluency &amp; accuracy</li> </ul>			
<b>Understand</b> Construct meaning, clarify, paraphrase, represent, translate, illustrate, give examples, classify, categorize, summarize, generalize, infer a logical conclusion), predict, compare/contrast, match like ideas, explain, construct models	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify or describe literary elements (characters, setting, sequence, etc.)</li> <li>Select appropriate words when intended meaning/definition is clearly evident</li> <li>Describe/explain who, what, where, when, or how</li> <li>Define/describe facts, details, terms, principles</li> <li>Write simple sentences</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Specify, explain, show relationships; explain why, cause-effect</li> <li>Give non-examples/examples</li> <li>Summarize results, concepts, ideas</li> <li>Make basic inferences or logical predictions from data or texts</li> <li>Identify main ideas or accurate generalizations of texts</li> <li>Locate information to support explicit-implicit central ideas</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Explain, generalize, or connect ideas using supporting evidence (quote, example, text reference)</li> <li>Identify/make inferences about explicit or implicit themes</li> <li>Describe how word choice, point of view, or bias may affect the readers' interpretation of a text</li> <li>Write multi-paragraph composition for specific purpose, focus, voice, tone, &amp; audience</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Explain how concepts or ideas specifically relate to <i>other</i> content domains or concepts</li> <li>Develop generalizations of the results obtained or strategies used and apply them to new problem situations</li> </ul>
<b>Apply</b> Carry out or use a procedure in a given situation; carry out (apply to a familiar task), or use (apply) to an unfamiliar task	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Use language structure (pre/suffix) or word relationships (synonym/antonym) to determine meaning of words</li> <li>Apply rules or resources to edit spelling, grammar, punctuation, conventions, word use</li> <li>Apply basic formats for documenting sources</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Use context to identify the meaning of words/phrases</li> <li>Obtain and interpret information using text features</li> <li>Develop a text that may be limited to one paragraph</li> <li>Apply simple organizational structures (paragraph, sentence types) in writing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Apply a concept in a new context</li> <li>Revise final draft for meaning or progression of ideas</li> <li>Apply internal consistency of text organization and structure to composing a full composition</li> <li>Apply word choice, point of view, style to impact readers' /viewers' interpretation of a text</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Illustrate how multiple themes (historical, geographic, social) may be interrelated</li> <li>Select or devise an approach among many alternatives to research a novel problem</li> </ul>
<b>Analyze</b> Break into constituent parts, determine how parts relate, differentiate between relevant-irrelevant, distinguish, focus, select, organize, outline, find coherence, deconstruct (e.g., for bias or point of view)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify whether specific information is contained in graphic representations (e.g., map, chart, table, graph, T-chart, diagram) or text features (e.g., headings, subheadings, captions)</li> <li>Decide which text structure is appropriate to audience and purpose</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Categorize/compare literary elements, terms, facts/details, events</li> <li>Identify use of literary devices</li> <li>Analyze format, organization, &amp; internal text structure (signal words, transitions, semantic cues) of different texts</li> <li>Distinguish: relevant-irrelevant information; fact/opinion</li> <li>Identify characteristic text features; distinguish between texts, genres</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Analyze information within data sets or texts</li> <li>Analyze interrelationships among concepts, issues, problems</li> <li>Analyze or interpret author's craft (literary devices, viewpoint, or potential bias) to create or critique a text</li> <li>Use reasoning, planning, and evidence to support inferences</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Analyze multiple sources of evidence, or multiple works by the same author, or across genres, time periods, themes</li> <li>Analyze complex/abstract themes, perspectives, concepts</li> <li>Gather, analyze, and organize multiple information sources</li> <li>Analyze discourse styles</li> </ul>
<b>Evaluate</b> Make judgments based on criteria, check, detect inconsistencies or fallacies, judge, critique			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cite evidence and develop a logical argument for conjectures</li> <li>Describe, compare, and contrast solution methods</li> <li>Verify reasonableness of results</li> <li>Justify or critique conclusions drawn</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Evaluate relevancy, accuracy, &amp; completeness of information from multiple sources</li> <li>Apply understanding in a novel way, provide argument or justification for the application</li> </ul>
<b>Create</b> Reorganize elements into new patterns/structures, generate, hypothesize, design, plan, produce	Brainstorm ideas, concepts, problems, or perspectives related to a topic or concept	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Generate conjectures or hypotheses based on observations or prior knowledge and experience</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Synthesize information within one source or text</li> <li>Develop a complex model for a given situation</li> <li>Develop an alternative solution</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Synthesize information across multiple sources or texts</li> <li>Articulate a new voice, alternate theme, new knowledge or perspective</li> </ul>

## ITEM TYPES

The Wisconsin Forward Exam has multiple types of test items. However, because this item sampler is in a format that can be printed, the majority of its items are multiple-choice. In the Forward Exam, there will be a more diverse array of item types, including the ones described below.

### **Selected-Response (SR) Items**

Selected-Response (SR) items are an efficient method for measuring a broad range of content, and can be used to assess a variety of skills. Three types of SR items are used on the online assessments: Multiple-Choice (MC), Enhanced Selected-Response (ESR), and Evidence-Based Selected-Response (EBSR). In all cases, SR items require that a student determines the correct answer(s) to the item posed from a provided list. While it is still possible for a student to perform some work directly related to determining the correct answer, the student is not required to generate the content of the answer when responding to a Selected-Response item. An exception to this requirement is Mathematics Short-Response/Gridded-Response items where students will be required to enter a short alphanumeric response.

### **Multiple-Choice (MC) Items**

Multiple-Choice (MC) items on Wisconsin's assessments have four answer choices, including three distractors and one correct answer. Distractors for Mathematics represent common misconceptions, incorrect logic, incorrect application of an algorithm, computational errors, etc. Distractors for English Language Arts (ELA) are written to represent a common misinterpretation, predisposition, unsound reasoning, casual reading, etc. A correct response to an MC item is worth one raw point. The process skills, directives, and action statements within an MC item also specifically align with the Wisconsin Academic Standards. Multiple-Choice items are present in all grades and are used with all content areas.

Multiple-Choice items can be further defined by being linked to, or independent from, a stimulus source. Items that operate independent of a stimulus are also known as "stand-alone MC." Stand-alone items may still have tables, graphs, or other information used in support of the stem. English Language Arts uses a mixture of MC items linked to a stimulus passage and some that are stand-alone. For Mathematics, all MC items are considered stand-alone.

### **Enhanced Selected-Response (ESR) Items**

The Enhanced Selected-Response (ESR) items are multi-part autoscored items that may consist of varying combinations of Multiple-Choice, Multiple-Response, Gridded-Response, Completion or Short-Answer, and Technology-Enhanced items that explore in greater depth and cognitive complexity the knowledge, skills, and abilities specified by the standards of each content area. Typically, this item type has a common focus and explores authentic problem-solving skills. An example of a Statistics and Probability Mathematics ESR item would utilize a data-table stimulus, with Part A using a Technology-Enhanced (TE) graphing tool to create a bar graph of the data presented and Part B asking students to calculate the mean of the data using a Short-Response item.

### **Two-Part Evidence-Based Selected-Response (EBSR) Items**

The Evidence-Based Selected-Response (EBSR) items have two parts and are designed to elicit a response based on what a student has read from a stimulus passage. EBSR items may be linked to a stimulus passage or to a stimulus passage set. There are several variations of two-part EBSR items, but all two-part EBSR items have an Accuracy piece and an Evidence piece.



The Accuracy piece of the item is Part A. Part A of a typical EBSR item will be similar to a standard MC test item. A student analyzes a passage and chooses a single, best (correct) answer from four answer choices. Part B of a typical EBSR item will elicit evidence from the stimulus passage and will require that the student selects one or more correct answers based on the response the student provided to Part A. Part B is also different from Part A in that it may have five or six answer options rather than just four answer options typical of an MC item and more than one option may be correct.

## Technology-Enhanced (TE) Items

Technology-Enhanced (TE) item types share the same functional structure as traditional paper and pencil test items; however, the expansive features and functions of a computer-based medium allow for the incorporation of technical enhancements into traditional elements of a test item, such as the item stem, the stimulus (if any), the response area, or a combination of all three. TE items are used in the content areas of ELA, Mathematics, and Science.

Item types such as drag-and-drop, hot spot, and in-line selection of multiple answers from drop-down menus broaden item presentation with engaging, interactive open-ended items.

A wide variety of TE item types will be present on the Wisconsin Forward Exam, including, but not limited to:

- **Clock Input**, where a student is able to add an hour hand and a minute hand to the clock;
- **Angle Draw Input**, where given a base line, the student can represent an angle;
- **Short Input**, where there are many types of short inputs that can be used (The number of characters is usually limited to a relatively small number in order to facilitate auto-scoring. The types of characters allowed can also be limited to text only, numbers only, or a mix. An equation editor can be utilized to assist the student in creating something as basic as a fraction or something more complex. The available symbols and templates in the equation builder can be customized for a testing program. Certain Short Input items can also be used in a paper-based test (PBT) as a Gridded-Response item.);
- **Bar Graph Input**, where students can produce bar graphs with prepopulated titles, labels, and scales, or the system can allow the student to populate them (The number of bars and the color of the bars is predetermined by the system. A reset feature is available that allows the student to start over from the original configuration.);
- **Number Line Input**, where students can create a graph that might involve plotting points only or points and lines (Both solid and open “dots” are available as well as line segments and rays. Number line graphs can have prepopulated titles, labels, and scales or can allow the student to populate them.);
- **Coordinate Graph Input**, which allows for the graphing and labeling of points and lines (Regions, determined by plotted lines, can be shaded. Solid and open “dots” as well as solid and dashed lines are available to the student. Coordinate graphs can have prepopulated titles, labels, and scales or can allow the student to populate them.);
- **Line Plot Input**, which is used as another way to graphically represent data (The basic structure is provided for the student. Certain labeling on the line plot can be done by the student. A reset feature is available that allows the student to start over from the original configuration.);
- **List Input**, a combination of the short input described earlier that allows the student to add input boxes (For example, it can be used for describing the steps in a process without revealing to the student the number of steps needed. The added input boxes can be rearranged and/or deleted.);
- **Drag-and-Drop Input**, a wide variety of ways are available to utilize a drag-and-drop input (The main difference between it and a drag-and-paste is that each draggable entity can be used only once with a drag-and-drop input. A reset feature is available that allows the student to start over from the original configuration.);

- **Drag-and-Paste Input**, a wide variety of ways are available to utilize drag-and-paste input (The main difference between it and a drag-and-drop is that each draggable entity can be used more than once with a drag-and-paste input. A reset feature is available that allows the student to start over from the original configuration.);
- **Drop-Down List Input**, allows for the creation of a situation where a great deal of information about a student's grasp of a concept can be determined with a single item (Students can be asked to choose from three function types, four number of real zero responses, and two inverse function responses. For one function alone, this provides 24 possible answer combinations. With the three functions, a considerable amount of information can be gained, making this almost an open-ended item type.);
- **Pictograph using Drag-and-Paste**, actually another example of drag-and-paste, but is worth mentioning on its own as it is a type of graphing often used at lower grade levels;
- **Circle Graph**, a graph that allows the student to create and label the "wedges" that represent the data (Circle graphs can have a prepopulated title or can allow the student to populate it. The color of the "wedges" is predetermined by the system.);
- **Matching**, allows for the use of text or graphics as the matching objects (The student clicks on one object and then clicks on a second object to connect them.);
- **Highlighting Text**, allows for designated text to be highlighted in a word, phrase, sentence, or paragraph; and the
- **Graphic Modification Hot Spot**, allows for one image to replace another image when a hot spot is clicked.

### Text-Dependent Analysis (TDA) Items

The English Language Arts (ELA) section of the Forward Exam presents students with a Text-Dependent Analysis (TDA) item. A TDA is a text-based analysis based on a single passage or a multiple-passage set that each student has read during the assessment. The passage or passage set will consist of either literary or informational text. In order to successfully answer a TDA, students must analyze and use information from the passage(s) to plan a comprehensive, holistic response. Students will then write their response, including supporting evidence from the passage(s). Students will have up to 5,000 characters to formulate their response. Students' responses are scored using a rubric that takes into account both the composition and the conventions of the student's writing.

The TDA portion of the Forward Exam requires students to read the text and then respond in writing in one of two ways:

- identifying and explaining a theme or central idea, using textual evidence to support the claim about what that theme or central idea is, or
- analyzing the development of an event, character, central ideas, or theme, using textual evidence to support the explanation and analysis.

TDA Item Samplers are available at <https://dpi.wi.gov/assessment/forward/sample-items>.



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## Paranka's Dumplings

Based on a Ukrainian Tale by Nancy Hallas

In old Ukraine, before cooks collected their recipes in books, a young girl named Paranka worked alongside the old cook of a wealthy aristocrat's manor house, memorizing all of her delicious recipes. The old cook, whom everyone affectionately called Babka after her wonderful small cakes, loved Paranka dearly. The two spent many hours working together, passing the time with stories and riddles.

One day Paranka was making her favorite recipe, tasty fruit dumplings, called *varenyky* or *pyrohy*. Paranka laughed as she mixed the dumpling dough. Paranka formed the dough into small circles and spooned cherries into the center of each. She gently folded the half-moon pockets, then pinched them closed with her nimble fingers. As Paranka delicately boiled the dough to perfection, Babka told her how dumplings were brought to Europe from Asia long ago.

Summer days passed, and Babka, who was getting quite old, suddenly became ill and couldn't cook anymore.

Ivan, the butler, hoped Paranka would take over the running of the kitchen. But the next day the lady of the manor said, "Paranka, I'm afraid you are too young and inexperienced to cook for my husband and our important guests. I have hired a new head cook." Paranka's heart sank, but she did not complain. That afternoon Olya came to take over the kitchen of the manor. She marched about and bragged of the fine houses she had cooked for all over Europe. Soon she was shrieking orders. Olya laughed scornfully as Paranka and the others scurried about trying to stay out of her way. It wasn't long until the older servants had had enough of her nasty ways.

One morning the aristocrat sent word that he would like fruit dumplings for dessert. Paranka begged Olya, "Please let me make them—it is my favorite recipe."

"No," barked Olya. "You are only a girl. You know nothing of dumplings."

Paranka watched in horror as Olya jabbed the dough, threw on more flour, and whacked it with a rolling pin. Paranka shook her head and thought, dumplings must be made tenderly and gently.

Olya poked cherries into the dumplings and clumsily pinched them shut with her thick fingers. When the dumplings had overboiled in the too-salty water, she put them on a cold, wet, drippy plate and sent them into the dining room.

The aristocrat bit into a dumpling and cried out in pain. "I've broken a tooth on a cherry pit!" The lady of the manor was furious.

"Take these back!" she ordered Ivan. "Send out the new cook. I wish to speak with her."

Olya rushed into the dining room.

The lady of the manor stared at her coldly and said, "These dumplings are terrible."

Olya smiled like a snake. "It is that girl Paranka, my lady," she hissed. "I told her to let me make the dumplings, but she wouldn't listen. She is so useless—no help at all."

"Paranka is young, and you must teach her," said the lady, her tone softening, "but don't let it happen again." Back in the kitchen, Olya laughed at her own cleverness. "Not a word from any of you," she snapped at the servants, "or I'll have Paranka sacked<sup>1</sup>!"

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<sup>1</sup> sacked—dismissed from a job.

Days passed, and whenever a meal was not pleasing to the lady, Olya blamed it on Paranka.

The day came when the gardener brought a basket of sweet, ripe, purple plums. As everyone made ready to serve the midday meal, Olya ordered Paranka to make plum dumplings for dessert.

“And if you tell anyone that you made them,” she threatened, “I’ll have you sent to live with the pigs.” Paranka nodded and reached for a bowl.

“And, by the way,” said Olya, yawning, “I’m going to have a rest. So you’ll have to serve the soup and all of the courses, too.” Then Olya sneaked some sweets from the cupboard, which she always kept locked, and retired to her bedroom by the kitchen. Soon she was snoring heavily.

“That Olya!” steamed Paranka as she flew about the kitchen giving direction to the other servants. She ladled out the soup and served the bread rolls. She arranged the fish, meats, and *kovbasa* onto platters and the *holubtsi* and vegetables into bowls. Hurrying to make the dumplings, she raced to the flour bin. She threw open the lid and gasped. There was hardly any flour left! Lazy Olya had forgotten to order more to be ground. Paranka scraped the last of the flour from the bin and mixed her dough.

“There isn’t much, but hopefully the dumplings will work,” she told herself. While the dough rested, Paranka washed and pitted the plums. Just as she was about to start making dumplings, Ivan burst through the door.

“A most distinguished guest has arrived!” he announced, rushing into the kitchen. “He is to join the master’s table for dessert.” Ivan turned to Paranka. “This guest is very important. You must help our master make a good impression.”

“I’m making plum dumplings, but—” started Paranka.

“Ah, that is good!” interrupted Ivan. “They are the master’s favorite. Your dumplings would warm the heart of any aristocrat. Hurry! Work, Paranka, and prosperity could be ours!”

Ivan rushed out of the kitchen before Paranka could say another word. “But there’s no flour to make more dumplings!” she wailed.

“What are you going to do?” asked the scullery maid.

Paranka shook her head. She paced the floor in front of the cooking fire and pondered her dilemma. The fire crackled gently, whispering to her.

Suddenly in the small, friendly flames Paranka saw an image of Babka, the beloved old cook. “Oh, Babka!” Paranka cried. “Please help me.”

The image smiled at Paranka. Then the flames flickered, and pictures began to emerge. The first showed the plums as they stood on the table. The second showed a white sheet on a clothesline flapping in the breeze. Then the image grew smoky and turned into a whirlpool of water, spinning round and round, until it dissolved into the flames and a puff of smoke.

Babka’s image has given me a riddle to solve, thought Paranka. What could it mean?

Paranka quickly but gently rolled the dough onto the table. As she rolled, she grew calmer. She thought over the riddle she had seen in the fire: the plums, a bedsheet, and a rolling swirl of water. How could she make a dessert from a bedsheet? It was crazy! As if in a dream, she rolled the dough thinner and thinner. Could it possibly stretch to make enough? But when she looked, it was too thin to make proper dumplings. It was thin like a sheet.

**Go on to the next page.**

“That’s it!” exclaimed Paranka. She brushed the stretched dough with melted butter, then topped it with sliced plums and honey. Taking one edge, she rolled it over and over, as she would to make a poppy seed roll. She rolled it like a bedsheet into a whirlpool. Then she cut the roll into two long pieces and placed them in the hot oven to bake.

When Ivan returned to the kitchen, Paranka was serving warm slices of thick, flaky pastry filled with sweet plums onto plates. She sprinkled each slice with poppy seeds and a drizzle of buckwheat honey, then placed a generous dab of rich sour cream on the top.

The delicious smells soon woke Olya. She stumbled into the kitchen, rubbed her eyes, and yawned.

“These are not dumplings!” she scolded Paranka. “How dare you disobey me!” Olya grabbed the dessert from Paranka and prepared to toss it into the fire, but Ivan stopped her.

“Stop, I beg you, Olya,” Ivan said. “While you were resting, a distinguished guest arrived. We have nothing else to serve him for dessert.”

“Is that so?” Olya sneered. “If the lady doesn’t like this strange dessert, tell her that Paranka made it. But if she does like it, be sure to tell her that I made it.”

“As you wish,” said Ivan, gritting his teeth. The servers took the dessert into the dining room. Soon Ivan returned.

“They like it!” he said. The servants cheered, but not Olya. She grumbled jealously. “The master and the lady would like to have a word with the cook of the dessert,” Ivan announced.

“That’s me!” said Olya. She primped her hair and rushed into the dining room.

“Cook, it seems you have made a new dessert to celebrate our guest’s visit,” said the lady. “How did you make it?”

Olya, who didn’t have a clue how Paranka had made the dessert, was quick to boast all the same. “I chose only the finest flour and the sweetest plums . . . ,” she began.

“It’s delicious!” exclaimed the guest. He turned to his host. “I simply must have your cook. She must come to my manor house and make this wonderful dessert for all of my guests.”

“Very well,” commanded the aristocrat, not wanting to offend his guest. “She will go with you today.” Olya, who was taken completely by surprise, was, for once, speechless. Paranka, Ivan, and the other servants happily waved good-bye as Olya trundled away behind the guest’s carriage, in a pig’s cart filled with heaping baskets of ripe plums and squawking geese.

After the carriage had gone, the lady of the manor complained, “I am tired of replacing cooks just to have them taken away.”

“My lady, may I suggest that you put Paranka in charge of the kitchen?” said Ivan. “She is young, but she is very capable.” Desperate, the lady took the butler’s advice and appointed Paranka head cook on a trial basis.

Olya went to the guest’s fine manor house, but she didn’t know how to make the rolled plum dessert and was eventually let go. The rolled pastry, however, traveled widely throughout central Europe. Eventually the artful cooks of Hungary and Austria made it into a grand dessert. World famous, it became known by the German name for whirlpool—strudel. As for Paranka, she stayed on at the manor and became a great cook, and the aristocrat and his wife were pleased to find that she made very tasty fruit dumplings after all.

**Go on to the next page.**

**TDA Prompt:**

The passage “Paranka’s Dumplings” is about two cooks who work in the same kitchen. Write an essay analyzing how the character traits of Paranka and Olya contribute to the theme of the passage. Use evidence from the passage to support your response.

## Writer’s Checklist

### Text Dependent Analysis (TDA)

The Writer’s Checklist is available as an online tool during the TDA. Students may also be provided with a hard copy of the checklist (available on the [Forward Exam Resources webpage](#)) as long as it is then treated as secure testing materials and securely destroyed immediately after the testing session.

**PLAN before you write**

- Read the entire passage(s) carefully.
- Read the question carefully.
- Think about how the question relates to the passage(s).
- Organize your ideas on scratch paper. Use a thought map or outline to plan your essay.
- Plan to include multiple paragraphs in your essay.

**FOCUS while you write**

- Analyze and explain what you think about the information from the passage(s) in your essay.
- Support and develop the ideas in your essay by using text evidence from the passage(s).
- Use correct language, a variety of sentence types, and transitions between paragraphs in your essay.
- Organize your essay with an introduction, body, and conclusion.

**PROOFREAD after you write**

- I re-read the question and my final essay answers the question.
- I included my own thoughts and ideas in my essay.
- I included evidence from the passage(s) to support my ideas in my essay.
- I corrected errors in capitalization, spelling, sentence formation, punctuation, and word choice.
- I used correct language, a variety of sentence types, and paragraph transitions in my essay.

**STOP.**







Answer the questions.

1. Read the letter of recommendation that the student editor of the school yearbook is writing for another student.

To Whom It May Concern:

Robert Leone has been a dedicated member of the staff for our school yearbook for the last two years. Not only is he highly motivated and intelligent, but he has a really laid-back personality and maintains his calm even in stressful situations. These qualities, among others, have made him an extremely valued member of our team.

Which phrase from the letter should be rewritten in order to maintain a formal style?

- A. a dedicated member of the staff
- B. has a really laid-back personality
- C. maintains his calm even in stressful situations
- D. an extremely valued member of our team

2. Read the sentences.

Last summer, my aunt said that her and my uncle were going to take my cousins and me hiking at Wildcat Mountain State Park. My aunt said that we would probably travel to the park in August, but then my uncle fell down some stairs and broke his ankle. Now we're going to wait until later this autumn for our trip so my uncle's ankle will have time to heal and he will be able to hike.

Which underlined part in the sentences is written incorrectly?

- A. my aunt said that her and my uncle
- B. to take my cousins and me
- C. we would probably travel to the park
- D. so my uncle's ankle will have time to heal

**Go on to the next page.**

3. A student is writing a report about a man named Mathew Brady. Read the information that was found in an online encyclopedia.

Mathew Brady (c. 1822–1896) was a photographer who lived during the time of the Civil War. He captured on film many important leaders of the era, including United States presidents and generals. President Abraham Lincoln was one of Brady’s most notable subjects. Some argue, in fact, that Brady’s photographs of Lincoln helped to strengthen Lincoln’s fame.

Which is the **best** paraphrase of the information from the encyclopedia?

- A. Of all the people Brady photographed, President Abraham Lincoln was probably the most notable subject. In fact, some people argue that Brady’s photographs of Lincoln helped to make the president even more famous than he already was.
- B. One famous person that Brady took pictures of was President Abraham Lincoln. Some people believe that Brady’s photographs of Lincoln even helped to strengthen Lincoln’s fame.
- C. One of the most famous people Brady photographed during the Civil War was President Abraham Lincoln. It is believed that Brady’s pictures of Lincoln may have even contributed to making Lincoln even more popular and better known.
- D. Abraham Lincoln, who was the United States president during the Civil War, was one of Brady’s subjects. Some say, in fact, that Brady’s photographs of Lincoln are what made him famous.





Listen to the presentation that your teacher reads to you from Appendix A. Then answer the questions.

## Cave of the Mounds

1. How does the speaker's description of the busy life on Ebenezer Brigham's farm mainly contribute to the presentation? Choose **two** answers.
  - A. It shows that it is quite common for large caves to be found beneath farmland.
  - B. It proves that the cave is one of the greatest natural treasures in the state of Wisconsin.
  - C. It suggests that the work being done on the farm affected the appearance of the cave.
  - D. It offers one reason that no one was aware that there was a cave underneath the farm.
  - E. It develops the feeling of surprise at the discovery of a large cave below the farm.
  
2. According to Cave of the Mounds general manager Joe Klimczak, why are people naturally drawn to caves?
  - A. because people long ago used to live in caves
  - B. because caves exist in so many different areas of the world
  - C. because people enjoy learning the story of how each cave was named
  - D. because new caves are still being discovered to this day

**Go on to the next page.**

3. How does the speaker **best** support the claim that going to Cave of the Mounds can be an adventurous experience?
- A. by including a quotation from the cave’s manager about the history of the cave
  - B. by providing a detailed description of the unique qualities of the cave
  - C. by noting how the cave’s owners improved the cave for visitors
  - D. by explaining what it was like for the miners to first discover the cave







Read the following passage. Then answer the questions. You may look back at the passage to help you answer the questions.

## The Robot Debate

“We should get a Worker Robot,” Max said, trying to persuade his father. Dad was heating a bowl of soup, which sat on the countertop in the kitchen. The counter automatically sensed what was in his bowl and used magnetic energy to warm it to the proper temperature.

“Every family has one!” Max added for extra emphasis. “They can do boring chores like cleaning the bathroom.”

“People shouldn’t always rely on machines to perform their tasks,” Dad responded matter-of-factly.

“But machines make life easier,” Max argued, “so you have more time to play baseball or ride hover bikes.”

“Well, if you organize your schedule on the Master Screen, you can plan for those activities,” Dad stated, pointing to the electronic bulletin board on the kitchen wall. When a family member touched the screen, it recognized the person’s fingerprint and displayed his or her daily schedule.

Max sighed, knowing he had lost this debate. It was time to pack his bag anyway. He was going camping tomorrow with his Uncle Stephen and cousin Dawn.

The next morning, Max piled into Uncle Stephen’s van hauling his duffel bag behind him. Dawn greeted him cheerfully, but Max didn’t respond. He was too busy staring at the object packed into the seat next to her: a Worker Robot.

“His name’s Stanley,” Dawn said. “We’ve had him for a month.”

At the campground, Uncle Stephen unloaded Stanley, and Max admired the robot’s sleek rocket shape. Stanley effortlessly floated on air, several inches above the ground. When Dawn touched Stanley’s front panel, a lighted menu appeared.

“Do you want to program Stanley to set up our tents?” Dawn asked Max. “You can tell him to collect firewood and to unpack our duffel bags too.”

Max leapt at the opportunity. His fingers danced across Stanley’s menu, tapping the options and entering the appropriate commands. When Max was finished, Stanley beeped, and two automated arms extended from the slots in Stanley’s sides. With a high-pitched swoosh, Stanley zipped toward the nylon bag that contained a tent and unzipped it.

Max watched, wide-eyed, as Stanley connected the tent poles and set them into place.

“Dad’s taking us fishing down by the lake while Stanley sets up camp,” Dawn said.

“Great! I’ll get my fishing rod,” Max said. Fishing was one activity he did not plan to delegate to a robot.

**Go on to the next page.**

When Max, Dawn, and Uncle Stephen returned from their excursion, the tents stood beneath a shady oak. Stanley floated nearby.

“Let’s build a campfire and cook some beans,” Uncle Stephen said.

Max and Dawn fetched some logs from Stanley’s sizable stack of firewood to help Uncle Stephen. Unfortunately, the wood was mucky and damp. Stanley had not comprehended that firewood needed to be dry in order to burn. Max’s stomach rumbled as he helped Dawn hunt for some dry branches to use for the fire.

Later, Dawn and Max discovered Stanley’s next blunder. They had programmed Stanley to unpack Max’s belongings in one of the tents, but instead, he had emptied everything out onto the floor of the van.

Dawn sighed as she and Max scooped up armfuls of clothes and transported them into the tent.

“It’s not really Stanley’s fault,” Max said, defending the robot. “We didn’t tell him specifically where to put my clothes.”

The rest of the evening passed by peacefully until heavy, threatening clouds began to roll into the sky. A stiff northern breeze with a sharp bite soon chased the family into their tents.

Max burrowed deep into his sleeping bag, thankful for its warmth as he drifted to sleep. Later, the rain pounded down in leaden sheets. Before long, its icy, wet fingers seeped into his sleeping bag, waking him suddenly.

“What’s happening?” Dawn asked as she ran into the tent where Max and Uncle Stephen were sleeping.

Uncle Stephen clicked on their electric lantern and surveyed the situation.

“Stanley must have pitched our tents in a low spot,” Uncle Stephen concluded. “The rainwater is pooling beneath us.”

“I’m cold,” Dawn said, shivering. Max could feel goose bumps forming on his skin as well.

“We’ll have to sleep in the van,” Uncle Stephen informed them. “Grab whatever is still dry and let’s go.”

Fifteen minutes later, they had all settled stiffly into the seats of the van. Wiggling to get comfortable, Max spied Stanley resting on the floor.

For the first time, Max genuinely understood Dad’s logic. Robots like Stanley couldn’t analyze situations or consider different outcomes the way people could. Clearly, Max would need to develop some skills of his own. There was a lot he still needed to learn—starting with how to camp. Next time, Max decided, he would depend not on a machine but on himself.

**Go on to the next page.**

1. Read the sentences from the passage.

Stanley had not comprehended that firewood needed to be dry in order to burn. Max’s stomach rumbled as he helped Dawn hunt for some dry branches to use for the fire.

How do the sentences mainly contribute to the development of the plot?

- A. They show that Max is starting to wish he had not come along on the trip.
  - B. They hint that Max will soon begin to understand his dad’s point of view.
  - C. They signal that Max and Dawn’s treatment of Stanley has not been fair.
  - D. They prove that Max knows more about camping than he realizes.
2. Read the sentences from the passage.

Max burrowed deep into his sleeping bag, thankful for its warmth as he drifted to sleep. Later, the rain pounded down in leaden sheets. Before long, its icy, wet fingers seeped into his sleeping bag, waking him suddenly.

Which statement **best** describes how the words in the sentences impact the tone of the passage?

- A. The words shift the tone from content to uneasy.
- B. The words shift the tone from curious to bored.
- C. The words shift the tone from humorous to serious.
- D. The words shift the tone from cheerful to angry.

**Go on to the next page.**

3. This question has two parts. First, answer Part A. Then, answer Part B.

**Part A**

Which sentence states a major theme of the passage?

- A. Machines can do work faster and better than humans can.
- B. Humans should use machines to help them plan for the future.
- C. Machines give humans the opportunity to spend more time enjoying life.
- D. Humans should be careful not to rely too much on machines.

**Part B**

Which sentence from the passage **best** supports the answer in Part A?

- A. When a family member touched the screen, it recognized the person's fingerprint and displayed his or her daily schedule.
- B. When Max, Dawn, and Uncle Stephen returned from their excursion, the tents stood beneath a shady oak.
- C. They had programmed Stanley to unpack Max's belongings in one of the tents, but instead, he had emptied everything out onto the floor of the van.
- D. Uncle Stephen clicked on their electric lantern and surveyed the situation.

**Go on to the next page.**

Read the following passage. Then answer the questions. You may look back at the passage to help you answer the questions.

## Water That You Can . . . Eat?

There's no doubt that people benefit from drinking water. Many studies have shown that drinking plenty of water on a daily basis is good for our health. People are heeding that advice, and millions of people choose to buy bottled water. They guzzle it down in order to stay hydrated.

Unfortunately, many of these plastic water bottles are not being recycled. Research shows that consumers in the United States recycle only about 20 percent of their water bottles. This means that every second, 1,500 plastic water bottles enter either the nation's landfills or the world's oceans. It can take centuries for these bottles to decompose. Because of these serious effects on the environment, it is hardly surprising that Canada and other countries are considering a total ban on plastic water bottles.

### Tiny Size, Big Solution

For the last several years, three designers from Imperial College in London, England, have been working to address the problem of plastic water bottles. This team has a history of creative success. They have used sealed bags full of empty plastic bottles to help build bridges, arches, and other structures. They have even invented a robotic suitcase called Hop that can follow its owner around! The team's new goal, according to their company, Skipping Rocks Lab, is to "make packaging waste disappear." To achieve that goal, these designers have developed a unique product they call Ooho.

When people first see Ooho, they are both curious and confused. Some people think the product looks like a tiny jellyfish. Others think it looks like a small water balloon. Believe it or not, the Ooho is several small gulps of water encased in a golf-ball-sized bubble of clear, edible gel. If you pick one up, it sits in your hand, wobbling slightly. You can poke a hole in the casing and drink the water out of it. You can also pop the entire bubble in your mouth—no bottle needed!

### A Creative Outer Covering

Ooho's gel covering is made from seaweed. It is virtually tasteless and easy for the body to digest. If people would rather not eat it, however, the casing can be thrown away. In less than a month, it will break down completely.

The gel casing is very affordable to make. First, a ball of water is frozen in a special chemical solution. Next, it is soaked in a solution made of brown algae. According to Skipping Rocks Lab, each bubble costs less than two cents to make. It is, therefore, a far cheaper alternative to making plastic bottles.

When the three London designers came up with the idea of Ooho, they went online to try to collect the funding they needed to get started. They were startled by how fast people signed up to become investors! It did not take long before Skipping Rocks Lab exceeded its goal and had raised one million dollars. The Ooho product was well on its way!

**Go on to the next page.**

**The Future of Ooho**

Since the fund-raiser, the company has been working hard. They have been figuring out the flaws and searching for possible solutions. For example, the Ooho is great if someone just wants a single gulp of water. But what if the person is especially thirsty and wants more? Skipping Rocks Lab is exploring the idea of making bigger bubbles. They are also searching for a way to link multiple bubbles together, for a larger drink of water. Another problem with the product has been how to transport it in packaging that is safe for the environment but still protects the bubbles from breaking.

To gauge people's interest in the Ooho product, the designers have set up booths at various events. They already have plans in place to distribute their bubbles next year at sporting events like marathons, as well as at entertainment venues and concerts. If Ooho becomes popular, people across the country may soon find themselves eating their water instead of drinking it!

**Go on to the next page.**

4. How does paragraph 2 mainly support the author’s purpose?
- A. by suggesting that some countries would be more likely than others to use Ooho
  - B. by detailing how Ooho is different from plastic water bottles
  - C. by explaining how Ooho would affect the environment
  - D. by showing why a product like Ooho is necessary
5. Which **two** sentences **best** introduce the idea that the design team is experienced in developing new types of products? Choose **two** answers.
- A. For the last several years, three designers from Imperial College in London, England, have been working to address the problem of plastic water bottles.
  - B. They have used sealed bags full of empty plastic bottles to help build bridges, arches, and other structures.
  - C. They have even invented a robotic suitcase called Hop that can follow its owner around!
  - D. The team’s new goal, according to their company, Skipping Rocks Lab, is to “make packaging waste disappear.”
  - E. To achieve that goal, these designers have developed a unique product they call Ooho.

**Go on to the next page.**



6. How is the idea that some features of Ooho still need to be improved elaborated on in the passage?
- A. by comparing Ooho water bubbles to traditional water bottles
  - B. by including examples of what Skipping Rocks Lab has been working on after the money for Ooho was raised
  - C. by providing information about the process for making an Ooho water bubble
  - D. by pointing out how people reacted when Skipping Rocks Lab first introduced Ooho





**APPENDIX A—LISTENING PASSAGE: CAVE OF THE MOUNDS**

Educators should read the following passage out loud to their students. The passage may be read more than once. Educators should NOT read the items out loud to the students. Students should answer items independently.

**Cave of the Mounds**

In the shadows of the Wisconsin hills known as the Blue Mounds, a man named Ebenezer Brigham enjoyed a busy, prosperous life on his land. Pioneers passed through his trading post, and many stayed at his inn. For years, life bustled as usual on the surface of the land. No one realized that not far below, a silent, stunning other world existed. It was not until 1939, after the land had passed to Ebenezer's great-nephew, that the underground world was revealed while limestone miners were blasting in a quarry. When the rocky surface broke away, a huge, ballroom-sized cavern was discovered. From the cavern, winding tunnels led to numerous other rooms. Wisconsin's Cave of the Mounds, one of the state's greatest treasures, had been discovered.

Soon, the cave's owners constructed walkways and installed lights. Then they opened the cave to the public. More than 59,000 people flocked to see the natural wonder during the first eight weeks, and with good reason. Its mysterious depths allow people to explore places rarely seen in their daily lives.

"I think caves specifically have an allure because we, as a species, used them for shelter in our ancient past," says general manager Joe Klimczak. "It feels adventurous because people are not used to being underground."

And adventurous it is. Visitors descend winding pathways and must sometimes duck and turn sideways to fit through narrow sections. Inside the damp, shadowy cave, golden lights glow on crystal-clear pools of water and majestic, striking rock formations. Stalactites hang from the roof like enormous icicles, and stalagmites rise from the floor like pillars in a castle ruin. Colorful minerals seem to be oozing from cracks in the walls. Over time, these, too, will grow to become strange limestone sculptures.

Since its opening, Cave of the Mounds has hosted millions of visitors. Its strange, glittering formations offer a fascinating detour from everyday life.

APPENDIX B—SUMMARY DATA

Grade 6

Sample Number	Alignment	Answer Key	Depth of Knowledge	Annotations
<b>Session 1</b>				
1	CCSS-1: 6.W.2		3	Students need to analyze how character traits contribute to the theme of the passage.
<b>Session 2</b>				
1	CCSS-1: 6.W.1d	B	2	Students need to find the phrase in the paragraph that needs to be rewritten in order to maintain a formal style. Option B is the correct answer. The other options are already written in a formal style.
2	CCSS-1: 6.L.1a	A	1	Students need to ensure that correct pronouns are used in the sentences. Option A is the correct answer. The other options already use correct pronouns.
3	CCSS-1: 6.W.8	C	2	Students need to gather relevant information from print sources and paraphrase the information. Option C is the correct answer. The other options do not paraphrase.
<b>Session 3</b>				
1	CCSS-1: 6.SL.2	D/E	2	After listening to the presentation, students need to select the two options that explain how the author’s description of a busy life on the Brigham farm contributes to the presentation. Options D and E are the correct answers. The other options are not ways the author’s description of the busy life on the Brigham farm contribute to the presentation.
2	CCSS-1: 6.SL.2	A	2	After listening to the presentation, students need to interpret information presented and then explain why people are naturally drawn to the caves. Option A is the correct answer. The other options do not interpret the information accurately as presented in the presentation.
3	CCSS-1: 6.SL.3	B	3	After listening to the presentation, students need to find the support for the claim that going to Cave of the Mounds can be an adventurous experience. Option B is the correct answer. The other options do not support the claim.

Grade 6

Sample Number	Alignment	Answer Key	Depth of Knowledge	Annotations
<b>Session 4</b>				
1	CCSS-1: 6.RL.5	B	2	Students need to analyze how the sentences from the passage contribute to the development of the plot. Option B is the correct answer. The other options do not contribute to the development of the plot.
2	CCSS-1: 6.RL.4	A	3	Students need to analyze how the words used in the sentences impact the tone of the passage. Option A is the correct answer. The other options do not describe the impact of the words on the tone of the passage.
3	CCSS-1: 6.RL.2	D/C	3	Students need to determine a theme of the passage and then find support. In Part A, option D is the correct answer. The other options are not themes of the passage. In Part B, option C is the correct answer. The other options in Part B do not support the theme from Part A.
4	CCSS-1: 6.RI.6	D	2	Students need to determine the author’s purpose of the passage and explain how paragraph 2 supports the author’s purpose. Option D is the correct answer. The other options do not explain how paragraph 2 supports the author’s purpose.
5	CCSS-1: 6.RI.3	Students need to choose any two of B, C, E	2	Students need to select <b>two</b> of the three sentences that best introduce the idea that the design team is experienced in developing new types of products. The correct answers are B, C, and E. Students will earn full credit for selecting two of the correct answers. The other options do not introduce the idea that the design team is experienced in developing new types of products.
6	CCSS-1: 6.RI.3	B	2	Students need to analyze how the idea that some features of Ooho still need to be improved is elaborated on in the passage. Option B is the correct answer. The other options do not provide elaboration about how Ooho still needs to be improved.

## APPENDIX C—SAMPLE LISTENING STIMULUS COMPLEXITY ANALYSIS

## Informational Stimulus—Cave of the Mounds

Grade 6

## Recommended Placement for Assessment

The quantitative Easy Listening Formula (ELF) indicates that this document is at least suitable for a *reader* at the 7th grade, fourth month of class completed level. Research shows students can *listen* two to three grade levels higher than they can read. The qualitative review supports grade 6 based on the clarity of the topic and simple organization of the concepts presented in the audio stimulus. Based on these sets of measures, this audio stimulus is of medium complexity and is recommended for assessment at grade 6.

**PURPOSE**

**Purpose:** Medium Complexity

**Audience:** Low Complexity

**Presentation:** Low Complexity

**AUDITORY STRUCTURE**

**Organization of Audio Text:** Medium Complexity

**Sound Variety:** audio not available at this time

**ORAL LANGUAGE FEATURES**

**Conventionality:** Medium Complexity

**Vocabulary:** Medium Complexity

**Delivery:** audio not available at this time

**KNOWLEDGE DEMANDS**

**Subject Matter Knowledge:** Medium Complexity

**Allusions/References:** Medium Complexity

**Use of Images:** N/A

**Listening Stimulus Rubric**

The ELA State Collaborative on Assessment and Student Standards (SCASS) developed the following qualitative measures rubric for listening stimuli. The rubric examines the following criteria judged as central to students’ successful comprehension of audio stimuli: purpose, auditory structure, oral language features, and knowledge demands. Each of these categories is ranked based on descriptors associated with the following levels: low complexity, medium complexity, and high complexity.

**Grade 6**

Qualitative Measures Rubric for Listening Stimuli			
Features	Low Complexity	Medium Complexity	High Complexity
<b>Purpose</b>	<b>Purpose:</b> Explicitly stated; clear, concrete with a narrow focus	<b>Purpose:</b> Implied, but fairly easy to infer; more theoretical than concrete	<b>Purpose:</b> Subtle, implied, theoretical elements
	<b>Audience:</b> Speaker’s approach is straightforward and transparent	<b>Audience:</b> Speaker’s approach is somewhat layered and may include elements intended to persuade or influence audience	<b>Audience:</b> Speaker may include a variety of persuasive techniques; speaker may direct the message to multiple audiences, and the listener must decipher the meaning on more than one level
	<b>Presentation:</b> A single speaker presents the information	<b>Presentation:</b> Two or more speakers interact. Their patterns of communication may influence the meaning and flow of information	<b>Presentation:</b> Two or more speakers interact. The juxtaposition of the speakers may reveal a contrast or otherwise influence the meaning



Grade 6

Qualitative Measures Rubric for Listening Stimuli			
Features	Low Complexity	Medium Complexity	High Complexity
<b>Auditory Structure</b>	<b>Organization of Audio Text:</b> Connections between ideas, processes or events are explicit and clear; organization of text is clear or chronological or easy to predict.	<b>Organization of Audio Text:</b> Connections between some ideas or events are implicit or subtle; organization is evident and generally sequential	<b>Organization of Audio Text:</b> Connections between a range of ideas, processes or events are deeper and often implicit or subtle; organization may exhibit traits common to a specific discipline; organization may be different from chronological or sequential (i.e., cause/effect, problem/solution, compare/contrast)
	<b>Sound Variety:</b> Sound is distinct and approach is direct	<b>Sound Variety:</b> Sound is somewhat layered. Overlapping voices or sounds require listener to integrate sounds for fullest understanding	<b>Sound Variety:</b> Sound is multi-layered. Overlapping voices, music, or sounds provide context that listener needs to process (such as foreground noise, background noise, or music)
<b>Oral Language Features</b>	<b>Conventionality:</b> Explicit, literal, straightforward, easy to understand	<b>Conventionality:</b> Largely explicit and easy to understand with some occasions for more complex meaning	<b>Conventionality:</b> Complex; contains some specialized abstract, ironic, and/or figurative language
	<b>Vocabulary:</b> Contemporary, familiar, conversational language	<b>Vocabulary:</b> Mostly contemporary, familiar, conversational; rarely unfamiliar or academic	<b>Vocabulary:</b> Complex language that is sometimes unfamiliar, archaic, subject-specific, or academic
	<b>Delivery:</b> Mainly direct, with simple declarative sentences	<b>Delivery:</b> Somewhat variable—at times, speaker changes pitch and volume to create emphasis	<b>Delivery:</b> Varied. Shifts in tone may be subtle and complex, requiring interpretation

Grade 6

Qualitative Measures Rubric for Listening Stimuli			
Features	Low Complexity	Medium Complexity	High Complexity
<b>Knowledge Demands</b>	<b>Subject Matter Knowledge:</b> Everyday, practical knowledge; simple, concrete ideas	<b>Subject Matter Knowledge:</b> Everyday practical knowledge and some discipline-specific content knowledge; both simple and more complicated, abstract ideas; knowledge of speaker may affect interpretation of content	<b>Subject Matter Knowledge:</b> Discipline-specific content knowledge; some theoretical knowledge may enhance understanding; range of recognizable ideas and challenging abstract concepts; knowledge of speaker or source affects interpretation of content
	<b>Allusions/References:</b> No references or allusions to other texts, or outside ideas, theories, etc.	<b>Allusions/References:</b> Some references or allusions to other texts or outside ideas, theories, etc.	<b>Allusions/References:</b> Many references or allusions to other texts or outside ideas, theories, etc.
	<b>Use of Images:</b> a range of images that help student understanding	<b>Use of images:</b> minimal use of images that help student understanding	<b>Use of images:</b> no use of images that help student understanding

Adapted from the ELA State Collaborative on Assessment and Student Standards (SCASS) © 2012.

## APPENDIX D—SAMPLE LITERARY PASSAGE TEXT COMPLEXITY ANALYSIS

## Literary Passage—The Robot Debate

Grade 6

## Recommended Placement for Assessment

The quantitative measures of several readability programs suggest an appropriate placement at the grade 6–8 band. The qualitative review supports grade 6 based on the subject matter of the passage. Based on these sets of measures as explained in the Wisconsin Academic Standards Appendix A, this passage is moderately complex and is recommended for assessment at grade 6.

**MEANING:** Moderately Complex

**TEXT STRUCTURE**

**Organization:** Slightly Complex

**Use of Images:** N/A

**LANGUAGE FEATURES**

**Conventionality:** Moderately Complex

**Vocabulary:** Moderately Complex

**Sentence Structure:** Moderately Complex

**KNOWLEDGE DEMANDS**

**Life Experiences:** Moderately Complex

**Intertextuality and Cultural Knowledge:** Slightly Complex

**Literary Texts Qualitative Measures Rubric**

The ELA State Collaborative on Assessment and Student Standards (SCASS) developed the following qualitative measures rubric for literary texts. The rubric examines the following criteria judged as central to students’ successful comprehension of text meaning, text structure, language features, and knowledge demands. Each of these categories is ranked based on descriptors associated with the following levels: slightly complex, moderately complex, very complex, and exceedingly complex.

**Grade 6**

Features	Exceedingly Complex	Very Complex	Moderately Complex	Slightly Complex
<b>Meaning</b>	<b>Meaning:</b> Several levels and competing elements of meaning that are difficult to identify, separate, and interpret; theme is implicit or subtle, often ambiguous and revealed over the entirety of the text	<b>Meaning:</b> Several levels of meaning that may be difficult to identify or separate; theme is implicit or subtle and may be revealed over the entirety of the text	<b>Meaning:</b> More than one level of meaning with levels clearly distinguished from each other; theme is clear but may be conveyed with some subtlety	<b>Meaning:</b> One level of meaning; theme is obvious and revealed early in the text.
<b>Text Structure</b>	<b>Organization:</b> Organization is intricate with regard to elements such as narrative viewpoint, time shifts, multiple characters, storylines, and detail	<b>Organization:</b> Organization may include subplots, time shifts, and more complex characters	<b>Organization:</b> Organization may have two or more storylines and is occasionally difficult to predict	<b>Organization:</b> Organization of text is clear, chronological, or easy to predict
	<b>Use of Images:</b> If used, minimal illustrations that support the text	<b>Use of Images:</b> If used, a few illustrations that support the text	<b>Use of Images:</b> If used, a range of illustrations that support selected parts of the text	<b>Use of Images:</b> If used, extensive illustrations that directly support and assist in interpreting the written text

Grade 6

Features	Exceedingly Complex	Very Complex	Moderately Complex	Slightly Complex
<b>Language Features</b>	<b>Conventionality:</b> Dense and complex; contains abstract, ironic, and/or figurative language	<b>Conventionality:</b> Complex; contains some abstract, ironic, and/or figurative language	<b>Conventionality:</b> Largely explicit and easy to understand, with some occasions for more complex meaning	<b>Conventionality:</b> Explicit, literal, straightforward, easy to understand
	<b>Vocabulary:</b> Generally unfamiliar, archaic, subject-specific, or overly academic language; may be ambiguous or purposefully misleading	<b>Vocabulary:</b> Somewhat complex language that is sometimes unfamiliar, archaic, subject-specific, or overly academic	<b>Vocabulary:</b> Mostly contemporary, familiar, conversational; rarely unfamiliar or overly academic	<b>Vocabulary:</b> Contemporary, familiar, conversational language
	<b>Sentence Structure:</b> Mainly complex sentences, often containing multiple concepts	<b>Sentence Structure:</b> Many complex sentences with several subordinate phrases or clauses and transition words	<b>Sentence Structure:</b> Simple and compound sentences, with some more complex constructions	<b>Sentence Structure:</b> Mainly simple sentences
<b>Knowledge Demands</b>	<b>Life Experiences:</b> Explores complex, sophisticated themes; experiences are distinctly different from the common reader	<b>Life Experiences:</b> Explores themes of varying levels of complexity; experiences portrayed are uncommon to most readers	<b>Life Experiences:</b> Explores a single theme; experiences portrayed are common to many readers	<b>Life Experiences:</b> Explores a single theme; experiences portrayed are everyday and common to most readers
	<b>Intertextuality and Cultural Knowledge:</b> Many references or allusions to other texts or cultural elements	<b>Intertextuality and Cultural Knowledge:</b> Some references or allusions to other texts or cultural elements	<b>Intertextuality and Cultural Knowledge:</b> A few references or allusions to other texts or cultural elements	<b>Intertextuality and Cultural Knowledge:</b> No references or allusions to other texts or cultural elements

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**APPENDIX E—SAMPLE INFORMATIONAL PASSAGE TEXT COMPLEXITY ANALYSIS****Informational Passage—Water That You Can . . . Eat?**

Grade 6

**Recommended Placement for Assessment**

The quantitative measures of several readability programs suggest an appropriate placement at the grade 6–8 band. The qualitative review supports grade 6 based on the moderate complexity of the passage. Based on these sets of measures as explained in the Wisconsin Academic Standards Appendix A, this passage is moderately complex and is recommended for assessment at grade 6.

**PURPOSE:** Moderately Complex

**TEXT STRUCTURE**

**Organization of Main Ideas:** Moderately Complex

**Text Features:** Slightly Complex

**Use of Images:** N/A

**LANGUAGE FEATURES**

**Conventionality:** Moderately Complex

**Vocabulary:** Moderately Complex

**Sentence Structure:** Moderately Complex

**KNOWLEDGE DEMANDS**

**Subject Matter Knowledge:** Moderately Complex

**Intertextuality:** Moderately Complex

### Informational Texts Qualitative Measures Rubric

The ELA State Collaborative on Assessment and Student Standards (SCASS) developed the following qualitative measures rubric for informational texts. The rubric examines the following criteria judged as central to students’ successful comprehension of text purpose, text structure, language features, and knowledge demands. Each of these categories is ranked based on descriptors associated with the following levels: slightly complex, moderately complex, very complex, and exceedingly complex.

**Grade 6**

Features	Exceedingly Complex	Very Complex	Moderately Complex	Slightly Complex
<b>Purpose</b>	<b>Purpose:</b> Subtle, implied, difficult to determine; intricate, theoretical elements	<b>Purpose:</b> Implied, but fairly easy to infer; more theoretical than concrete	<b>Purpose:</b> Implied, but easy to identify based upon context or source	<b>Purpose:</b> Explicitly stated; clear, concrete with a narrow focus
<b>Text Structure</b>	<b>Organization of Main Ideas:</b> Connections between an extensive range of ideas or events are deep, intricate, and often implicit or subtle; organization of the text is intricate or specialized for a particular discipline	<b>Organization of Main Ideas:</b> Connections between an expanded range of ideas, processes, or events are deeper and often implicit or subtle; organization may contain multiple pathways and may exhibit traits common to a specific discipline	<b>Organization of Main Ideas:</b> Connections between some ideas or events are implicit or subtle; organization is evident and generally sequential	<b>Organization of Main Ideas:</b> Connections between ideas, processes, or events are explicit and clear; organization of text is clear or chronological or easy to predict
	<b>Text Features:</b> If used, are essential in understanding content	<b>Text Features:</b> If used, greatly enhance the reader’s understanding of content	<b>Text Features:</b> If used, enhance the reader’s understanding of content	<b>Text Features:</b> If used, help the reader navigate and understand content but are not essential
	<b>Use of Images:</b> If used, extensive, intricate, essential integrated images, tables, charts, etc., necessary to understanding the text; also may provide information not otherwise conveyed in the text	<b>Use of Images:</b> If used, essential integrated images, tables, charts, etc., occasionally essential to understanding the text	<b>Use of Images:</b> If used, images mostly supplementary to understanding the text, such as indexes and glossaries; graphs, pictures, tables, and charts directly support the text	<b>Use of Images:</b> If used, simple images unnecessary to understanding the text; directly support and assist in interpreting the text

Grade 6

Features	Exceedingly Complex	Very Complex	Moderately Complex	Slightly Complex
<b>Language Features</b>	<b>Conventionality:</b> Dense and complex; contains abstract, ironic, and/or figurative language	<b>Conventionality:</b> Complex; contains some abstract, ironic, and/or figurative language	<b>Conventionality:</b> Largely explicit and easy to understand with some occasions for more complex meaning	<b>Conventionality:</b> Explicit, literal, straightforward, easy to understand
	<b>Vocabulary:</b> Generally unfamiliar, archaic, subject-specific, or overly academic language; may be ambiguous or purposefully misleading	<b>Vocabulary:</b> Somewhat complex language that is sometimes unfamiliar, archaic, subject-specific, or overly academic	<b>Vocabulary:</b> Mostly contemporary, familiar, conversational; rarely unfamiliar or overly academic	<b>Vocabulary:</b> Contemporary, familiar, conversational language
	<b>Sentence Structure:</b> Mainly complex sentences, often containing multiple concepts	<b>Sentence Structure:</b> Many complex sentences with several subordinate phrases or clauses and transition words	<b>Sentence Structure:</b> Simple and compound sentences, with some more complex constructions	<b>Sentence Structure:</b> Mainly simple sentences
<b>Knowledge Demands</b>	<b>Subject Matter Knowledge:</b> Extensive, perhaps specialized or even theoretical discipline-specific content knowledge; range of challenging abstract and theoretical concepts	<b>Subject Matter Knowledge:</b> Moderate levels of discipline-specific content knowledge; some theoretical knowledge may enhance understanding; range of recognizable ideas and challenging abstract concepts	<b>Subject Matter Knowledge:</b> Everyday practical knowledge and some discipline-specific content knowledge; both simple and more complicated, abstract ideas	<b>Subject Matter Knowledge:</b> Everyday, practical knowledge; simple, concrete ideas
	<b>Intertextuality:</b> Many references or allusions to other texts or outside ideas, theories, etc.	<b>Intertextuality:</b> Some references or allusions to other texts or outside ideas, theories, etc.	<b>Intertextuality:</b> A few references or allusions to other texts or outside ideas, theories, etc.	<b>Intertextuality:</b> No references or allusions to other texts or outside ideas, theories, etc.

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# **English Language Arts Item Sampler Grade 6**

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