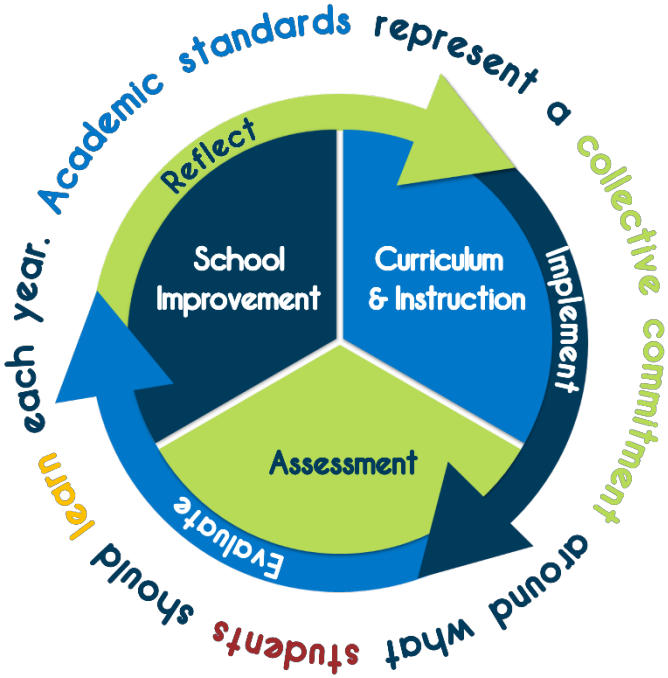
ILLINOIS STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS SAMPLE ITEMS

GRADE 7

Samples to Success

Sample items provide valuable insight into how students engage with different texts, tasks, and contexts, highlighting the types of opportunities they need for success in the classroom. These items offer a shared reference point for understanding proficiency expectations, complementing the assessment's role in measuring learning. By analyzing items alongside performance data, educators can gain a deeper understanding of students' strengths and areas for growth. Students thrive in environments rich with diverse materials, challenges that vary in task type, and multiple avenues for demonstrating understanding. High-quality instruction, aligned with the learning goals, is the most effective way to support students' growth and prepare them for success.



Test questions can measure a single skill or a set of knowledge and skills. The ELA test differs from other subjects in that it has fewer items overall, but each item assesses multiple skills or knowledge by asking students to demonstrate skills through performance, such as writing a response to literary or informational texts. Therefore, what differentiates the levels of performance are the degree to and quality with which a student performs.

Grade 7 – Claim 1: Reading Literary Text

1st Text P. 4-5

Today you will analyze a passage from *The Georges and the Jewels* and a passage from *Black Beauty: The Autobiography of a Horse*. As you read these passages, you will gather information and answer questions about how the authors develop each narrator's point of view so you can write an essay.

Read the passage from the novel *The Georges and the Jewels*. Then answer the questions.

from *The Georges and the Jewels*

by Jane Smiley

1 Sometimes when you fall off your horse, you just don't want to get right back on. Let's say he started bucking and you did all the things you knew to do, like pull his head up from between his knees and make him go forward, then use a pulley rein on the left to stop him. Most horses would settle at that point and come down to a walk. Then you could turn him again and trot off—it's always harder for the horse to buck at the trot than at the lope. But if, right when you let up on the reins, your horse put his head between his knees again and took off bucking, kicking higher and higher until he finally dropped you and went tearing off to the other end of the ring, well, you might be there, as I did, with the wind knocked out of you and think about how nice it would be not to get back on, because that horse is just dedicated to bucking you off.

2 So I did be there, looking up at the branches of the oak tree that grew beside the ring, and I did wait for Daddy to come trotting over with that horse by the bridle, and I did stare up at both their faces, the face of that horse flicking his ears back and forth and snorting a little bit, and the face of my father, red-cheeked and blue-eyed, and I did listen to him say, "Abby? You okay, honey? Sure you are. I saw you bounce! Get up, now."

3 I sighed.

4 "How am I going to tell those folks who are looking to buy these horses that a little girl can ride them, if you don't get up and ride them?"

5 I sat up. I said, "I don't know, Daddy." My elbow hurt, but not too badly. Otherwise I was okay.

6 "Well, then."

7 I stood up, and he brushed off the back of my jeans. Then he tossed me on the horse again.

2nd Text P. 9

Today you will analyze a passage from *The Georges and the Jewels* and a passage from *Black Beauty: The Autobiography of a Horse*. As you read these passages, you will gather information and answer questions about how the authors develop each narrator's point of view so you can write an essay.

Read the passage from the novel *Black Beauty: The Autobiography of a Horse*. Then answer the questions.

from *Black Beauty: The Autobiography of a Horse*

by Anna Sewell

1 Every one may not know what breaking in is, therefore I will describe it. It means to teach a horse to wear a saddle and bridle, and to carry on his back a man, woman or child; to go just the way they wish, and to go quietly. Besides this he has to learn to wear a collar, a crupper, and a breeching, and to stand still while they are put on; then to have a cart or chaise fixed behind, so that he cannot walk or trot without dragging it after him; and he must go fast or slow, just as his driver wishes. He must never start at what he sees, nor speak to other horses, nor bite, nor kick, nor have any will of his own; but always do his master's will, even though he may be very tired or hungry; but the worst of all is, when his harness is once on, he may neither jump for joy nor lie down for weariness. So you see this breaking in is a great thing.

2 I had of course been used to a halter and a headstall, and to be led about in the fields and lanes quietly, but now I was to have a bit and bridle. My master gave me some oats as usual, and after a good deal of coaxing he got the bit into my mouth, and the bridle fixed, but it was a nasty thing! Those who have never had a bit in their mouths cannot think how bad it feels; a great piece of cold hard steel as thick as a man's finger to be pushed into one's mouth, between one's teeth, and over one's tongue, with the ends coming out at the corner of your mouth, and held fast there by straps over your head, under your throat, round your nose, and under your chin, so that no way in the world can you get rid of the nasty thing; it is very bitter, and makes you feel as if you would give in to anything, to have it taken out. I was sure at first, she went out, and all horses did when they were grown up, and so, what with the nice oats, and what with my master's pats, kind words, and gentle ways, I got to wear my bit and bridle.

3 Next came the saddle, but that was not half so bad; my master put it on my back very gently, while old Daniel held my head; he then made the girths fast under my body, patting and talking to me all the time; then I had a few walks, there a little leading about, and this he did every day till I began to look for the oats and the saddle. At length, one morning, my master got on my back and rode me round the meadow on the soft grass. It certainly did feel queer, but I must say I felt rather proud to carry my master, and as he continued to ride me a little every day I soon became accustomed to it.

Black Beauty: The Autobiography of a Horse—Public Domain

Writing Task P. 13

Item: 4127
Associated Texts: "The Georges and the Jewels" and "Black Beauty: The Autobiography of a Horse"

You have read passages from the novels *The Georges and the Jewels* and *Black Beauty: The Autobiography of a Horse*. Both were written in the first person point of view.

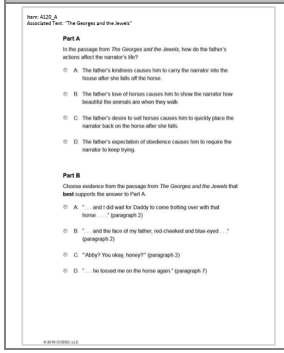
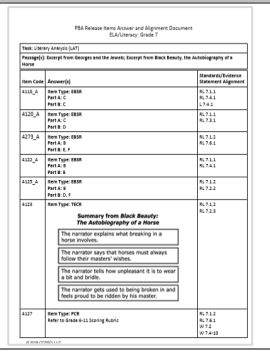
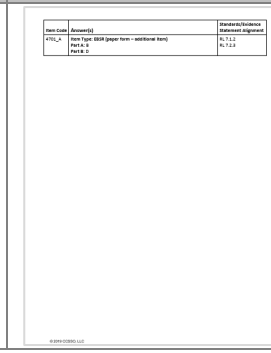
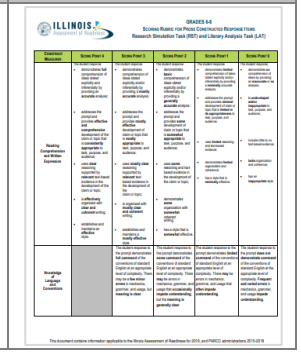
Write an essay in which you compare the way the authors use first person point of view to develop the characters.

Be sure to cite specific examples from **both** passages.

Multiple items on the Illinois Assessment of Readiness (IAR) are linked to a set of texts to read, often accompanied by images or multimedia. The sample item set has two sections from a literary text and a writing task. Small screenshots and page numbers are provided to help you navigate the linked sample item set.

Each text is followed by several two-part multiple-choice items. Students must select a correct response in Part A and supporting evidence in Part B. The set also has items that require different interactions, such as summarizing events where partial credit is possible.

This sample item set also contains a Literary Analysis writing task comparing two texts. Student responses are graded according to page 5 of the Literary Analysis Rubric. Literary writing tasks often contribute to a student's **Reading Comprehension** score in addition to their **Writing** score. Student writing samples and annotations are found in the Written Expression Claim section in this document**.**

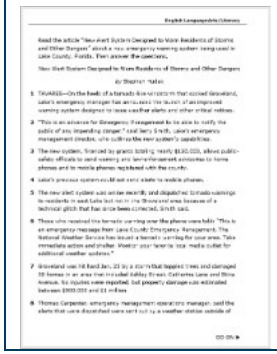
Two-part Multiple-choice P. 6-14	Summary Item P. 9	Answer Key P. 2	Answer Key P. 3	Written Response Scoring Rubric P. 5
				

Grade 7 – Claim 2: Reading Informational Text

1st Text P. 5-7

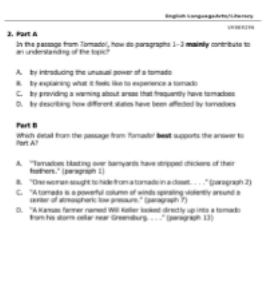
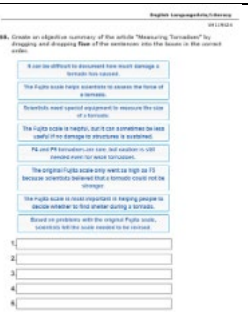
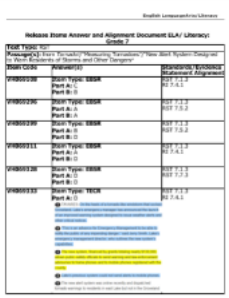
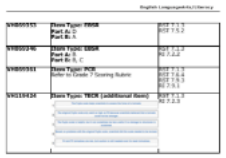
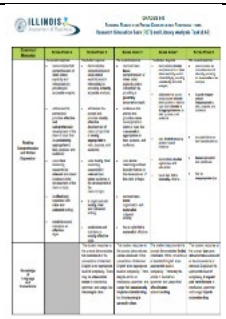
2nd Text P. 11-12

3rd Text



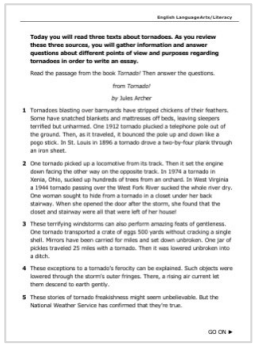
Here we provide an informational text sample item set. The set contains a set of informational texts to read along with several multiple-choice items. Small screenshots and page numbers are provided to help you navigate the linked sample item set.

The item set also contains a Research Simulation writing task. Student responses are graded according to page 5 of the Research Simulation Task Rubric. All Research Simulation writing tasks contribute to a student's **Reading Comprehension** score in addition to their **Writing** score. Student writing samples and annotations are found in the Written Expression Claim section in this document**.**

Two-part Multiple-choice P. 9-28	Sequence Item P. 21	Answer Key P. 3	Answer Key P. 4	Written Response Scoring Rubric P. 5
				

Grade 7 – Claim 3: Reading Vocabulary

1st Text P. 5-7



English Language Arts/Literacy

Today you will read three texts about tornadoes. As you review these three sources, you will gather information and answer questions about different points of view and purposes regarding tornadoes in order to write an essay.

Read the passage from the book *Tornado!* Then answer the questions.

from Tornado!

by Jules Archer

1 Tornadoes blasting over barnyards have stripped chickens of their feathers. Some have snatched blankets and mattresses off beds, leaving sleepers terrified but unharmed. One 1912 tornado plucked a telephone pole out of the ground. Then, as it traveled, it bounced the pole up and down like a pogo stick. In St. Louis in 1896 a tornado drove a two-by-four plank through an iron sheet.

2 One tornado picked up a locomotive from its track. Then it set the engine down facing the other way on the opposite track. In 1974 a tornado in Xenia, Ohio, sucked up hundreds of trees from an orchard. In West Virginia a 1944 tornado passing over the West Fork River sucked the whole river dry. One woman sought to hide from a tornado in a closet under her back stairway. When she opened the door after the storm, she found that the closet and stairway were all that were left of her house!

3 These terrifying windstorms can also perform amazing feats of gentleness. One tornado transported a crate of eggs 500 yards without cracking a single shell. Mirrors have been carried for miles and set down unbroken. One jar of pickles traveled 25 miles with a tornado. Then it was lowered unbroken into a ditch.

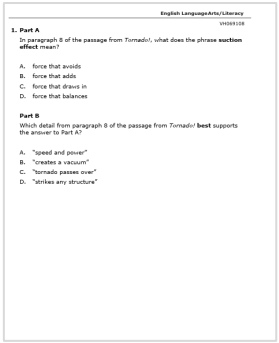
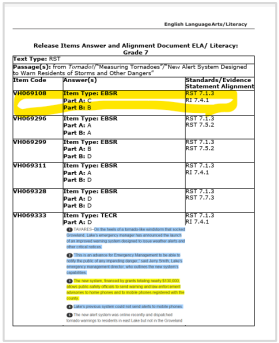
4 These exceptions to a tornado's ferocity can be explained. Such objects were lowered through the storm's outer fringes. There, a rising air current let them descend to earth gently.

5 These stories of tornado freakishness might seem unbelievable. But the National Weather Service has confirmed that they're true.

GO ON ►

Reading vocabulary items are found within Reading Informational and Reading Literary item sets. This released item set (the same sample set from Claim 2) contains two embedded reading passages; items; and an associated answer key, which is located at the beginning of the document. (Screenshots are included to support navigation of the linked items.)

Vocabulary items ask students to select a correct response in Part A and then to select a response that supports that answer in Part B of the item. In this item, students must select the correct definition of the phrase "suction effect" and select the correct support for its meaning.

Two-part Vocab Item P. 12	**Answer Key P. 3**
	

English Language Arts/Literacy

VH069108

1. Part A

In paragraph 8 of the passage from *Tornado!*, what does the phrase **suction effect** mean?

A. force that avoids
B. force that adds
C. force that draws in
D. force that balances

Part B

Which detail from paragraph 8 of the passage from *Tornado!* **best** supports the answer to Part A?

A. "speed and power"
B. "creates a vacuum"
C. "tornado passes over"
D. "strikes any structure"

English Language Arts/Literacy

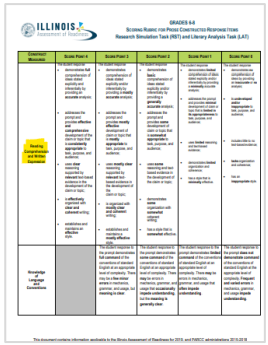
Release Items Answer and Alignment Document ELA/ Literacy: Grade 7

Text Type: RST
Passage(s): from *Tornado!*/"Measuring Tornadoes"/"New Alert System Designed to Warn Residents of Storms and Other Dangers"

Item Code	Answer(s)	Standards/Evidence Statement Alignment
VH069108	**Item Type:** EBSR **Part A:** C **Part B:** B	RST 7.1.3 RI 7.4.1
VH069296	**Item Type:** EBSR **Part A:** A **Part B:** A	RST 7.1.3 RST 7.3.2
VH069299	**Item Type:** EBSR **Part A:** B **Part B:** D	RST 7.1.3 RST 7.3.2
VH069311	**Item Type:** EBSR **Part A:** A **Part B:** D	RST 7.1.3 RI 7.4.1
VH069328	**Item Type:** EBSR **Part A:** D **Part B:** D	RST 7.1.3 RST 7.7.3
VH069333	**Item Type:** TECR **Part A:** D	RST 7.1.3 RI 7.4.1

Grade 7 – Claim 4: Written Expression

Written Expression Rubric – P. 5

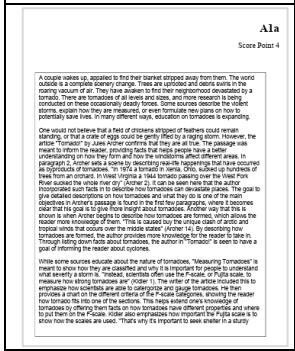


Writing Task – P.9

Research Simulation Writing Task – See Claim 2 to view all associated texts with the item.

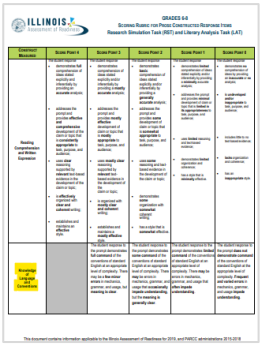
The Written Expression Claim is measured through writing tasks. These sample student responses are from the Research Simulation Task introduced in Claim 2. This is followed by examples of student writing at different point levels. Comparing student responses to rubric criteria allows us to see how students earn points for performance of specific skills. The IAR writing rubrics align with performance level descriptors (PLDs) by specifying how different aspects of writing correspond to these proficiency levels.

Each writing sample is followed by notes that explain the rationale for the student's **Written Expression** score according to the rubric. The samples begin with the highest-scoring example and end with the lowest-scoring example.

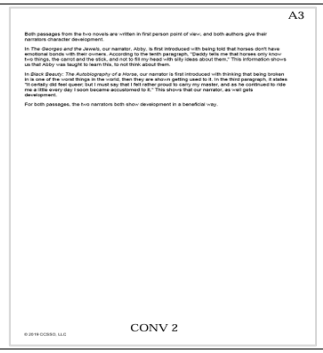
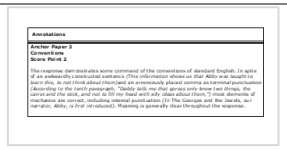
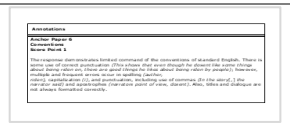
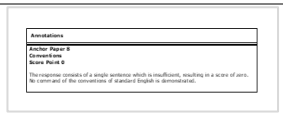
4 Points P. 10-11	3 Points P. 19	2 Points P. 23	1 Point P. 25	0 Points P. 29
				
Notes P. 13	**Notes P. 20**	**Notes P. 24**	**Notes P. 26**	**Notes P. 30**

Grade 7 – Claim 5: Conventions

Conventions Writing Rubric P. 5



Sample writing tasks and student responses provide concrete examples of student writing at different levels. The IAR writing rubrics align with PLDs by specifying how different aspects of writing correspond to these proficiency levels. These released item responses contain notes that explain the rationale for student's **Conventions** score. These samples come from a variety of writing prompts; therefore, the types of responses will vary, but the conventions remain the focus of this claim. The samples begin with the highest-scoring example and end with the lowest-scoring example.

3 Points P. 3	2 Points P. 5	1 Point P. 7	0 Points P. 16
			
Notes P. 4	**Notes P. 6**	**Notes P. 8**	**P. 17**