



PSSA

Pennsylvania System of School Assessment

English Language Arts

Grade 4

Item Sampler Scoring Guide

2025–2026



Pennsylvania
Department of Education

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INFORMATION ABOUT ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS	3
Introduction	3
General Introduction	3
Pennsylvania Core Standards (PCS)	3
What Is Included	3
Purpose and Uses	4
Item Format and Scoring Guidelines	4
Testing Time and Mode of Test Delivery for the PSSA	5
English Language Arts	5
Item and Scoring Sampler Format	6
Text-Dependent Analysis Scoring Guidelines	9
English Language Arts—Summary Data	11
English Language Arts Test Directions	12
PSSA ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS GRADE 4	14
Text-Dependent Analysis Scoring Guidelines	14
Sample Student Responses	16
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	26

INFORMATION ABOUT ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS

Introduction

General Introduction

The Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) provides districts and schools with tools to assist in delivering focused instructional programs aligned with the Pennsylvania Core Standards (PCS). These tools include Academic Standards, Assessment Anchors and Eligible Content (AAEC) documents, assessment handbooks, and content-based online Item Samplers, and a Sampler Guide. The online Item Sampler is intended to be used in conjunction with this Sampler Guide as a useful tool for Pennsylvania educators in preparing local instructional programs by providing samples of test item types and scored student responses. The online Item Sampler and this Sampler Guide are not designed to be used as a pretest, a curriculum, or any other benchmark for operational testing.

The online Item Sampler is available in Braille format. For more information regarding Braille, call (717) 901-2238.

Pennsylvania Core Standards (PCS)

The online Item Sampler and this Sampler Guide contain examples of test questions designed to assess the Pennsylvania Assessment Anchors and Eligible Content aligned to the PCS.

What Is Included

The online Item Sampler contains stimulus reading passages with test questions, Conventions of Standard English questions, and a text-dependent analysis (TDA) prompt that have been written to align to the Assessment Anchors, which are based on the PCS. The sample test questions model the types of items that may appear on an operational PSSA. Each sample test question has been through a rigorous review process to ensure alignment with the Assessment Anchors prior to being piloted in an embedded field test within a PSSA assessment and then used operationally on a PSSA assessment. Answer keys, scoring guidelines, and any related stimulus materials are also included. To access the Online Item Sampler, go to <https://portal.te.drcedirect.com/PA>. Select Item Samplers. Then, select the subject and grade levels as needed. Additionally, this Sampler Guide PDF provides sample student responses for each TDA prompt item to demonstrate the range of responses that students provided in response to these items.

Purpose and Uses

The items in the online Item Sampler may be used¹ as examples for creating assessment items at the classroom level. Classroom teachers may find it beneficial to have students respond to the TDA prompt question in this online Item Sampler. Educators may then use this Sampler Guide as a model to score the responses either independently or together with colleagues within a school or district. This Sampler Guide also includes the *General Description of Scoring Guidelines for ELA TDA Questions* that students will have access to during a PSSA ELA administration. The general description of scoring guidelines may be distributed to students for use during local assessments and may also be used by educators when scoring local assessments.

Item Format and Scoring Guidelines

Multiple Choice: Each test question of this type has four answer choices. Some MC test questions are based on a stimulus reading passage, while Conventions of Standard English MC test questions are independent of a passage. Each correct response to an MC test question is worth one point.

Evidence-Based Selected-Response: Each two-part EBSR question is designed to elicit an evidence-based response from a student who has read either a literature or an informational text passage. In Part One, which is similar to an MC question, the student analyzes a passage and chooses the best answer from four answer choices. In Part Two, the student utilizes evidence from the passage to select one or more answers based on the response to Part One. Part Two is different from an MC question in that there may be more than one correct answer. Each EBSR test question is worth either two or three points, and students can receive points for providing a correct response to Part One and/or for providing one or more correct responses in Part Two.

Text-Dependent Analysis Prompt: The TDA prompt is a text-dependent analysis prompt based on a passage or passage set that each student has read during the test event. There are three response pages in the paper-and-pencil format and up to 5,000 characters in the online format. Both literature and informational text passages are addressed through this item type. Students use explicit and implicit evidence to make inferences leading to a conclusion or generalization in response to the task stated in the prompt. Students construct a well-written analytical essay to communicate inferences and connections to the evidence using grade-appropriate writing skills. The TDA response is scored using a holistic scoring guideline on a 1–4-point scale.

Non-score Considerations: For TDA items, responses can be designated as non-scorable (NS). While every effort is made to score each student response, a response may receive an NS designation if it falls into one of five categories:

Blank – Blank, entirely erased, entirely crossed out, or consists entirely of whitespace

Refusal – Refusal to respond to the task

Non-scorable – In a language other than English, incoherent, illegible, insufficient, unrelated to the passage, or consisting solely or almost solely of text copied from the passage

Off Topic – Makes no reference to the item or passage but is not an intentional refusal

Copied – Consists of text copied from the item and/or test directions

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Testing Time and Mode of Test Delivery for the PSSA

The PSSA is delivered in an online format. The estimated response time for each item type is listed below.

- **Multiple-Choice:** 1.5 minutes
- **Evidence-Based Selected-Response:** 3 to 5 minutes
- **Text-Dependent Analysis Prompt:** 45 minutes

During an official test administration, students are given as much additional time as is necessary to complete the test questions.

English Language Arts

The online Item Sampler is composed of 2 passages, 6 passage-based MC questions, 1 EBSR question, 1 TDA prompt, and 3 Conventions of Standard English MC questions.

Each question is accompanied by a table that contains the Assessment Anchor and Eligible Content coding, answer key(s), depth of knowledge, testing data, and annotations.

Item and Scoring Sampler Format

The online Item Sampler and this Sampler Guide include the test directions and scoring guidelines that appeared in the PSSA English Language Arts assessments. Each MC item contains a table that includes the item alignment, the answer key, the depth of knowledge (DOK) level, points possible, the percentage² of students who chose each answer option, and a brief answer-option analysis or rationale. The EBSR item is followed by a table that includes the item alignment, the answer key to Part One of the item, the answer key to Part Two of the item, the DOK level, points possible, the mean student score, and a brief answer-option analysis for each part of the item. The TDA prompt is followed by a table that includes the item alignment, the DOK level, and the mean student score.

Example Multiple-Choice Item Information Table

Item-Specific Information	Item Statistics
Alignment:	p-value A:
Answer Key:	p-value B:
Depth of Knowledge:	p-value C:
Points Possible:	p-value D:

Option Annotations

Brief answer-option analysis or rationale.

Example Evidence-Based Selected-Response Item Information Table

Category	Answer Key	Item Scoring
Alignment:	Part One:	Points Possible:
Depth of Knowledge:	Part Two:	Mean Score:

Option Annotations

Brief answer-option analysis or rationale.

Example Text-Dependent Analysis Prompt Information Table

Category	Item-Specific Information
Alignment	Assigned AAEC
Depth of Knowledge	Assigned DOK
Points Possible	Number of Points
Mean Score	Average Score

² All p-value percentages listed in the item information tables have been rounded.

Directions for Text-Dependent Analysis (TDA) Prompts:

The English Language Arts TDA prompt will ask you to analyze the passage and use evidence from the passage to write an essay.

For the TDA Essay:

- Be sure to read the passage and the TDA prompt carefully.
- Review the Writer's Checklist to help you plan and organize your response.
- You may look back at the passage to help you write your essay.
- Write your essay in the appropriate space in the answer booklet. If you use scratch paper to write a rough-draft essay, be sure to transfer your final essay to the answer booklet.
- Be sure to check that your essay contains evidence from the passage to support your response.
- Be sure to check your essay for errors in capitalization, spelling, sentence formation, punctuation, and word choice.

Writer’s Checklist for the Text-Dependent Analysis Prompt

PLAN before you write

- Make sure you read the prompt carefully.
- Make sure you have read the entire passage carefully.
- Think about how the prompt relates to the passage.
- Organize your ideas on scratch paper. Use a thought map, outline, or other graphic organizer to plan your essay.

FOCUS while you write

- Analyze the information from the passage as you write your essay.
- Make sure you use evidence from the passage to support your response.
- Use precise language, a variety of sentence types, and transitions in your essay.
- Organize your paper with an introduction, body, and conclusion.

PROOFREAD after you write

- I wrote my final essay in the answer booklet.
- I stayed focused on responding to the prompt.
- I used evidence from the passage to support my response.
- I corrected errors in capitalization, spelling, sentence formation, punctuation, and word choice.

Text-Dependent Analysis Scoring Guidelines

Score Point	Description
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effectively addresses all parts of the task demonstrating in-depth analytic understanding of the text(s) • Effective introduction, development, and conclusion identifying an opinion, topic, or controlling idea related to the text(s) • Strong organizational structure that effectively supports the focus and ideas • Thorough analysis of explicit and implicit meanings from text(s) to effectively support claims, opinions, ideas, and inferences • Substantial, accurate, and direct reference to the text(s) using relevant key details, examples, quotes, facts, and/or definitions • Substantial reference to the main idea(s) and relevant key details of the text(s) to support the writer’s purpose • Skillful use of transitions to link ideas • Effective use of precise language and domain-specific vocabulary drawn from the text(s) to explain the topic and/or to convey experiences/events • Few errors, if any, are present in sentence formation, grammar, usage, spelling, capitalization, and punctuation; errors present do not interfere with meaning
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adequately addresses all parts of the task demonstrating sufficient analytic understanding of the text(s) • Clear introduction, development, and conclusion identifying an opinion, topic, or controlling idea related to the text(s) • Appropriate organizational structure that adequately supports the focus and ideas • Clear analysis of explicit and implicit meanings from text(s) to support claims, opinions, ideas, and inferences • Sufficient, accurate, and direct reference to the text(s) using relevant details, examples, quotes, facts, and/or definitions • Sufficient reference to the main idea(s) and relevant key details of the text(s) to support the writer’s purpose • Appropriate use of transitions to link ideas • Appropriate use of precise language and domain-specific vocabulary drawn from the text(s) to explain the topic and/or to convey experiences/events • Some errors may be present in sentence formation, grammar, usage, spelling, capitalization, and punctuation; errors present seldom interfere with meaning

PSSA ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS GRADE 4

Score Point	Description
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inconsistently addresses some parts of the task demonstrating partial analytic understanding of the text(s) • Weak introduction, development, and/or conclusion identifying an opinion, topic, or controlling idea somewhat related to the text(s) • Weak organizational structure that inconsistently supports the focus and ideas • Weak or inconsistent analysis of explicit and/or implicit meanings from text(s) that somewhat supports claims, opinions, ideas, and inferences • Vague reference to the text(s) using some details, examples, quotes, facts, and/or definitions • Weak reference to the main idea(s) and relevant details of the text(s) to support the writer’s purpose • Inconsistent use of transitions to link ideas • Inconsistent use of precise language and domain-specific vocabulary drawn from the text(s) to explain the topic and/or to convey experiences/events • Errors may be present in sentence formation, grammar, usage, spelling, capitalization, and punctuation; errors present may interfere with meaning
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimally addresses part(s) of the task demonstrating inadequate analytic understanding of the text(s) • Minimal evidence of an introduction, development, and/or conclusion • Minimal evidence of an organizational structure • Insufficient or no analysis of the text(s); may or may not support claims, opinions, ideas, and inferences • Insufficient reference to the text(s) using few details, examples, quotes, facts, and/or definitions • Minimal reference to the main idea(s) and/or relevant details of the text(s) • Few, if any, transitions to link ideas • Little or no use of precise language or domain-specific vocabulary drawn from the text(s) • Many errors may be present in sentence formation, grammar, usage, spelling, capitalization, and punctuation; errors present often interfere with meaning

English Language Arts—Summary Data

Multiple-Choice and Evidence-Based Selected-Response Questions

An asterisk (*) indicates the key.

Sample Number	Alignment	Answer Key	Depth of Knowledge	Points	p-value A	p-value B	p-value C	p-value D
1	B-V.4.1.2	B	2	1	18%	59%*	15%	8%
2	B-K.4.1.1	C	2	1	19%	13%	51%*	17%
3	B-K.1.1.2	A	3	1	38%*	15%	29%	18%
4	B-C.2.1.2	D	2	1	26%	16%	12%	46%*
5	B-C.3.1.3	C	3	1	32%	12%	42%*	14%
6	B-K.1.1.2	Part One: B Part Two: D	3	2	Mean Score: 1.21			
7	B-C.3.1.1	Part One: A Part Two: B,D	2	3	Mean Score: 1.57			
9	D.2.1.1	D	2	1	42%	8%	24%	26%*
10	D.1.2.2	A	2	1	67%*	7%	18%	8%
11	D.1.2.1	A	2	1	58%*	21%	13%	8%

Text-Dependent Analysis Prompt

Sample Number	Alignment	Points	Depth of Knowledge	Mean Score
8	A-K.1.1.3	4	3	1.58

English Language Arts Test Directions

Read these directions carefully before beginning the assessment. To look at these directions again, select the ? **[Help]** button and choose the **Test Directions** tab.

This section of the test has Conventions of Standard English questions that include multiple-choice questions, reading passage multiple-choice questions, and reading passage evidence-based selected-response questions. Each multiple-choice question has four answer choices. Each evidence-based selected-response question has two parts and will ask you to select one or more answers in each part.

Answering Questions

Read each question carefully and choose your answer or enter your response.

1. For Conventions of Standard English multiple-choice questions, first, find the answer to the question. Then, select the correct answer using the **Pointer** tool.
 - Only one of the answer choices provided is correct.
 - To change an answer, use the **Pointer** tool to choose a different answer.
 - Select the **Flag** button if you are not sure of the answer to a question. It will mark the question so you know to go back and answer the question later.
2. For reading passage multiple-choice questions, first, read the passage carefully. Then read each question carefully and choose your answer or enter your response. Find the answer to the question. Then, select the correct answer using the **Pointer** tool.
 - Only one of the answer choices provided is correct.
 - To change an answer, use the **Pointer** tool to choose a different answer.
 - Select the **Flag** button if you are not sure of the answer to a question. It will mark the question so you know to go back and answer the question later.
3. For reading passage evidence-based selected-response questions, first, find the answer to **Part One**. Then, select the correct answer using the **Pointer** tool. **Next**, find the evidence in **Part Two** based on your answer to **Part One** and select each answer using the **Pointer** tool.
 - Only one of the answers provided in **Part One** is correct. **Part Two** will tell you how many correct answers there are.
 - To change an answer in **Part One**, use the **Pointer** tool to choose a different answer.
 - To remove a choice in **Part Two**, use the **Pointer** tool to click on the answer a second time.

4. For the text-dependent analysis prompt, use the keyboard and other online tools to enter your response in the areas provided.
 - An example of the scoring guidelines that professional scorers will use to evaluate your responses to the text-dependent analysis prompt can be found by selecting the ? [Help] button and choosing the **Scoring Guidelines** tab. You may refer to the **Scoring Guidelines** at any time while responding to the text-dependent analysis prompt.
5. Use tools such as the **Cross-Off**, **Highlighter**, **Notepad**, **Magnifier**, and **Line Guide** to assist you during the test.

Navigation

1. Only one question at a time will appear on the screen. Use the **Next** and **Back** buttons to move from question to question or page to page.
2. When you have answered all the questions, select the **Review/End Test** button at the top-right of the screen.
 - Select questions from the list that appears on the screen to check your work.
 - When you have finished and have checked your answers, follow the directions on the screen to exit.

Helpful Hints

- There is no time limit to finish the test.
- If you need to take a break from the assessment, select the **Pause Test** button. Select the **Resume** button to continue. If you are away from the assessment for more than 20 minutes, you will need to log back in.
- To see your progress on the test, select the **Review/End Test** button. You may go to any question by selecting it from the list that appears on the screen.
- Select the ? [Help] button to find more information.

PSSA ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS GRADE 4

Text-Dependent Analysis Scoring Guidelines

#8 Item Information

Category	Item-Specific Information
Alignment	A-K.1.1.3
Depth of Knowledge	3
Points Possible	4
Mean Score	1.58

Assessment Anchor:

E04.A-K.1—Key Ideas and Details

Specific Assessment Anchor Descriptor addressed by this item:

E04.A-K.1.1.3—Describe in depth a character, setting, or event in a story, drama, or poem, drawing on specific details in the text (e.g., a character’s thoughts, words, or actions).

Item-Specific Scoring Guideline

Score Point	Description
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effectively addresses all parts of the task demonstrating in-depth analytic understanding of the text(s) • Effective introduction, development, and conclusion identifying an opinion, topic, or controlling idea related to the text(s) • Strong organizational structure that effectively supports the focus and ideas • Thorough analysis of explicit and implicit meanings from text(s) to effectively support claims, opinions, ideas, and inferences • Substantial, accurate, and direct reference to the text(s) using relevant key details, examples, quotes, facts, and/or definitions • Substantial reference to the main idea(s) and relevant key details of the text(s) to support the writer’s purpose • Skillful use of transitions to link ideas • Effective use of precise language and domain-specific vocabulary drawn from the text(s) to explain the topic and/or to convey experiences/events • Few errors, if any, are present in sentence formation, grammar, usage, spelling, capitalization, and punctuation; errors present do not interfere with meaning

Score Point	Description
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adequately addresses all parts of the task demonstrating sufficient analytic understanding of the text(s) • Clear introduction, development, and conclusion identifying an opinion, topic, or controlling idea related to the text(s) • Appropriate organizational structure that adequately supports the focus and ideas • Clear analysis of explicit and implicit meanings from text(s) to support claims, opinions, ideas, and inferences • Sufficient, accurate, and direct reference to the text(s) using relevant details, examples, quotes, facts, and/or definitions • Sufficient reference to the main idea(s) and relevant key details of the text(s) to support the writer’s purpose • Appropriate use of transitions to link ideas • Appropriate use of precise language and domain-specific vocabulary drawn from the text(s) to explain the topic and/or to convey experiences/events • Some errors may be present in sentence formation, grammar, usage, spelling, capitalization, and punctuation; errors present seldom interfere with meaning
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inconsistently addresses some parts of the task demonstrating partial analytic understanding of the text(s) • Weak introduction, development, and/or conclusion identifying an opinion, topic, or controlling idea somewhat related to the text(s) • Weak organizational structure that inconsistently supports the focus and ideas • Weak or inconsistent analysis of explicit and/or implicit meanings from text(s) that somewhat supports claims, opinions, ideas, and inferences • Vague reference to the text(s) using some details, examples, quotes, facts, and/or definitions • Weak reference to the main idea(s) and relevant details of the text(s) to support the writer’s purpose • Inconsistent use of transitions to link ideas • Inconsistent use of precise language and domain-specific vocabulary drawn from the text(s) to explain the topic and/or to convey experiences/events • Errors may be present in sentence formation, grammar, usage, spelling, capitalization, and punctuation; errors present may interfere with meaning
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimally addresses part(s) of the task demonstrating inadequate analytic understanding of the text(s) • Minimal evidence of an introduction, development, and/or conclusion • Minimal evidence of an organizational structure • Insufficient or no analysis of the text(s); may or may not support claims, opinions, ideas, and inferences • Insufficient reference to the text(s) using few details, examples, quotes, facts, and/or definitions • Minimal reference to the main idea(s) and/or relevant details of the text(s) • Few, if any, transitions to link ideas • Little or no use of precise language or domain-specific vocabulary drawn from the text(s) • Many errors may be present in sentence formation, grammar, usage, spelling, capitalization, and punctuation; errors present often interfere with meaning

Sample Student Responses

Item 8 – Score Point 4

Student Response

The decision the author made to place the setting in late spring in Sweden had an effect on the events during the passage. The setting not only gave a heavy impact on the entire story, but gave a specific set of actions for Mattias.

One reason why the setting was important to the text was because of the thin ice that appears during late spring in Sweden. When temperatures rise and the ice thins, it gives a heavy impact on Mattias. When his mom got sick, he knew the trip would be tough from the thin ice to cross to get to the hospital. Without the season with thin ice, it would be easy to get Mattias's mamma to the hospital. Also, if it was summer the ice would be gone entirely, so it would be easier to walk either a different route or just row along the river.

A different reason for the importance of the season is the cold temperatures. Because the late spring in Sweden is a lot colder during the season than most places, it gives a higher chance of illness, the reason why his mother needed to go to the hospital anyway! Without the cold temperatures the lower chance of Mattias's mom getting sick in the first place. The author decided to pick that season so the story would make sense and Mattias would have a good reason to be crossing the thin ice to get to the hospital.

In conclusion, the author's decision of the setting has a heavy impact on the events and reasoning to the passage. The author has many reasons to have picked late spring as the setting of the text. Without them, the text would not make sense or have a proper storyline easy for readers to understand.

Annotation

This response effectively addresses all parts of the task, demonstrating in-depth analytic understanding of the text. The organizational structure is strong and effectively supports the focus and ideas throughout. In the effective introduction, the response focuses on *the decision the author made to place the setting in late spring in Sweden* and establishes the controlling idea (*The setting not only gave a heavy impact on the entire story, but gave a specific set of actions for Mattias*). The first body paragraph comprises thorough analysis with substantial text references. The response starts with analysis (*One reason why the setting was important to the text was because of the thin ice that appears during late spring in Sweden. When temperatures rise and the ice thins, it gives a heavy impact on Mattias*). The analysis includes an insightfully paraphrased text reference (*When his mom got sick, he knew the trip would be tough from the thin ice to cross to get to the hospital*) that connects to further in-depth analysis, demonstrating understanding of explicit and implicit meanings from the text (*Without the season with thin ice, it would be easy to get Mattias's mamma to the hospital. Also, if it was summer the ice would be gone entirely, so it would be easier to walk either a different route or just row along the river*). The next body paragraph is similarly crafted, weaving text references into original and insightful analysis (*A different reason for the importance of the season is the cold temperatures. Because the late spring in Sweden is a lot colder during the season than most places, it gives a higher chance of illness, the reason why his mother needed to go to the hospital anyway! Without the cold temperatures the lower chance of Mattias's mom getting sick in the first place. The author decided to pick that season so the story would make sense and Mattias would have a good reason to be crossing the thin ice to get to the hospital*). While this analysis includes logic that is somewhat reflective of this grade level, it is thoughtful and layered and reinforces the controlling idea. The conclusion ties back to the introduction (*In conclusion, the author's decision of the setting has a heavy impact on the events and reasoning to the passage. The author has many reasons to have picked late spring as the setting of the text. Without them, the text would not make sense or have a proper storyline easy for readers to understand*). There is a skillful use of transitions (*not only, but, One reason/A different reason, When, Without, Also, so, either, or, Because, and, In conclusion*) as well as an effective use of precise language and domain-specific vocabulary drawn from the text (*decision, author, heavy impact, entire, specific, set of actions, important, temperatures, rise, higher/lower chance, illness, a lot colder, hospital, in the first place, decided, make sense, good reason, reasoning, proper, storyline, easy for readers to understand*). The errors present in spelling (*temperatures*) and punctuation (missing or misplaced commas) do not interfere with meaning.

Student Response

The story, "Mattias's Crossing" is about a boy who helps his mother cross thin ice when she is injured. This essay will prove that the setting of the story affects the story.

In the beginning the season is starting to become spring, which means the ice is starting to melt. "We can't cross the river, Mattias, his mother whispered. The ice is too thin." This shows that since the ice is thin Mattias's mother does not think Mattias will be able to cross the river. The fact she uses the work "can't" shows there is little or no possibility of them making a successful trip.

When Mattias denies his mothers warning and countinues the ice starts to break up, "The boat moved halfway up the jagged ice edge, then, to Mattias's despair, slipped back into the hole." This shows that he didn't easily cross the river, and when he though the trip would be easy, he got stuck. The water covered ice was slippery and thin which did not help them on their trip.

Lastly, "Mattias stomped his frozen feet." This proves that it was cold outside and a long hard journey. The fact it uses the word "stomped" shows he was frustrated and disapointed in himself for not being able to escape the hole.

As you can see the season, tempature and place affected the story.

Annotation

This response effectively addresses all parts of the task, demonstrating in-depth analytic understanding of the text. The organizational structure is strong and effectively supports the focus. The introduction sets up the response’s controlling idea by identifying the event (*about a boy who helps his mother cross thin ice when she is injured*) and addressing the task (*This essay will prove that the setting of the story affects the story*). The first body paragraph begins with analysis (*In the beginning the season is starting to become spring, which means the ice is starting to melt*) that is supported with well-chosen text (*“We can’t cross the river, Mattias, his mother whispered. The ice is too thin”*). The response continues the development with precisely focused and thorough analysis (*This shows that since the ice is thin Mattias’s mother does not think Mattias will be able to cross the river. The fact she uses the work “can’t” shows there is little or no possibility of them making a successful trip*). The next body paragraph begins with additional precise analysis (*When Mattias denies his mothers warning and countinues the ice starts to break up*) that is also supported with well-chosen text (*“The boat moved halfway up the jagged ice edge, then, to Mattias’s despair, slipped back into the hole.”*). This is followed by thorough analysis focused on showing how the setting affects the story (*This shows that he didn’t easily cross the river, and when he thought the trip would be easy, he got stuck. The water covered ice was slippery and thin which did not help them on their trip*). The last body paragraph starts with a specific text reference (*Lastly, “Mattias stomped his frozen feet”*) that the response analyzes insightfully, again demonstrating an effective understanding of explicit and implicit meaning from the text (*This proves that it was cold outside and a long hard journey. The fact it uses the word “stomped” shows he was frustrated and disapointed in himself for not being able to escape the hole*). The conclusion concisely sums up the response (*As you can see the season, tempature and place affected the story*). The response uses transitions skillfully to link ideas (*In the beginning, which means, This shows that, The fact, When, and, which, Lastly, This proves that, As you can see*) as well as precise language and domain-specific vocabulary drawn from the text to succinctly convey events and experiences (*injured, affects/ affected, fact, little or no possibility, successful, denies, warning, slippery, hard journey, stomped, frustrated, disapointed in himself, escape, tempature*). The errors present in spelling (*countinues, disapointed, tempature*) and punctuation (missing apostrophe and commas) seldom interfere with meaning.

Student Response

In the text “Mattias’s Crossing,” one reason why the setting being in early spring is important is because the ice is not melted yet. In the text, it shows that the ice is thin. It being early spring shows that because it is spring, the ice has melted just a bit, but not fully.

To further explain, on page 39, the text states: “We can’t cross the river, Mattias,” his mother wispered. “The ice is to thin.” This proves my point in which the ice has not fully melted yet, but just enough for it to be to thin to cross.

Another reason on why the setting being early spring is important is on page 38. On this page, the text states: “Still, it would be many weeks before the ice melted enough for him to use his boat to cross the river and get back to his school in Kirjaluokta.” This peice of text shows that because spring had just came, “Early spring,” the weather was not quite warm enough for travel. Therefore, taking the risk of going on the thin ice, like so with Mattias and his mother, could be dangerous.

In conclusion, the reasons why the setting being in early spring is important is that because it is early in the warm season, the ice is not quite melted and being only slightly melted makes the ice to thin and unsafe for travel for the snowmobile and the boat.

Annotation

This response adequately addresses all parts of the task, demonstrating sufficient analytic understanding of the text. The organizational structure is appropriate and adequately supports the response’s focus. The clear introduction begins with analysis (*one reason why the setting being in early spring is important is because the ice is not melted yet*) that both addresses the task and serves as the controlling idea for the response. Analysis references the text and reinforces the controlling idea (*In the text, it shows that the ice is thin. It being early spring shows that because it is spring, the ice has melted just a bit, but not fully*). The first body paragraph starts with well-chosen text (*“We can’t cross the river, Mattias,” his mother wispered. “The ice is to thin”*) and continues with analysis focused directly on the controlling idea (*This proves my point in which the ice has not fully melted yet, but just enough for it to be to thin to cross*). The next paragraph continues the focus on the setting with a text reference (*Another reason on why the setting being early spring is important is on page 38. On this page, the text states: “Still, it would be many weeks before the ice melted enough for him to use his boat to cross the river and get back to his school in Kirjaluokta”*) followed by clear analysis (*This peice of text shows that because spring had just came, “Early spring,” the weather was not quite warm enough for travel. Therefore, taking the risk of going on the thin ice, like so with Mattias and his mother, could be dangerous*). The conclusion maintains focus on the controlling idea to the end of the response, reiterating points made earlier (*In conclusion, the reasons why the setting being in early spring is important is that because it is early in the warm season, the ice is not quite melted and being only slightly melted makes the ice to thin and unsafe for travel for the snowmobile and the boat*). There is an appropriate use of transitions (*In the text/the text states, but, To further explain, This proves, Another reason, This peice of text shows, Therefore, In conclusion*) and precise language and domain-specific vocabulary drawn from the text (*further explain, proves my point, just enough, taking the risk, dangerous, early in the warm season, not quite melted, slightly melted, to thin, unsafe for travel*). The errors present in usage (*to for “too,” came for “come”*) and spelling (*wispered, peice*) seldom interfere with meaning.

Item 8 – Score Point 3

Student Response

The setting in “Mattias’s Crossing” is important to the events that occurred because it was in early spring and the weather had been rough.

This takes place in early spring when the ice is thin so it’s quite hard to cross. This is bad because now Mattias can’t cross the river 100% safely. In the first paragraph, the text states, “The ice on the river was no longer safe for his snowmobile.” and “The ice is too thin.” Meaning that it not safe for them to ride the snowmobile, nor the boat. But then I think Mattias did the right thing by using the boat.

There had also been an ice storm earlier that week that took out the telephone lines. Since the telephone lines are “disabled” Mattias can’t call the fire department for help.

All in all, those two things made it very difficult for Mattias to pull that off because of the rough weather in early spring in Sweden.

Annotation

This response adequately addresses all parts of the task, demonstrating sufficient analytic understanding of the text. The organizational structure is appropriate and supports the response’s focus. There is a brief introduction that addresses the task and establishes the controlling idea (*The setting in “Mattias’s Crossing” is important to the events that occurred because it was in early spring and the weather had been rough*). The first body paragraph begins with analysis and inferences (*This takes place in early spring when the ice is thin so it’s quite hard to cross. This is bad because now Mattias can’t cross the river 100% safely*). Next, relevant text references (*“The ice on the river was no longer safe for his snowmobile.” and “The ice is too thin.”*) are clearly analyzed through the lens of the task (*Meaning that it not safe for them to ride the snowmobile, nor the boat. But then I think Mattias did the right thing by using the boat*). Continuing the focus on the controlling idea, the next body paragraph starts with relevant text support (*There had also been an ice storm earlier that week that took out the telephone lines*) that connects to clear analysis (*Since the telephone lines are “disabled” Mattias can’t call the fire department for help*) and the controlling idea from the introduction (*The setting in “Mattias’s Crossing” is important to the events that occurred because it was in early spring and the weather had been rough*). The brief conclusion (*All in all, those two things made it very difficult for Mattias to pull that off because of the rough weather in early spring in Sweden*) also clearly ties back to the controlling idea, adequately supporting the focus while completing the response. Transitions are employed appropriately (*because, and, so, In the first paragraph, the text states, Meaning that, nor, But then, All in all*), and there is an appropriate use of precise language and domain-specific vocabulary drawn from the text (*rough, quite, 100% safely, snowmobile, nor, boat, did the right thing, disabled, fire department, difficult, pull that off*) to describe Mattias’s experiences. The errors present in usage (*it* for “it’s”) and punctuation (missing commas) do not interfere with meaning.

Student Response

Since the setting is in Sweeden in early spring, it can be imortant for a few reasons.

The first reason is there's ice and snow every where because it is early spring. This effects the story because Mattias could not use his snowmobile to get to school.

The other reason is the river is frozen because when it's early spring it can be cold and rivers can still be frozen. This effects the story because Mattias and his mom use their boat to get across the frozen river.

Those were all the reasons the setting effected the story

Annotation

This response inconsistently addresses some parts of the task, demonstrating partial analytic understanding of the text. The organizational structure is weak. The response begins with a weak introduction (*Since the setting is in Sweeden in early spring, it can be imortant for a few reasons*) that only vaguely addresses the task. The first body paragraph focuses on the response's first reason by means of a weak inference (*The first reason is there's ice and snow every where because it is early spring*). This is followed by another inference and a vague text reference that weakly supports the student's idea (*This effects the story because Mattias could not use his snowmobile to get to school*). The next body paragraph includes another inferential reason (*The other reason is the river is frozen because when it's early spring it can be cold and rivers can still be frozen*). Again, the response uses an inference that only vaguely references the text and only weakly supports their idea (*This effects the story because Mattias and his mom use their boat to get across the frozen river*). The conclusion is perfunctory (*Those were all the reasons the setting effected the story*). There is an inconsistent use of transitions (*The first/other reason, and, because*) and an inconsistent use of precise language and domain-specific vocabulary drawn from the text (*every where, effects/effected, snowmobile, frozen*). There are errors in usage (*effects/effected* for "affects/affected," *every where* for "everywhere"), spelling (*imortant*), and punctuation (missing comma and period) that seldom interfere with meaning.

Item 8 – Score Point 2

Student Response

The setting of the story is important because if they were not in Sweden they might of not have had snow and that would just dissapier the problem of crossing the river and his dad not being there which is why most of the events even happen!

Annotation

This response inconsistently addresses some parts of the task, demonstrating partial analytic understanding of the text. The organizational structure is weak because the response does not develop a clear introduction, detailed analysis, or explicit conclusion. The response addresses the task (*The setting of the story is important because*) with weak inferences that move beyond a literal interpretation of the text only by making vague references to the setting (*if they were not in Sweden they might of not have had snow and that would just dissapier the problem of crossing the river and his dad not being there which is why most of the events even happen*). The transitions are simple (*because, and, which is why*), and there is an inconsistent use of precise language and domain-specific vocabulary (*dissapier*). The few errors present in spelling (*dissapier*) and punctuation (missing comma) do not seriously interfere with meaning.

Student Response

Thes setting is important because it tells where and when the story takes place. “Mattias stared at the white walls of the hospital waiting room.” “He fount them in the tool shed and placed them next to his mother.” “He wasn’t far from ther other side of the river, maybe ten boat lengths, when he noticed two men drilling a fishing hole next to ther shore.” This is why the setting is important.

Annotation

This response minimally addresses part of the task, demonstrating inadequate analytic understanding of the text. There is minimal evidence of an organizational structure. The response begins with a very weak inference (*Thes setting is important because it tells where and when the story takes place*) that minimally addresses the task. Next, the response provides three text references (“*Mattias stared at the white walls of the hospital waiting room.*” “*He fount them in the tool shed and placed them next to his mother.*” “*He wasn’t far from ther other side of the river, maybe ten boat lengths, when he noticed two men drilling a fishing hole next to ther shore*”), each of which identifies a setting where part of the story takes place. These text references are included, presumably, to support the ideas regarding the story’s settings (“*hospital waiting room,*” “*tool shed,*” “*other side of the river . . . next to ther shore*”). However, there is no analysis or inference regarding why these settings are important. The response abruptly concludes (*This is why the setting is important*). The student uses only one transition (*this is why*) and makes little or no use of precise language or domain-specific vocabulary beyond the content of the text references and the prompt. The errors present in spelling (*Thes, fount, ther*) sometimes interfere with meaning.

Item 8 – Score Point 1

Student Response

The setting is important because it has a lot of detail and you can also learn a lot from it and it's very intersing story so there is a lot of things to know about this story.

Annotation

This response minimally addresses part of the task, demonstrating inadequate analytic understanding of the text. There is minimal evidence of an organizational structure. The response minimally addresses the task (*The setting is important because . . .*); however, the explanation, which includes no analysis or references to the text (*it has a lot of detail and you can also learn a lot from it and it's very intersing story so there is a lot of things to know about this story*), is minimal. Few transitions are employed (*and, so*), and there is no use of precise language or domain-specific vocabulary drawn from the text. The errors present in spelling (*intersing*), punctuation (missing comma), and the fact that the response is a run-on sentence do not interfere with meaning.

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PSSA Grade 4 English Language Arts Item Sampler Scoring Guide

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