

# ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS GRADE 8

**Theory of Action:** Academic standards represent a collective commitment around what students should learn each year. The state assessment asks students to demonstrate their knowledge, skills, and understanding related to these standards using a common measure. The resulting data allows us to see patterns in performance that should guide school and district improvement, helping identify areas of strength and opportunity.

**Role of Performance Level Descriptors in Defining Proficiency:** Performance level descriptors bridge the state assessment to classroom instruction and the systems of formative assessments that guide local instruction and choices about individual students. *Academic proficiency represents a range of observable student performance characteristics.* There are multiple pathways to proficiency, and students rely upon their strengths differently within that range of performance.

**Proficiency and Difficulty:** A student's ability to demonstrate proficiency is influenced by the complexity of the texts or stimuli presented, tasks they're asked to complete, and the contexts in which they are engaged. As student performance improves, students are typically able to handle more challenging texts/stimuli, tasks, and contexts, and are able to demonstrate their skills and knowledge more accurately and consistently.

## Reading Literary Text *Student performance indicates the ability to ...*

Claim 1	Below Proficient	Approaching Proficient	Proficient	Above Proficient
Text Complexity:	LEAST COMPLEX	RI.10/RL.10 – Read and comprehend appropriate texts independently		MOST COMPLEX
RL 8.1	Identify general ideas or facts from the text.	Locate some relevant evidence but may not clearly connect it to analysis.	Select strong textual evidence to support both explicit and inferred ideas.	Integrate multiple, well-chosen pieces of evidence to support deep, critical analysis.
RL 8.2	Identify a general setting and theme, retelling minor plot events.	Identify theme and some supporting details; summary may include opinions.	Determine a theme and explain how it develops; summarize objectively with key details.	Analyze story elements, including theme development, in depth to create concise, thorough summaries using key details.
RL 8.3	Describe basic plot points or dialogue.	Identify events or dialogue and explain their connection to the plot.	Analyze how key events or dialogue shape character and advance the plot.	Interpret the impact of character decisions and narrative techniques.
RL 8.5	Identify different types of texts.	Describe the difference in structural elements (e.g., soliloquy, sonnet).	Compare structures and explain how they affect meaning and style.	Evaluate how structure supports theme, pacing, or tone across multiple texts.
RL 8.6	Recognize an aspect of point of view or tone.	Describe point of view and recognize an effect it has on the story.	Analyze differences in point of view and how they influence reader experience or mood.	Examine complex uses of point of view to create layers of meaning or literary effects.
RL 8.7	Identify a variation between different presentations of a similar story.	Describe differences between written and visual formats.	Explain how different formats affect understanding of the same story, evaluating the choices made within the medium.	Evaluate how different mediums uniquely present a similar story, analyzing differences in theme, tone, or character.

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 prose-constructed response. Therefore, what differentiates the levels of performance are the degree to and quality with which a student performs.

Claim 1	Below Proficient	Approaching Proficient	Proficient	Above Proficient
Text Complexity:	LEAST COMPLEX	<i>RI.10/RL.10 – Read and comprehend appropriate texts independently</i>		MOST COMPLEX
RL 8.9	Recognize familiar elements.	Begin to identify connections between modern and traditional texts.	Analyze how authors adapt and reference traditional stories.	Evaluate how adaptations deepen meaning, reframe messages, or reflect cultural perspectives.
RL 8.10	Comprehend parts of literature with clear structure.	Ask and answer basic comprehension questions to show understanding of literature.	Comprehend grade-level literary texts, citing details and identifying structural elements.	Synthesize and analyze structure, themes, and language in increasingly complex literary texts.

Reading Informational Text <i>Student performance indicates the ability to ...</i>				
Claim 2	Below Proficient	Approaching Proficient	Proficient	Above Proficient
Text Complexity:	LEAST COMPLEX	<i>RI.10/RL.10 – Read and comprehend appropriate texts independently</i>		MOST COMPLEX
RI 8.1	Identify important ideas or facts.	Locate some evidence to support an idea but may not fully connect it to analysis.	Select and cite strong evidence to support clear analysis.	Synthesize multiple pieces of evidence to develop sophisticated inferences.
RI 8.2	Identify a main idea with a summary that may lack clarity.	Identify a central idea and related details with an opinionated summary.	Determine and explain how a central idea develops over the text; summarize objectively.	Analyze development of a central idea with insight and connect it to broader implications.
RI 8.3	Identify important individuals/events/ideas.	Describe general relationships among individuals/events/ideas.	Analyze how individuals/events/ideas are connected and influence one another.	Examine complex relationships among individuals/events/ideas and evaluate how they shape the text's message or purpose.
RI 8.5	Notice transitions or sections.	Describe how a text section (e.g., sentences/paragraphs/chapters) relates to the whole.	Analyze how paragraphs and sections build, refine, or reinforce key ideas.	Evaluate structure and organization as a rhetorical strategy to convey key ideas.
RI 8.6	Recognize the author's stance on a topic.	Describe tone or intention behind the text.	Determine the author's point of view or purpose and analyze how the author acknowledges conflicting viewpoints.	Evaluate rhetorical strategies and their effectiveness in shaping perspective.
RI 8.7	Identify basic features of different mediums (e.g., digital text/video).	Compare different mediums (e.g., digital text/video) and highlight major differences/similarities.	Explain how different mediums (e.g., digital text/video) influence understanding of a topic, including advantages and disadvantages.	Critically evaluate how different mediums (e.g., digital text/video) influence perception and effectiveness.
RI 8.8	Identify an author's claim.	Trace an argument with some supporting evidence.	Delineate and evaluate arguments, distinguishing valid from weak reasoning based on evidence.	Critique argument quality and explain the impact of reasoning on the audience.

Claim 2	Below Proficient	Approaching Proficient	Proficient	Above Proficient
<b>RI 8.9</b>	Recognize a difference between how texts address a similar topic or idea.	Identify a key difference between how texts address a similar topic or idea using some supporting details.	Analyze conflicting information about a topic across different texts, identifying key aspects where they disagree.	Evaluate bias, source reliability, and quality of evidence to make informed judgments.
<b>RI 8.10</b>	Comprehend parts of informational texts with clear structure.	Ask and answer basic comprehension questions to show understanding of informational texts.	Comprehend grade-level informational texts, citing details and identifying structural elements.	Synthesize and analyze structure, ideas, and language in increasingly complex informational texts.

Reading Vocabulary <i>Student performance indicates the ability to ...</i>				
Claim 3	Below Proficient	Approaching Proficient	Proficient	Above Proficient
<b>Text Complexity:</b>	<b>LEAST COMPLEX</b>	<b><i>RI.10/RL.10 – Read and comprehend appropriate texts independently</i></b>		<b>MOST COMPLEX</b>
<b>RL 8.4, RI 8.4, L8.4-8.6</b>	<p>Use familiar strategies such as context or affixes to explore unfamiliar words. May rely on support.</p> <p>Use general or familiar vocabulary to express ideas. Begin to notice topic-specific terms.</p> <p>Recognize common figurative language or word relationships. May begin interpreting meaning in context.</p>	<p>Apply basic strategies (e.g., context, affixes, references) with growing independence.</p> <p>Use academic or domain-specific vocabulary with growing accuracy and begin adjusting word choices for meaning.</p> <p>Identify figurative language and explain basic relationships or connotations in grade-level texts.</p>	<p>Integrate and adapt strategies flexibly to interpret precise, technical, or layered meanings in varied texts.</p> <p>Apply vocabulary deliberately to clarify meaning, enhance precision, or deepen analysis through subtle word choices or references across texts.</p> <p>Analyze and explain how sophisticated wordplay or layered figurative language contributes to meaning, tone, or author's intent.</p>	<p>Apply strategies independently and flexibly to analyze nuanced meanings in unfamiliar or technical texts.</p> <p>Select vocabulary purposefully to enhance clarity, precision, or tone in varied contexts.</p> <p>Analyze and explain how nuanced language, including figurative devices and word relationships, shape meaning and tone.</p>

## Written Expression *Student performance indicates the ability to ...*

Claim 4	Below Proficient	Approaching Proficient	Proficient	Above Proficient
Text Complexity:	LEAST COMPLEX	<i>RI.10/RL.10 – Read and comprehend appropriate texts independently</i>		MOST COMPLEX
<b>W8.1-W8.10</b>	<p>State a claim and includes general support. Ideas may not be clearly connected or developed.</p> <p>Present general information or ideas about a topic. May use simple lists or loosely connected facts.</p> <p>Describe events in a basic sequence with some character or setting details. May include a beginning or ending.</p>	<p>Present a clear claim with reasons and some relevant evidence. May include basic analysis or uneven organization.</p> <p>Explain a topic with related information and emerging organization or analysis.</p> <p>Tell a story with structured events, basic narrative techniques, and some elaboration.</p>	<p>Develop a structured argument using logical reasoning, relevant evidence, and analysis. Transitions support coherence.</p> <p>Clearly examines a topic using relevant content, organized structure, and focused analysis.</p> <p>Develop a coherent narrative using pacing, description, dialogue, and reflection to show depth.</p>	<p>Construct a persuasive, well-analyzed argument with precise evidence, nuanced reasoning, and purposeful structure.</p> <p>Explore the topic deeply using precise evidence, effective structure, and thoughtful elaboration.</p> <p>Crafts a powerful narrative with strong voice, rich detail, and intentional structure that enhances meaning.</p>

## Knowledge of Written Language and Conventions *Student performance indicates the ability to ...*

Claim 5	Below Proficient	Approaching Proficient	Proficient	Above Proficient
<b>L8.1-3 L8.6 W8.1</b>	<p>Use familiar grammar and sentence forms. May experiment with style or complexity.</p> <p>Use familiar conventions in familiar writing contexts. May begin to apply in more complex texts.</p> <p>Use context or familiar strategies to interpret common unfamiliar words.</p> <p>Identify basic figurative language or common word relationships in context.</p>	<p>Apply grammar rules with growing consistency and adjusts sentence style to support meaning.</p> <p>Demonstrate increasing control over conventions in extended writing.</p> <p>Apply known strategies with increasing independence to understand word meanings.</p> <p>Begin to interpret connotation and more complex figures of speech.</p>	<p>Use grammar and varied sentence structures suited to the task, audience, and purpose.</p> <p>Consistently apply grade-level conventions to support clarity, structure, and tone.</p> <p>Select and apply a variety of strategies to clarify vocabulary and support writing.</p> <p>Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word nuances, and relationships across contexts.</p>	<p>Apply grammar and style strategically to create emphasis, rhythm, or clarity.</p> <p>Use conventions intentionally and precisely to support flow, emphasis, or subtle meaning.</p> <p>Use strategies flexibly and independently to interpret and apply precise or complex vocabulary.</p> <p>Use figurative and nuanced language intentionally to enrich meaning, tone, or argument.</p>