

Middle School English Language Arts (0049)

Test at a Glance

Test Name	Middle School English Language Arts		
Test Code	0049		
Time	2 hours		
Number of Questions	90 multiple-choice questions (Part A); 2 constructed-response questions (short-answer essay) (Part B)		
Format	Multiple-choice and constructed-response questions		
Weighting	Multiple-choice: 75% of total score Short constructed-response: 25% of total score		
	Content Categories	Approximate Number of Questions	Approximate Percentage of Questions
	I. Reading and Literature Study II. Language Study III. Composition and Rhetoric IV. Short Essays 1. Textual Interpretation 2. Teaching Reading/Writing	45 16 29 2	37% 13% 25% 25%
Pacing and Special Tips	In allocating time on this assessment, it is expected that about 90 minutes will be spent on the multiple-choice section and about 30 minutes will be spent on the constructed-response section; the sections are not independently timed.		

About This Test

The Middle School English Language Arts test is designed to assess whether an examinee has the knowledge and competencies necessary for a beginning teacher of English Language Arts at the middle school level. The 90 multiple-choice questions constitute approximately 75% of the examinee's score and fall into three categories: knowledge of concepts relevant to reading and literature study, knowledge of the history and use of the English language, and knowledge of concepts relevant to the study of composition and rhetoric. The two equally-weighted constructed-response questions constitute approximately 25% of the examinee's score and emphasize the use of critical thinking skills. One question will ask examinees to interpret a piece of literary or nonfiction text and/or to discuss an approach to interpreting text; the other question will ask examinees to discuss approaches to teaching writing or teaching reading. With respect to the examinee's allocation of time on this assessment, it is expected that about 90 minutes will be spent on the multiple-choice section and about 15 minutes will be spent on each essay question (for an approximate total of 30 minutes on the constructed-response portion); the sections are not separately timed.

Please note that this test may contain some multiple-choice questions that will not count toward your score.

Topics Covered

Representative descriptions of topics covered in each category are provided below.

Multiple Choice

I. Reading and Literature Study

- Knowing the major works and authors of literature appropriate for adolescents
- Paraphrasing, comparing, and interpreting (literally and inferentially) various types of print and nonprint texts, e.g., fiction, nonfiction, poetry, drama, and graphic representations
- Identifying and interpreting figurative language and other literary elements, e.g., voice, point of view, style, tone, diction, allusions, irony, clichés, simile, metaphor, analogy, character, setting, theme, plot
- Identifying the characteristics of literary forms and text structures, e.g., poetry, fiction, nonfiction, drama
- Locating and interpreting literature within historical and cultural contexts
- Recognizing various critical approaches to interpreting text, e.g., shared inquiry and reader-response theory
- Recognizing and applying various strategic approaches to teaching reading, e.g., cueing systems, activating prior knowledge, constructing meaning through context, and employing metacognitive strategies

II. Language Study

- Understanding and applying the conventions of grammar, usage, and mechanics, e.g., sentence types, sentence structure, parts of speech, modifiers, phrases and clauses, capitalization, and punctuation
- Understanding the development and structure of the English language, e.g., vocabulary and syntax
- Understanding principles of first- and second-language acquisition and development, and the nature of dialects

III. Composition and Rhetoric

- Understanding strategies for teaching writing
 - Individual and collaborative approaches to teaching writing, e.g., writing processes (prewriting, drafting, revising, editing, publishing, evaluating) and how those processes work recursively
 - Common research and documentation techniques, e.g., gathering and evaluating data, using electronic and print media, and evaluating sources
 - Evaluating and assessing student writing, including knowledge of various assessment tools and response strategies
- Recognizing, understanding, and evaluating rhetorical features of writing
 - Thesis statements and appropriate support, e.g., evidence, examples, arguments
 - Audiences and purposes within varying contexts
 - Types of discourse, e.g., narrative, expressive/poetic, expository, persuasive, reflective, informational, and descriptive
 - Coherence and organization, e.g., chronological order, transitions, cause/effect, compare/contrast
 - Critical reasoning, e.g., recognition of bias and fallacies, distinctions between fact and opinion, and identification of stereotypes, inferences, and assumptions

Short Essays

Question 1: Textual Interpretation

Stimulus

The stimulus for the literary analysis question will consist of a selection of prose (fiction or nonfiction) OR poetry (a whole short poem or an excerpt from a longer work).

Task

Examinees will be asked to do both of the following:

- Describe and give examples of the use of one or two specified literary element(s) present in the stimulus, e.g., metaphor, simile, voice, narrative point of view, tone, style, setting, diction, mood, allusions, irony, clichés, analogy, hyperbole, personification, alliteration, foreshadowing
- Discuss how the author’s use of the literary element(s) contributes to the overall meaning and/or effectiveness of the text

Question 2: Teaching Reading/Writing

Stimulus

The stimulus for the teaching reading/writing question will consist of a piece of student work OR a classroom situation.

Task

Examinees may be asked to do any of the following:

- Analyze a piece of student work or a classroom situation to determine strengths and/or weaknesses
- Describe an instructional activity referencing the identified strengths and/or weaknesses

Sample Test Questions

The sample questions that follow illustrate the kinds of questions in the test. They are not, however, representative of the entire scope of the test in either content or difficulty. Answers with explanations follow the questions.

Directions: Each of the questions or statements below is followed by four suggested answers or completions. Select the one that is best in each case.

1. _____ is a narrative that takes abstract ideas of behavior—good or bad, wise or foolish—and attempts to make them concrete and striking. The chief actor in these stories is usually an animal or inanimate object that behaves like a human and engages in a single significant act intended to teach a moral lesson.

Which of the following will correctly complete the passage above?

- (A) A myth
- (B) A fable
- (C) An epic
- (D) A legend

Questions 2–4 refer to the following poem.

There is no frigate like a book
To take us lands away,
Nor any coursers like a page
Of prancing poetry.

- (5) This traverse may the poorest take
Without oppress of toll;
How frugal is the chariot
That bears a human soul!

Reprinted by permission of the publishers and the Trustees of Amherst College from *The Poems of Emily Dickinson*, edited by Thomas H. Johnson, Cambridge, Mass.: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, Copyright 1951 © 1955, 1979 by the President and Fellows of Harvard College.

2. Which of the following is the best restatement of lines 5–6?
- (A) Travel exposes an individual to new experiences.
 - (B) Reading is an adventure that costs nothing.
 - (C) Chariots are an inexpensive means of travel.
 - (D) Poetry, in comparison with fiction, lacks seriousness.

3. In the poem, books and reading are described in terms related to

- (A) laborious activities
- (B) wealth and poverty
- (C) geographical regions
- (D) modes of transportation

4. The word “prancing” (line 4) is used to

- (A) link the images of “frigate” (line 1) and “chariot” (line 7)
- (B) underline the contrast between “book” (line 1) and “page” (line 3)
- (C) reinforce the image of horses, or “coursers” (line 3)
- (D) introduce an image that will dominate the last four lines of the poem

5. If atoms are the letters of the chemical language, then molecules are the words. But in order to put the chemical letters together to form chemical words, we have to know something about the rules of chemical spelling.

In the passage above, a discussion of atoms is introduced by

- (A) an analogy
- (B) an aphorism
- (C) an example
- (D) a hypothesis

6. Set in the American Civil War, the novel concerns a young soldier’s first encounter with battle and the psychological changes that he undergoes. Published in 1895, the novel had a great influence on twentieth-century fiction.

The novel discussed above is

- (A) Andrea Davis Pinkney’s *Silent Thunder*
- (B) Gary Paulsen’s *Soldier’s Heart*
- (C) Stephen Crane’s *The Red Badge of Courage*
- (D) Carolyn Reeder’s *Shades of Gray*

7. Each of the following is an important part of guided reading EXCEPT:
- (A) The teacher should use texts that challenge students' current reading levels.
 - (B) It is used to help students become independent readers.
 - (C) It is used to help students learn various reading strategies.
 - (D) Students are grouped homogeneously based on reading ability.

8. I. The teacher from Nebraska displayed Native American artifacts to her class.

II. The teacher displayed Native American artifacts from Nebraska to her class.

The meaning of sentence I differs from that of sentence II in that the

- (A) subject of sentence I is "teacher" whereas the subject of sentence II is "artifacts"
 - (B) first sentence ends in a prepositional phrase whereas the second sentence does not
 - (C) sentences do not have the same simple predicate
 - (D) adjective phrase "from Nebraska" modifies different nouns
9. They set two rats in cages side by side, and one was furtive, timid, and small, and the other was glossy, bold, and big.

The sentence above is an example of a

- (A) simple sentence
- (B) compound sentence
- (C) complex sentence
- (D) compound-complex sentence

10. My sister and I always loved sledding down the hill behind our house.

The underlined word in the sentence above is an example of

- (A) a conjunction
- (B) a participle
- (C) a gerund
- (D) an adverb

Questions 11–12 refer to the following passage.

Unlike some writers who talk of language use with wailing and gnashing of teeth (see Edwin Newman's petulant discussions of language misuse or any of Jacques Barzun's tirades on contemporary English), George Orwell recognized the complexity of the interrelationship between thinking and language and avoided the simplistic thinking that argues that if we "correct" people's use of English, we will somehow have solved the "problem" of the "decline" of the English language.

11. The author puts the words "correct," "problem," and "decline" in quotation marks primarily in order to suggest that
- (A) they are examples of words that are misused in the English language
 - (B) the complex interrelationship between thinking and language has affected the way in which people try to correct one another's speech
 - (C) the problem of the decline of the English language is too severe to be solved merely by correcting people's speech
 - (D) they reflect a limited perspective and should not be accepted uncritically
12. The author's tone in describing Newman and Barzun can best be described as
- (A) dismissive
 - (B) bitter
 - (C) defensive
 - (D) spiteful

13. Freewriting, brainstorming, clustering, and idea mapping are most important during which stage of the writing process?

- (A) Prewriting
- (B) Drafting
- (C) Revising
- (D) Proofreading

14. All of us find or invent our language. We may come up with new sentences never heard before. We may use words in a unique way. But we are always finding our voice, locating old patterns or long-heard expressions, reaching into our thesaurus for the right term. And in inventing English, we are always inventing ourselves—finding our place among the welter of the words or in the swell of sounds that is the ocean of our tongue.

Which of the following most accurately describes how the author's use of point of view works as a rhetorical strategy?

- (A) He speaks in the first person to invite the readers to see how they participate in the activities he describes.
- (B) He speaks in the first person to emphasize his unique experience with the subject under discussion.
- (C) He speaks in the third person to highlight the universality of the topic being discussed.
- (D) He speaks in the third person to construct a more authoritative position from which to argue his point.

Answers

1. The correct answer is B. The statements on which the question is based constitute a definition of a fable. While all of the choices are types of narrative, only a fable fits the full description.
2. The correct answer is B. The syntax of line 5 of the poem is inverted. Read as “the poorest [people] may take this traverse [i.e., this travel; this route],” the sense becomes plainer, as does the sense of line 6: “without oppress [oppression or burden] of toll [i.e., payment].” What remains is to determine that “this traverse” refers to taking “us lands away” (line 2). It is a book (line 1) or “page of prancing poetry” (lines 3–4) that can do that.
3. The correct answer is D. The comparison in line 1 of a book to a ship (“a frigate”) and in lines 2–3 of poetry to swift horses (“coursers”) makes it clear that books and reading are described in terms of modes of transportation. That interpretation is reinforced by the metaphor of a chariot bearing a human soul (lines 7–8).
4. The correct answer is C. The description of poetry as “prancing” in line 4 calls to mind the rhythm of poetry and reinforces the image of spirited, galloping horses (coursers) in line 3.
5. The correct answer is A. By suggesting that atoms are like letters, the author of the passage has used an analogy; that is, the author has characterized one thing by reference to another thing that functions in a similar way.
6. The correct answer is C. The passage presents factual information and a brief description of the plot of *The Red Badge of Courage* by Stephen Crane.
7. During guided reading, students are placed into small groups according to their individual reading levels. The teacher observes as students read and provides them with the opportunity to use various reading strategies. The ultimate goal of guided reading is to enable students to read successfully on their own. Thus, B, C, and D are all important parts of guided reading. A is not an important part because the teacher selects texts that students can read with ninety percent accuracy; it is not the intent of guided reading to select books that are beyond students’ current reading levels.
8. The correct answer is D. The meaning of the two sentences differs because in sentence I the teacher is “from Nebraska” and in sentence II the Native American artifacts are “from Nebraska.” Thus, the placement of the adjective phrase “from Nebraska” after two different nouns changes the meaning of the sentences. A is incorrect because “teacher” is the subject of both sentences. B is incorrect because both sentences end in the prepositional phrase “to her class.” C is incorrect because the simple predicate of both sentences is “displayed.”
9. The correct answer is B. A simple sentence contains only one independent clause. This sentence has three independent clauses joined by the conjunction “and.” Without dependent clauses, the sentence cannot be characterized as either “complex” or “compound-complex.”
10. The correct answer is C. In this sentence, the word “sledding” is a gerund, a verb form (the present participle) functioning as a noun.
11. The correct answer is D. In the paragraph, the speaker explains that George Orwell recognized the complexity of language use and avoided simplistic arguments for improving how people speak. What follows are terms the speaker would consider related to such simplistic arguments. The quotation marks call attention to the terms and discourage readers from taking them at face value.
12. The correct answer is A. In contrasting Orwell’s discussions of language with those of writers exemplified by Newman and Barzun, the speaker implies that the arguments of Newman and Barzun are simplistic and hence easily dismissed. The hyperbole in “wailing and gnashing of teeth” (line 1) and the characterization of Newman’s work as “petulant” and Barzun’s as “tirades” (line 2) have already signaled disapproval, implying that these authors are more emotional than thoughtful. While it is possible that the speaker is dismissing Newman and Barzun out of spite or bitterness, or even defensiveness, there is nothing in the structure of this excerpt to support choices B, C, or D.
13. The correct answer is A. The terms mentioned are processes and devices associated with generating new ideas and organizing them. These processes and devices would not be associated with proofreading (D). While they might be part of drafting (B) or revising (C), they are most important during the prewriting stage of the writing process.
14. The correct answer is A. In first person point of view, the author or narrator writes from his or her own perspective. In this passage, the author uses the words “we” and “our” to suggest that his experience is similar to the readers’ experience, and invites readers to understand how people invent themselves through the words they use. B is incorrect because the author does not suggest that inventing language is unique to him as an author. C and D are incorrect because the third person point of view is not used in the passage.

This section presents sample questions and constructed-response samples along with the standards used in scoring the essays. When you read these sample responses, keep in mind that they will be less polished than if they had been developed at home, edited, and carefully presented. Examinees do not know what

questions will be asked and must decide, on the spot, how to respond. Readers take these circumstances into account when scoring the responses.

Readers will assign scores based on the following scoring guide.

SCORING GUIDE

3

The response is successful in the following ways:

- It demonstrates an ability to analyze the stimulus material thoughtfully and in depth.
- It demonstrates a strong knowledge of the subject matter relevant to the question.
- It responds appropriately to all parts of the question.
- It demonstrates facility with conventions of standard written English.

2

The response demonstrates some understanding of the topic, but it is limited in one or more of the following major ways:

- It may indicate a misreading of the stimulus material or provide superficial analysis.
- It may demonstrate only superficial knowledge of the subject matter relevant to the question.
- It may respond to one or more parts of the question inadequately or not at all.
- It may contain significant writing errors.

1

The response is seriously flawed in one or more of the following ways:

- It may demonstrate weak understanding of the subject matter or of the writing task.
- It may fail to respond adequately to most parts of the question.
- It may be incoherent or severely underdeveloped.
- It may contain severe and persistent writing errors.

0

Response is blank, off-topic, totally incorrect, or merely rephrases the question.

Sample Question: Literary Analysis

“Why, thank you so much. I’d adore to.”

I don’t want to dance with him. I don’t want to dance with anybody. And even if I did, it wouldn’t be him. He’d be well down among the last ten. I’ve seen the way he dances. . . . Just think, not a quarter of an hour ago, here I was sitting, feeling sorry for the poor girl he was dancing with. And now I’m going to be the poor girl.

“The Waltz,” a short story by humorist Dorothy Parker, opens with the lines above. Explain how Parker establishes tone and uses perspective in the excerpt.

Sample Response That Received a Score of 3:

Dorothy Parker tells the story in the first person with two contrasting perspectives: what her character says and what she is really thinking. This sets an amusing and intimate tone throughout the excerpt.

Contributing to the sense of intimacy with her character is the conversational tone of her thoughts. Immediately the reader identifies with the character. Also, the use of present tense, so we are overhearing the character’s thoughts as she is having them, contributes to the intimacy of the internal dialogue. When she says that she didn’t want to dance with anyone, and even if she did “it wouldn’t be him,” it feels like the character is having a private conversation with the reader. Finally, the reader is left with a feeling of ironic amusement. The character who so politely agrees to dance has just been feeling sorry for her partner’s previous victim: “Just think, not a quarter of an hour ago, here I was sitting, feeling sorry for the poor girl he was dancing with. And now I’m going to be the poor girl.” Again, the reader identifies with the intimate tone the character uses since at one time or another most of us have also agreed to do something we would have preferred not to, just to be polite.

Sample Response That Received a Score of 1:

In the above passage, Parker establishes tone with short, precise sentences, gradually getting longer. She used perspective in dealing with the fact that she does not want to dance and especially with him. She also was putting herself in the other girl’s position.

Sample Question: Teaching Writing

Introduction

Students in a seventh-grade class were asked to write a descriptive essay, for an audience of their peers, in response to an assignment about a favorite person. What follows is the final draft of one student's response to this assignment. Read the student's response carefully, paying particular attention to the features of writing listed below, and then complete the three tasks that follow the student's response.

Features of Writing

- Focus/Thesis
- Organization
- Content/Supporting Ideas
- Sentence variety and complexity

Student Response

There are a lot of people that are important to me. My family, friends, and many more, but I know that my Aunt Pat is high on the list.

My Aunt Pat is someone I truly care about. Aunt Pat is always there for me. She makes me happy when I am sad. She also cheers me up when I am sad. Another reason I care for her is because we have the same interests. Pat likes to sew, scrapbook, and march in parades.

Pat is a great role model. She always tries to do the right thing. She is also very enthusiastic. Pat has many traits. She is reliable, cool, funny, and most of all she is creative. I love that she is a creative person. Currently she owns the costume shop in town. She also likes fall. She thinks it is pretty. Most people like winter because of Christmas, or summer because of the heat, but she has her own mind. She likes fall. I also love that she isn't afraid to be different.

In the end there are many reasons why I love her. She makes you feel like you are the most important person in the world and nobody can take that away from you.

Tasks

1. Identify one feature of the student's writing as a strength. Be sure to support your response with examples from the student's writing. Do NOT discuss facility in the conventions of standard written English (grammar, punctuation) in this part of your response.
2. Identify one feature of the student's writing as a weakness. Be sure to support your response with examples from the student's writing. Do NOT discuss the errors in the conventions of standard written English (grammar, punctuation) in this part of your response.
3. Describe one follow-up assignment you would give to this student that would build on the strength you described in Task 1 OR address the weakness that you identified in Task 2. Explain how the assignment would help the student.

Sample Response That Received a Score of 3:

One strength of this student’s descriptive essay is attention to the task of writing about a favorite person, which is established in a nicely stated (albeit structurally flawed) opening paragraph. “...my Aunt Pat is high on the list.” All subsequent discussion is about Aunt Pat—who cheers, who shares interests, who is a “great role model,” who is creative (“Currently she owns the costume shop in town.”), who like fall when winter and Christmas or summer are the more typical seasonal preferences.

However, the weakness in this essay is that this defined focus is not well elaborated with illustrative examples. Aunt Pat is a great role model, but how? “She always tries to do the right thing” but in what way or ways? When the student offers support—“...we have the same interests. Pat likes to sew, scrapbook, and march in parades”—the illustrative details are lacking. Sentences are simple, leaving the reader wishing for those supporting details.

The suggestion for revision, therefore, would be to build on the clear focus, which captures a genuine appreciation of this favorite person by extending the sentences to build interest. The student’s respect and love of “Aunt Pat” is charming. The hints at her character (marching in parades, owning the costume shop, “she isn’t afraid to be different”) are intriguing. But, for example the simple, repetitive statements, “She makes me happy when I am sad. She also cheers me up when I am sad” do not reveal HOW “she is always there for me.”

Illustrative examples literally “color in” the lines to make the portrait come alive.

The purpose of the essay is to “describe” a favorite person. The follow up assignment encourages the student to address this purpose. The essay is definitely about one favorite person, but the descriptive details are limited. Add in one or two stories and a brief example for other points would enhance the fullness of why Aunt Pat is special.

To extend the example above: The student could consider, “When was one specific moment when Aunt Pat cheered you up?”

In doing this revision with a topic close to the student’s heart, the student will gain a better understanding of the value of including descriptive details/supporting ideas when making a point, and, therefore, what is meant by “complex” sentences. The student will gain an understanding that complex sentences that include illustrative detail are applicable in all writing, whether in a descriptive essay or when making a case in a persuasive essay or when addressing a topic in an expository essay.

Sample Response That Received a Score of 1:

This student really loves her Aunt Pat! She sounds like a fun person. As a scrapbooker, I know how much creative energy is needed. Aunt Pat is creative. The student says, “most of all she is creative” and she backs this up with the detail that the aunt owns a costume shop! And Aunt Pat loves fall, even when most people like winter “because of Christmas” and summer “because of the heat.” These are good details of how Aunt Pat “isn’t afraid of being different.”

The essay makes a good case why Aunt Pat is a favorite person.

However, it is not perfect! I would have this student fix the fragments, like in the first paragraph. For example, “Some of those important people are my family, friends and many more, but I know that my Aunt Pat is high on the list.” It is important to have the verb in that sentence to make it a sentence and not a fragment.

It is really important to write in complete sentences. This would be important to help the student become a better writer.



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