



# PSSA

Pennsylvania System of School Assessment

# English Language Arts

# Grade 7

## Item Sampler Scoring Guide

2025–2026



Pennsylvania  
Department of Education

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# 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 used<sup>1</sup> 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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<sup>1</sup> The permission to copy and/or use these materials does not extend to commercial purposes.

## 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, 5 passage-based MC questions, 1 EBSR question, 1 TDA prompt, and 4 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 percentage<sup>2</sup> 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

<sup>2</sup> 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"> <li>• Effectively addresses all parts of the task demonstrating in-depth analytic understanding of the text(s)</li> <li>• Effective introduction, development, and conclusion identifying an opinion, topic, or controlling idea related to the text(s)</li> <li>• Strong organizational structure that effectively supports the focus and ideas</li> <li>• Thorough analysis of explicit and implicit meanings from text(s) to effectively support claims, opinions, ideas, and inferences</li> <li>• Substantial, accurate, and direct reference to the text(s) using relevant key details, examples, quotes, facts, and/or definitions</li> <li>• Substantial reference to the main idea(s) and relevant key details of the text(s) to support the writer’s purpose</li> <li>• Skillful use of transitions to link ideas</li> <li>• Effective use of precise language and domain-specific vocabulary drawn from the text(s) to explain the topic and/or to convey experiences/events</li> <li>• Few errors, if any, are present in sentence formation, grammar, usage, spelling, capitalization, and punctuation; errors present do not interfere with meaning</li> </ul>
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adequately addresses all parts of the task demonstrating sufficient analytic understanding of the text(s)</li> <li>• Clear introduction, development, and conclusion identifying an opinion, topic, or controlling idea related to the text(s)</li> <li>• Appropriate organizational structure that adequately supports the focus and ideas</li> <li>• Clear analysis of explicit and implicit meanings from text(s) to support claims, opinions, ideas, and inferences</li> <li>• Sufficient, accurate, and direct reference to the text(s) using relevant details, examples, quotes, facts, and/or definitions</li> <li>• Sufficient reference to the main idea(s) and relevant key details of the text(s) to support the writer’s purpose</li> <li>• Appropriate use of transitions to link ideas</li> <li>• Appropriate use of precise language and domain-specific vocabulary drawn from the text(s) to explain the topic and/or to convey experiences/events</li> <li>• Some errors may be present in sentence formation, grammar, usage, spelling, capitalization, and punctuation; errors present seldom interfere with meaning</li> </ul>

# PSSA ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS GRADE 7

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

## 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	A-K.1.1.3	B	2	1	11%	63%*	13%	13%
2	A-C.2.1.3	A	2	1	74%*	8%	7%	11%
3	A-V.4.1.1	C	1	1	3%	20%	44%*	33%
4	A-K.1.1.3	A	2	1	60%*	7%	26%	7%
5	A-C.2.1.1	D	2	1	13%	15%	21%	51%*
6	A-K.1.1.2	Part One: C Part Two: A,C	2	3	Mean Score: 1.75			
8	D.2.1.2	D	2	1	6%	25%	28%	41%*
9	D.1.1.7	B	2	1	39%	42%*	8%	11%
10	D.2.1.3	A	2	1	45%*	36%	11%	8%
11	D.1.1.4	C	2	1	11%	5%	80%*	4%

### Text-Dependent Analysis Prompt

Sample Number	Alignment	Points	Depth of Knowledge	Mean Score
7	B-C.2.1.1	4	3	1.88

## 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 7

## Text-Dependent Analysis Scoring Guidelines

### #7 Item Information

Category	Item-Specific Information
Alignment	B-C.2.1.1
Depth of Knowledge	3
Points Possible	4
Mean Score	1.88

### Assessment Anchor:

E06.B-C.2—Craft and Structure

### Specific Assessment Anchor Descriptor addressed by this item:

E06.B-C.2.1.1—Determine an author’s point of view or purpose in a text and analyze how the author distinguishes his or her position from that of others.

### Item-Specific Scoring Guideline

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

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

## Sample Student Responses

Item 7 – Score Point 4

## Student Response

In the nonfiction story, *Discovery!* by Mark Clemens, the author uses factual evidence to inform the reader about the gold rush. Throughout the story, the author writes about how a group of prospectors start the gold rush. Mark Clemens incorporates various historical facts to form an image in our brain and show the reader the impact of the gold rush.

Firstly, the author used historical facts to paint in our brain about the gold rush. For example, when the text states, “Yukon had no roads and no towns. Winter temperatures dropped to as low as -40 to -70 degrees Fahrenheit.” This means that the travellers at that time had to go through extreme temperature, just to find gold. This matters, because it shows how the author used these facts to help us imagine the amount of time and *perseverance* they needed to have to go through frostbite type temperatures. Another instance where the author paints an image, is at the end of the passage when the author writes, “Some miners got sick or were robbed. Other miners died from disease, malnutrition, hypothermia, or avalanches.” This shows how many people tried to go but were stopped by disease or natural cause. This proves that the author paints an image in your head, because when you read it, you can imagine all of the people who died through malicious disease or natural cause, just trying to make their way to Bonanza Creek to gain maybe only an ounce of gold. Overall, the author uses historical facts to paint an image and informs the reader about what happened during the gold rush at Bonanza Creek.

Another reason how the author uses facts to help him inform the reader about the gold rush is by using massive numbers to display the huge impact of the gold rush. For example, near the end of the passage, the author writes, “Before the gold rush, the city’s merchants sold \$300,000 worth of goods. In the first years of the Klondike gold rush, they sold \$10 million worth of goods.” This means before the gold rush, Seattle’s prices were low, however, during the gold rush prices soared making Seattle rich. This implies that because of the gold rush, businesses got tons of money, making in tern the economy rich as well. This, furthermore, proves that the gold rush had a huge impact on the United States, and this, it also proves that through the facts the author gave, the reader can draw this conclusion. In summation, this example proves that the author’s use of facts with huge numbers displays the huge impact that the gold rush had.

In conclusion, if gold had not been found on the Bonanza Creek, then America would not be as rich as it is today. Instead, however, the gold was found, and America’s economy boomed. All in all, by reading this the reader can understand that imagery and big numbers through historical facts, the author informs us about the gold rush. What if the author had not included these facts, then would his passage be as strong.

## 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 response's focus and ideas. In the effective introduction, the response addresses the task by means of a thorough analysis (*the author uses factual evidence to inform the reader about the gold rush. Throughout the story, the author writes about how a group of prospectors start the gold rush. Mark Clemens incorporates various historical facts to form an image in our brain and show the reader the impact of the gold rush*) that functions as a controlling idea. The first body paragraph begins by reiterating the controlling idea from the introduction (*Firstly, the author used historical facts to paint in our brain about the gold rush*). The student then provides well-chosen text support (*For example, when the text states, "Yukon had no roads and no towns. Winter temperatures dropped to as low as -40 to -70 degrees Fahrenheit."*) to build to the thorough analysis that follows (*This means that the travellers at that time had to go through extreme temperature, just to find gold. This matters, because it shows how the author used these facts to help us imagine the amount of time and perserverance they needed to have to go through frostbite type temperatures*). Next, the analysis continues (*Another instance where the author paints an image, is at the end of the passage*), followed by more well-chosen text support (*"Some miners got sick or were robbed. Other miners died from disease, malnutrition, hypothermia, or avalanches"*) and additional thorough analysis (*This shows how many people tried to go but were stopped by disease or natural cause. This proves that the author paints an image in your head, because when you read it, you can imagine all of the people who died through malicious disease or natural cause, just trying to make their way to Bonanza Creek to gain maybe only an ounce of gold. Overall, the author uses historical facts to paint an image and informs the reader about what happened during the gold rush at Bonanza Creek*), all of which supports the controlling idea. The next body paragraph begins with analysis that again addresses the author's purpose (*Another reason how the author uses facts to help him inform the reader about the gold rush is by using massive numbers to display the huge impact of the gold rush*). Substantial and well-chosen text references support the analysis (*For example, near the end of the passage, the author writes, "Before the gold rush, the city's merchants sold \$300,000 worth of goods. In the first years of the Klondike gold rush, they sold \$10 million worth of goods"*) and build towards additional thorough analysis that further clarifies the author's purpose (*This means before the gold rush, Seattle's prices were low, however, during the gold rush prices soared making Seattle rich. This implies that because of the gold rush, businesses got tons of money, making in tern the economy rich as well. This, furthermore, proves that the gold rush had a huge impact on the United States, and this, it also proves that through the facts the author gave, the reader can draw this conclusion. In summation, this example proves that the author's use of facts with huge numbers displays the huge impact that the gold rush had*). The student concludes the essay effectively, employing a rhetorical question that engages the reader (*In conclusion, if gold had not been found on the Bonanza Creek, then America would not be as rich as it is today. Instead, however, the gold was found, and America's exonomy boomed. All in all, by reading this the reader can understand that imagery and big numbers through historical facts, the author informs us about the gold rush. What if the author had not included these facts, then would his passage be as strong*), demonstrating an in-depth analytic understanding of the text. The student skillfully uses transitions throughout the response (*In the nonfiction story, Throughout the story, Firstly, For example, This means that, This matters, because, Another instance, when the author writes, This shows, This proves that, Overall, Another reason, This implies that, This, furthermore, and thus, In summation, In conclusion, Instead, however, All in all, What if*). There is also an effective use of precise language

**Annotation**

and domain-specific vocabulary drawn from the text (*nonfiction, factual evidence, inform, gold rush, prospectors, incorporates various historical facts, form an image in our brain, show the reader the impact, paint, Winter temperatures, Fahrenheit, travellers, extreme temperature, imagine, perserverance, frostbite, stopped by disease or natural cause, malicious disease, Bonanza Creek, ounce, massive numbers, huge, Seattle's/Seattle, prices soared, businesses, making in tern the economy rich as well, proves, United States/America, through the facts, draw this conclusion, summation, displays, exonomy, boomed, imagery*). The errors present in spelling (*temperatures, Farenheit, travellers, perserverance, exonomy*) do not interfere with meaning.

**Student Response**

There have been many great discoveries in the world. But collecting gold has always been a rare and impressive find. The passage, "Discovery!" written by Mark Clemens shares a story about a group of people scouting for gold. Throughout the story the author uses facts to contribute to the purpose of the article. For example, he had proof that the economic depression caused a lot of people to have the longing for riches, it was awfully difficult to actually obtain the gold and become wealthy, and despite all of the obstacles and challenges some people became lucky and were able to strike gold.

During the economic depression there was a gold rush in Yukon Canada, some people saw this as their light and opportunity to escape any new problems in their lives and become rich. According to the article, "The news flashed across the country by Telegraph. It started one of the biggest gold rushes in North American history. At the time, the United States was an economic depression." The author wanted the reader to know that the lack of money people had was a big reason to why the gold rush was a big hit. The text also claims, "Yukon had no roads and no towns. Winter temperatures dropped to as low as -40 to -70 Fahrenheit." The fact that the climate was freezing, and that travelling would be unpleasant contributes to the purpose because it shows that people were willing to go through so much to get out of the issues that they had. All in all, people were willing to do anything to get money and get out of their financial problems.

Knowing that it was extremely hard to become successful, most people were not able to achieve their dreams. The fact, "Of the 100,000 Stampeders who started for the gold fields in 1897, only about 30,000 or 40,000 completed the trip. Some miners got sick or were robbed. Other miners died from disease, malnutrition, hypothermia, or avalanches." Clemens wanted to include this fact to show that money has such a big affect on people that they would risk their lives for riches and gold. The text states, "of those who stayed, only about 4000 miners found gold. Only 300 people found enough to be considered rich." This fact goes to show that it was basically a waste of time, health, and labor to actually try to become wealthy. Overall, the author wants to show the overwhelming challenges that people completed just for the gold.

Even though so many humans were not able to find gold. There were some lucky ones that were actually able to become wealthy. In the box, "About the Discoverers" the text says, "They found about \$1 million worth of gold. George Carmack returned to the United States with his fortune, bringing his wife and daughter with him. But he later abandoned Shaaw Tiaa, who returned to Yukon almost penniless. She relied on the generosity of her brother, Keish, for support." Clemens wanted the reader to know that some people used the money for the wrong reasons or let the wealth change their whole personality or intentions. The text also states, "Keish tried to adjust to a nonnative, wealthy life. He created a trust to protect his fortune and to provide for his family years later the trust of money was used to help Yukon's First Nations people." Despite all of the money Kiesh stayed kind and genourous. He helped his sister and always wanted to provide for his loved ones. In the end, the author wanted to prove that money should be used cautiously and for the right reasons.

The passage, "Discovery!" created by Mark Clemens used facts to support the purpose of the difficulty of gaining money and spending it correctly. The author wanted to prove that the economic depression caused people to want money. Also most people were not able to gain the riches due to the harsh environments. And, despite all of the difficulties, some people got lucky. From begging to end, Clemens wanted to give facts to prove how hard financial issues are.

## 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 response's focus. The effective and engaging introduction begins with strong analysis that addresses the task (*There have been many great discoveries in the world. But collecting gold has always been a rare and impressive find. The passage, "Discovery!" written by Mark Clemens shares a story about a group of people scouting for gold*) and provides the controlling idea (*Throughout the story the author uses facts to contribute to the purpose of the article. For example, he had proof that the economic depression caused a lot of people to have the longing for riches, it was awfully difficult to actually obtain the gold and become wealthy, and despite all of the obstacles and challenges some people became lucky and were able to strike gold*). The first body paragraph begins with insightful analysis interspersed with context-providing text details (*During the economic depression there was a gold rush in Yukon Canada, some people saw this as their light and opportunity to escape any new problems in their lives and become rich*). Next, well-chosen text references are incorporated (*"The news flashed across the country by Telegraph. It started one of the biggest gold rushes in North American history. At the time, the United States was an economic depression"*) to set up thorough analysis of the author's purpose (*The author wanted the reader to know that the lack of money people had was a big reason to why the gold rush was a big hit*). More relevant text (*"Yukon had no roads and no towns. Winter temperatures dropped to as low as -40 to -70 Fahrenheit"*) and clarifying analysis (*The fact that the climate was freezing, and that travelling would be unpleasant contributes to the purpose because it shows that people were willing to go through so much to get out of the issues that they had. All in all, people were willing to do anything to get money and get out of their financial problems*) develop the response's focus on the author's purpose. The next body paragraph starts with strong analysis (*Knowing that it was extremely hard to become successful, most people were not able to achieve their dreams*) followed by additional well-chosen text support (*The fact, "Of the 100,000 Stampeders who started for the gold fields in 1897, only about 30,000 or 40,000 completed the trip. Some miners got sick or were robbed. Other miners died from disease, malnutrition, hypothermia, or avalanches"*). Further analysis ties the development to the author's purpose (*Clemens wanted to include this fact to show that money has such a big affect on people that they would risk their lives for riches and gold*). Another text reference (*"of those who stayed, only about 4000 miners found gold. Only 300 people found enough to be considered rich"*) supports more thorough analysis (*This fact goes to show that it was basically a waste of time, health, and labor to actually try to become wealthy. Overall, the author wants to show the overwhelming challenges that people completed just for the gold*) and maintains focus on the task. The last body paragraph continues the pattern, leading with a strong analysis (*Even though so many humans were not able to find gold. There were some lucky ones that were actually able to become wealthy*) supported with well-chosen text (*"About the Discoverers" the text says, "They found about \$1 million worth of gold. George Carmack returned to the United States with his fortune, bringing his wife and daughter with him. But he later abandoned Shaaw Tiaa, who returned to Yukon almost penniless. She relied on the generosity of her brother, Keish, for support"*) that is developed with additional analysis (*Clemens wanted the reader to know that some people used the money for the wrong reasons or let the wealth change their whole personality or intentions*). Another text detail (*"Keish tried to adjust to a nonnative, wealthy life. He created a trust to protect his fortune and to provide for his family years later the trust of money was used to help Yukon's First Nations people"*) followed by insightful analysis (*Despite all of the money Kiesh stayed kind and genourous. He helped his sister and always wanted to provide for his loved ones. In the end, the author wanted to prove that money should be used cautiously and for the right reasons*) maintains the focus on the author's purpose. The effective conclusion ties back to ideas from the introduction (*Clemens used*

**Annotation**

*facts to support the purpose of the difficulty of gaining money and spending it correctly. The author wanted to prove that the economic depression caused people to want money. Also most people were not able to gain the riches due to the harsh environments. And, despite all of the difficulties, some people got lucky. From begging to end, Clemens wanted to give facts to prove how hard financial issues are). The response skillfully uses transitions to link ideas throughout the response (But, The passage, Throughout the story, For example, and, During, According to the article, At the time, The text also claims, The fact that, because, All in all, Knowing that, The fact, to show, The text states, This fact goes to show that, Overall, Even though, In the box, The text also states, Despite, In the end, Also). The student also demonstrates an effective use of precise language and domain-specific vocabulary drawn from the text (great discoveries, world, gold rare, impressive, scouting, facts, contribute/contributes, proof, economic depression, longing, riches, awfully difficult/difficulties, wealthy, despite, obstacles, challenges, lucky, strike gold, gold rush, light, opportunity, escape, problems, big hit, climate, freezing, travelling, unpleasant, willing, financial, extremely, successful, achieve, dreams, disease, malnutrition, hypothermia, avalanches, affect, risk, overwhelming, wrong reason, personality, intentions, generous, cautiously, right reasons, due to, harsh environments) to explain the topic. The few errors present in sentence formation (fragment), usage (affect for "effect," begging for "beginning"), spelling (awfully, successful, malnutrition, generous) and minor punctuation (missing comma) do not interfere with meaning.*

**Student Response**

In many informational texts or passages, authors use different forms of factual evidence to contribute to what his, or her purpose may be. In the passage, “Discovery!” by Mark Clemens he uses factual evidence to contribute to his purpose of informing the reader about the process of the gold rush that took place around the 1890s.

An example of Clemens’s factual evidence is shown when he wrote, “Some miners got sick or were robbed. Others died from disease, malnutrition, hypothermia, or avalanches.” This peice of evidence contributes to the author’s purpose, for an author attempting to entertain the reader wouldn’t necessarily include something so serious as these miner’s tragic deaths, showing that Clemens’s purpose is to inform the reader about the gold rush of the 1890s. Clemens supports the idea of his purpose is to inform the reader when the passage stated, “Of those who stayed, only about 4,000 miners found gold. Only 300 people found enough gold to be considered rich.” Once again Clemens is informing reader, explaining how the gold rush was not the great period people thought it was, for it caused many losses with little gain, proving how his purpose is to inform.

Clemens continues his work on informing the reader when he states, “At the end of the day, the men had more “color” than they had ever found before. They thought finding 10 cents of gold in one day was good.” This peice of evidence showed how hard obtaining gold was, showing how the author is informing the reader about the good and bad.

In conclusion, the author of “Discovery!”, Mark Clemens used factual evidence like dates, real occurances, and people to contribute to his purpose of informing the reader about the gold rush of the 1890s. This allows the reader to get a clear picture that includes both the good and the bad parts of the goldrush.

## 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 on the author's purpose of informing the reader. The introduction is clear and begins with a generalization (*In many informational texts or passages, authors use different forms of factual evidence to contribute to what his, or her purpose may be*) that sets up the establishment of a controlling idea (*he uses factual evidence to contribute to his purpose of informing the reader about the process of the gold rush that took place around the 1890s*) that clearly addresses the task. The first body paragraph builds on the controlling idea by providing relevant text support (*"Some miners got sick or were robbed. Others died from disease, malnutrition, hypothermia, or avalanches"*) and clear analysis (*This peice of evidence contributes to the author's purpose, for an author attempting to entertain the reader wouldn't necessarily include something so serious as these miner's tragic deaths, showing that Clemens's purpose is to inform the reader about the gold rush of the 1890s*). The response continues the development (*Clemens supports the idea of his purpose is to inform the reader*) by adding more text support (*"Of those who stayed, only about 4,000 miners found gold. Only 300 people found enough gold to be considered rich"*) and providing additional clear analysis (*Once again Clemens is informing reader, explaining how the gold rush was not the great period people thought it was, for it caused many losses with little gain, proving how his purpose is to inform*). In the next body paragraph, the response continues the pattern of text followed by analysis by adding another relevant text detail (*"At the end of the day, the men had more "color" than they had ever found before. They thought finding 10 cents of gold in one day was good"*) developed with clear analysis (*This peice of evidence showed how hard obtaining gold was, showing how the author is informing the reader about the good and the bad*). The analytic conclusion ties back to the introduction (*used factual evidence like dates, real occurances, and people to contribute to his purpose of informing the reader about the gold rush of the 1890s. This allows the reader to get a clear picture that includes both the good and the bad parts of the goldrush*) to strengthen the response's cohesiveness. Transitions are appropriate both between and within paragraphs (*In many informational texts, In the passage, An example of, This peice of evidence, showing that, Clemens supports the idea, when the passage stated, Once again, Clemens continues, when he states, In conclusion*). There is also an appropriate use of precise language and domain-specific vocabulary drawn from the text (*informational, factual evidence, contribute, informing, process, gold rush, 1890s, author's purpose, serious, miner's tragic deaths, explaining, great period, caused many losses with little gain, proving, obtaining, occurances*) to explain the topic. The few errors in spelling (*peice, occurances*) and punctuation (*misplaced apostrophes*) do not interfere with meaning.

**Student Response**

In the story “discovery!” the author seems to use a lot of facts in his writing. He does this because it is an informational writing piece and it hooks the reader in. Using facts is very useful to keep the reader interested in reading, like when he talks about the harsh weather the miners have to face or all of the dates and numbers.

In the passage, the author talks about the harsh weather and climate that the miners have to go through. In the story it says, “Other miners died from disease, malnutrition, hypothermia, or avalanches” and it says, “Winter temperatures dropped to as low as -40 to -70 degrees Fahrenheit.” This is two examples of how much suffering the miners had to go through while looking for gold. These facts matter because it shows that miners made sacrifices to find gold and it makes the reader want to know more about it, just like the reader would want to know more about the numbers in the story.

In the passage the author writes a lot of numbers down such as dates, amounts of money, number of miners, and measurements. In the story it says, “Of the 100,000 stampedeers who started for the goldfields in 1897, only about 30,000 or 40,000 completed the trip” and it also says, “The discovery on August 16, 1896, kept the group busy for several hours”). These dates and numbers let the readers know exactly when something happened and know how many miners there were. This matters because it lets the story go deeper into facts and lets the reader know a lot more about the story.

This passage has so many facts to keep the reader invested. He does this so the reader would want to keep reading and would not get bored like when he talks about the harsh climates the miners went through, or when he talks about all the dates and numbers in the passage. In conclusion, the usage of facts helped this passage a lot because it is an informational writing.

## 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, addresses the task, and identifies a controlling idea (*the author seems to use a lot of facts in his writing. He does this because it is an informational writing piece and it hooks the reader in. Using facts is very useful to keep the reader interested in reading, like when he talks about the harsh weather the miners have to face or all of the dates and numbers*). The first body paragraph identifies a fact (*the author talks about the harsh weather and climate that the miners have to go through*) that is supported with relevant text (*"Other miners died from disease, malnutrition, hypothermia, or avalanches" and it says, "Winter temperatures dropped to as low as -40 to -70 degrees Fahrenheit."*) and developed with clarifying analysis (*This is two examples of how much suffering the miners had to go through while looking for gold. These facts matter because it shows that miners made sacrifices to find gold and it makes the reader want to know more about it, just like the reader would want to know more about the numbers in the story*). The next body paragraph starts with another fact (*the author writes a lot of numbers down such as dates, amounts of money, number of miners, and measurements*) supported by two text selections (*"Of the 100,000 stampedeers who started for the goldfields in 1897, only about 30,000 or 40,000 completed the trip" and it also says, "The discovery on August 16, 1896, kept the group busy for several hours"*). Clear analysis then connects the text selections to the controlling idea (*These dates and numbers let the readers know exactly when something happened and know how many miners there were. This matters because it lets the story go deeper into facts and lets the reader know a lot more about the story*). The conclusion then ties back to the introduction (*This passages has so many facts to keep the reader invested. He does this so the reader would want to keep reading and would not get bored like when he talks about the harsh climates the miners went through, or when he talks about all the dates and numbers in the passage. In conclusion, the usage of facts helped this passage a lot because it is a informational writing*), providing cohesion and maintaining focus on the task. An appropriate use of transitions links ideas both between and within the paragraphs (*In the story, He does this because, In the passage, This is two examples of, These facts matters because, and, These dates and numbers, This matters because, like, or when, In conclusion*). There is also an appropriate use of precise language and domain-specific vocabulary drawn from the text (*facts, informational writing, hooks, interested, harsh weather, miners, climate, suffering, gold, sacrifices, deeper, invested, bored*). The errors present in usage (*passages for "passage," a for "an"*) and spelling (*interested, "discovery!" informational, interested, measurements*) seldom interfere with meaning.

## Student Response

Facts are used in the passage. Many historical facts are used in the passage. The author wrote the passage for a reason. Mark Clements wrote “Discovery” to inform and entertain readers about a goldrush in 1896. The use of facts contributes to the author’s purpose for writing the passage.

The use of historical facts is necessary because the author is retelling a past event. The text states, “They thought finding 10 cents’ worth of gold in one day was good. They held more than four dollars worth of gold!” This fact informs the readers of just how much gold the group had found. “A settlement of shacks and tents soon sprang up near Discovery Claim at the confluence of the Klondike and Yukon Rivers,” says Clemens. This fact tells the reader what people did after hearing about the found gold. The author states, “Only 300 people found enough gold to be considered rich”. This fact informs the reader about how rare it was to strike it rich mining gold. The use of historical facts is necessary.

In conclusion, the use of facts contributes to the author’s reason for writing the passage. Facts are used to entertain and inform the reader. The 300 people who became rich during the goldrush struck it rich.

## Annotation

This response inconsistently addresses some parts of the task, demonstrating partial analytic understanding of the text. The organizational structure and development are both weak. The weak introduction begins with three vague statements (*Facts are used in the passage. Many historical facts are used in the passage. The author wrote the passage for a reason*) followed by an unclear controlling idea (*Mark Clements wrote “Discovery” to inform and entertain readers about a goldrush in 1896. The use of facts contributes to the author’s purpose for writing the passage*) that is only somewhat related to the text. The single body paragraph opens with an inference (*The use of historical facts is necessary because the author is retelling a past event*) that is followed by text support (*“They thought finding 10 cents’ worth of gold in one day was good. They held more than four dollars worth of gold!”*) and then another inference (*This fact informs the readers of just how much gold the group had found*). The response then provides another text reference (*“A settlement of shacks and tents soon sprang up near Discovery Claim at the confluence of the Klondike and Yukon Rivers,” says Clemens*) along with a weakly connected inference (*This fact tells the reader what people did after hearing about the found gold*). The response’s final text reference (*“Only 300 people found enough gold to be considered rich”*) is partially clarified by means of a weak analysis (*This fact informs the reader about how rare it was to strike it rich mining gold. The use of historical facts is necessary*). All of these facts and inferences only weakly support the controlling idea. The conclusion is also weak, consisting of a reiteration of the controlling idea and one of the facts from the body paragraph (*In conclusion, the use of facts contributes to the author’s reason for writing the passage. Facts are used to entertain and inform the reader. The 300 people who became rich during the goldrush struck it rich*). Transitions are used inconsistently (*The use of historical facts, The text states, This fact informs the readers, This fact tells the reader, The author states, In conclusion*), and the use of precise language and domain-specific vocabulary drawn from the text (*Facts, historical, inform, entertain, goldrush, 1896, necessary, retelling, rare, strike it rich mining gold/struck it rich*) inconsistently explains the topic. The errors present in spelling (*entertain, necessary, Discovery*) and punctuation (*dollars worth* is missing an apostrophe) seldom interfere with meaning.

## Item 7 – Score Point 2

**Student Response**

Mark Clemens used the facts that he had learned and made it into a passage. He came up with a lot of facts that became enough to write a whole passage.

He has a lot of information about miners and gold. So, he made it into an artical. In the text it shows, “The original Klondike gold discoverers worked their claims together for several years. The found about \$1 million worth of gold.” The evidence from the text shows that he’s been studying them for a long time and that he has a lot of information about them.

Mark Clemens used a lot more information about them. In the text it shows, “The Klondike gold ended as quickly as it had begun. In 1898, gold was discovered in Nome. In 1902, gold also was discovered near Fairbanks.” This fact contributes to the story because it shows time and where it all happened.

Mark Clemens wrote a lot of historical facts and opinions in “Discovery!” So, in the end, he decided to write an informational text and inform readers.

**Annotation**

This response inconsistently addresses some parts of the task, demonstrating partial analytic understanding of the text. The organizational structure is weak overall, with a weak introduction, weak development, and a weak conclusion. The introduction consists of an inference that only partially addresses the task (*Mark Clemens used the facts that he had learned and made it into a passage. He came up with a lot of facts that became enough to write a whole passage*). The first body paragraph also begins with an inference (*He has a lot of information about miners and gold. So, he made it into an artical*), which is supported with a loosely connected text reference (“*The original Klondike gold discoverers worked their claims together for several years. The found about \$1 million worth of gold*”) followed by a weak inference (*The evidence from the text shows that he’s been studying them for a long time and that he has a lot of information about them*) that is not clearly supported by the text. The next body paragraph consists of another weak inference (*Mark Clemens used a lot more information about them*) and more loosely connected text (“*The Klondike gold ended as quickly as it had begun. In 1898, gold was discovered in Nome. In 1902, gold also was discovered near Fairbanks*”) followed by another weak inference (*This fact contributes to the story because it shows time and where it all happened*). From this inconsistent analysis, the response’s conclusion (*Mark Clemens wrote a lot of historical facts and opinions in “Discovery!” So, in the end, he decided to write an informational text and inform readers*) only vaguely addresses the task and text. However, the response does demonstrate an understanding of the text that goes beyond a strictly literal interpretation. Transitions are used inconsistently (*So, in the end, In the text it shows, The evidence from the text shows, In 1902, also, This fact contributes to the story because, in the end*), and there is an inconsistent use of precise language and domain-specific vocabulary, including dates and dollar amounts (*facts, information/informationallinform, miners, gold, artical, evidence, studying, contributes, historical facts, opinions*). The few errors present in spelling (*artical*) and punctuation do not interfere with meaning.

**Student Response**

I think the author's purpose for writing is to tell people about the gold rush discovery, "(The discovery on August 16, 1896 ketp the group busy for several hours)" (Clemens 1). The End

**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 lacks an introduction and development, and the conclusion consists of *The End*. In this response, the student makes a single very weak inference (*I think the author's purpose for writing is to tell people about the gold rush discovery*) followed by a loosely connected text reference ("*The discovery on August 16, 1896 ketp the group busy for several hours*"). There is no analysis of the text. Transition use is minimal (*I think*), as is the use of precise language or domain-specific vocabulary (*August 16, 1896*). The few errors present in spelling (*ketp*) and punctuation (missing punctuation after the date *August 16, 1896* and the use of parentheses in a quotation) do not interfere with meaning; however, in a response this short, those errors are more significant. The minimal addressing of the task warrants a score of 1 despite the brevity of the response.

## Item 7 – Score Point 1

**Student Response**

There were some young adults looking for gold and had found it and people thought 10 cents was alot until people found it was more valublie.

**Annotation**

This response minimally addresses part of the task, demonstrating inadequate analytic understanding of the text. There is minimal evidence of an organizational structure, with no discernible introduction, conclusion, or development. The response to the task is a simplistic, literal sentence (*There were some young adults looking for gold and had found it and people thought 10 cents was alot until people found it was more valublie*). There is no analysis of the insufficient reference to the text. The response uses two transitions (*and, until*), and there is little use of precise language or domain-specific vocabulary drawn from the text (*gold, 10 cents, valublie*). The errors present in spelling (*alot, valublie*) do not interfere with meaning. This response receives a score of 1 for demonstrating a very minimal understanding of the text and task.

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# **PSSA Grade 7 English Language Arts Item Sampler Scoring Guide**

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