ACTION: 2026 NAEP Reading Assessment and Item Specifications

The Board discussed the 2026 NAEP Reading Assessment Framework at several meetings beginning in July 2020 and unanimously approved the framework during the August 2021 quarterly meeting. The final step in the framework development process is the creation of Assessment and Item Specifications to provide direction to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) on implementing the framework. Board adoption of the Reading Assessment and Item Specifications at the November Board meeting will ensure that NCES has adequate time to implement the assessment for the 2026 NAEP administration.

Following Board approval of the Assessment and Item Specifications, the Board's role in developing the framework is complete; responsibility then shifts to NCES to implement the item development process. NCES has provided a short description (attached) of how they use a framework and the accompanying specifications for item development. The Board policy on Item Development and Review describes general principles for the development and review of all NAEP assessments.

According to the Board policy on Framework Development, NCES is the primary audience for the Assessment and Item Specifications and the document is intended to include the following information:

- types of items;
- guidelines for stimulus material;
- types of response formats;
- scoring procedures;
- achievement level descriptions;
- administration conditions;
- ancillary or additional materials, if any;
- considerations for special populations;
- sample items, including a substantial number and range of sample items with scoring guidelines for each grade level; and
- any unique requirements for the given assessment

The Reading Assessment and Item Specifications include much of the same text from the framework (often verbatim) with additional elaboration on the information listed above. The achievement level descriptions (ALDs) are included as appendices.

In addition to providing some further details intended to inform item development, the Reading Assessment and Item Specifications include some edits made to the original version of the ALDs that appeared in Appendix B of the framework document. The purpose of these recent edits was to address references to knowledge and skills that are not feasible to assess on NAEP (e.g., rewriting a story from a different character's perspective). These edits were made based on feedback from Board staff, NCES staff, and the Technical Advisory Committee and are provided in tracked changes as an additional attachment.

Since NCES is the primary audience for the specifications, they reviewed and provided feedback on several drafts of this document and have confirmed that they have no outstanding concerns.

A joint Assessment Development Committee (ADC) and Committee on Standards, Design and Methodology (COSDAM) review took place on September 21; as a result of that review and follow up conversations with the ADC and COSDAM Chairs and Vice Chairs, the appendix that included recommendations for special studies was removed from the document. To address a request from the joint meeting, language was added to be more explicit about the need for there to be a distribution of comprehension targets at each achievement level. A summary of the review and resolution of issues discussed was sent to ADC and COSDAM members on October 6; no additional questions or concerns were raised.

Role of the Frameworks, Specifications and ALDs in the Item Development Process

Once the Frameworks and Specifications have been adopted by the National Assessment Governing Board, it is NCES's responsibility to use those documents to guide item development. The Achievement Level Descriptors (ALDs) are included in the guidance provided by the two larger documents. ALDs provide a context for crucial knowledge and skills described in the Frameworks.

Test design (including passage selection in Reading), item-writing, and review are iterative processes that involve staff from NCES, its contractors, and members of external advisory committees. Each of these entities use the guidance provided by the Frameworks and Specifications, including the ALDs, when fulfilling their respective roles. Alignment, coverage, relevance, and difficulty are considered at each point by the full complement of reviewers. In this process, the ALDs provide a means to evaluate whether the collection of items and blocks reflect the range of levels of student ability. Prior to moving on to the next step of development, there is consensus among the groups of reviewers that the content is consistent with the guidance provided. The ongoing reviews act as a system of checks and balances, where NCES's interpretation and application of these documents is either confirmed or challenged in each round of review.

Item Development Process

NCES uses the following item development cycle to develop every assessment item and block carefully before they are integrated into the operational NAEP assessment. Each phase of the cycle includes review by one or more organizations familiar with the subject area Framework, Specifications and ALDs.

1. **(For Reading only) Reading Text Selection.** Texts and text sets are identified by the ETS reading item development team. Proposed texts are reviewed by the ETS bias and sensitivity review team and the ETS editorial staff before they are submitted to NCES item development staff and contractors, Reading Standing Committee members, and the Governing Board Assessment Development Committee (ADC).
2. **Initial Item Reviews.** For Reading, after passages are approved, items are developed by the ETS reading item development team. ETS subject area teams with appropriate and deep content expertise develop draft items for the various subject area assessments. For all subject areas, once draft items are completed and any stimulus (e.g., images, videos) are selected, ETS reviewers conduct framework alignment and construct

measurement reviews, as well as editorial and bias and sensitivity reviews. Items and stimuli are then reviewed by NCES item development staff and contractors and subject area Standing Committees.

3. **Pretesting.** Following initial item reviews, items and support features are pretested, using: 1) cognitive interviews with individual students to determine how they respond to proposed items and stimuli (including texts for reading); 2) tryouts under "live" testing conditions with groups of 50–200 students from the target population; and 3) usability studies. Data from these trials inform ETS item development team's item revisions.
4. **Revised Item Reviews**. After items and stimuli are pretested and revised by item developers, ETS reviewers conduct editorial, bias and sensitivity reviews, cold read reviews, and language accessibility reviews. Items are then reviewed by NCES item development staff and contractors and subject area Standing Committees. Item revisions are adjudicated with NCES item development staff, and items are submitted to the Governing Board ADC for final review and clearance for piloting.
5. **Piloting.** New blocks of items are folded into the administration of operational blocks of a live assessment. By comparing student and item performance across the new and old items and blocks, NAEP developers can determine whether items effectively scale together with the old, measuring the same underlying subject area construct.
6. **Post-pilot Reviews**. Following the collection of pilot data (up to 3,000 students per item), the following groups review pilot data, item level analyses, and items (as well as texts for Reading):
    - ETS item development team
    - ETS data analysis and reporting team
    - ETS Differential Item Functioning panel
    - ETS bias and sensitivity review team
    - NCES item development staff and contractors
    - NCES data analysis and reporting staff and contractors
    - ETS editorial staff
    - ETS subject area Standing Committee
    - Governing Board ADC

Following post-pilot reviews, items (and blocks in Reading since items travel with their passages) are selected for operational use, based on their performance in the pilot, committee reviews, contractor recommendations, and NCES's decisions. All of these are informed by the Frameworks, Specifications and ALDs.

Reading Assessment and Item Specifications

for the

2026 National Assessment of Educational Progress

National Assessment Governing Board

U.S. Department of Education

November 3, 2021

Developed for the National Assessment Governing Board under contract number 91995918C0001 by WestEd, with a subcontract to the Council of Chief State School Officers.

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What Is In This Assessment and Item Specifications Document?

This document is a companion to the *Reading Framework for the 2026 National Assessment of Educational Progress* (NAEP). The 2026 NAEP Reading Framework informs NAEP assessment development, describing the subject matter to be assessed and the questions to be asked, as well as the assessment's design and administration. This Assessment and Item Specifications document extends the Framework, providing greater detail about development of the items for the 2026 NAEP Reading Assessment. The primary audience for this document is the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) and its contractors, who will use both the Specifications and the Framework to develop the 2026 NAEP Reading Assessment.

Background on NAEP

The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) has measured student reading achievement nationally since 1971, and state-by-state since the early 1990s, providing the nation with a snapshot of what students in this country know and can do in reading. Starting in 2002, urban school districts that meet certain selection criteria could volunteer to participate in the Trial Urban District NAEP Assessment (TUDA).

There are two distinct assessments administered by NAEP. The NAEP Long-Term Trend assessment has measured trends in achievement among 9-, 13-, and 17-year-old students nationally since 1971, and the assessment's content has been essentially unchanged ever since. The second assessment, referred to as "main NAEP," is adjusted over time to reflect shifts in research, policy, and practice. The content and format of the main NAEP Reading Assessment are the focus of the Framework and this Assessment and Item Specifications Document.

The main NAEP Reading Assessment is administered at the national, state, and selected urban district levels every two years, by Congressional mandate. In reading, NAEP results are reported on student achievement in grades 4, 8, and 12 at the national level, and for grades 4 and 8 at the state level and for large urban districts that volunteer to participate.

Overview of the 2026 NAEP Reading Assessment and Item Specifications

To develop the 2026 NAEP Reading Framework, WestEd, under contract to the Governing Board, engaged in a comprehensive process that involved extensive review of the scientific research literature on reading; consultation with three committees of national and state policymakers, state assessment staff, reading educators, and others who use data from the NAEP Reading Assessment; and wide public review of successive drafts of the Framework. The 2026 NAEP Reading Assessment will be developed to represent the content emphasis, complexity of reading, item format guidelines, and other requirements of the NAEP Reading Framework.

The 2026 NAEP Reading Framework and these accompanying Assessment and Item Specifications were developed in a time of intense interest in the improvement of reading achievement and an attunement to the scientific literature on the acquisition and growth of reading skills. NAEP's purpose has always been "to provide, in a timely manner, a fair and accurate measurement of student academic achievement and reporting of trends in such achievement in reading, mathematics, and other subjects[s]" (National Assessment of Educational Progress Reauthorization Act, 2002) and the updates to the Framework reflect this purpose.

The structure of the Assessment and Item Specifications mirrors the structure of the Framework. As with the Framework, the Assessment and Item Specifications document is divided into four chapters, the contents of which are briefly described below. Following the chapters is a set of appendices.

Chapter 2 of the Framework defines reading comprehension and describes major components of the 2026 NAEP Reading Assessment. Chapter 2-S of the Assessment and Item Specifications frames reading comprehension as a meaning-making process characterized by diverse texts and varied reading purposes.

Chapter 3 of the Framework describes the design and development of the 2026 NAEP Reading Assessment. Chapter 3-S of the Assessment and Item Specifications provides illustrations of how the assessment design can be enacted.

Chapter 4 of the Framework explains how the results of the 2026 NAEP Reading Assessment will be reported. Chapter 4-S of the Assessment and Item Specifications addresses the central communication responsibility of NAEP—to report scores in a manner that informs the public about current results and performance trends over time on the NAEP Reading Assessment in the Nation's Report Card.

NAEP Administration and Student Samples

As currently planned, the 2026 NAEP Reading Assessment will be administered to students in grades 4, 8, and 12, and results will be reported at national, regional, and state levels. To be able to provide accurate estimates of student reading achievement, schools throughout the country are randomly selected to participate in the assessment in a process that includes stratification to provide adequate representation of the broad population of U.S. students, the populations of students in each state participating in NAEP, and the populations of students from participating large urban districts. Accordingly, the assessed sample includes schools of various types and sizes from a variety of community and geographical regions. The student populations of these schools represent different levels of economic status; racial, ethnic and cultural backgrounds; and instructional experiences. Students with disabilities and English language learners are included, and accommodations are provided.

The test design also considers the need to obtain reliable estimates for the population of students at each assessed grade level. Therefore, a large pool of assessment items is developed and used to build multiple test forms using a matrix sampling design. That is, many items are administered, but each student takes only a subset of the items. In addition to the reading items, contextual questionnaires accompany each test form and are administered in separately timed sessions. Each student will spend approximately one hour taking the 2026 NAEP Reading Assessment.

NAEP reporting provides comprehensive information about what U.S. students know and can do in reading. In addition, NAEP provides comparative subgroup data according to gender, race/ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and geographic region; describes trends in performance over time; and reports on relationships between student achievement and contextual variables.

Reporting Results of the NAEP Reading Assessment

The NAEP Reading Assessment is an assessment of overall achievement, not a tool for diagnosing the needs of individuals or groups of students. Therefore, reported scores are always at the aggregate level. By law, scores are not produced for individual schools or students. Results are reported for the nation as a whole, for regions of the nation, for states, and for large districts that volunteer to participate in the NAEP Trial Urban District Assessment (TUDA).

Under the provisions of the Every Student Succeeds Act legislation, states receiving Title I grants must include assurances in their state assessment plans that they will participate in the NAEP Reading and Mathematics assessments at grades 4 and 8. Local school districts that receive Title I funds must agree that they will participate in biennial NAEP administrations at grades 4 and 8, if they are selected. However, participation in NAEP is not considered a substitute for the federally mandated state-level assessments in reading and mathematics at grades 3 to 8.

National and state level results are reported in terms of scale scores, achievement levels, and percentiles. Average scores for groups of students are given on the NAEP 0–500 scale and as percentages of students who attain each of the three achievement levels established and defined by the National Assessment Governing Board (Governing Board). These policy definitions can be found in the Governing Board's *Developing Student Achievement Levels for the National Assessment of Educational Progress Policy Statement* (2018a) and in Exhibit 1.1.

Since 1990, the Governing Board has used student achievement levels for reporting results on NAEP assessments. The achievement levels represent an informed judgment of "how good is good enough" in the various subjects that are assessed.

Policy-level definitions describe, in general terms, what students at each grade level should know and be able to do on the NAEP assessment to perform at the NAEP Basic, NAEP Proficient, or NAEP Advanced levels. Achievement level descriptions of student performance at each grade 4, 8, and 12 for the 2026 NAEP Reading Framework are provided in Appendix A. These updated reading-specific achievement level descriptors will replace those from the previous Framework to guide item development and initial stages of standard setting (if necessary) for the 2026 NAEP Reading Assessment.

Exhibit 1.1: Generic Achievement Level Policy Definitions for the National Assessment of Educational Progress

Achievement Level	Policy Definition
NAEP Advanced	This level signifies superior performance beyond *NAEP Proficient.*
NAEP Proficient	This level represents solid academic performance for each NAEP assessment. Students reaching this level have demonstrated competency over challenging subject matter, including subject-matter knowledge, application of such knowledge to real-world situations, and analytical skills appropriate to the subject matter.
NAEP Basic	This level denotes partial mastery of prerequisite knowledge and skills that are fundamental for performance at the *NAEP Proficient* level.

Comparison of the 2009–2019 and the 2026 NAEP Reading Frameworks and Assessment and Item Specifications

This Assessment and Item Specifications document reflects several major changes, both those made to the Framework and those made to support item development. The changes are summarized in the following section and in Exhibit 1.2.

Building from the Framework used for the 2009–2019 NAEP Reading Assessments and following from digital innovations, updates to the Framework include consideration of three additional, research-based concepts: (1) how social and cultural experiences shape learning and development; (2) how reading varies across disciplines; and (3) the increasing use of digital and multimodal texts.

Key similarities and differences between the two frameworks and associated assessment and item specifications are presented in Exhibit 1.2. While the new documents are an update to the current

documents, the continuity between the existing Framework and Assessment and Item Specifications and the 2026 NAEP Reading Framework and Assessment and Item Specifications is substantial.

Exhibit 1.2. Similarities and Differences Between the 2009–2019 and 2026 NAEP Reading Frameworks and Assessment and Item Specifications

	Current Framework and Assessment	2026 Framework and Assessment & Item Specifications Update
Comprehension Targets	Locate and Recall Integrate and Interpret Critique and Evaluate	Locate and Recall Integrate and Interpret Analyze and Evaluate Use and Apply
Disciplinary Contexts	Literary Text Informational Text	Literature Contexts Social Studies Contexts Science Contexts
Purposes	Specific purposes communicated to students for scenario-based tasks in digitally based assessment as of 2017	Broad Purposes ● Reading to Develop Understanding ● Reading to Solve Problems Specific purposes for all assessment tasks are communicated to students
Text Types	Literary Texts Informational Texts	Literature Texts Social Studies Texts Science Texts
Text Source	Authentic	Authentic except in rare instances
Text Format	Digital texts as of 2017 ● Static – non-moving print, graphics, or images on screen ● Dynamic – navigation across modes (print, video, other) or nonlinear locations (hypertext link)	Digital texts ● Static – non-moving print, graphics, or images on screen ● Expanded use of dynamic formats – navigation across modes (print, video, other) or nonlinear locations (hypertext link)
Text Complexity	Determined by: ● Expert judgment ● Passage length ● Two or more research-based readability measures	Determined by: ● Expert judgment ● Passage length ● Quantitative and qualitative research-based complexity measures
Language Structures and Vocabulary	Vocabulary assessed Potential for subscore	Language structures and vocabulary assessed No subscore
Universal Design Elements (UDEs)	Digitally based assessment as of 2017 includes tools and support features: ● Highlighting and note-taking ● Text-to-speech on Directions and Help screens	Types of UDEs and possible examples: ● Task-based UDEs – Highlighting and note-taking – Text-to-speech on Directions and Help Screens

	Current Framework and Assessment	2026 Framework and Assessment & Item Specifications Update
	● Zoom-in and selection of color schemes ● Sequential directions and transitions ● Look-back buttons to return to relevant section of text ● Graphic organizers ● Item foreshadowing ● Multipart response frames ● Purpose statements ● Task characters (avatars that act as partners in simulated settings) ● Pop-up notes for definitions of vocabulary ● Resetting by providing correct response to answered questions ● Topic or passage introductions	– Zoom-in and selection of color schemes – Sequential directions and transitions for reading a collection of texts – Look-back buttons to return to relevant section of text – Graphic organizers – Item foreshadowing – Multipart response frames – Samples of student writing as examples – Resetting by providing correct response to answered questions ● Motivational UDEs – Explicit connections between broad and specific purposes – Task characters that provide oral or written directions, act as peers or experts, or serve as an audience ● Informational UDEs – Text providing brief topic previews – Pop-up notes for definitions of obscure words or phrases that are not part of the Comprehension Target being tested
Reporting	Overall scale score and achievement levels (NAEP Basic, NAEP Proficient, NAEP Advanced) Disaggregation by gender, race/ ethnicity, socioeconomic status, English learner status, state, region, type of community, public or nonpublic school, and literary and informational texts Data collected from student, teacher, and administrator questionnaires on contextual variables of interest Some data collected from students' test taking behaviors (process data) in digital administrations	Overall scale score and achievement levels (NAEP Basic, NAEP Proficient, NAEP Advanced) Disaggregation by all existing categories, adding the following: ● disciplinary contexts ● socioeconomic status within race/ ethnicity, whenever feasible ● former English learners (ELs) as well as current ELs and non-ELs Data collected from student, teacher, and administrator questionnaires on expanded set of contextual variables Data collected from students' test-taking behaviors (process data) on expanded set of contextual variables

Aligning with the Framework and the Assessment and Item Specifications

The assessment should be developed so that it is aligned with the guidelines as set forth in the Framework and in these Assessment and Item Specifications. More specifically:

- The content of the assessment should be matched with the content of the Framework and the Assessment and Item Specifications. The assessment as a whole should reflect the content emphasis, complexity of reading, item format guidelines, and other requirements outlined in the Framework.
- While it is not possible to cover all possible combinations of content and complexity for each achievement level on one assessment, appropriate alignment between the assessment and the Framework and Assessment and Item Specifications at each grade should be maintained in the item pools. The developer should avoid under- or overemphasizing particular content or complexity levels.
- The assessment should report and interpret scores based on the Framework, the Assessment and Item Specifications, and the NAEP Achievement Level Descriptions (ALDs). That is, the assessment should be developed so that scores will reflect both the guidelines in the Framework and Assessment and Item Specifications and the range of performances illustrated in the NAEP Reading Framework ALDs.
- The assessment design should match the characteristics of the targeted assessment population. That is, the assessment should give all students tested the opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge and skills of reading as covered by the Framework and the Assessment and Item Specifications.

A valuable resource for learning more about NAEP can be found on the Internet at http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/. This site contains reports describing results of recent assessments, as well as a searchable tool for viewing released items. The items can be searched by many different criteria, such as grade level and content area. Information about the items includes student performance data and any applicable scoring rubrics. NAEP released items that are used as examples and nonexamples in this document are marked with the designation that matches the item name or identified by the question ID from the NAEP Questions Tool website (NCES, n.d.).

The NAEP Reading Assessment measures what students know and can do in reading. This chapter focuses on the reading content of the 2026 NAEP Reading Assessment and the connections between the content and the NAEP Definition of Reading Comprehension. Each of the four aspects of the NAEP Definition of Reading Comprehension—contexts, readers, texts, and activities—is reflected throughout the 2026 NAEP Reading Framework (see Chapter 2).

Comprehension Items: The Role of Comprehension Targets

As in previous NAEP assessments, the 2026 NAEP Reading Assessment will engage students in reading sets of texts and responding to questions that assess their comprehension of these texts. Comprehension Targets are used in NAEP to generate the comprehension items students respond to as they take the test. Students' responses to the questions provide the observable data that NAEP uses to describe how effectively students engage in important comprehension processes, such as recalling texts and forming connections among ideas within and across texts, when reading various kinds of texts. Three of the four targets— *Locate and Recall, Integrate and Interpret, Analyze and Evaluate*— are closely aligned with those in the 2009–2019 NAEP Reading Framework. An additional target, *Use and Apply*, has been added to reflect the importance of applying comprehension to new situations.

Each Comprehension Target involves inferences that readers tend to find more or less challenging. Items based on each target will range in difficulty, depending on the particulars of the questions in relation to the texts they are designed to probe. Building on the attention to vocabulary in the 2009–2019 Framework, the 2026 NAEP Reading Assessment also attends to structures of language within each Comprehension Target.

Locate and Recall

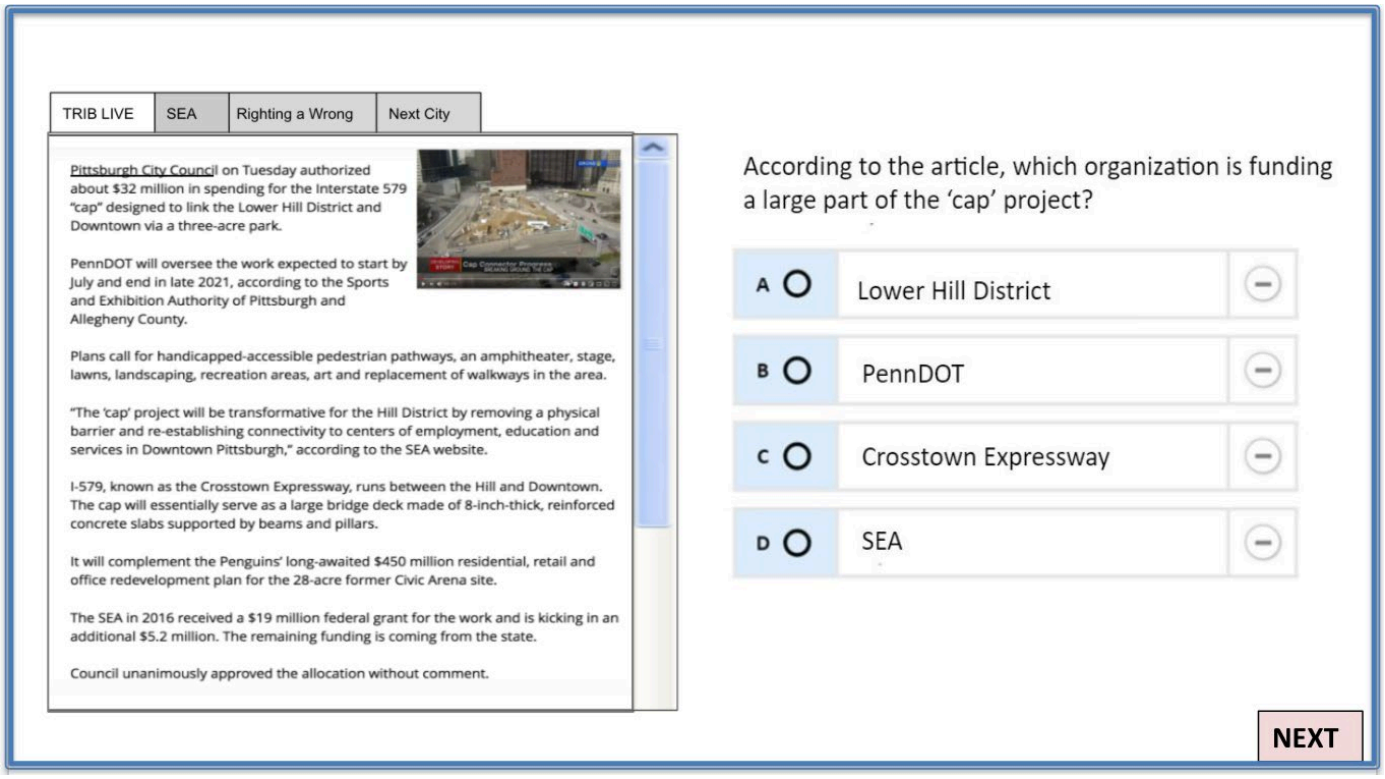
As readers locate or recall information from what they read, they may identify clearly stated main ideas or supporting details, or they may find essential elements of a story, such as characters, time, or setting. In order to comprehend, readers need to identify important information and form connections among ideas in the text as they move through it. In addition, readers often need to locate information to fulfill a particular purpose, aid recall, and repair understanding. These kinds of processing help readers build a literal understanding of what the text "says."

Items assessing the Locate and Recall target typically focus on information stated directly in a single location in a text, such as a sentence, a paragraph, adjacent paragraphs, or a single graphic. However, in some cases, readers may need to navigate across different pages or documents, including hyperlinked and multimodal texts, to find additional information that is relevant to the test item. Test items might ask readers to recall or locate specific information about characters or settings in a story; or to locate a specific piece of information from a table in an expository text. Locate and Recall items can also require readers to form connections across text segments that are near one another in the text, such as fairly straightforward inferences about the relationships between ideas presented in adjacent sentences (e.g., A caused B or A occurred before B). Finally, readers may be asked to infer the meanings of unfamiliar words using information in the sentences immediately surrounding that word.

In this Grade 12 Social Studies item (Exhibit 2.1) demonstrating the Locate and Recall Comprehension Target, students locate explicit information in the text.

Exhibit 2.1. Sample Item: Locate and Recall

Comprehension Target: Locate and Recall; **Item Format:** SR-SSMC; **Key:** D
Skill: Locate explicit information in a text.



Integrate and Interpret

When readers engage in behaviors involving integrating and interpreting, they make connections across sentences, paragraphs, or sections within or across texts to synthesize ideas under a common theme (e.g., justice or loss) or idea (e.g., how food goes from the farm to tables in people's houses). In making these connections, readers rely on their understanding of the ideas in the texts, their disciplinary knowledge, their knowledge of text genres, and even their knowledge of how language works to communicate ideas. In order to engage in these processes, readers may be required to navigate complex hyperlinks or multimodal elements, such as video or interactive graphics.

Items assessing the Integrate and Interpret target may ask readers to compare and contrast characters and settings, examine causal and chronological relations across aspects of text, or formulate explanations for events or information in texts. For example, items may ask readers to explain or predict a character's behavior by relying on multiple pieces of text information about that character's history and dispositions, or they might ask readers to describe how the setting of a story contributes to the theme. Integrate and Interpret items might also ask readers to recognize how specific features of language signal relationships or viewpoints within a text. For example, readers might be asked to make judgments about characters based on the adjectives used to describe them or to rely on signal phrases (e.g., "to the contrary") to understand the connections among ideas.

In this Grade 8 Science item (Exhibit 2.2) demonstrating the Integrate and Interpret Comprehension Target, students determine which source texts support stated claims.

Exhibit 2.2. Sample Item: Integrate and Interpret

Comprehension Target: Integrate and Interpret; **Item Format:** SR-Grid; **Key:** See below the item.
Skill: Determine whether textual evidence supports claims.

Click on the boxes to show the claim(s) that each source supports. Some sources will have more than one box selected.

	Source #1: How Do We Remember?	Source #2: Memory Masters	Source #3: Interpreters: Silver-Tongued Masters of Memory
Find out how your memory systems process information.	☐	☐	☐
Learn how to improve your memory skills.	☐	☐	☐
Learn about the kinds of challenges presented at a memory competition.	☐	☐	☐

KEY:

Find out how your memory systems process information.: Source #1: How Do We Remember?, Source #3: Interpreters: Silver-Tongued Masters of Memory

Learn how to improve your memory skills.: Source #2: Memory Masters

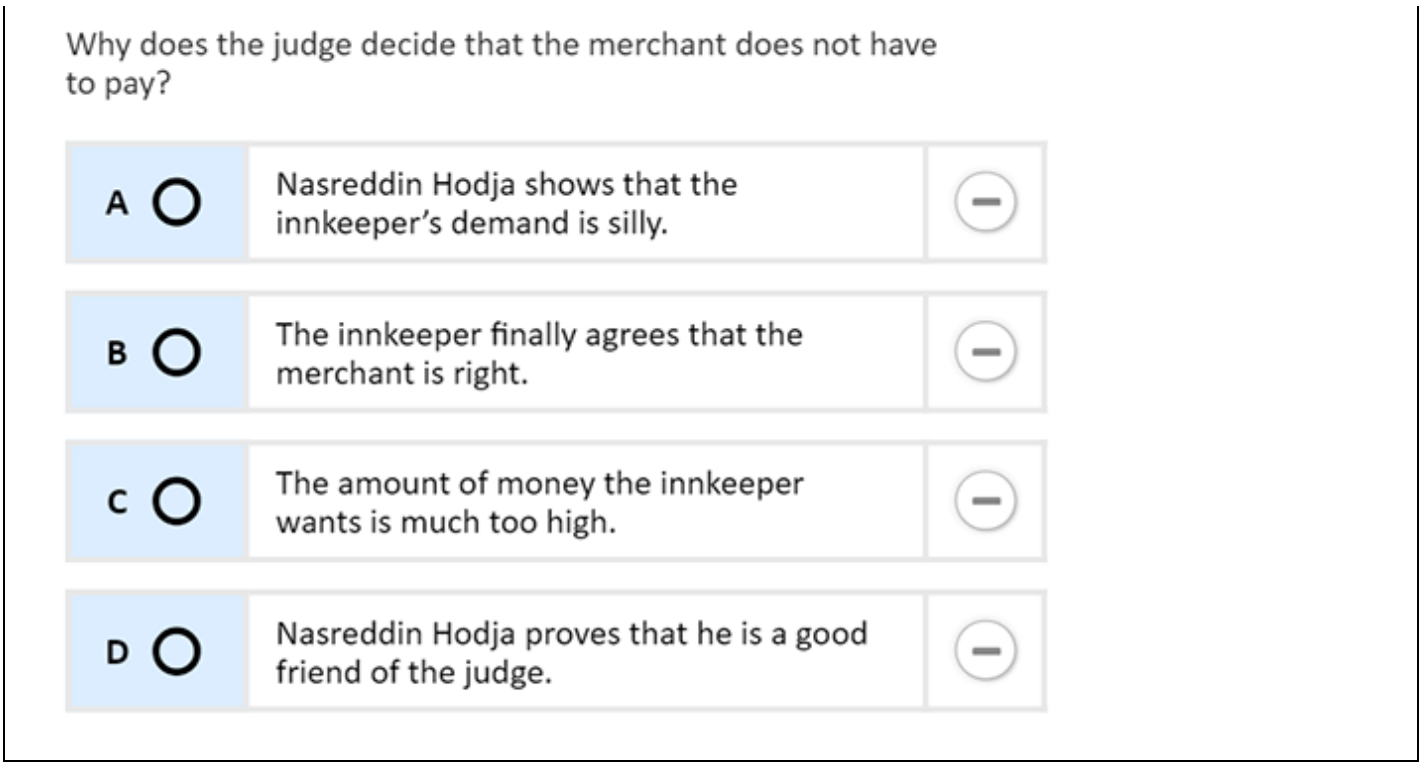
Learn about the kinds of challenges presented at a memory competition.: Source #2: Memory Masters

This item appeared in the 2019–20 Grade 8 Smarter Balanced Sample Items published by The Regents of the University of California with Item ID 61235.

In this Grade 4 Literature item (Exhibit 2.3) demonstrating the Integrate and Interpret Comprehension Target, students are asked to determine the reason a story's plot is resolved based upon their analysis of the story's plot and character interactions.

Exhibit 2.3. Sample Item: Integrate and Interpret

Comprehension Target: Integrate and Interpret; **Item Format:** SR-SSMC; **Key:** A
Skill: Recognize reason for plot resolution in a story



This item appeared in the 2017 NAEP grade 4 Reading administration with NAEP Item ID 2017-4R5 #10.

Analyze and Evaluate

Readers who Analyze and Evaluate engage in processes associated with examining and assessing one or more texts during and after reading. Readers may analyze by closely examining the choices an author makes about content and form and how those choices affect meaning. Readers may then use those analyses to evaluate a text by judging various aspects of the text as well as its overall effectiveness. In order to engage in Analyze and Evaluate processes, readers must view texts in relation to knowledge from other sources. Sources may include their existing knowledge base (Alexander, 2012; Lee, 2011) or common tools and criteria used in literary analysis, historical reasoning, or scientific argumentation (Lee & Spratley, 2010; Goldman et al., 2016; van Drie & van Boxtel, 2008). Readers also draw on their knowledge about and preferences for particular rhetorical strategies, such as the use of language, organization of text, or articulation of claims and evidence.

Items assessing the Analyze and Evaluate target might ask readers to evaluate the coherence, credibility, or quality of one or more texts. Readers may be asked to make judgments about the effectiveness of an author's use of figurative language, the degree to which the author provides sufficient evidence to support a claim, or the trustworthiness of the source (e.g., venue and author) (Bråten, Stadtler, & Salmerón, 2018, 2020; Meola, 2004; Ostenson, 2014; Wineburg, 1991; Wineberg & McGrew, 2017). For example, readers might use information appearing in one text as the basis for evaluating the ideas or the use of language in a second text.

In this Grade 4 Literature item (Exhibit 2.4) demonstrating the Analyze and Evaluate Comprehension Target, students are asked to provide an opinion about who is the most important character in a story and explain the opinion using specific information from the story as support.

Exhibit 2.4. Sample Item: Analyze and Evaluate

Comprehension Target: Analyze and Evaluate; **Item Format:** SCR; **Key:** N/A
Skill: Produce new text for argumentative purpose, based upon analysis of a text.

Who do you think is the most important character in the story?
Explain your opinion using specific information from the story.

This item appeared in the 2017 NAEP grade 4 Reading administration with NAEP Item ID 2017-4R5 #9.

Use and Apply

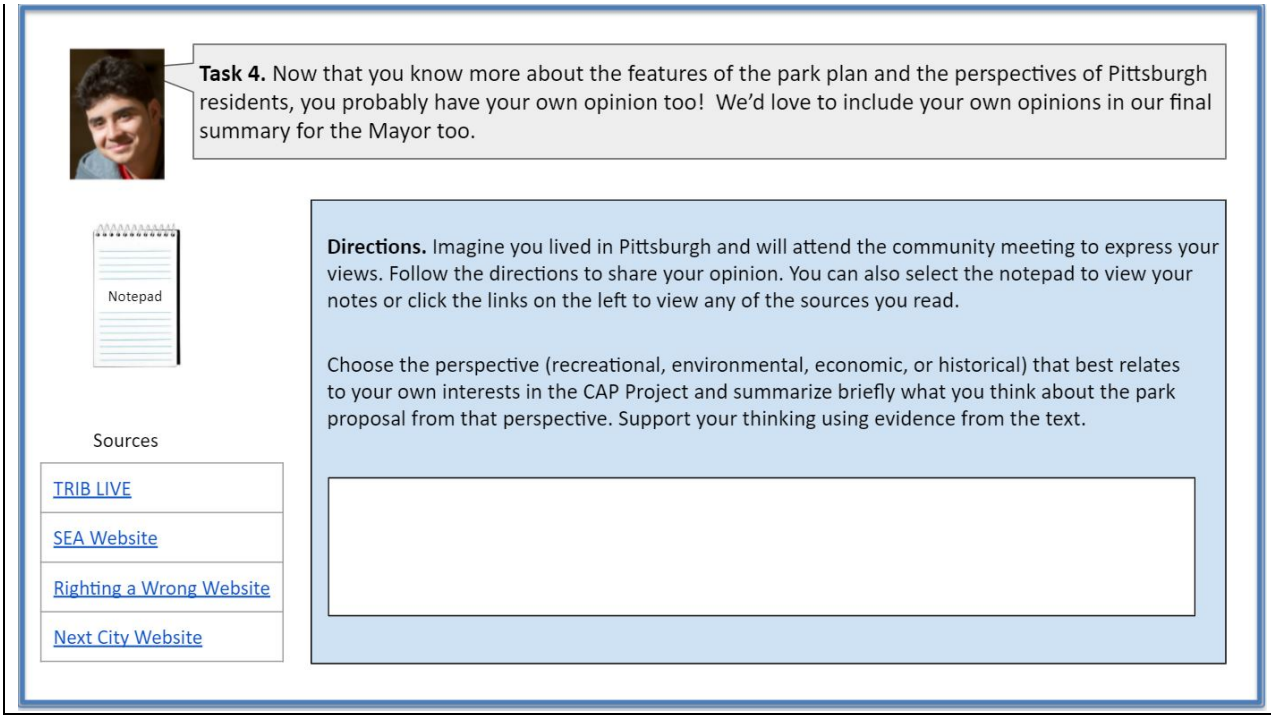
The Use and Apply target reflects the culmination of comprehension, in which understandings acquired during reading are used in new situations or applied in the development of novel ideas and products (Goldman et al., 2019; Pearson, Palincsar, Biancarosa, and Berman, 2020). This target reflects contemporary understandings that comprehension involves a series of processes that leads to readers taking some kind of action in the world outside of text. In doing so, readers must consider how to reframe ideas from their reading and experiences to create a new product for a specific purpose and audience (Marzano, 1988). As readers reflect on how to respond to items that require such actions, they take into account the reading purposes, the norms established by genre and disciplinary conventions, and the expectations about what is deemed appropriate and compelling to members of the target audience (Gee, 2001; Goldman et al., 2016; Moje, 2015).

Items assessing the Use and Apply target will ask readers to use information they acquire through reading to solve a problem or create a new text. For example, after reading a set of commentaries, readers might be asked to produce a blog-type message for a public audience that captures the most relevant information or offers an argument about an issue. Readers might also be asked to use one or more texts as a model for generating a new text or graphic representation. In a literature context, readers might be asked to rewrite an aspect of a story in accordance with a particular, specified goal.

In this Grade 12 Social Studies item (Exhibit 2.5) demonstrating the Use and Apply Comprehension Target, students are asked to write an opinion, incorporating evidence from a text, that aligns to one of multiple perspectives that students had read as part of an assessment block regarding the proposed development of a city park.

Exhibit 2.5. Sample Item: Use and Apply

Comprehension Target: Use and Apply; **Item Format:** ECR; **Key:** N/A
Skill: Produce new text for argumentative purpose, based upon analyses of multiple texts and perspectives.



The photograph of Moises is sourced from [https://images.all4ed.org/high-school-boy-in-hallway (photographer Allison Shelley/The Verbatim Agency for EDUimages)](https://images.all4ed.org/high-school-boy-in-hallway).

Comprehension Targets and the NAEP Definition of Reading Comprehension.

The Comprehension Targets reflect the understanding that the extent to which a reader succeeds at particular reading tasks is dependent on many factors related to the reader's experiences, knowledge, language development, and motivations. The Comprehension Targets also reflect the centrality of readers' use of reading processes, including a range of different kinds of inferential reasoning, in the meaning they construct. By targeting a range of knowledge and skills under conditions that replicate many aspects of authentic reading, the NAEP Reading Assessment provides a more ecologically valid measure of students' reading comprehension.

Contexts and Purposes

As stated in the Framework, a central principle of the NAEP Definition of Reading Comprehension is that, as a human meaning-making activity, reading comprehension is a purpose-driven activity, situated within contexts that shape the readers' engagement with text and that influence how readers respond to and learn from the experience of reading. This section describes how two expanded components of the 2026 NAEP Reading Assessment, Disciplinary Contexts and Purposes, contribute to this contextualization. (See the section "Organizational Features and Structures of the Reading Construct" in Appendix A-S for additional details.)

Disciplinary Contexts

Given recent advances in theory, research, and practice about reading within disciplines, NAEP has elevated the importance of disciplinary reading in literature, science, and social studies to reflect the increased importance of disciplinary reading in schools, state standards, and large-scale reading comprehension assessments. Students taking the 2026 NAEP Reading Assessment will read across three disciplinary contexts: Reading to Engage in Literature, Reading to Engage in Science, and Reading to Engage in Social Studies. Their performance will be reported by disciplinary context, along with an aggregate score for performance across all three contexts. Reading will involve texts that are drawn from

the range that students encounter when reading about literature, science, and social studies. Examples of types of text to be used are provided in the text selection section of Chapter 3 and Exhibit 3.10 (also see "Selecting Texts" section in Framework Chapter 3).

Literature Contexts. Perhaps more than in any other disciplinary domain, reading is the center of literary study and enjoyment. Themes of human experience pervade works of literature—nature and humanity, struggle and survival, love and friendship, loss and betrayal, victory and defeat, mortality and meaningfulness. Reading literature texts, such as poetry, fictional and nonfiction narratives, and criticism, provides opportunities for enjoyment and for reflection and analysis around these themes, including how they shed light on their own experiences and social worlds. Literature also often provides opportunities to connect with cultures and experiences similar to or different from one's own, extending readers' understandings about the world. Individuals read a variety of literature texts to appreciate elements of craft and to reflect on point of view, varied perspectives and experiences, and human dilemmas relevant to solving personal, social, and ethical problems. Literature also invites its readers to examine text as a repository of language, rhetorical moves, and structure; to connect its ideas to those in other texts and those of other authors and literary traditions; and to situate problems in contemporary and historical contexts.

Science Contexts. Science contexts focus primarily on observing and explaining the natural world. Although scientific activities do not depend exclusively on reading, texts play an important role in learning about and communicating science ideas in school and out-of-school settings. Learning the concepts and processes of science in school involves the use of varied texts to describe, report, and articulate claims about the natural world (e.g., textbooks) and to record systematic efforts to act upon it (e.g., observation protocols, lab notes, experimental descriptions, journal articles). Outside of schools, individuals often access scientific information (e.g., in newspapers and on internet sites) needed to understand issues and solve problems. Moreover, the application of reading to understanding and acting upon the natural world calls for an array of reading strategies as well as understandings about how scientists determine findings and what constitutes credible evidence for those findings.

Social Studies Contexts. Social studies includes history, geography, cultural studies, civics, and government, with less common coverage of disciplines such as sociology and anthropology. These fields offer unique ways of thinking, organizing knowledge, and investigating social systems and events current and past. In schools, social studies texts provide students with an intellectual context for studying how humans have interacted with each other and with the environment over time (National Council for the Social Studies, 2013). Social studies explores how humans organize societies and governments, how societies make use of available resources, and how cultures develop and change over time. In order to understand social studies texts, readers bring both conceptual tools needed to understand patterns (e.g., trade-offs, how perspective impacts representation) and understandings about how claims are developed and supported. Individuals read a variety of social studies texts to understand historical and contemporary issues and to solve community, national, and world problems. Reading in social studies also requires the application of a broad range of the reading processes described in the Comprehension Targets.

Purposes

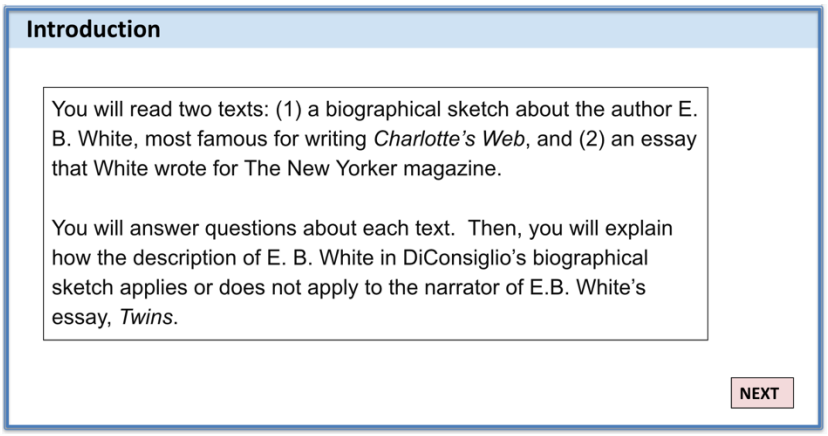
Purposes reflect a commitment on the part of NAEP to ensure that readers know why they are engaging in every part of the assessment, and to reflect the fact that all reading is done in relation to specific purposes. Within the disciplinary contexts described above, the assessment will be oriented toward purposes for reading, and these purposes will be communicated to students throughout the assessment.

Broad Purposes. When students take the 2026 NAEP Reading Assessment, each set of readings and activities they encounter will be situated in one of two broad purposes for reading that reflect standards and curriculum frameworks across the United States—Reading to Develop Understanding or Reading to Solve a Problem.

Reading to Develop Understanding (RDU) blocks are designed to measure what readers do when asked to deeply read and comprehend—literally, inferentially, interpretively, and critically—in or across disciplinary contexts. Reading to Solve a Problem (RSP) blocks are designed primarily to assess what readers do when asked to demonstrate understanding across multiple texts and related perspectives while solving a problem. RSP activities entail developing understanding, or comprehending text, but in the service of using this understanding to take a specific action or create a product, such as a written explanation or a classroom presentation.

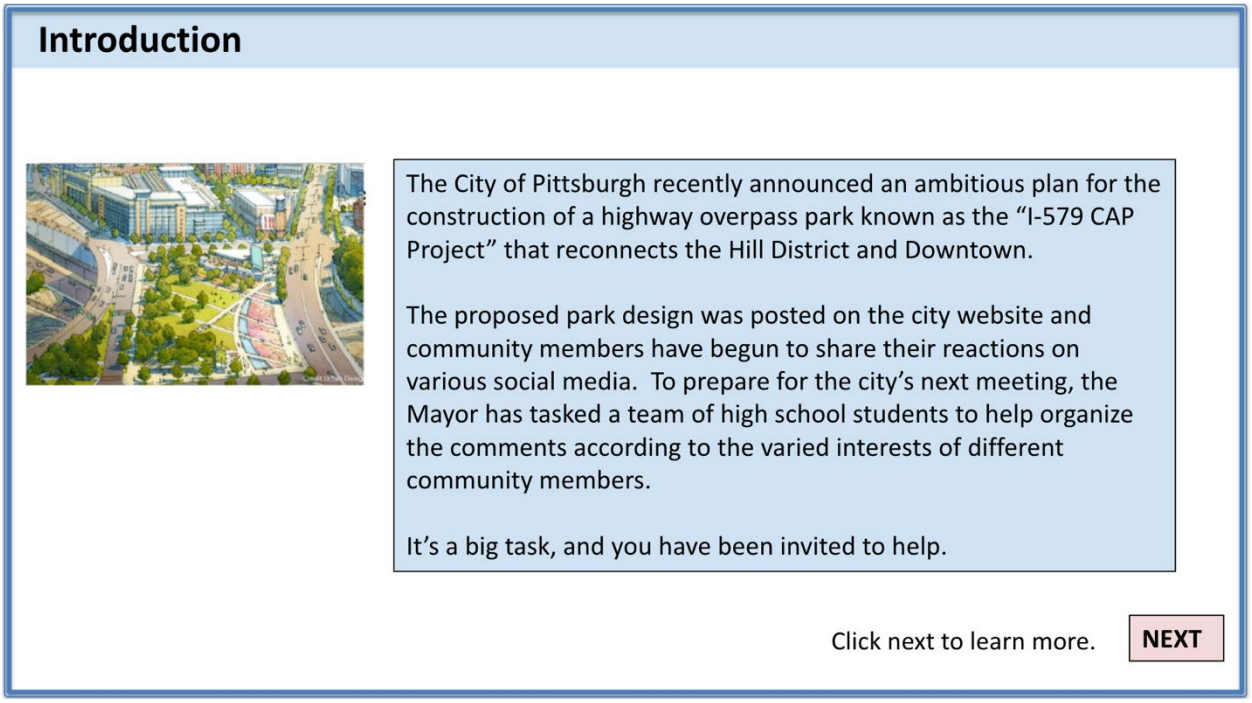
RDU items require students to read texts carefully and respond to comprehension test items generated from the four Comprehension Targets. For example, as in Exhibit 2.6, items may assess students' understanding of concepts described in a science text or the development of a literary theme. These purposes tend to resemble those associated with items on widely used reading comprehension tests. Readers might read with the purpose of understanding the motives of a particular character in a literary text or read scientific texts to understand the significance of a public health threat.

Exhibit 2.6. Example of a Reading to Develop Understanding Purpose for a Grade 8 Literature Block



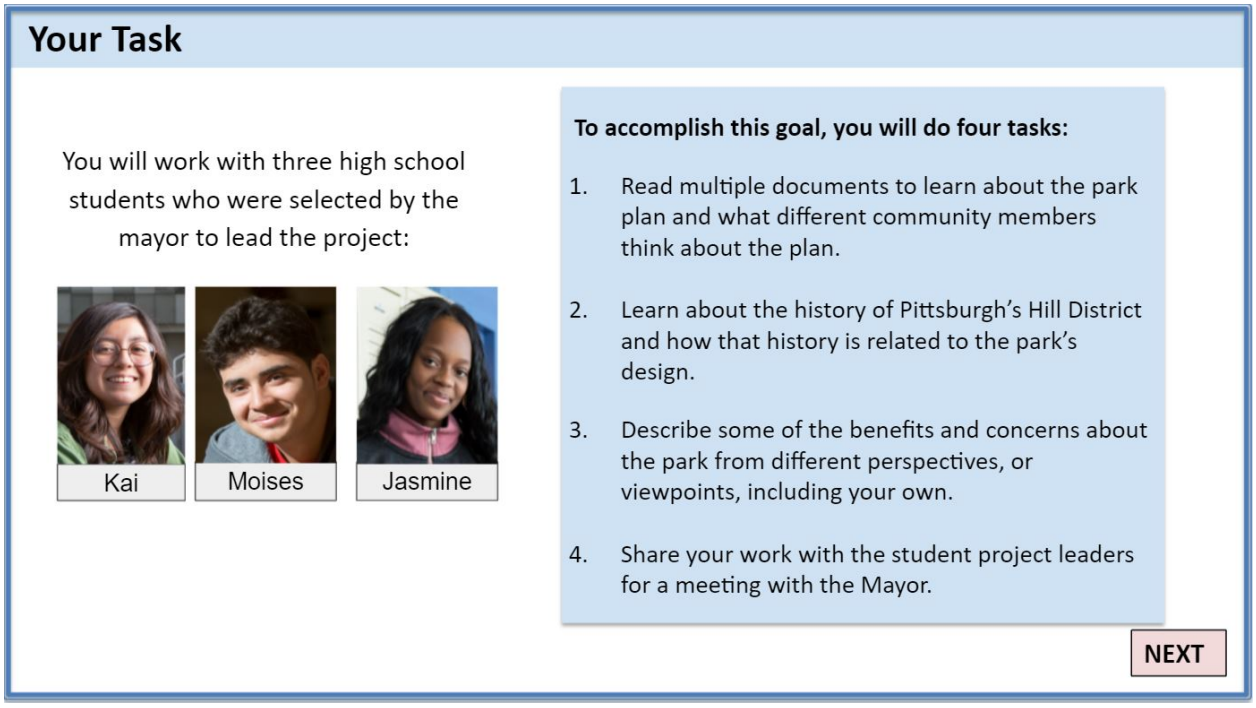
RSP items require that students work across multiple texts and perspectives in order to solve a problem. These activities entail using information gained during text comprehension in the service of a specific action or in the creation of a product. For example, as in Exhibit 2.7, readers might be asked to use information across four different short texts to develop an argument for or against a city ordinance requiring bicycle lanes on all city streets with a certain traffic load.

Exhibit 2.7. Example of a Reading to Solve a Problem Purpose for a Grade 12 Social Studies Block



Specific Purposes. In addition to these broad purposes, more specific purposes for reading particular texts or engaging in particular tasks will be communicated to students. For example, within a Literature Context, students may be assigned a role and given a goal, such as working with task characters (avatar collaborators) in a book group to prepare a presentation about which character in a narrative behaved heroically. Or they might be asked to read a brochure for a new bicycle to evaluate how well the claims about the bicycle's qualities are supported with evidence. (See Exhibit 2.8.)

Exhibit 2.8. Example of four task-specific purposes in a Grade 12 Social Studies Block



The photograph of Kai is sourced from https://images.all4ed.org/high-school-boy-and-girl-near-playground (photographer Allison Shelley for EDUimages). The photograph of Moises is sourced from https://images.all4ed.org/high-school-boy-in-hallway (photographer Allison

Shelley/The Verbatim Agency for EDUimages). The photograph of Jasmine is sourced from https://images.all4ed.org/high-school-boy-and-girl-drive-robots (photographer Allison Shelley/The Verbatim Agency for EDUimages).

Contexts and Purposes and the NAEP Definition of Reading Comprehension

The NAEP Definition of Reading Comprehension describes the role of contexts and purposes in shaping texts and activities related to reading comprehension. This definition relies on research documenting that, when readers taking the assessment know what they are doing, why they are doing it, and what role they are expected to play, the assessment is more likely to serve as a valid proxy for their reading in authentic reading contexts (O'Reilly et al, 2018). Efforts to make contexts and purposes available to students are intended to provide guidance about the purpose for reading and comprehending text, providing explicit connections to activities readers might engage with outside of a testing situation. The aim of these components is to reflect the purposes, texts, activities, and resources that influence students' reading in school, home, and community settings.

Texts

The 2026 NAEP Reading Framework recommends sampling from the large domain of texts that fourth, eighth, and twelfth graders are likely to encounter in school and nonschool settings. Sampling recommendations are described in more detail in Chapter 3. This portfolio of texts ranges from classic to contemporary forms that characterize reading within and across varied disciplinary contexts. These texts will reflect multiple and diverse criteria: cultural diversity, disciplinary representation, and developmental appropriateness with regard to complexity, topic, and modality.

Disciplinary Texts

The 2026 NAEP Reading Assessment will utilize texts within the three broad disciplinary contexts described above: literature, science, and social studies. The features of these texts will vary by disciplinary context and include the genres, text types, and discursive, rhetorical, and syntactic structural characteristics specific to texts in those disciplines. (See Exhibit 3.10.)

Literature Texts. NAEP will draw on literature texts to reflect the range of classic and contemporary genres, text structures, literary language, and traditions that students experience in their classrooms and communities. Literature texts may reflect long-standing traditions, like myths, short stories, novels, drama, and poetry. They might also include current evolving forms, such as fan fiction, author interviews, book reviews, and graphic novels. Variety in reading literature might also be reflected in specific discourse patterns, including word choice, sentence structure, and use of figurative language. Literary language can also situate narratives in time and place as well as in cultural traditions and may draw on archetypal characters typical of those traditions. Texts in literature may also cue non-literal interpretations by using irony, satire, or other literary elements and devices (Appleman, 2017; Lee, Goldman, Levine, & Magliano, 2016; Rabinowitz, 1987).

Science Texts. Science texts will reflect the formats, language, and structural elements germane to pedagogical, public, and professional science discourse. This discourse conveys information, findings, and varied applications of scientific ideas. Science texts include technical information, such as raw data, bench notes, journals, personal communications, handbooks, refereed journal articles, and review articles (Goldman & Bisanz, 2002), as well as more general texts, including press releases, news briefs, websites, and blogs. Such texts may draw on varied text structures, such as cause and effect, correlation, problem and solution, sequence, comparison, exemplification, descriptive classification, extended definition, and analogy. In addition to description, exposition, and narrative genres, science texts may also include many kinds of visuals, including tables, graphs, equations, diagrams, models, and flowcharts (Cromley et al., 2010; Lemke, 1998; van den Broek, 2010). Several challenging language structures common to these texts include nominalized verbs (e.g., digest becomes digestion), passive voice (e.g., a liter of hydrochloric acid

is added to the solution), and technical and specialized words (e.g., transpiration or metamorphic) (Fang & Schleppegrell, 2010; O'Hallaron, Palincsar & Schleppegrell, 2015).

Social Studies Texts. NAEP will also sample from the varied forms of texts common to social studies including a wide array of text types, forms of representation, sources of information, and perspectives. These texts document human activity across societies and time periods and may include newspaper articles, diaries, letters, speeches, records of sale, advertisements, official government documents, photographs, cartoons, maps, artwork, music, and video and audio recordings. They may also include classroom textbooks and interpretive books and articles about events, time periods, or people. Social studies texts may organize ideas chronologically or thematically to represent time periods, social structures, continuity and change, cause and consequence, and varied social or historical perspectives to consider how the past influences the present (Charap, 2015; Seixas, 2010; Seixas, et al., 2015; Schreiner, 2014). Varied text structures use linguistic frames to mark arguments, persuasion, chronology, cause and effect, perspective, or comparison and contrast. Texts from long ago may even require readers to consider language and the policy contexts within which the texts were generated.

Texts in a Digital Platform

As initiated in 2017, the NAEP Reading Assessment will continue to be presented entirely in a digital platform. The widespread presence of computers and smart devices in modern society has changed ideas about what counts as text. Students in school are frequently required to read literature, science, and social studies texts that reflect the digital environment, an environment that is different from the world of print on paper. Online newspapers and magazines are replete with graphs that allow readers to simulate different scenarios and see possible outcomes when a causal factor is altered. Digital science texts now in use in schools may include simulations that, for example, dynamically illustrate what happens to one human body system when variables in the other body systems change.

Digital texts may be static, with no movement of the text on-screen (Barron, 2015) and require readers to make sense of ideas using print and images (e.g., photographs, diagrams, tables) very much like those in a print-on-paper world. Dynamic texts require readers to follow movement across modes (e.g., between print and video or static image) or across nonlinear locations (e.g., clicking a hypertext link that moves you to another section) to construct meaning (Beach & Castek, 2016; Giroux & Moje, 2017; Kinzer & Leander, 2003; Kress, 2013; Manderino, 2012). Reading within and across multiple texts that contain both static and dynamic textual elements makes reading more complex, especially when texts contain conflicting ideas and varying stylistic features that further contribute to complexity. Readers must work actively within and across these text arrangements to construct meaning and to respond appropriately to a particular reading purpose.

Text Complexity

NAEP has long taken a multifaceted approach to assessing the complexity and accessibility of texts to determine which features of text to emphasize in selecting texts. The 2026 NAEP Reading Framework continues this approach, evaluating quantitative and qualitative features of texts, along with additional considerations. The application of measures used to assess text complexity are described more fully in Chapter 3 of this document.

Text and the NAEP Definition of Reading Comprehension.

Texts used in the 2026 NAEP Reading Assessment align with the NAEP Definition of Reading Comprehension. They reflect the three disciplinary contexts, multiple genres and modalities used in both school and out-of-school settings, as well as the many kinds of digital and multimodal texts that make up the textual repertoires of most students. Utilizing a broad array of texts increases the chances that all readers will encounter texts that connect to their experiences and identities as well as texts that are more distant.

Universal Design Elements

The purpose of the 2026 NAEP Reading Assessment is to measure students' reading comprehension across a diverse range of test-takers. To help accomplish this purpose, the 2026 NAEP Reading Assessment employs principles of Universal Design of Assessments (UDA). Universal Design of Assessments calls for the purposeful design of assessments that are accessible to the greatest number of students possible in order to accurately measure the same construct—in this case, reading comprehension—across the diversity of test takers (Thompson, Johnstone, & Thurlow, 2002; Thompson, Thurlow, & Malouf, 2004). To do this, assessments draw on design features, available to all test takers, called Universal Design Elements (UDEs).

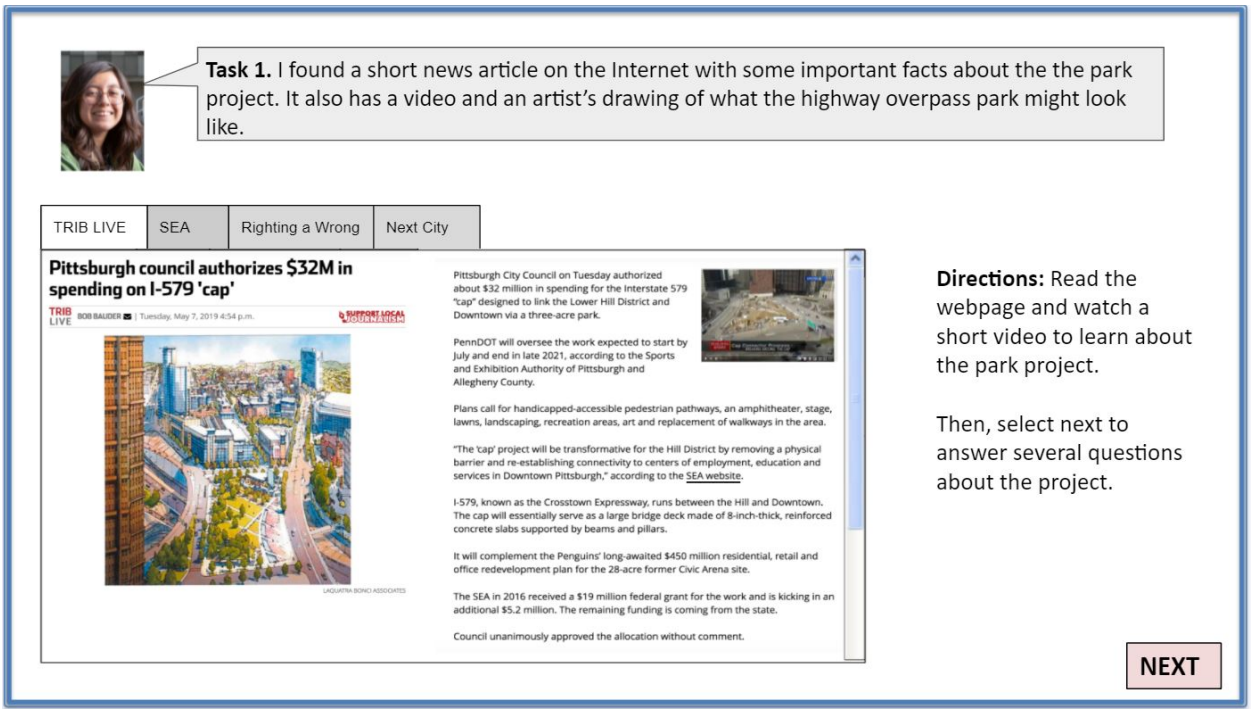
UDEs are design elements of the assessment environment intended to help all test-takers access, organize, analyze, and express ideas when engaging in complex tasks, such as reading comprehension (Johnstone, 2003; Johnstone, Altman, & Thurlow, 2006). As such, UDEs aid students' ability to engage with the content that is being tested by reducing the noise (what measurement scholars call *construct-irrelevant variance*) introduced when students lack familiarity with other aspects of assessment.

The 2026 NAEP Reading Assessment uses three expanded categories of UDEs: task-based, motivational, and informational.

Task-based UDEs

Task-based UDEs are designed to clarify requirements and guide readers in their use of available resources. They increase access and sustain readers' attention as they take the assessment. They clarify the expectations for readers and help them examine and use available resources within the assessment blocks (CAST, 2020; Dejong, 2006; Zhang & Quintana, 2012). They maximize the likelihood that readers are able to cognitively engage with complex NAEP-designed reading experiences within the compressed time frame of an assessment. They might include a sequential set of directions to communicate expectations for how and why readers should engage with a collection of texts; they can also help readers plan and monitor their work across multiple texts and tasks (de Jong, 2006). They might also include graphic organizers that allow readers to record and revisit their ideas, reduce time spent on searching and scrolling, and, thus, provide more time for students to read, evaluate, and engage with text content. These UDEs might also include simulated student work examples that offer models of approaches to tasks before students complete similar tasks independently (e.g., Sparks & Deane, 2014). Task-based UDEs may also include the kind of resetting feature, described earlier, which has been part of NAEP since 2019.

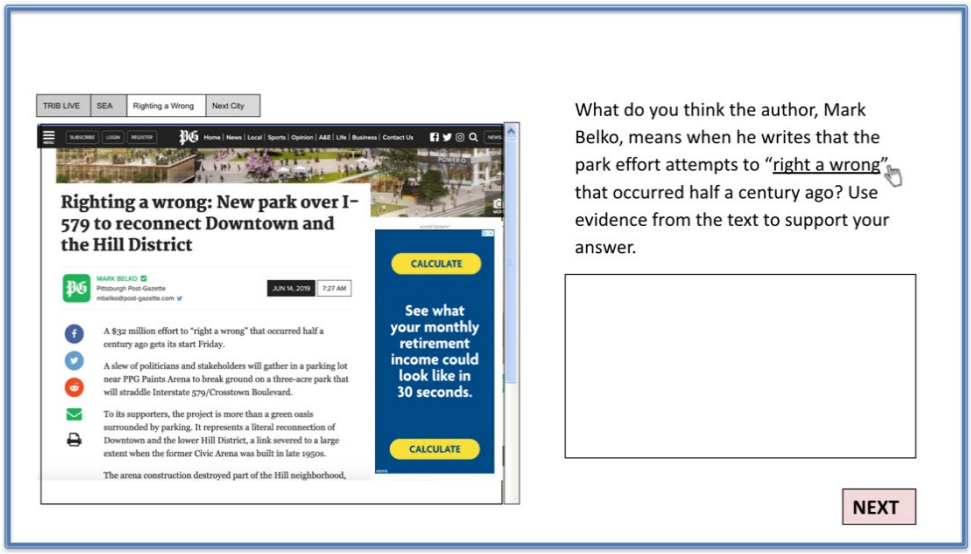
Exhibit 2.9. Example of a Task-based UDE from a Grade 12 RSP Block



The photograph of Kai is sourced from https://images.all4ed.org/high-school-boy-and-girl-near-playground (photographer Allison Shelley for EDUimages).

This task-based UDE (Exhibit 2.9) includes directions that readers are asked to follow as they engage with texts and items. The task character reminds the reader of the specific purpose and the first task.

Exhibit 2.10. Example of a Task-based UDE from a Grade 12 RSP Block



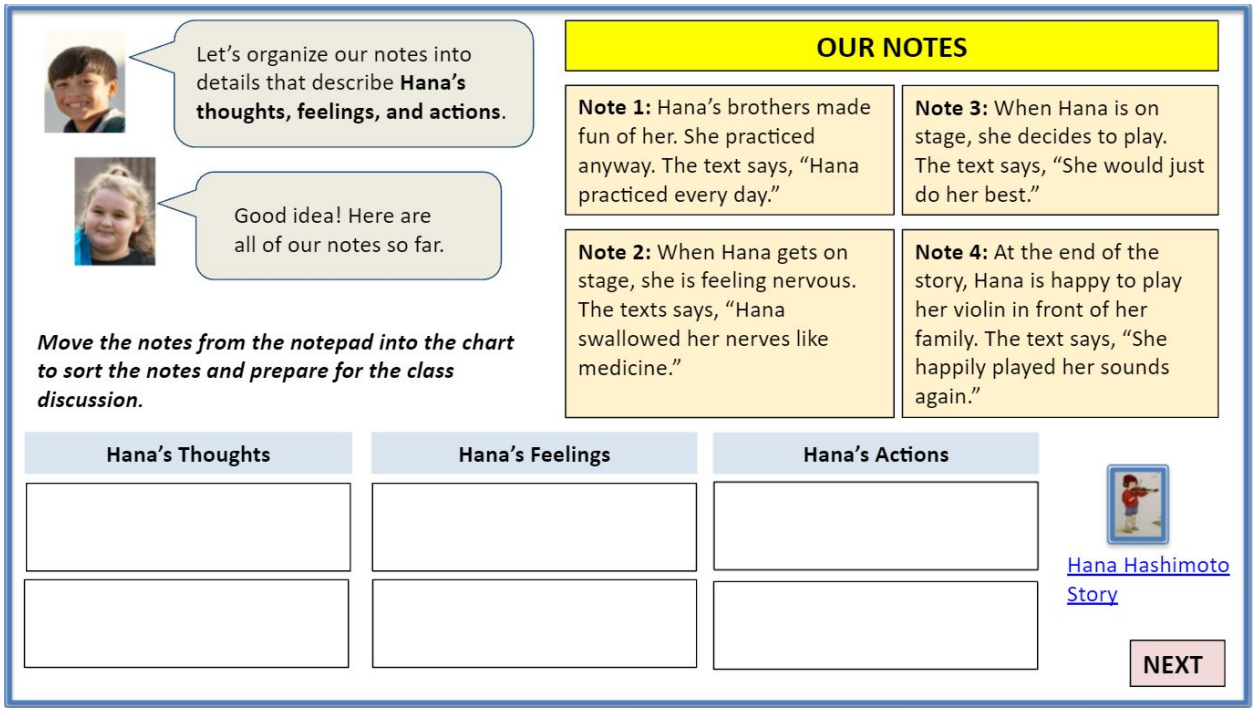
Incorporated into this short constructed-response item (Exhibit 2.10) is a task-based UDE as a look-back button that asks readers to integrate and interpret information in an online newspaper article about the historical significance of the park's design.

Motivational UDEs

Motivational UDEs are intentionally embedded into reading activities to encourage and support readers' interest, engagement, and persistence, especially when they encounter challenging tasks. These

UDEs are informed by the substantial body of research that describes the beneficial influence of motivation on reading comprehension (Dalton & Proctor, 2008; Buehl, 2017; CAST, 2020; Guthrie & Klauda, 2016). They may also maintain readers' interest by communicating explicit connections between the broader purpose for completing a task and the sub-tasks that need to be completed along the way. UDEs in the form of task characters provide written and/or oral directions or serve as experts or peers to provide information or moral support. Task characters may also serve as a simulated target audience with whom readers can communicate new understandings about what they have read and learned (e.g., Use and Apply).

Exhibit 2.11. Example of a Motivational UDE from a Grade 4 RDU Block



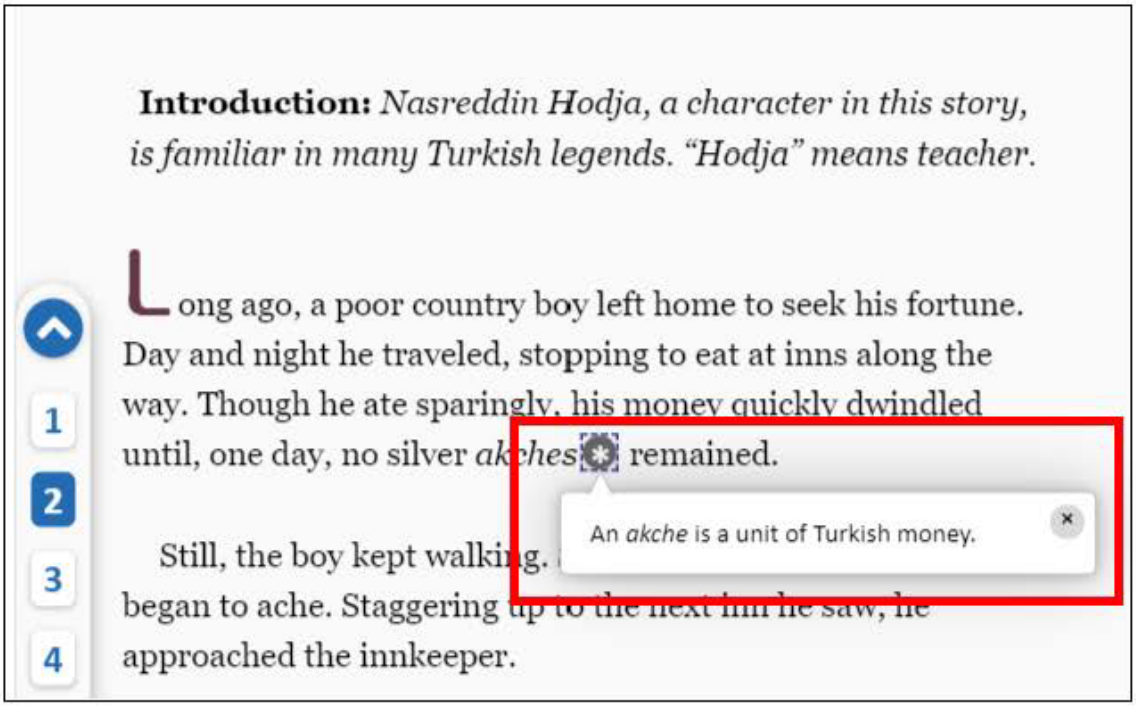
The photograph of Gabe is sourced from https://images.all4ed.org/third-grade-boy-with-backpack-outside/. The photograph of Luisa is sourced from https://images.all4ed.org/fifth-grade-girl-mask-break (photographer Allison Shelley for EDUimages).

In this example (Exhibit 2.11), the other two classmates serve as motivational and task-based UDEs to engage students in the task while also reminding them to stay focused on the character's thoughts, feelings, and actions. The student's responses from the previous item are carried over to the next item as the completed notes, which also serves to motivate the student since they have already completed the work. These notes could also be "reset" (as an additional task-based UDE) if the student did not enter appropriate notes in the previous item so that the student's score on this item is not dependent on how they responded previously.

Informational UDEs

Informational UDEs are designed to maximize students' ability to engage with the content that is being tested by providing relevant context. Informational UDEs do not reduce the difficulty level of assessment items but rather they provide orientations to topics, concepts, or obscure vocabulary that students may need to make meaning from text as they read (Kintsch, 1998; McNamara, 2021; van den Broek & Helder, 2017). Informational UDEs consist of brief passage introductions (e.g., a short description of the author or text) to provide context about what the student is reading and vocabulary pop-ups to offer on-demand definitions of obscure words that are not part of the content being assessed. Unless video, image, or other kinds of introductions are already part of an authentic source text, topic previews may take the form of written texts only.

Exhibit 2.12. Example of an Informational UDE from a Grade 4 RDU Block



This example (Exhibit 2.12) from a NAEP Grade 4 block illustrates two informational UDEs. The first informational UDE appears in the form of an introduction to the story "Five Boiled Eggs," which introduces students to Nasreddin Hodja, a character in the story whose last name means "teacher" in Turkish. The second informational UDE appears in the form of a vocabulary pop-up box defining the Turkish word "akche."

UDEs and the NAEP Definition of Reading Comprehension.

UDEs enable readers to engage with topics to be read about by providing brief previews and offering instructions on how to complete assessment tasks. They include lookback buttons and definitions of some words not measured on the assessment, thus reflecting the kinds of navigational aids and tools available in typical reading situations. In addition, UDEs clarify the nature and order of tasks and expected responses.

Summarizing the Relationship Between the Definition and Assessment Components

This chapter has described the reading content of the 2026 NAEP Reading Assessment and the connections between the content and the NAEP Definition of Reading Comprehension. Exhibit 2.13 summarizes these connections.

Exhibit 2.13. Relationships Between the NAEP Definition of Reading Comprehension Definition and the 2026 NAEP Reading Assessment

	Features of the NAEP Definition of Reading Comprehension			
Assessment Components	Contexts	Readers	Texts	Activities
Comprehension Items	Reflect a view of the outcomes of reading as influenced by factors within	Address an array of skills and strategies related to comprehension,	Query different types of comprehension within and across texts and	Attend to disciplinary contexts, purposes, and text challenges

	and outside of the assessment.	including literal, inferential, analytical, and critical responses along with items that ask students to apply ideas in the texts.	different aspects of the texts, including local and global features and meanings.	to determine how items will reflect the four Comprehension Targets.
Contexts and Purposes	Invoke rich contexts (discipline-related and otherwise) as a way of situating reading in settings that involve reading comprehension.	Communicate purposes for reading, introduce interactive elements, such as a digital "guide," and enhance engagement by focusing on contemporary issues.	Include varied texts that align with disciplinary contexts and purposes.	Establish authentic contexts, structures, and purposes for reading and formulate tasks that are aligned with those purposes.
Texts	Include a variety of texts that represent a range of cultural traditions, disciplinary contexts, and reading purposes.	Select texts that are broadly representative of varied cultural traditions, backgrounds, experiences, and identities.	Include texts from a wide range of genres, modalities, formats, and disciplinary traditions.	Include varied texts that align with the disciplinary contexts, broad purposes, and genres appropriate for the block.
Universal Design Elements	Reflect the kinds of resources that are commonly available during reading in school, workplace, and community contexts.	Provide previews of the topics, information about obscure words that are not the focus of the assessment items, and instructions on how to complete assessment tasks.	Increase broad access to texts, such as providing definitions of obscure words not measured on the assessment and offering lookback buttons.	Provide information that clarifies the nature and order of tasks and expected responses.

Chapter 3 describes the structure of the assessment and illustrates the use of key design principles and development practices that will support NAEP test developers to create an assessment that includes the components described.

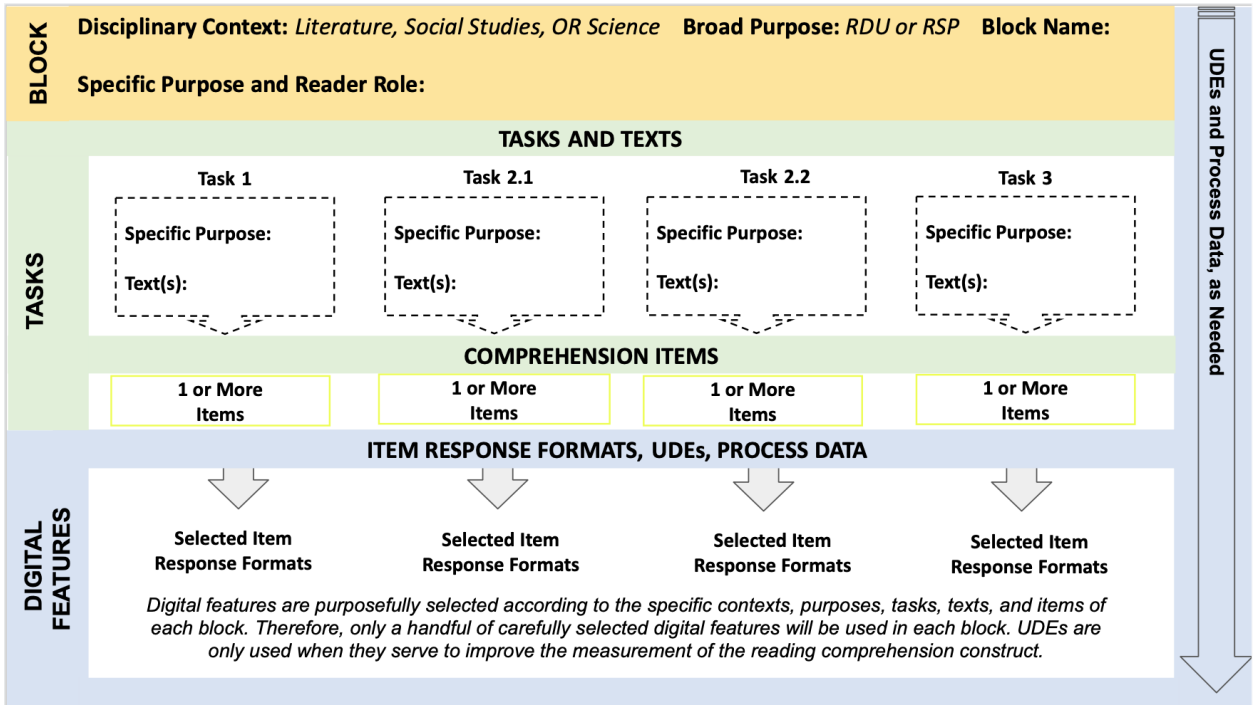
This chapter describes the assessment design components that contribute to best educational measurement practices, as outlined by the National Research Council (Pellegrino, et al., 2001; AERA/APA/NCME, 2014), and that were used in previous NAEP Reading assessments (National Assessment Governing Board, 2019). These practices include incrementally augmenting current assessment design with features that are carefully tested and refined over time: a hallmark of NAEP development practices since the inception of the assessment.

The chapter is divided into three sections. The first section provides an overview of considerations related to developing block components of the 2026 NAEP Reading Assessment. This involves situating readers within a disciplinary context, a broad purpose, and a specific purpose and role for each block. The second section discusses the task components, including text and comprehension items, and how they can be used to expand the ways in which readers are asked to demonstrate their ability to engage in the comprehension processes outlined in Chapter 2. The third section details considerations for leveraging digital assessment features, including item response formats, Universal Design Elements (UDEs), and process data in line with principles of validity, fairness, and inclusivity (AERA/APA/NCME, 2014).

Situating Readers Within Assessment Blocks

A block is the largest organizational unit for the 2026 NAEP Reading Assessment. In a typical NAEP Reading Assessment session, test-takers engage in two grade-appropriate blocks. The design of every block is intended to situate readers within a *disciplinary context*, a *broad purpose for reading*, and a *specific purpose* and *role* for the reader working through the block, as shown in Exhibit 3.1 This exhibit provides one sample approach to an assessment block; other approaches are possible that would have variations in the components (e.g., the number of tasks and texts). As developers develop a block, they make decisions about each of the components. In the following section, we describe some of the different design principles for consideration as decisions are made about the assessment components illustrated. Refer to Appendix C for additional considerations and guidelines for block development, along with grade-level block sketches with more examples.

Exhibit 3.1. Design Components of a 2026 NAEP Reading Assessment Block



Designating Disciplinary Context

All blocks will sample from a range of grade-appropriate texts within one of three disciplinary contexts—literature, science, or social studies. In some cases, a block may contain texts associated with more than one disciplinary context. In these cases, the block is designed as both a primary reading context that shapes the overall reading purpose and a secondary context identified by one or more interdisciplinary or cross-disciplinary topics or genres. The distribution of disciplinary contexts by grade level varies, with increasing emphasis on informational contexts as the grades progress. Exhibit 3.2 shows the design principle and provisional distribution targets for sampling disciplinary contexts at each grade level.

Exhibit 3.2. Principle and Provisional Distribution Targets for Sampling Disciplinary Contexts by Grade Level

Principle for Sampling Disciplinary Contexts: The percentage of Literature contexts decreases across grades as the percentages of Science and Social Studies contexts increase.				
Grade Level		4	8	12
Disciplinary Context	Reading to Engage in Literature	50%	40%	33%
	Reading to Engage in Science	25%	30%	33%
	Reading to Engage in Social Studies	25%	30%	33%

Designating a Broad Reading Purpose

Situating reading in purpose-driven tasks has demonstrated potential for promoting student readers' interest and engagement in existing NAEP Reading assessments (Educational Testing Service, 2019). Therefore, in addition to situating readers in one of the three disciplinary contexts, each assessment block is also designated as having one of two broad purposes: Reading to Develop Understanding or Reading to Solve a Problem.

As described in Chapter 2, RDU blocks are designed to measure what readers do when asked to deeply read and comprehend—literally, inferentially, interpretively, and critically—in or across disciplinary contexts. RSP blocks are designed primarily to assess what readers do when asked to demonstrate understanding across multiple texts and related perspectives while solving a problem. RSP activities entail developing understanding, or comprehending text but are in the service of using this understanding to take a specific action or create a product, such as a written explanation or a classroom presentation.

In both types of blocks, these broad purposes are intended to help readers prepare for reading in order to develop understanding or to solve a problem. The design principle and provisional distribution targets for sampling broad purposes by grade level are depicted in Exhibit 3.3.

Exhibit 3.3. Principle and Provisional Distribution Targets for Sampling Broad Reading Purposes by Grade Level

Principle for Sampling Broad Purposes. The percentage of Reading to Develop Understanding (RDU) blocks decreases across grades as the percentage of Reading to Solve a Problem (RSP) blocks increases.				
Grade Level		4	8	12
Broad Reading Purpose	RDU	60%	50%	40%
	RSP	40%	50%	60%

Identifying Block-Specific Purposes and a Reader Role

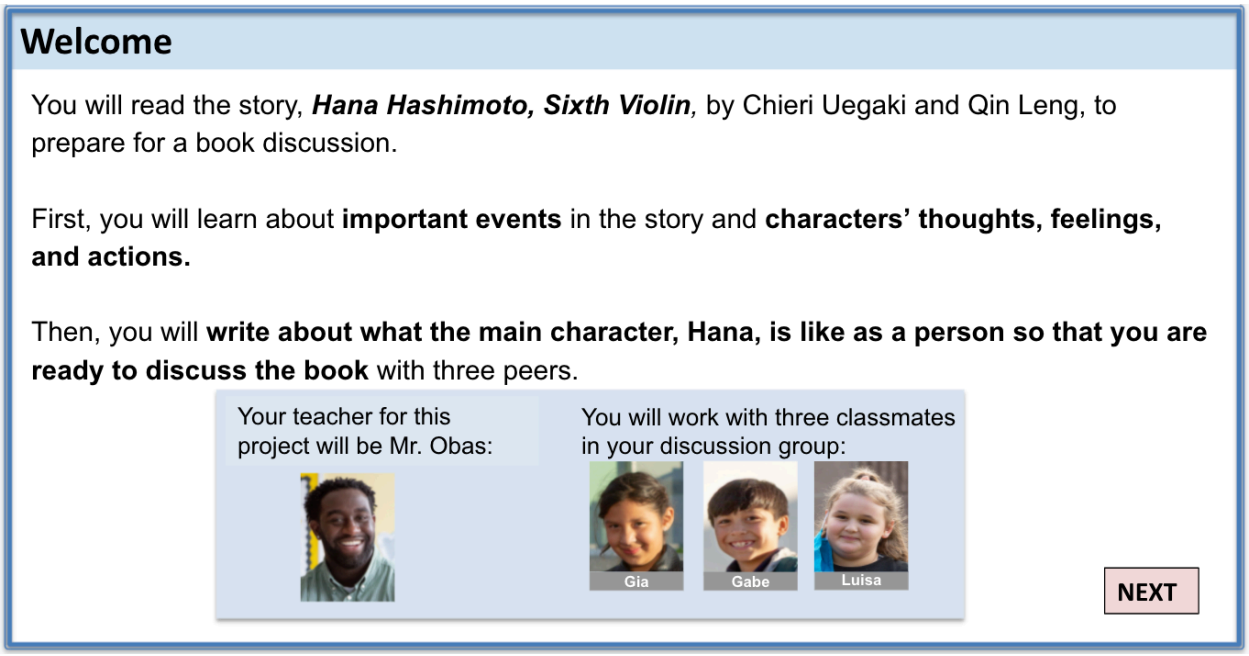
Apart from the identified broad purpose, each block also has its own specific purpose and reader role that shape how and why readers engage with the tasks, texts, and comprehension items in one of the three disciplinary contexts. These block-specific purposes differ from the broad block purposes (i.e., RDU or RSP) because the duration of their guidance is limited to the text or texts within a given task in the assessment block. Test developers for the 2026 NAEP Reading Assessment should craft these purpose-driven statements with an eye toward reflecting the real-world contexts and purposes for which readers engage with and make sense of a diverse range of texts.

Reader roles are designed to reflect how readers typically engage with texts and each other in different contexts (e.g., fourth-grade classmates and a teacher in a literature circle discussion at school or a group of friends at home reacting to news about a local event in their town). Some blocks may ask readers to take on a simpler, less immersive role that offers fewer specifications for the kinds of tasks with which readers will engage. Other blocks may assign readers to take on more immersive roles that offer more specifications for how readers should engage with the reading purpose, tasks, and expected outcomes.

A goal of the 2026 NAEP Reading Framework is to design an assessment that immerses readers in discipline-specific blocks for which both reading purpose and reader role are transparent. By making purpose and role clear to test-takers, the assessment better simulates the situations in which most readers find themselves in school, workplace, and community situations. Block-specific purposes and reader roles

are explicitly shared with test-takers as part of the directions at one or more locations in the block. Exhibit 3.4 depicts an example of what readers might see when they begin a Grade 4 Reading to Develop Understanding sample block in a literature context. In this block, readers are invited to participate in a book discussion group about the short story *Hana Hashimoto, Sixth Violin*[1] by Chieri Uegaki and Qin Leng (2014) with three other fourth-grade student task characters (simulated avatar classmates). In addition to reading directions about the discussion goal, students are told they will read the story and respond to items situated in two purpose-driven tasks.

Exhibit 3.4. Block-specific purposes presented at the beginning of a Grade 4 Reading to Develop Understanding block using the text *Hana Hashimoto, Sixth Violin* (a short story) by Chieri Uegaki and Qin Leng



The photograph of Mr. Obas is sourced from https://images.all4ed.org/male-sixth-grade-math-teacher-with-protractor (photographer Allison Shelley for EDUimages). The photograph of Gia is sourced from https://images.all4ed.org/elementary-boy-with-backpack-and-girl-with-notebook/ (photographer Allison Shelley for EDUimages). The photograph of Gabe is sourced from https://images.all4ed.org/third-grade-boy-with-backpack-outside/. The photograph of Luisa is sourced from https://images.all4ed.org/fifth-grade-girl-mask-break (photographer Allison Shelley for EDUimages).

Developing Assessment Tasks: Texts and Items

After readers are situated in an assessment block, they encounter two or more tasks, each with its own specific purpose. A task is a subunit within each block on the 2026 NAEP Reading Assessment. Each NAEP Reading Assessment block has two or three tasks, one or more texts, and related comprehension items. Developers should take into consideration time, total passage length, and grade appropriateness when determining the number of texts in each assessment block. Extended pieces of literature or a full argumentative essay might result in only one text with one or two tasks. Shorter texts such as a haiku poem, photograph, search engine result, or social media post might result in more than one text for a particular task.

For example, Exhibit 3.5 from an ePIRLS Grade 4 assessment block illustrates how several texts are embedded into one screen to authentically represent the array of texts young readers encounter when reading on the internet; these texts include a webpage with two tabs and a navigational menu, an embedded hyperlink (which is the source of the answer as displayed in the blue pop-up box when the link is selected),

[1] Material from *Hana Hashimoto, Sixth Violin* written by Chieri Uegaki and illustrated by Qin Leng is used by permission of Kids Can Press Ltd., Toronto, Canada. Text © 2014 Chieri Uegaki. Illustrations © 2014 Qin Leng.

a photo of a rocket, a photo of the surface of Mars, and a dynamic image of two planets spinning around the sun. The item is intended to assess 4th graders' understanding of how to use embedded hyperlinks to locate and recall important information about the passage.

Exhibit 3.5. Example of multiple texts readers encounter as part of one task on the ePIRLS (2016) Grade 4 reading assessment

Besides consideration of grade appropriateness and the subject material in the creation of a task or multiple tasks in an assessment block, developers should pay close attention to and make careful decisions regarding the time demands placed on students to successfully accomplish the task in a given time limit, including the total passage length of all passages presented in the task (along with consideration of text complexity demands) and the total number of items, in association with their formats, that must be answered.

Selecting Texts

All grade-appropriate blocks will sample from a variety of task-specific purposes and a range of texts, including reading materials that students might use in their everyday lives, in and out of school (see, for example, Creer, 2018; Dobler & Azwel, 2007). The texts can represent one or more genres, modalities, or disciplines. Exhibit 3.6 provides guidance to developers about sampling different kinds of texts (where texts include multimodal forms of representation).

Exhibit 3.6. Principle and Provisional Distribution Targets for Sampling Assessment Design Elements: Text Formats and Modes

For All Grade Levels
Principle: The percentage of different text formats (static or dynamic) and modalities (print, sound, image, and multimodal) should reflect their distribution in the population of texts that students encounter in and out of school at different grade levels. • As dynamic and multimodal texts increase in our society and schools, NAEP should aim to keep pace with those shifts. • Current NAEP: 80% print, 20% other modalities

Exhibit 3.7 provides examples of the types of texts/media that designers should consider for the three text environments (single static, single dynamic, and multilayered digital) in NAEP blocks.

Exhibit 3.7. Illustrative Examples of Texts and Other Media Across Single Static and Dynamic Texts and Multilayered Digital Text Environments

SINGLE STATIC TEXT	**SINGLE DYNAMIC TEXT**
Examples of single static genres and forms of continuous prose, non-continuous prose, and everyday reading materials from which designers might sample as readers read to engage in literature, science, or social studies are found in Exhibit 3.10.	*Nonlinear text* Single text with hyperlinks that only connect to ideas within the same document; may also contain one or more dynamic media elements *Dynamic media* • Dynamic image • Video • Podcast • Digital poster • Infographic • Interactive timeline • Interactive chart or graph • Data visualization • Blog • Simulation

MULTILAYERED DIGITAL TEXT ENVIRONMENT	
• Augmented reality text • Blog • Database • Digital creation/composition tool • Dynamic simulation • Email • Interactive model	• Google document or Google folder • Role play simulation • Search engine • Social media (e.g., Facebook, Instagram, Twitter) • Threaded discussion • Webpage or website

Text Selection Criteria. Passages selected for the 2026 NAEP Reading Assessment should adhere to rigorous criteria that include the following:

- ***Authenticity***. Do texts represent the types of texts that students encounter in their reading in and out of school?
- ***Diversity***. Do texts reflect an appropriate range of perspectives, geographical regions, gender, and social and cultural traditions characteristic of the diverse U.S. population, and are they written by diverse authors?
- ***Engagement***. Will texts encourage and maintain student interest?
- ***Developmental appropriateness***. Do the texts reflect grade-level expectations of the students assessed at grades 4, 8, and 12?
- ***Disciplinary appropriateness***. Do the texts represent the range of genres/text types and text features in the disciplinary contexts of literature, science, or social studies?
- ***Quality and cohesion***. Are the texts well written and organized in ways that promote comprehension and learning? Do nonfiction texts, and especially those in a modality other than print, include brief and purposeful topic introductions where appropriate?
- ***Complexity***. Are the language features (vocabulary, syntax, discourse and rhetorical structures) representative of the specific grade and disciplinary context?

Several of these text selection criteria are elaborated below with a number of principles and design considerations.

Authenticity. An authentic text is defined as communication or composition produced by an author for publication purposes. Most texts included in the 2026 NAEP Reading Assessment should be presented in their entirety, as students would typically encounter them. However, some texts may be excerpted from, for example, a novel, a play, or a long essay. Excerpted material should be carefully analyzed, and minimally altered if necessary, to ensure that it is coherent in structure. Texts should be selected to evoke the range of reading comprehension processes, or targets. In exceptional cases, NCES and its contractors may consider commissioning authors to write a text that satisfies the needs of a particular assessment block. For example, it might become highly challenging to find a text of a particular length of a certain genre that is suitable for a specific grade level for a RSP purpose. In these exceptional cases in which commissioned writing may be required, it should follow the text selection criteria applied to authentic texts. In very rare cases, then, commissioned texts may be used as part of a set of texts. Thus, such commissioned texts will not serve as the main, or anchor, text for a text set, nor will students be presented items focused on evaluating the credibility or accuracy of such texts.

Exhibit 3.8 summarizes the guidelines that developers will use to determine if, when, and how texts will be commissioned to meet particular needs that cannot be met by sampling already published (i.e., authentic) texts.

Exhibit 3.8. Commissioned Texts: Parameters and Constraints

Guidelines for Using Commissioned Texts
The following guidelines seek to provide clarity about the circumstances under which commissioned texts might be used and the criteria with which developers should use such commissioned texts: • Rare, never to exceed more than 5–10% of all texts included in NAEP at any grade level; 5% limit at 12th grade unless permission issues are encountered • Only used when an appropriate authentic text cannot be located to include within a text set for a block, but never as an "anchor" text for a block • Authored by writers within the discipline in which the block is situated and using specific criteria to meet strict guidance regarding form and purpose • Vetted for accuracy, authenticity, and appropriateness by experts in the discipline, NCES's text selection panel, and the Assessment Development Committee • No items asking students to evaluate source credibility of such commissioned texts will be used • Will meet the same complexity and other criteria for text selection as all texts for the NAEP Reading Assessment

Developmental Appropriateness of Texts. Texts included in the assessment will be of different lengths. Exhibit 3.9 provides ranges for the total number of words in the text(s) within a given block. In grade 4, passage lengths will range from 200–800 words, in grade 8 from 400–1000 words, and in grade 12 from 500–1500 words. This word count total might be distributed across 1–4 texts depending on the broad purpose (Reading to Develop Understanding or Reading to Solve a Problem) of a block. Differing passage lengths are employed for several reasons, including the broad purpose of a block and the total time readers have to complete the block. To gain valid information about students' reading comprehension, stimulus material should be as similar as possible to what students use in their in-school and out-of-school reading. Unlike many common reading tests that use short passages, the 2026 NAEP Reading Assessment will include complete texts of greater length. Such texts require students to use a broader and more complex array of reading strategies, reflecting student reading in authentic in- and out-of-school situations (Goldman, 2018; Paris, Wasik, and Turner 1991).

Exhibit 3.9. Passage Lengths for Grades 4, 8, and 12

Grade	Range of Passage Lengths (Number of Words)
4	200–800
8	400–1,000
12	500–1,500

Reflecting classroom practice, students in earlier grades generally read shorter texts while older students read longer texts. It is expected that in some cases, two or more texts (with static and/or dynamic textual features) will be used together to assess students' ability to compare, synthesize, and critique texts

in terms of their content, themes, and stylistic features. In these cases, the total number of words will reflect the recommended passage length range for each grade.

Because text in NAEP assessments built from the 2026 NAEP Reading Framework may continue to include video elements, consistent with previous NAEP Reading Assessments administered since 2017, some attention should be given to video length. The length of a video segment will vary in relation to its purpose and to overall block time. Video length may also increase across grade levels. However, because students have greater engagement and perceived retention rates for shorter as compared to longer videos (Slemmons et al., 2018), video length should be kept relatively short, especially in consideration of the length of written texts within the task. Video length should typically remain in the range of one to three minutes, with some flexibility allowed to account for the density of information in the video and for the specific requirements of the task. The developer should obtain or create a transcript of a video to aid item development and ancillary materials development.

Disciplinary Appropriateness of Texts. Selected texts must be representative of the discipline in both content and structure, reflecting the range of genres and discourse features detailed in Chapter 2. Because reporting prompted by the 2026 NAEP Reading Framework will feature scales for the three disciplinary contexts, it is also important to specify both the variability of student reading within contexts and the commonalities across each context. Exhibit 3.10 provides a list of the text types and elements that test developers should consider as they sample texts within the three disciplinary contexts of literature, science, and social studies. Examples are provided for both broad organizational structures (genre and text type) and highly specific features that define the nature and flow of discourse at more specific levels of text (sections, paragraphs, sentences, and words). While it is impossible in NAEP to represent the entire range, these elements define the portfolio of possibilities that developers should consult when selecting specific texts, making sure that a range of broad organizational structures and specific features are represented in the sample for each discipline and each grade level.

Exhibit 3.10. Typical Text Elements Across Disciplinary Contexts

Context	Genres and Text Types	Discourse, Language Structures, and Text Elements
Literature	Fiction (Short stories, novels, plays) • Myths, legends, and fables • Coming of age stories • Satires • Science fiction • Magical realism • Fantasy • Comic books • Graphic novels • Manga • Fanfiction Poetry • Haiku, sonnet, ballad, dirge, epic, etc. Related Nonfiction • Memoirs	• Plot types • Character types • Narrative elements (character, setting, plot, conflict, rising action, climax, resolution) • Figurative language (symbolism, imagery, simile, metaphor, personification, satire) • Point of view • Theme • Soliloquy, dialogue, and monologue • Diction, word choice • Repetition, exaggeration • Flashback • Foreshadowing • Mood, tone, irony, paradox, and sarcasm • Visual and graphical elements such as illustrations and photographs

	• Biographies and autobiographies • Literary analyses • Reviews and recommendations • Author profiles	• Multimodal elements such as narrative soundscapes • Description • Narrative and expository text structures
Science	• Science reports • Press releases • Science news and features • Science magazine articles • Reference materials and field guides • Discovery narratives • Biographies and first-person accounts • Blogs and other forms of public engagement in science • Science websites, such as those of universities, federal and state agencies, formal research groups, hospitals, etc. • Raw data • Bench notes and science journals • Procedures • Published research articles • Personal communications	• Linguistic frames and signals for organizing arguments, comparisons, sequences and/or causal chains • Abstraction and nominalization (e.g., use of technical terms like transpiration to represent a sequence of events in an explanation) • Embedded definitions (science specific words explained in the text) • Science-specific definitions for polysemous words (e.g., heat, energy) • Qualification of claims: may, probably, indicates, suggests, etc. • Spatial (place, location) and temporal indicators (era, time, sequence, and tense) • Linguistic and numeric indicators of magnitude and scale • Visual and graphical elements such as charts, tables, graphs, equations, diagrams, schematics, models, photographs, digital scans and images • Multimodal elements such as simulation, time lapse photography and animations
Social Studies	• Historical and contemporary documents such as newspaper articles, editorials, political cartoons, broadsides, blogs, census data, diaries, letters, speeches, inventories and records of sale, advertisements, archival documents • Biographies and autobiographies • Historical and contemporary photographs and video • Data (tables, charts, graphs, infographics) conveying information such as demographic, employment and	• Linguistic frames and signals for organizing arguments, comparisons, and/or causal chains • Lexical expressions that mark chronology or argument • Abstraction and nominalization (e.g., to develop a chain of reasonings across events and happenings, e.g., this stance of brinkmanship...) • Rhetorical markers of persuasion • Historical expressions and terminology • Ideological markers of language and rhetorical devices (word choices, emotional appeals, hyperbole)

	education levels, voter registration and turnout statistics, Gross Domestic Product and other economic measurements, etc. • Interpretive explanations or arguments about historical, social, and cultural phenomena and trends. • Procedural texts, public service announcements	• Visual and graphical elements such as maps, timelines, political cartoons, photographs • Multimodal elements such as digital stories • Event models (how historical events are described) • Spatial (place, location) and temporal indicators (era, time, sequence, and tense)

Standards for Cohesion and Complexity of Texts. Efforts should also be made to promote the strategic balance and selection of texts across blocks. This process should be informed by general standards of quality, cohesion, and complexity and "considerateness," including both qualitative and quantitative measures (e.g., conventional readability criteria, reader-text connections, language structures and vocabulary considerations) (Armbruster & Anderson, 1985). Selections should also reflect standards applied to digital texts and other contemporary media forms. Because readers use specific knowledge to identify important information in different types of texts, developers should attend to variations in organization and cohesion in line with text structures and text features that are found across disciplinary contexts.

To gauge the grade-level appropriateness (i.e., in terms of the conceptual and linguistic challenge) of a text for development, the 2026 NAEP Reading Assessment will rely on a combination of quantitative, qualitative, and reader attributes. Quantitative approaches rely on an algorithm to create either a single score or a small set of scores to estimate the difficulty readers might have understanding a particular text. The most common single scores are a Lexile (Stenner, 1996) or grade level designations, such as the popular Flesch-Kincaid (Kincaid, et al., 1975). A Lexile provides a point on a scale running from "Beginning Reader" to 2000L for obscure scientific or legal documents that can be understood by only a handful of experts. Readability formulas like the Flesch-Kincaid usually convert their numerical scales to a grade level scale (from 1.0 to 20+, for example) to convey the idea of the typical student who would be able to understand a text that scaled at a particular grade level. Increasingly, readability systems provide both an overall score and a small set of scores (e.g., Graesser, et al., 2014; Sheehan, et al., 2014).

For the 2026 NAEP Reading Assessment, NAEP will investigate the validity and utility of various quantitative indicators, including several of the more recent, more complex, and nuanced measures (see Hiebert & Pearson, 2014; Nelson, Perfetti, Liben, & Liben, 2012) indicators, such as TextEvaluator (Sheehan, Kostin, Napolitano, & Flor, 2014) and the Coh-Metrix Text Easability Assessor (Graesser, McNamara, Cai, Conley, Li, & Pennebaker, 2014), to select one (or more) that best fits the needs of NAEP—and that complement the approaches that NAEP uses to examine the qualitative facets of text complexity.

Similarly, NAEP will expand the range of qualitative tools currently in use (NAGB, 2009)—to include even more careful examination of the language used to render key concepts and the relationships among them accessible to readers. This is particularly important in light of greater emphasis in the 2026 NAEP Reading Framework on discipline-specific texts, settings in which language exerts substantial influence on the accessibility of texts for the general population of students as well as for specific groups, such as English learners and students with disabilities. The general approach employed in applying qualitative analyses of complexity is to train analysts to use specific criteria to unearth linguistic (largely vocabulary, syntax, or discourse) features that serve either as barriers or bridges to comprehension. Barriers

can include rare words, obscure syntax (e.g., negative conditional clauses), or complex rhetorical frames for large sections of text (e.g., a conflict-resolution scenario). Bridges, by contrast, might include a diagram, an internal definition of a rare word, an explicit clue word like "unless" to signal the relationship among ideas, or explicit naming of the parts of a conflict-resolution frame.

Passage mapping is routinely conducted as a part of a text selection process. Mapping procedures result in a graphic representation of a possible stimulus selection that clearly highlights the hierarchical structure and the interrelatedness of the components of the texts. Story mapping, for example, shows how the setting of a story is related to and contributes to the development of plot and theme. Concept mapping shows the structure of informational text, along with the concepts presented and the relational links among concepts. Organizing information hierarchically within a text allows identifying the various levels of information within a text so that items can target the most important aspects of what students read.

For the 2026 NAEP Reading Framework, these successful practices from the previous NAEP Reading Assessment development should be supplemented with more recent developments, particularly those deployed by PARCC and SBAC in developing their assessments (Hain & Piper, 2016). For example, the qualitative text complexity rubrics published by the State Collaborative on Assessment and Student Standards (SCASS) are useful tools to determine qualitative text complexity. There are two rubrics, one for literary texts and one for informational texts. Both rubrics incorporate four traits: Meaning; Structure; Language; and Knowledge Demands. Each trait has one to three criteria to determine if the qualitative text complexity falls into one of four text complexity levels: Low; Middle Low; Middle High; and High. Similar qualitative text complexity rubrics are employed by many state assessments.

Finally, NAEP will conduct analyses for what have been called reader-task considerations (NGA-CCSSO, 2010) or reader attributes or text-task scenarios (Valencia et al, 2014). All three of these approaches ask the question, "for whom, in what specific contexts, and with what levels of support are specific texts more or less accessible, i.e., harder or easier to comprehend?"

Exhibit 3.11 describes considerations regarding the distribution of selected texts, especially now that many of the texts within NAEP will bring digital affordances along with those of print texts. Ideas within each cell are likely to change and expand as new kinds of texts and technologies continue to emerge.

Exhibit 3.11. Text Structures and Features Within and Across Single Static and Dynamic Texts and Multilayered Digital Text Environments

SINGLE STATIC TEXT	SINGLE DYNAMIC TEXT
Text structures are comparable to those in a printed format for texts designed to inform, entertain and/or persuade. **Text features** may include visual media elements in a single text comparable to those in a printed format that convey meaning through primarily static words, numbers, and/or visual graphics, such as those in a still photograph, diagram, or table.	**Text structures** include one or more **nonlinear** elements (e.g., hypermedia or hyperlinks) for readers to quickly move from one location or mode to another, but still *within the same text* (e.g., a navigational menu at the top of a document). **Text features** include one or more **multimodal** elements (words, moving images, animations, color, music and sound) embedded into a single text or other media element.

MULTILAYERED DIGITAL TEXT ENVIRONMENT
In multilayered digital text environments (Cho & Afflerbach, 2017), text structures may include one or more static or dynamic texts, with a strong likelihood of nonlinear elements both within a text (e.g., hypermedia or hyperlinks) that may lead to another text (e.g., another webpage within the same website or another webpage on a different website). **Text features** may include linked texts that may contain either related or conflicting ideas. Multimodal elements (words, moving images, animations, color, music and sound) may appear in any or all texts.

Test developers should strive to select texts with features that cue readers' attention to structure and influence the recall of information (Wixson & Peters, 1987). The extent to which readers' background knowledge, experiences, and interests connect to a text and its topic should also be considered when evaluating a text's complexity, suggesting that a text is not just complex "in the abstract" but more or less complex for particular groups of readers under specific circumstances (Valencia, Wixson & Pearson, 2014). Textual ideas in disciplinary contexts should be represented with appropriate vocabulary and, where needed, texts should have useful supplemental explanatory features such as definitions of technical terms or orthographic features (e.g., italics, bold print, headings) and connective signal words (e.g., first, next, because, however). Unfamiliar concepts should be defined with examples provided. Designers should aim for a flexible and diverse representation of language and structures across the blocks.

There is also wide variance in the nature and quality of graphical or multimodal displays of ideas in today's texts. Therefore, in selecting texts, it is important to create a sample that represents the grade-appropriate array of graphical and structural representations (e.g., static, dynamic, multimodal, nonlinear) found in print and digital reading materials., Texts also often appear and are used in sets. Thus, it is important to determine the grade-appropriate number of texts in a block, and the opportunities for readers to engage with ideas within different sections of the same text as well as to process ideas across two or more texts.

A potential difference between traditional and digital texts is the nature of text arrangement and the means with which readers navigate through and across texts (Cho, 2014). In selecting digital texts, it is important to attend to the features that allow for navigating multilayered digital text environments (Cho & Afflerbach, 2017; e.g., search engines, dynamic hypertexts linked within and across documents) to reflect what readers do when they use the internet. Further, digital texts represent diverse combinations of the information contained in text and the media used to present that information. For example, a digital text may include short (e.g., 30-second), embedded videos or links to other sources of information. Thus, it is important to determine that the ideas, perspectives, and modes presented in digital media reflect what readers encounter in their academic and everyday lives.

For an example of digital texts that are embedded in a webpage or other texts, please see Exhibit 3.5 above. Sometimes a digital text will be one of the stimulus passages in an assessment block. Fourth-grade students encountering a literary disciplinary context assessment block, for example, would first read a printed short fictional piece and answer some comprehension items. Then the students would watch a short animation that would elicit its own comprehension items, as well as comparisons of character(s), setting, plot, and theme with the printed text. As another example, in the social studies disciplinary context, 8th-grade students would be presented with a recent print article, accompanied with an embedded map, about how the stones assembled at Stonehenge may have been sourced and moved from their original location in England to the location at Stonehenge. After answering a few reading comprehension items about the article and its map, the students would then be presented with a stimulus digital text, watching a news segment about the same topic with similar and differing details. Students would answer a few more reading comprehension items about the digital text and then encounter more items that incorporate both texts to assess evaluation and synthesis skills. In the science disciplinary context, 12th-grade students may first be

presented the stimulus material of a digital text of a National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) video demonstrating how plastics enter the environment and end up in the oceans and create trash gyres, such as the Great Pacific Garbage Patch. After answering items regarding the digital text, students are then presented with a scientific journal excerpt focused upon the Great Pacific Garbage Patch and how it is affected by seasons and currents. Students then would answer items about the journal excerpt, followed by items assessing their skills of analysis and synthesis related to both texts.

Engaging experts in selecting texts that reflect authentic social and cultural traditions in a range of disciplinary contexts, without placing students at a disadvantage based on their particular social and cultural context.. The text selection process is best conducted by experts with disciplinary, educational, and cultural knowledge about the nature and structure of texts that are representative of particular disciplinary contexts and cultural traditions in specific grade levels. What readers know, do, and understand from reading is tied to the variations in knowledge, skills, and experiences they bring to their reading from experiences at home, in their communities, and in school. In accordance with the Board's legislative mandate to "ensure that all items selected for use in the National Assessment are free from racial, cultural, gender, or regional bias," experts should represent diverse cultures and languages in order to identify texts that reflect the broad range of student readers' knowledge and experiences. The passages that are selected should themselves be drawn from texts that reflect a diverse range of cultures, regions, and experiences.

Bias and Sensitivity Considerations. Along with the consideration of disciplinary appropriateness of texts and of the standards for coherence and complexity of texts within and across disciplines, assessment developers, in their selection of texts, must analyze the texts for any bias and sensitivity issues (e.g., topics to avoid) that could negatively affect a student's testing experience.

Topics to Avoid. In addition to certain authors, publications, and publishers, there are a number of subjects and contexts that, while suitable for classroom use, would be considered inappropriate for assessment purposes. A story about a child dealing with death may be read as a classroom assignment; however, the teacher in the classroom has a chance to prepare students before they read the selection, and students have the opportunity to talk through their reactions. No such opportunities are available in a testing situation. In general, a topic might be unacceptable for any of the following reasons:

1. The text evokes an emotional response that might affect test performance. Examples include texts that are frightening or very humorous.
2. The topic is too controversial, such as abortion, gun control, and evolution.
3. The topic has been used extensively in standardized tests or textbooks, making it overly familiar or boring to students.
4. The topic could be biased against a particular demographic, for example, due to socioeconomic level.

Some of the bias and sensitivity issues to avoid include:

- gender bias (i.e., neither gender would have an advantage due to prior knowledge or interest)
- inappropriate content, including age, ethnic, and cultural bias
- stereotyping
- derogatory statements
- violence, sex, or objectionable language
- expressions of religious belief
- highly emotional themes (death, divorce, abuse, terrorism, etc.)
- emotionally charged historical events

Developing Comprehension Items

Design Principles. As with the selection of texts, item development is guided by a set of design principles in order to guarantee that readers are asked to respond to important aspects of the text and to use a range of processes that result in successful comprehension. These design principles include the following:

- ***Importance.*** Items should focus on central textual and intertextual concepts or themes or, on occasion, more specific information related to these themes and concepts. For example, a fact that provides evidence to support a claim or a detail that supports a main idea may be queried.
- ***Balance***. The Comprehension Targets, as described in Chapter 2, should be proportionally distributed across dimensions of the block. Exhibit 3.12 provides both the principles and ranges anticipated for the distribution of items for each Comprehension Target within blocks developed for each broad purpose (RDU and RSP) at grades 4, 8, and 12. Because item development is so greatly influenced by the affordances of the texts selected, the ranges for item types will vary from block to block, even within each broad purpose.

Exhibit 3.12. Distribution of Cognitive Comprehension Targets Across Grade Level and Broad Purposes

Rules of Thumb

- The distribution of items for the Comprehension Targets should be monitored at the pool level (across the two broad purposes—Reading to Develop Understanding and Reading to Solve a Problem) at each grade level.
- All Comprehension Targets are employed at each grade level.
- All Comprehension Targets require students to consult the text in order to select or construct responses. What changes across targets (from Locate and Recall, to Integrate and Interpret, to Analyze and Evaluate, to Use and Apply) is the sophistication of the text-based reasoning and the inferences involved.
- Moving across grades, the proportion of higher-level Comprehension Targets increases.
- RDU blocks, by definition, do not require the application of ideas to a new task. Thus, the bulk of Use and Apply items will be in RSP blocks; however, NAEP should be open to the possibility that an RDU block might merit an item based on the Use and Apply Comprehension Target.

Grade	**Combined Block Pool: Reading to Develop Understanding and Reading to Solve a Problem Blocks (% Target Ranges per Block)**
Grade 4	
Locate and Recall	15–40%
Integrate and Interpret	10–40%
Analyze and Evaluate	10–25%
Use and Apply	0–30%
Grade 8	
Locate and Recall	10–25%

Integrate and Interpret	20–35%
Analyze and Evaluate	20–35%
Use and Apply	0–30%
Grade 12	
Locate and Recall	10–25%
Integrate and Interpret	25–35%
Analyze and Evaluate	25–40%
Use and Apply	0–45%

While the percentage of Comprehension Targets may vary across these dimensions, items representing all Comprehension Targets should be represented at all levels of these dimensions.

- ***Clarity and transparency.*** Items should be accessible and transparent. They should be written in straightforward language, and accompanied by directions that clearly explain what steps readers should take during the activities (e.g., which texts to read and for what purpose) and explanations regarding how their responses will be evaluated.
- ***Alignment with an array of skills of navigation and inference.*** In accordance with the focus of the Comprehension Targets, items should call upon readers to locate information in different multilayered digital text environments (e.g., static and dynamic) and to make different kinds of inferences, from local bridging inferences to more complex inferences across texts and applications of knowledge to a new situation (e.g., Use and Apply). Items may require readers to draw on information contained in audio or visual features.
- ***Varied knowledge sources***. Items should invoke a variety of knowledge sources in accordance with the Comprehension Targets in a given assessment block. Across items, readers should be called upon to employ certain kinds of background knowledge (e.g., knowledge of vocabulary and language structures, knowledge of text structures and features) and to draw information from different sources in the texts (including information from various types of representation [e.g., directly stated in prose, embedded in a visual representation, or implied through symbolism] and across different locations in the text). On the other hand, items should not assess knowledge sources irrelevant to the items and associated Comprehension Targets in a given block. For example, items should not be answerable by readers only drawing upon text-independent domain knowledge, without even reading the passage.

Planning the Distribution and Characteristics of Comprehension Items. The four Comprehension Targets do not represent a hierarchy of strategies or skills; rather, the difficulty of any particular item, regardless of which Comprehension Target it is designed to elicit, should be shaped by the content of text(s) (the ideas themselves), the language and structure of the text (the language and relations among ideas), and the cognitive demands of the Comprehension Target. As a consequence, there can be relatively difficult items representing Locate and Recall Comprehension Targets and relatively easy items representing either Integrate and Interpret or Analyze and Evaluate targets. The single most important standard that the 2026 NAEP Reading Assessment will meet is asking questions about matters of substance in the texts. Chapter 2-S contains examples of what test items might ask readers to do with respect to each of the four Comprehension Targets. Appendix A-S: Achievement Level Descriptions provides for each

grade some of the possible disciplinary context-specific skills that are associated with the Comprehension Targets and which may appear in an administered NAEP assessment block. Items must be developed to address the range of Comprehension Targets with the expectation that there will be a distribution of Comprehension Targets at each achievement level.

The guidelines for distributing items mapped to Comprehension Targets across grade levels and blocks presented in Exhibit 3.12 allow for the possibility of varying the number of items for each target depending on block type. One broad principle is that the percentage of items designed to assess Integrate and Interpret or Analyze and Evaluate ideas increases across grades. In addition, in Reading to Solve a Problem (RSP) blocks, the percentage of items designed to assess Locate and Recall ideas decreases across grades as the percentage of Use and Apply ideas increases. Finally, the distribution targets should never outweigh the other principles in the bulleted list. In other words, for a given text, it is better to fall one item short in the number of items for a target than it is to include one item that fails the importance or the clarity standard just for the sake of meeting the distribution goal.

Considering Navigational Complexity of Texts, Tasks, and Items. Developers should also consider the *navigational complexity of text* as it interacts with the reading task and the specific demands of the comprehension items attached to the text(s) within tasks (see Coiro, 2020). Comprehension items may, for example, vary in difficulty according to the nature of associated comprehension processes (e.g., locating a topically relevant idea is likely easier than inferring the tone of a particular passage or analyzing the impact of an author's word choice on a particular audience). Further, comprehension items may vary in difficulty due to the nature of inferences readers are asked (or required) to make (i.e., the *type* of inference [a local, straightforward inference within a paragraph versus a global inference across ideas in a text] combined with the *number* [one or multiple] and the *distance* of these inferences [within one text, across two texts, or beyond the text]). These factors introduce variations in task and item demands that impact the difficulty of a particular comprehension item on the reading assessment.

Language Structures and Vocabulary in the Comprehension Items. The phrase "language structures and vocabulary" in the 2026 NAEP Reading Framework refers to the application of the reader's understanding of individual words, grammatical structures, and discourse structures characteristic of grade-appropriate texts to text comprehension. Specifically, the 2026 NAEP Reading Assessment will include items designed to evaluate readers' application of their knowledge of useful grade-appropriate words and language structures to their understanding of a text or a set of texts.

Exhibit 3.13 describes the types of words and structures that developers may and may not include when developing the set of vocabulary items for a given block. Vocabulary items are doubly categorized: (a) by the language structures and features in this table; and (b) by the Comprehension Targets. Because these items target readers' application of the meaning of highly useful language found across grade-appropriate texts to text comprehension, testing items will exclude obscure words of limited application across grade-appropriate texts, and idiomatic expressions characteristic of particular cultural and idiosyncratic discourse practices.

Exhibit 3.13. Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria for Connected Language and Vocabulary

Language Structures & Vocabulary Included / Excluded from Testing	Criteria
Included	• Words and language structures that appear across numerous texts, either across literary texts (e.g., *despise, benevolent*) or across social studies and natural sciences ts (e.g., *resolution, commit*)

	• Words or phrases necessary for understanding at least a local part of the context linked to central ideas in the passage • Words and language structures found in grade-appropriate texts • Words that label generally familiar and broadly understood concepts, even though the words themselves may not be familiar to younger learners (e.g., *timid*). • Words that include word parts (roots and affixes) useful to acquire and figure out the meaning of unfamiliar words (e.g., *disregard, counterargument*). • Language that expresses logical relations between ideas (e.g., phrases that include connecting words such as *although, in contrast*) • Expressions that refer to characters, events, or ideas previously introduced in the passage (e.g., *those alliances, this phenomenon*)
Excluded	• Obscure words of limited application across grade-appropriate texts and discipline-specific concepts (e.g., fiduciary, apotheosis) • Idiomatic expressions (e.g., spill the beans, up in the air)

A total of 15-20 percent of items in any assessment block will assess readers' application of passage-relevant Language Structures and Vocabulary to text comprehension, while concurrently measuring a specific comprehension process. Due to the intricate relationship between language understanding and text comprehension, language structures and vocabulary will not be measured independently from Comprehension Targets. Instead, they will be doubly coded for Comprehension Target (e.g., Locate and Recall; or Integrate and Interpret) and Language Structures and Vocabulary.

A note on open-ended responses. Whereas measuring students' understanding of passage-relevant grade-appropriate language is crucial, it is also important not to confuse language dexterity with the demonstration of text understanding in open-ended responses. Thus, consistent with the 2009–2019 NAEP Reading Assessments, the development for the 2026 NAEP Reading Assessment should include scoring rubrics and trainings for scorers that are language-conscious so that students are not erroneously penalized for language features irrelevant to the comprehension processes being assessed. For example, a student's written answer that displays accurate comprehension should not be negatively affected by uses of unconventional grammar or misspelled words.

Digital Assessment Features: The Role of Item Response Options, UDEs, and Process Data

An essential goal of the 2026 NAEP Reading Framework is establishing valid assessment tasks that can reliably measure diverse students' real-world reading comprehension. In the 2026 NAEP Reading Assessment, this goal is accomplished by having all test components designed to support ecological validity, which refers to the extent to which assessment elicits students' reading performance as it would be demonstrated in real-world settings. Newer, digital tools in particular allow assessments to situate cognitive acts of reading, to the extent possible, in complex but authentic home, school, and work reading contexts, and to do so in ways that are ecologically valid (Mislevy, 2016).

To undertake these aims, the 2026 NAEP Reading Assessment is grounded in Universal Design of Assessments (UDA). As described in Chapter 2, UDA calls for the purposeful design of assessments that

are accessible to the greatest number of students possible in order to accurately measure the same construct across the diversity of test takers (Thompson, Johnstone, & Thurlow, 2002; Thompson, Thurlow, & Malouf, 2004). The NAEP 2026 Reading Assessment employs UDA (Johnstone et al., 2006; Thompson et al., 2002) to select from a broad range of digital assessment features in order to design an assessment from which stakeholders can make more informed interpretations of assessment scores for all test-takers. Such digital assessment features include the purposeful selection of item response formats, UDEs, and process data, as described in each of the next three sections. See Exhibit 3.14 for an overview of how these digital features, as well as other aspects of the 2026 NAEP Reading Assessment, align with principles of UDA.

Exhibit 3.14. Alignment of the 2026 NAEP Reading Assessment with Principles of Universal Design of Assessments (UDA)

UDA Principle*	Alignment of Aspects of the 2026 NAEP Reading Assessment with UDA Principles
1. Inclusive Assessment Population	***Inclusive Population Assessed in NAEP Reading:*** NAEP Reading aims to measure *reading comprehension* in a way that represents *all* students within the U.S. population at grades 4, 8, and 12 by not excluding any groups from sampling. ***UDEs*** UDEs minimize bias while supporting construct validity by activating students' knowledge, interest, and understanding of tasks across the diverse range of test-takers, helping to ensure that all students can access and understand the items (see, for example, Lee, 2020; Solano-Flores & Nelson-Barber, 2001). This supports the ability of the assessment to measure the same construct for all students, aligning with UDA Principles 1, 2 and 3. • Task-based UDEs facilitate students' ability to focus cognitive resources on the assessment tasks and items by providing clear instructions about what to do during the task (but not how to do it). • Motivational UDEs activate interest in the topics of texts and tasks, eliciting motivational processes that typically occur in out-of-test reading situations and thus improving validity of assessment items. • Informational UDEs preview untested topic knowledge and provide definitions for obscure vocabulary not intended to be assessed. This maximizes the extent to which the assessment can measure the same, intended construct for all test-takers.
2. Precisely Defined Constructs	***Definition of Reading Comprehension:*** Chapter 2 of the Framework defines the construct of *reading comprehension* and explains how this construct is operationalized using the Comprehension Targets as situated within the disciplinary contexts and broad purposes. This clearly defined construct helps to ensure that the assessment is measuring what it intends to measure (i.e., construct validity) by outlining exactly what is included and not included, helping to ensure that items can capture this construct and not elements outside of this construct. ***Reader Roles Support Validity:*** Reader roles are designed to situate the reader within a disciplinary context and broad purpose, as readers would be during out-of-test reading activities. While assessments can never perfectly measure the constructs they intend to measure as

	those constructs exist in reality, assessments aim to do so to the extent possible (i.e., what is referred to as ecological validity). In so doing, this also supports construct validity, in alignment with the "precisely defined constructs" called for in UDA Principle 2. Situating the reader within a disciplinary context and broad purpose also allows the reader to access the content being measured because it activates the reader's prior understandings relevant to those disciplinary contexts and purposes, allowing for more precise measurement of the construct. ***Specific Purposes:*** Situating readers within specific purposes (e.g., a reader is asked to read a story and participate in a book discussion) activates readers' prior understanding of what it means to read within a given task purpose and in so doing facilitates their ability to engage in the items and tasks. Specific purposes also help make clear to the reader what they are supposed to do with the texts and why. This aligns with "precisely defined constructs" because the specified purposes enable the assessment to do a better job of measuring the student's ability to engage with the construct and not, for example, their ability to figure out what they are supposed to do. ***Item Formats:*** Thoughtful selection of item formats to measure particular Comprehension Targets within the context of the texts and specific purposes supports students' access to the test construct because they are able to focus limited cognitive resources on tasks aimed to measure the construct. This supports the assessment's ability to measure the construct it intends to measure (Principle 2) by facilitating *all* students' ability to access the construct (Principle 3).
3. Accessible, Non-biased Items	***Regular NAEP Reading Research and Development Process:*** Item bias is tested through NAEP's regular item review and pilot testing procedures to ensure that items are not more or less difficult for students from particular subpopulations. To test item bias, the difficulty of items across different subpopulations of students (e.g., boys and girls) is compared to ensure that items measure the same construct across groups. Biased items are revised until they no longer demonstrate bias. ***Disciplinary Contexts & Purposes:*** Because all students being tested are familiar with the school-based disciplinary contexts of literature, science, and social studies, and with the Reading to Develop Understanding and Reading to Solve a Problem purposes as they are situated within these contexts, sampling texts and tasks from these disciplines and using these purposes helps to minimize bias, since all students can be presumed to be familiar with the kinds of texts used within these three disciplines. ***Range of Texts and Tasks Represented:*** Selection of a diverse range of texts and tasks representing different student identities, interests, knowledge, and other backgrounds helps to ensure equity across diverse subpopulations of test-takers. Such broad sampling facilitates equitable test items and scales.
4. Amenable to Accommodations	***UDEs and Item Formats:*** UDEs and thoughtful use of item formats limit the need for special accommodations. For example, task-based UDEs and item formats such as "drag and drop" can limit the need for accommodations such as extended time because they facilitate students' thoughtful use of time and focus on the texts and tasks being measured rather than on unrelated organizational skills.

5. Simple, Clear, and Intuitive Instructions and Procedures	***Instructions:*** Instructions, in simple language, facilitate measurement of the intended construct (in this case, reading comprehension) because they allow readers to focus limited cognitive attention on the items rather than on the instructions. ***Clear Comprehension Items and Tasks:*** Similarly, items written using simple, clear language that is easily understandable regardless of a student's experience, knowledge, language use, or interest support the student's ability to engage in the items that are measuring reading comprehension ability aligned to the Comprehension Targets. Both of these aspects help to ensure that the items are measuring the intended construct (e.g., the student's ability to make meaning from literature) rather than aspects unrelated to the construct (e.g., the student's ability to understand written instructions or to understand the item stem).
6. Maximum Readability and Comprehensibility	***Selection of Grade-Appropriate Texts:*** Texts are selected based on readability and text cohesion elements relevant to the grade levels in which they are tested. This helps to ensure that students taking the test can engage with the texts at these particular levels.
7. Maximum Legibility	***Visual Layout:*** The 2026 NAEP Reading Assessment layout considers elements such as contrast, font type and size, and spacing within the digital environment to facilitate the validity of items because it supports' students' ability to focus limited cognitive resources on the items rather than on visual features. For example, layout should be easily accessible for different students' sensory abilities. Careful consideration of these elements also allows the assessment to be amenable to accommodations (Principle 4) because the layout is easily modified when accommodations do need to be made (e.g., translating the assessment into braille).

* These UDA principles are drawn from Thompson et al., 2002. UDEs are "Universal Design Elements."

Item Response Formats

Central to the development of 2026 NAEP Reading Assessment is the careful selection of the ways in which students respond to items. From 1992 through 2016, items on the NAEP Reading Assessment were limited to two formats: multiple choice and constructed response (write the response with a pen or pencil). In 2017, the term multiple-choice was revised to "selected response" to account for the wider range of item formats available (e.g., "matching") with digitally based assessments. The 2026 NAEP Reading Assessment thus employs Selected Response and Constructed Response options. Additionally, NAEP will be exploring additional kinds of Dynamic Response options. Some examples of item response formats are presented in the next sections.

Selected Response Options. Selected-response items have a variety of formats, some of which allow for more than one correct response. The listed formats reflect a subset of those with the potential to be developed for the 2026 NAEP Reading Assessment.

- **single-selection multiple choice** – Students respond by selecting a single choice from a set of given choices.
- **multiple-selection multiple choice** – Students respond by selecting two or more choices that meet the condition stated in the stem of the item.
- **matching** – Students respond by inserting (i.e., dragging and dropping) one or more source elements (e.g., a graphic) into target fields (e.g., a table).

- **zones** – Students respond by selecting one or more regions on a graphic stimulus.
- **grid** – Students evaluate ideas with respect to certain properties. The answer is entered by selecting cells in a table in which rows typically correspond to the statements and columns to the properties checked.
- **in-line choice** – Students respond by selecting one option from one or more drop-down menus that may appear in various sections of an item.
- **select in passage** – Students select one or more ideas in the passage; in some cases, they also drag them into the target fields.

The table in Exhibit 3.15 lists and describes selected response item formats, indicates other names by which an item format might be known, and provides the location of exhibits within the *Assessment and Item Specifications* of examples. At the beginning of the table are guidelines to assist with the development of selected response items.

Exhibit 3.15. Selected Response Item Information

Selected Response (SR) Development Guidelines
In a well-designed selected-response item, the stem clearly presents the question to the student. The stem may be in the form of a question, a phrase, or an expression, as long as it conveys what is expected of the student. Selected response items should have the following characteristics:

- The stem includes only the information needed to make the student's task clear.
- Options are as short as possible and are parallel in length.
- Options are parallel in structure, syntax, and complexity.
- Options do not contain inadvertent cues to the correct answer, such as repeating a word from the stem in the correct answer or using specific determiners (e.g., all, never) in the distractors (incorrect options).
- Distractors are plausible, but not so plausible as to be possible correct answers.
- Distractors are designed to reflect the measurement intent of the item, not to trick students into choices that are not central to the idea being assessed.

NAEP Item Formats	Similar Item Formats/ Abbreviations	Student Interaction	Location(s) of Example Item(s)
single-selection multiple choice (SSMC)	multiple choice (MC)	Student selects one of four given response options.	Exhibit 3.16 Exhibit 3.17
multiple-selection multiple choice (MSMC)	multiple select (MS)	Student selects two of five given response options.	Exhibit 3.18
matching	drag and drop; gap match	Student inserts one or more source elements (e.g., graphics) into target fields (e.g., cells of a table).	Exhibit 3.19
zone	hot spot (HS)	Student responds by selecting one or more regions on a graphic stimulus.	Exhibit 3.20 Exhibit 3.21
grid	matching table (MT; MTG)	Student evaluates reading analyses (e.g., central ideas shared or not shared between two texts) with respect to certain criteria. The response is entered by selecting cells in a table in which	Exhibit 3.22

		rows typically correspond to the statements and columns to the properties checked.	
In-line choice (IC)	in-line dropdown	Student responds by selecting one option from one or more drop-down menus that appear in various sections of an item.	Exhibit 3.23
select in passage	hot text (HT); text highlight	Student selects (or selects and drags to a target field) one or more highlighted pieces of text (options) in the reading passage.	Exhibit 3.24

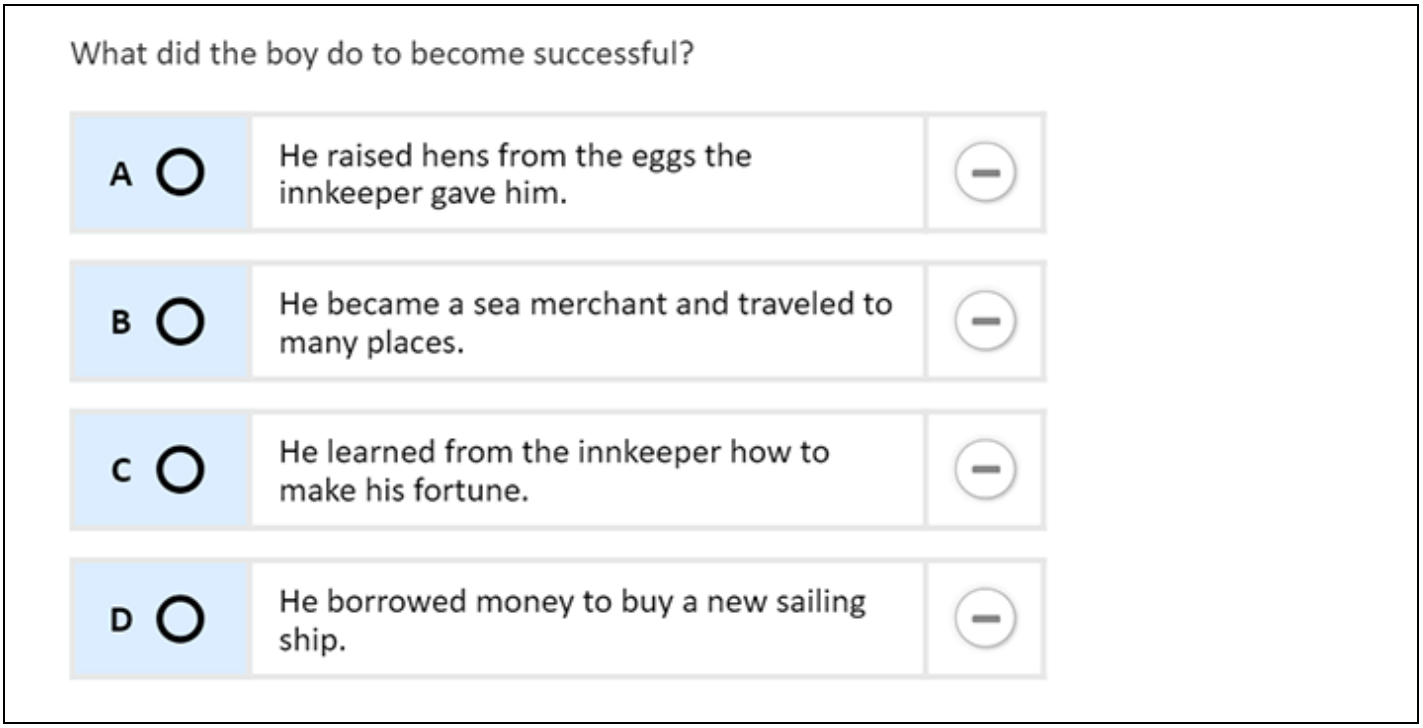
Single-Selection Multiple Choice. Multiple choice items are an efficient way to assess knowledge and skills, and they can be developed to measure various levels of rigor. In a well-designed multiple-choice item, the stem clearly presents the problem to the student. The stem may be in the form of a question (i.e., closed stem) or an incomplete sentence (i.e., open stem) where the options each complete the sentence, as long as the stem conveys what is expected of the student. The stem is followed by four answer choices, or options, only one of which is correct. A generic scoring rubric can be used for all single-selection multiple choice items, as they are scored dichotomously:

- 1 = Correct: This response represents the one correct option.
- 0 = Incorrect: These responses represent one of the three incorrect options.

The item in Exhibit 3.16 illustrates a straightforward stem with a direct question. The distractors are plausible, but only one response option is correct.

Exhibit 3.16. Selected Response Example: Single-Selection Multiple Choice Item from NAEP Grade 4 Literature

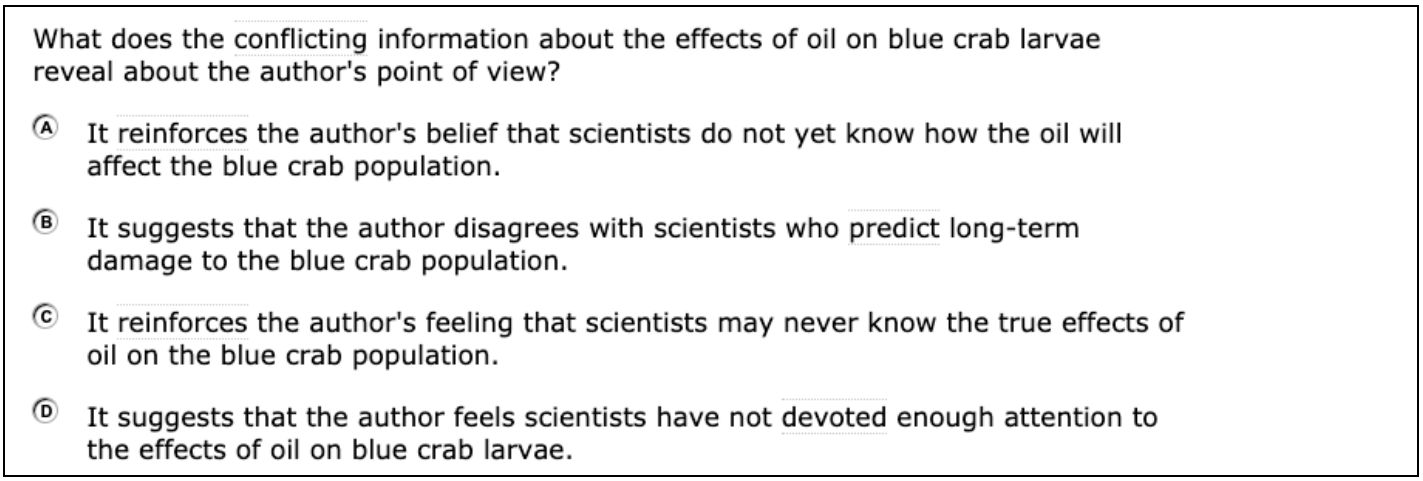
In this item, students are given options of how a main character in the story became successful.



This item appeared in the 2017 grade 4 NAEP Reading administration with NAEP Item ID 2017-4R5 #1.

Exhibit 3.17. Selected Response Example: Single-Selection Multiple Choice Item from Smarter Balanced Grade 12 Science

In this Smarter Balanced Grade 12 item associated with a Science context, students are asked to determine an author's point of view based upon the author's inclusion of conflicting information in the text.



This item appeared in the 2019–20 Grades 11–12 Smarter Balanced Sample Items published by The Regents of the University of California with Item ID 183143.

Multiple-Selection Multiple Choice. As with single-selection multiple choice items, the stem of a well-designed multiple-selection multiple choice item clearly presents the problem to the student. The stem may be in the form of a question (i.e., closed stem) or an incomplete sentence (i.e., open stem) where the options each complete the sentence, as long as the stem conveys what is expected of the student. To avoid confusion for students, it is common in assessment development that the stem in multiple-selection items is followed by five response options with two correct response options (when single-selection items on the same assessment have four options with exactly one option correct). Directions for this item format should

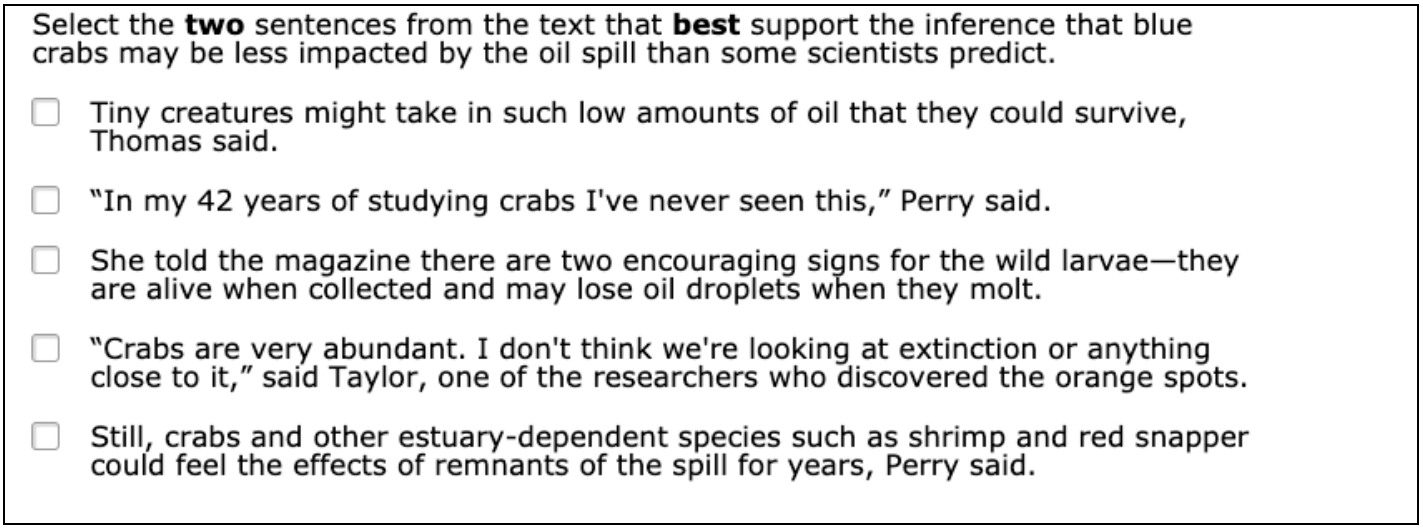
indicate the number of correct responses that students should select. Due to the selection of multiple responses, items allow for partial credit. A generic scoring rubric can be used for all multiple-selection multiple choice items:

- 2 = Correct: This response represents the two correct selections and no incorrect selections.
- 1 = Partial: These responses represent one correct selection and one incorrect selection.
- 0 = Incorrect: These responses represent no correct selections.

Correctly responding to items using the multiple-selection format is more challenging than single-selection multiple choice items, as students must determine not only the relationship between a response and the item stem, but also the relationships among the response options (Baghaei & Dourakhshan, 2016). The item in Exhibit 3.18 specifically asks students to select two correct response options that are textual evidence supporting an inference stated in the stem. Using a multiple-selection multiple choice item format allows for the assessment of student recognition that multiple pieces of evidence support key ideas in a text.

Exhibit 3.18. Selected Response Example: Multiple-Selection Multiple Choice Item from Smarter Balanced Grade 12 Science

In this Grade 12 Smarter Balanced item associated with a Science context, students are asked to determine which two pieces of textual evidence support an inference provided in the stem.



This item appeared in the 2019–20 Grades 11–12 Smarter Balanced Sample Items published by The Regents of the University of California with Item ID 183102.

Matching. Matching items take many forms, but each involves the dragging and dropping of one or more objects. For example, a matching item may require the dragging of text or graphics into indicated spaces; the ordering of presented text (e.g., in an item assessing summary of a text); or the matching of a subset of objects from one set of information to objects in another set.

Matching items can quickly become quite complicated, based on the number of dragging and dropping actions required. In addition to accessibility concerns, item writers should consider the number of actions in light of the measurement intent of the item—that is, how much information students need to provide to demonstrate evidence of understanding of the assessed objective. Additionally, when possible, the development of more objects to drag than locations in which to drop them tends to allow students to make an error in one placement without impacting the other placements.

This selected response item format allows for dichotomous or partial credit scoring, dependent upon the item construct. Directions for this item format should indicate either the number of correct responses or that students should select all of the correct responses. Due to the selection of multiple responses, some

items allow for partial credit. For these items, scoring guides are developed to indicate how the partial credit is allocated.

The item in Exhibit 3.19 asks students to drag one piece of evidence from each of two Literature text sources. The student must evaluate which piece of textual evidence from each reading passage supports a provided shared theme of the two texts.

Exhibit 3.19. Selected Response Example: Matching Item from PARCC Grade 8 Literature

The table shows a shared theme of the passage from *The Black Pearl* and the poem "The Last Bargain."

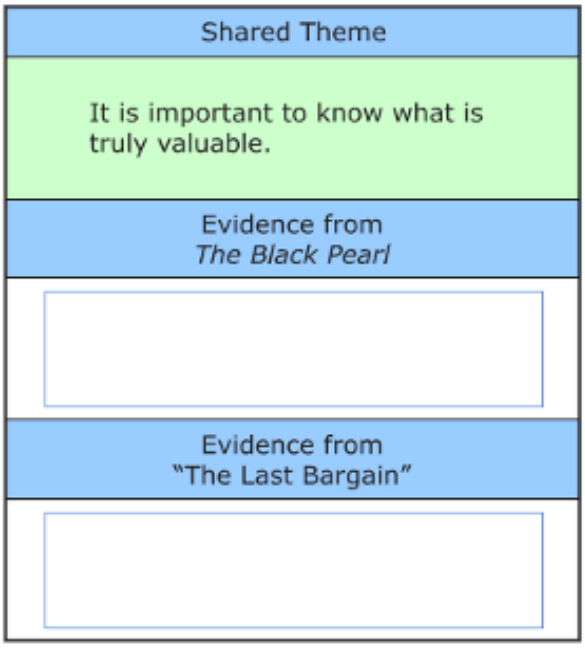
Complete the table with **one** piece of evidence from **each** text that **best** supports the shared theme. Drag and drop the pieces of evidence that **best** support the shared theme into the appropriate rows of the table. Not all pieces of evidence will be used.

The Black Pearl: "'They often die or become dull before a year passes.'" (paragraph 7)

The Black Pearl: "'And the price, gentlemen, remains twenty thousand pesos.'" (paragraph 22)

"The Last Bargain": "But his power counted for nought . . ." (line 4)

"The Last Bargain": "Her smile paled and melted into tears . . ." (line 12)



This item appeared in the 2019 Grade 8 Released Items published by Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) with Item ID FF429345509.

Zone. Zone items involve the selection of a graphic or graphics or the selection of a location or locations on a graphic. As with matching items, writers should consider the number and type of student actions required in light of accessibility and the measurement intent of the item. When developing an item that requires the selection of graphics, consideration should be given to the number of graphics presented and the number of correct graphics. When developing an item that requires the selection of a location or locations on a graphic, consideration should be given to the size and clarity of the graphic, the number of locations that are selectable, and the number of correct locations. For zone items, the selectable locations should be purposeful and clearly defined.

This selected response item format allows for dichotomous or partial credit scoring, dependent upon the item construct. Directions for this item format should indicate either the number of correct responses or that students should select all of the correct responses. Due to the selection of multiple responses, some items allow for partial credit. For these items, scoring guides are developed to indicate how the partial credit is allocated.

Exhibit 3.20. Selected Response Example: Zone Item from ePIRLS' Grade 4 Social Studies

This item from ePIRLS' assessment for grade 4 students provides an example of the use of a zones item format. Here, students are asked to "Click on the link that is most likely" to have the requested information – in this case, "information about the life and achievements of Doctor Elizabeth Blackwell." This exhibit also illustrates the use of an Internet text in the form of a search engine results page.

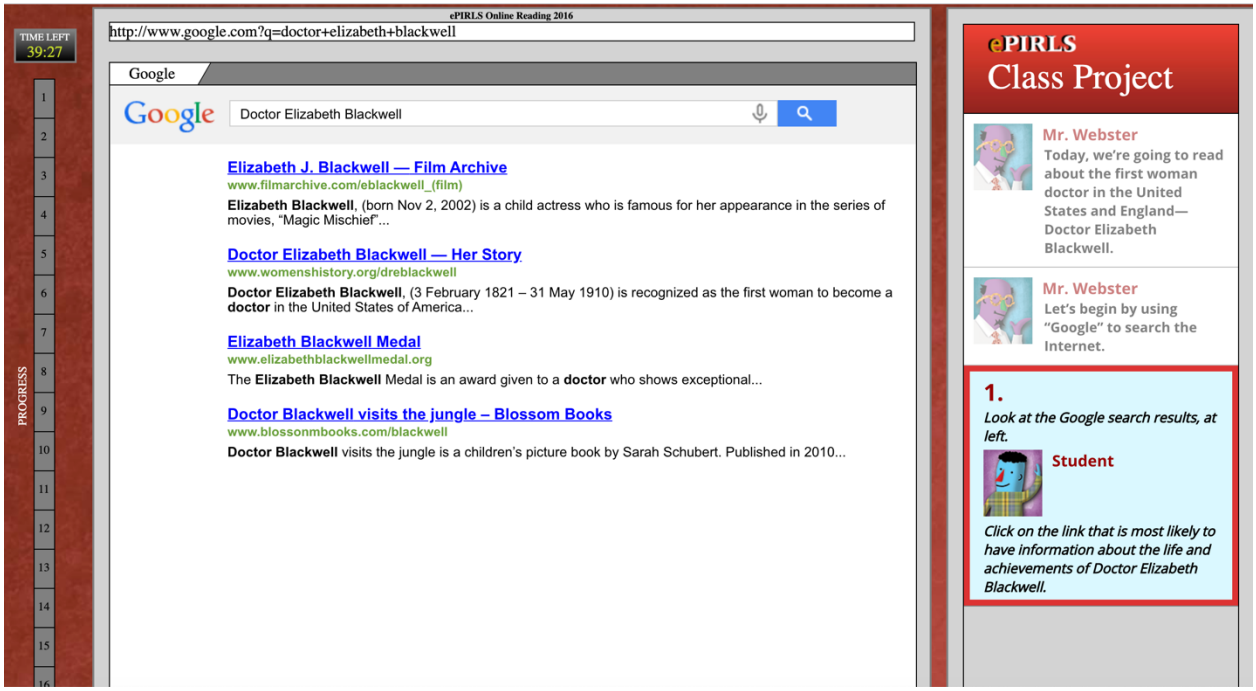
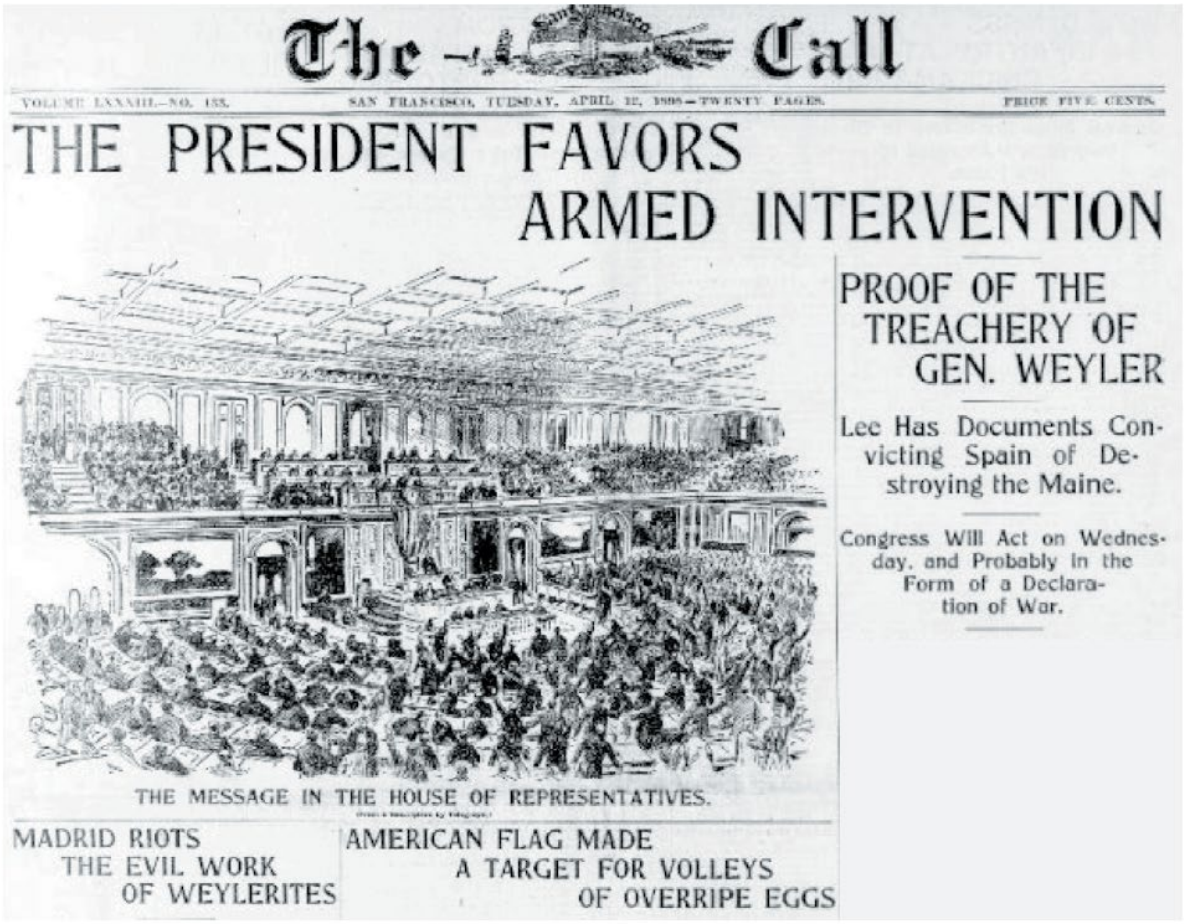


Exhibit 3.21. Selected Response Example: Zone Item for Grade 8 Social Studies

This item is a Grade 8 zone format item associated with the Social Studies context that asks students to use knowledge acquired from the task-based reading to discern three examples of yellow journalism in the components of newspaper headlines.

Read the newspaper headlines from *The Call*. Using what you have learned about yellow journalism, highlight **three** examples of sensational words or phrases in the headlines.



The Call

VOLUME LXXXIII.—NO. 133. SAN FRANCISCO, TUESDAY, APRIL 12, 1898—TWENTY PAGES. PRICE FIVE CENTS.

THE PRESIDENT FAVORS ARMED INTERVENTION

THE MESSAGE IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES.

PROOF OF THE TREACHERY OF GEN. WEYLER

Lee Has Documents Convicting Spain of Destroying the Maine.

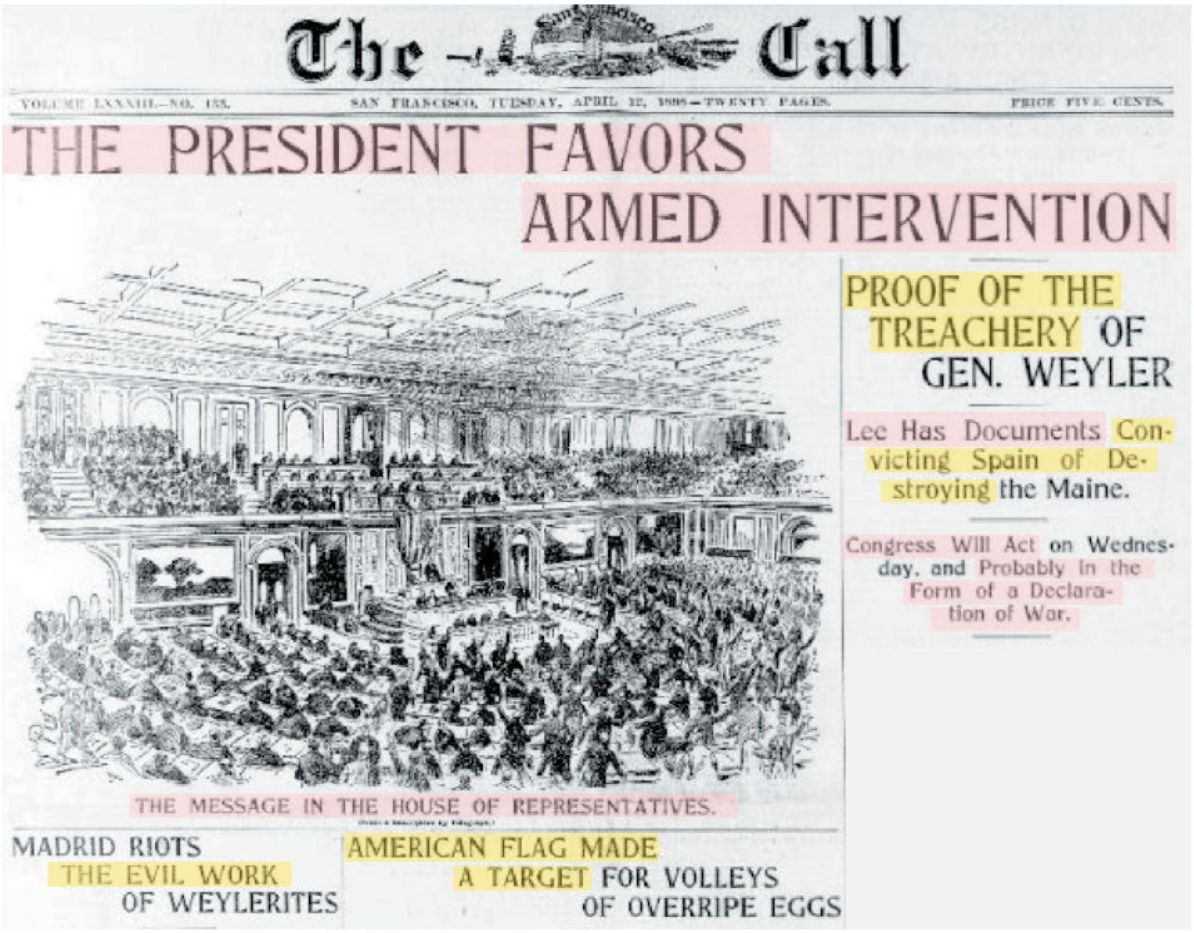
Congress Will Act on Wednesday, and Probably in the Form of a Declaration of War.

MADRID RIOTS THE EVIL WORK OF WEYLERITES

AMERICAN FLAG MADE A TARGET FOR VOLLEYS OF OVERRIPE EGGS

Scoring Information

The highlighted portions of text will be selectable. Correct answers are highlighted in yellow; distractors are shown in pink. Three correct answers are required for full credit.



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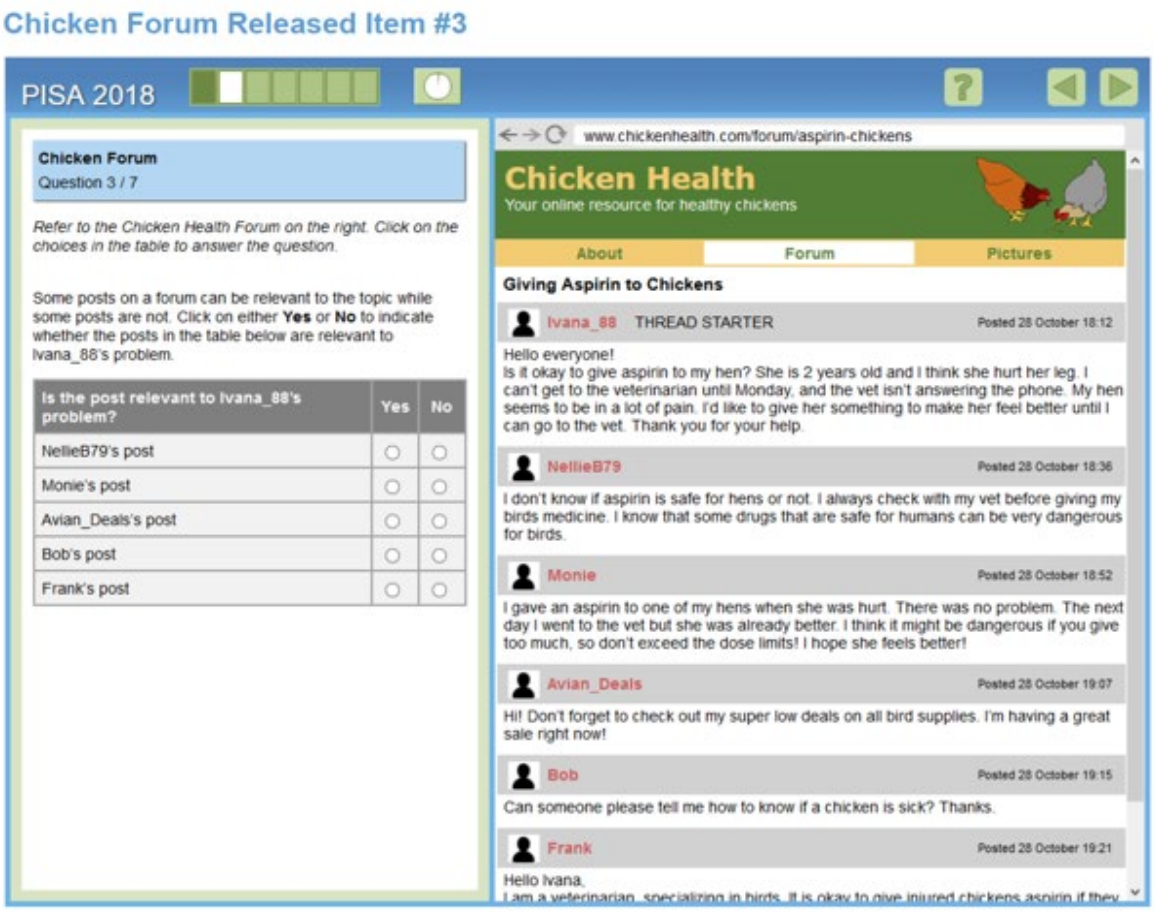
Grid. Grid items involve the selection of cells in a table to indicate a response. The rows of the table contain stimuli to be considered. The stimuli should be related. The first cell in each column of the table lists the options from which students choose. The options should be plausible for each stimulus. As with previously discussed item formats, writers should consider the number and type of student actions required in light of accessibility and the measurement intent of the item – that is, how much information students need to provide to demonstrate evidence of understanding of the assessed objective. This should inform the number of rows and columns included in an item.

This selected response item format allows for dichotomous or partial credit scoring, dependent upon the item construct. Directions for this item format should indicate either the number of correct responses or that students should select all of the correct responses. Due to the selection of multiple responses, some items allow for partial credit. For these items, scoring guides are developed to indicate how the partial credit is allocated.

Exhibit 3.22. Selected Response Example: Grid Item from PISA



In-line Choice. In-line choice items require students to select text that correctly completes a statement. Typically, the item stem presents information relevant to the completion of one or more statements. The statements are written beneath the stem, with drop-down menus that present plausible options for sentence completion. Item writers should take care when determining the number of options for each drop-down menu, as the total number of response options has the potential to impact the amount of reasoning required for students to complete the item. Additionally, in terms of accessibility, a student taking the test with a screen reader must listen to every potential answer, so the number of options in each drop-down menu impacts the number of combinations that the student must hear and manage.

This selected response item format allows for dichotomous or partial credit scoring, dependent upon the item construct. Directions for this item format should indicate either the number of correct responses or that students should select all of the correct responses. Due to the selection of multiple responses, some items allow for partial credit. For these items, scoring guides are developed to indicate how the partial credit is allocated.

Exhibit 3.23. Selected Response Example: In-line Choice Item from ePIRLS' Grade 4 Mars Block

This item from ePIRLS' assessment for grade 4 asks students to use the digital diagram to answer questions by selecting responses from a drop-down menu.

Select in passage. This item type, also commonly referred to as hot text or text highlight, requires students to select one or more pieces of text that have been highlighted as options in sections (in one or more paragraphs) of a reading passage or excerpted and presented in the item itself. Typically, the item stem presents a statement (e.g., a central idea) that requests the student to select the appropriate supporting textual evidence from the text. The item can also request the student to identify which piece(s) of text identify or support a literary element, such as character traits, or help the reader derive meaning of vocabulary or figurative language via context. Options should be near each other and should not force the student to scroll across many paragraphs of a passage.

This selected response item format allows for dichotomous or partial credit scoring, dependent upon the item construct. Directions for this item format should indicate either the number of correct responses or that students should select all of the correct responses. Due to the selection of multiple responses, some items allow for partial credit. For these items, scoring guides are developed to indicate how the partial credit is allocated.

Exhibit 3.24. Selected Response Example: Select in Passage Item from Smarter Balanced Grade 4 Literature

In this Smarter Balanced Grade 4 Literature example of a select in passage (hot text) item, the student is asked how the word "disappointed" used elsewhere in the text to describe the narrator's reaction to an event is supported by surrounding textual evidence. This item positions excerpted text as a functional hot text element in the item itself rather than using fuller sections of the text (or the full text) in a side pane; this strategy eases the complexity of the task for younger students. The key is highlighted in this example, but other phrases in the excerpted text, operating as distractors, are selectable (i.e., "a cloudy Saturday"; "skip the Farmer's Market"; "what I wanted").

The author uses the word disappointed in the passage. Click on the group of words in the sentence that **best** shows that idea.

It was a cloudy Saturday, and I thought we would be able to skip the Farmer's Market. I had hoped to do what I wanted today, but no such luck.

This item appeared in the 2018–19 Grade 4 Smarter Balanced Sample Items published by The Regents of the University of California with Item ID 182898.

Constructed Response Options. Constructed response items for the NAEP Reading Assessment also include a variety of formats. These kinds of responses allow the student to develop their own response within a given parameter (e.g., a certain number of characters) and include:

- **short constructed response** – Students respond by entering a short text in a response box that consists of a word, a phrase, or a sentence or two. The fill-in-the-blank (FIB) item type is also considered a short constructed response format.
- **extended constructed response** – Students respond by entering an extended text in a response box that consists of multiple sentences (typically one or more paragraphs).
- **hybrid constructed response** – Students respond by selecting one or more choices that meet the condition stated in the stem of the item. Then they write a short explanation about their choices.

The table in Exhibit 3.25 describes constructed response item formats, indicates abbreviations by which an item format might be known, and provides the locations of exhibits within this document of examples. At the beginning of the table are guidelines to assist with the development of constructed response items.

Exhibit 3.25. Constructed Response Item Information

Constructed Response (CR)
Best used when student communication of the correct response and/or support for a response provides greater evidence than use of selected response item types. Constructed response items should have the following characteristics:

- The stem or prompt clearly and concisely sets up the task and conveys what is expected of the student.
- As part of describing the task, the prompt may indicate the text(s) or source(s) that the student should use to produce the response, whether the student must include supporting details or evidence from the text(s), and if applicable the genre of the writing to be produced.
- The task should be feasible for the average student in the amount of time allotted for the item type in the assessment block.

NAEP Item Formats	Abbreviations	Description	Location(s) of Example Item(s)
short constructed response	SCR	Student provides a written response as a word, phrase, sentence, or brief explanation to a question or a prompt. Fill-in-the-blank items are also considered SCR items.	Exhibit 3.26 Exhibit 3.27 Exhibit 3.28
extended constructed response	ECR	Student provides a written response that typically is at least one paragraph, but may be a multi-paragraph essay, to a prompt that demands a higher degree of analysis and/or application of knowledge.	Exhibit 3.29 Exhibit 3.30
hybrid constructed response	HCR	Student selects one or more choices in one part of an item and then provides a brief explanation of their choice(s).	Exhibit 3.31

Every constructed response item has a scoring guide that defines the criteria used to evaluate students' responses. Some short constructed response items can be scored according to guides that permit

partial credit, while others are scored dichotomously as either correct or incorrect. All constructed response scoring guides are refined from work with a sample of actual student responses gathered during pilot testing of items. All constructed-response items will be scored using rubrics unique to each item. General principles that apply to these rubrics follow:

- Students will not receive credit for incorrect responses.
- All scoring criteria will be text based; students must support statements with information from the reading passage.
- Partial credit will be given for responses that answer a portion of the item but do not provide adequate support from the passage.
- Student responses will be coded to distinguish between blank items and items answered incorrectly.
- Responses will be scored on the basis of the response as it pertains to the item and the passage, not on the quality of writing.
- As part of the item review, the testing contractor will ensure a match between each item and the accompanying scoring guide.

Students are provided information, via task-based UDEs, on elements required for a complete response in individual item stems and/or in overviews of writing prompt items. This information provides all students with greater access to the item and defines the parameters for their response, honoring their time and energy as they engage in the work.

All constructed-response items should communicate clearly to the student how the response to the item will be evaluated, for example whether they must justify their response with reference to the text. In developing the scoring rubric for an item, writers should think about what kind of student responses would show increasing degrees of knowledge and understanding (e.g., as outlined in the ALDs). Writers should provide answer information and sketch sample responses for each score category, even before pilot use. Doing so scaffolds development of a clear scoring rubric and provides guidance for those scoring the item. Item writers should refer to additional directions for developing scoring guides, provided by Governing Board policy and the assessment development contractor, when constructing scoring information for an item. Additionally, the use of passage maps support the development of scoring rubrics.

Short Constructed Response. To provide more reliable and valid opportunities for extrapolating about students' approaches to problems, NAEP assessments include items referred to as short constructed response (SCR) items. These are short-answer items that require students to provide a word, phrase, sentence, or possibly write a brief explanation. SCR items may be scored as correct, incorrect, or partially correct, depending on the complexity of the response required and the information gained from students' responses.

Some short constructed-response items are written to be scored dichotomously. Short constructed response items with two scoring categories should measure knowledge and skills in a way that selected response items cannot or provide greater evidence of the depth of students' understanding. They are also useful when there is more than one possible correct answer, when there are different ways to explain an answer, or when a brief justification is required. Item writers should take care that short constructed response items would not be better or more efficiently structured as selected response items—there should be real value in having students actually constructing a response, rather than selecting the right answer from among wrong answers.

Other short constructed response items are written to be scored on a three-category scale. Short constructed response items with three scoring categories should measure knowledge and skills that require students to go beyond giving a simple acceptable answer that can obviously be scored correct or incorrect. Items scored with a 3-point rubric allow degrees of accuracy in a response so that a student can receive some credit for demonstrating partial understanding of a concept or skill.

As stated previously, item writers must draft a scoring rubric for each short constructed response item. For dichotomous items, the rubrics should define the following two categories:

- 1 = Correct: These responses represent an understanding of the text and a correct response to the item.
- 0 = Incorrect: These responses represent a lack of understanding and an incorrect response to the item.

For items with three score categories, the rubrics should define the following categories:

- 2 = Correct: These responses represent an understanding of the text and a correct response to the item.
- 1 = Partial: These responses represent a partial understanding of the text and a partially correct response.
- 0 = Incorrect: These responses represent little or no understanding of the text and an incorrect response.

Exhibit 3.26. Constructed Response Example: Short Constructed Response Item from Grade 4 NAEP Social Studies

In this Grade 4 NAEP item associated with a Social Studies context, students are asked to explain how a key detail supports the main idea of an article.

Why do you think Marian Anderson began her concert by singing the words, "My country, 'tis of thee, sweet land of liberty, of thee I sing"? Use information from the article to support your answer.

This item appeared in the 2011 grade 4 NAEP Reading administration NAEP Item ID 2011-4R10 #8.

Exhibit 3.27. Constructive Response Example: Short Constructed Response Item from Grade 8 Smarter Balanced Science

In this Grade 8 Smarter Balanced item associated with a Science context, students are asked to determine which source is most relevant to a specified topic and provide written justification with evidence in their response.

All of the sources provide information about memory. Which source would be **most** relevant to students researching ways to help remember information? Justify your answer and support it with details from the source.

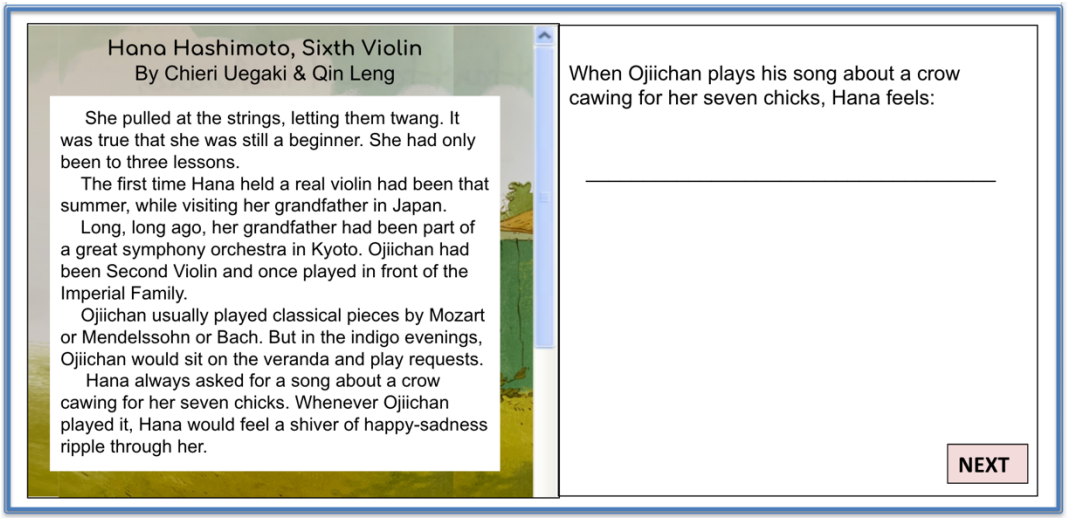
This item appeared in the 2019–20 Grade 8 Smarter Balanced Sample Items published by The Regents of the University of California with Item ID 55409.

Fill-in-the-blank (FIB) items with one response box are SCR items. FIB items require students to enter short text (e.g., a character's name or a text-derived fact). Some FIBs are written to be scored dichotomously with two scoring categories: correct or incorrect. FIBs with two scoring categories should measure knowledge and skills in a way that multiple choice items cannot, or be designed to elicit greater evidence of students' understanding. Such FIBs might be appropriate, for example, to measure reading skills tied to locating explicit textual evidence to avoid guessing (which could be a factor if a multiple choice item were used). FIB items are also useful when there is more than one possible correct answer or when there are different ways to display an answer. Item writers should take care that FIB items would not be better or more efficiently structured as selected response items (such as multiple choice or in-line choice); there should be a purpose for the use of the item type, based on the measurement intent of the item.

Item writers should draft a scoring rubric for each FIB. A writer will not necessarily need to determine the scoring categories for an item, as this depends on the robustness of the item as determined in an iterative item development process.

Exhibit 3.28. Constructed Response Example: Short Constructed Response Fill-in-the-Blank Item from Grade 4 Literature

In this Grade 4 item associated with a Literature context, students are asked to identify how a character feels based on another character's actions and provide the answer as a short text entry.



Extended Constructed Response. Extended constructed response items entail a greater amount of rigor than short constructed response items. In general, extended constructed response items ask students to think deeply about what they have read, to integrate concepts, to analyze a situation, or to explain a

concept. These items should be developed so that the knowledge and skills they measure are worth the additional time and effort that they take the student to respond and the time and effort that scoring the response takes. Extended constructed response items typically have four scoring categories: Extensive, Essential, Partial, and Incorrect.

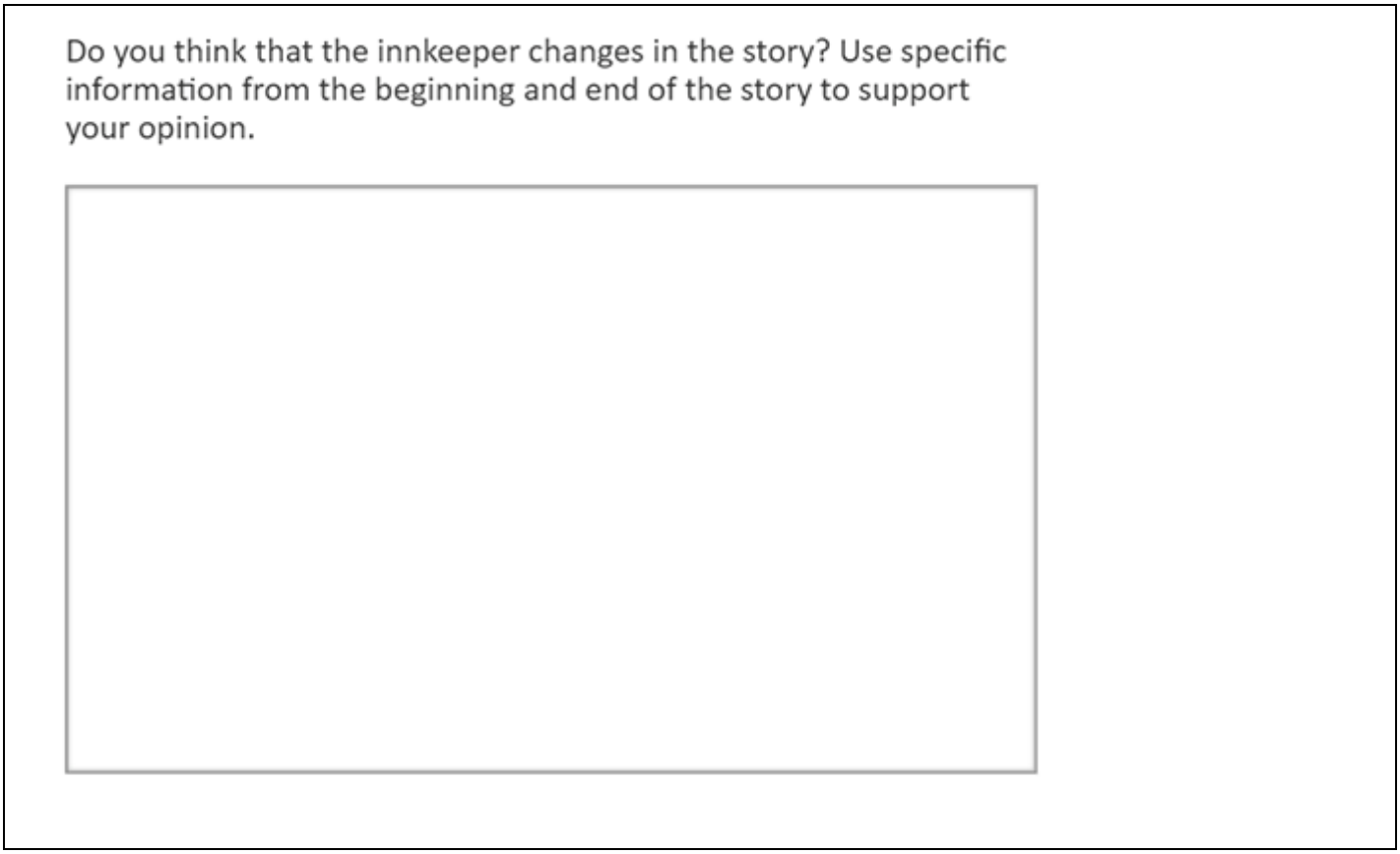
In developing the scoring rubric for an extended constructed-response item, writers should think about the kind of student responses that would show increasing degrees of knowledge and understanding. Writers should sketch condensed sample responses for each score category.

Item writers must develop a draft scoring rubric specific to each extended constructed response item. The rubric should clearly reflect the measurement intent of the item. Item writers also should include a justification or explanation for each rubric category description. Doing so will allow the writer to document the scoring rubric, as well as provide guidance for scoring the item. Extended constructed response items will usually have four scoring categories (with the possibility for additional score categories as appropriate):

- 3 = Extensive: These responses represent an in-depth, rich understanding of the text and a correct response supported by multiple pieces of information from the passage.
- 2 = Essential: These responses represent a solid understanding of the text and a correct response supported by some information from the passage.
- 1 = Partial: These responses represent some understanding of the text and little or no information from the text as part of the response.
- 0 = Incorrect: These responses represent little or no understanding of the text and an incorrect response.

Exhibit 3.29. Constructed Response Example: Extended Constructed Response Item from Grade 4 NAEP Literature

In this Grade 4 NAEP item associated with a Literature context, students are asked to evaluate how a character does or does not change over the course of a story.



This item appeared in the 2017 grade 4 NAEP Reading administration with NAEP Item ID 2017-4R5 #11.

Exhibit 3.30. Constructed Response Example: Extended Constructed Response Item from Grade 12 NAEP Social Studies

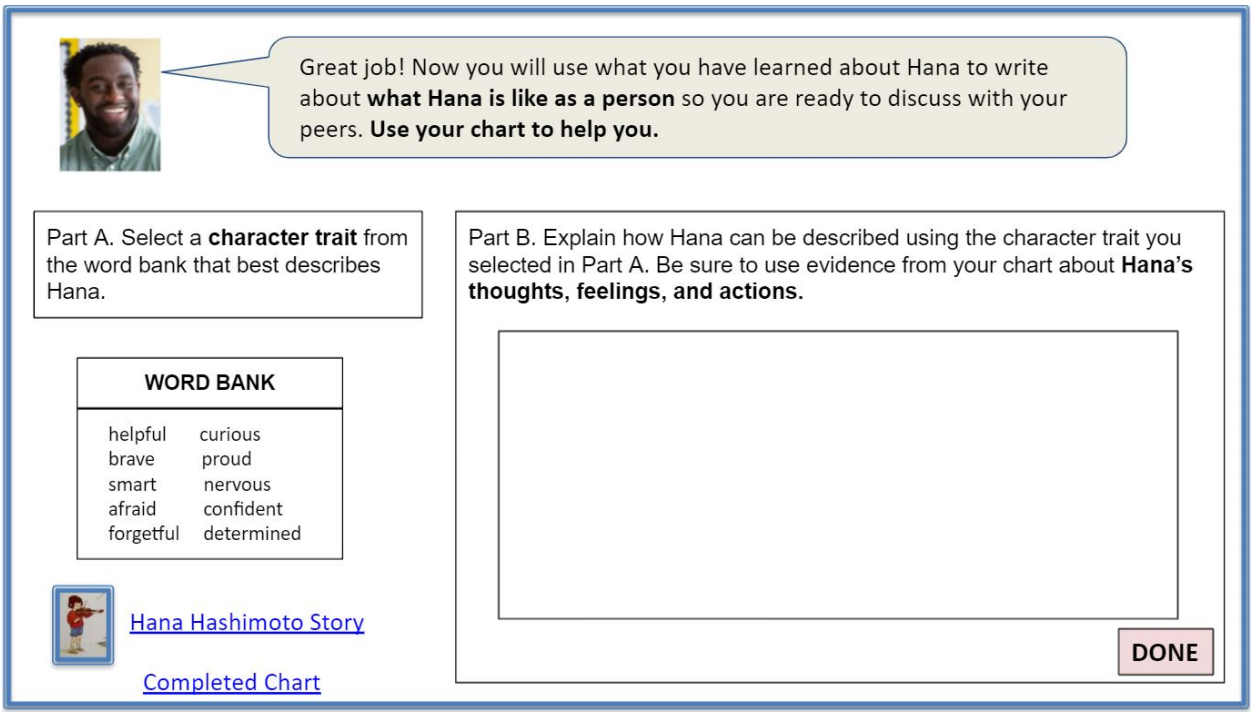
In this Grade 12 NAEP item associated with a Social Studies context, students are tasked to write a an explanatory essay delineating an argument and its claims in a speech.

Roosevelt emphasizes "responsibility" and "duty" throughout his address. According to Roosevelt, why should the nation take responsibility? What are two responsibilities or duties that Roosevelt believed were important?

This item appeared in the 2013 grade 12 NAEP Reading administration with NAEP Item ID 2013-12R11 #6.

Hybrid Constructed Response. As depicted in Exhibit 3.31, in a Grade 4 Literature two-part item with a hybrid constructed response format, students are given a word bank (also acting as a task-based UDE) from which to select a relevant character trait (these could be hot spots where a reader clicks on a word, the word is highlighted and gets recorded as the student's answer to Part A) when asked to describe the kind of person Hana is. Instead of spending time generating character trait words (which is not part of the construct this item aims to measure), the student can select from those provided. This allows the student, in Part B, to focus their limited time and cognitive resources on applying evidence from the text about Hana's thoughts, feelings, and actions to a constructed response analysis of the kind of person Hana is.

Exhibit 3.31. Constructed Response Example: Hybrid Constructed Response Item from Grade 4 Literature



The photograph of Mr. Obas is sourced from https://images.all4ed.org/male-sixth-grade-math-teacher-with-protractor (photographer Allison Shelley for EDUimages).

Scoring rubrics for this item type will have more than two scoring categories. Scoring guides are developed to indicate how credit is allocated based on the item construct. For items with three score categories, the rubrics should define the following categories:

- 2 = Correct: These responses represent an understanding of the text and a correct response to the item.
- 1 = Partial: These responses represent a partial understanding of the text and a partially correct response.
- 0 = Incorrect: These responses represent little or no understanding of the text and an incorrect response.

For items with four scoring categories (with the possibility for additional score categories as appropriate):

- 3 = Extensive: These responses represent an in-depth, rich understanding of the text and a correct response supported by multiple pieces of information from the passage.
- 2 = Essential: These responses represent a solid understanding of the text and a correct response supported by some information from the passage.
- 1 = Partial: These responses represent some understanding of the text and little or no information from the text as part of the response.
- 0 = Incorrect: These responses represent little or no understanding of the text and an incorrect response.

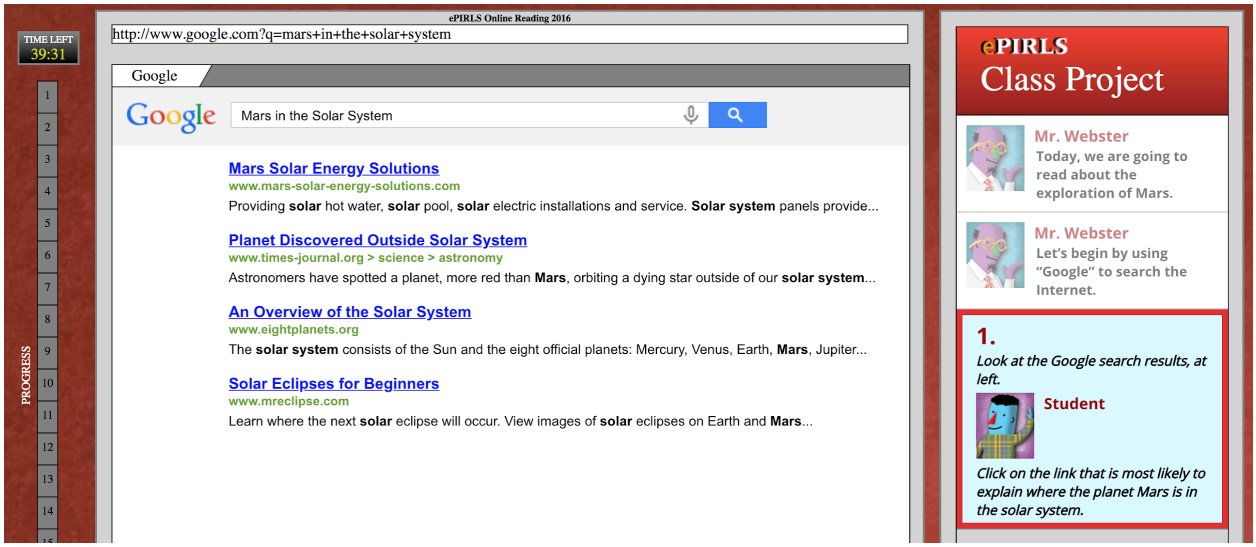
Dynamic Response Options. NAEP is currently exploring the use of dynamic response options to assess comprehension (e.g., graphic organizers and drop-down menus). NAEP should continue this trend in the years ahead by further exploring the use of other interactive or dynamic response formats made possible

with emerging digital tools. Many existing state assessments, as well as consortia assessments such as PARCC and Smarter Balanced, use these kinds of item response formats. Useful frameworks (Scalise & Gifford, 2006) and guidelines (Measured Progress/ETS Collaborative, 2012) introduce a wide variety of innovative item types that should be considered by NAEP in implementing digitally based facets of the 2026 NAEP Reading Assessment, when it is indicated that such item types bring value to the assessment. For example, dynamic item formats introduce opportunities to assess how readers:

- Search and locate information (e.g., dynamic search engines).
- Select and identify information (e.g., multiple choice items with new media distractors);
- Reorder or rearrange information (e.g., ranking, categorizing, and sequencing items);
- Substitute or correct information (e.g., multiple drop-down menus offering word choices embedded within lines; limited graphical elements that are adjusted or corrected to accurately represent ideas in the passage);
- Categorize or classify information (e.g., tiling, select, and order);
- Construct relationships among information (e.g., dynamic concept maps, multimodal representations); or
- Construct spoken responses (e.g., recorded spoken language in open-ended responses).

When selecting the format of any particular item, developers should be mindful of the cognitive and logistical demands of varied formats and how these may interact with reader familiarity and the time constraints of each activity.

Exhibit 3.32. Constructed Response Example: Dynamic Search Engine Item from ePIRLS 2016 for Grade 4 Students



At each grade level, across the item pool and within an assessment block, developers should develop the range of item response types so that every student experiences answering short constructed response, extended constructed response, and selected response types. A flexible distribution of each item response type is allowed so that the developer can create a set of items for an assessment block that is best suited for the types of texts presented and to the texts' content. Flexible distributions of item response types across each grade level are presented in Exhibit 3.33.

Exhibit 3.33. Flexible Distributions of Item Response Types Across Grade Level

	Selected Response Items	Short Constructed Response Items	Extended Constructed Response Items
Grade 4	40–50%	40–45%	10–15%
Grade 8	40–50%	40–45%	10–15%
Grade 12	40–50%	40–45%	10–15%

Universal Design Elements (UDEs)

Grounded in Universal Design of Assessments (Johnstone et al., 2006; Thompson et al., 2002), the NAEP 2026 Reading Assessment employs design features known as Universal Design Elements (UDEs). UDEs provide orientation, guidance, and motivation. They are designed to mirror typical (non-testing) reading situations to improve the validity of the assessment.

All readers have access to UDEs. UDEs, or the "built-in features of computer-based assessments," have been included in NAEP since the introduction of the digital platform in 2017, and are available for *all* students (NCES, 2021). Importantly, UDEs are not the same as legally mandated accommodations. While the use of UDEs might minimize the need for special accommodations, UDEs are not designed to fully address accessibility needs for the full population of students who take the 2026 NAEP Reading Assessment. Other assessment features, called *accommodations*, are legally mandated for *some* but not all students with additional testing needs (NCES 2019a) Examples of accommodations available on some assessments include extended time, options for responses in braille or Sign Language, or having test-items read aloud. UDEs that venture into this territory and by design target the performance of one group (e.g., students with a visual impairment) are by definition no longer UDEs, as they cannot be applied universally. Distinguishing an appropriate UDE will not always be straightforward —for example, decisions about what exactly makes a vocabulary term obscure or idiosyncratic, or about when introductory text inadvertently provides interpretations that test-takers are supposed to generate on their own. Throughout this *Specifications* document, examples are provided to help assessment developers quickly identify tools and features that could introduce bias.

Types of UDEs. Examples of UDEs already exist in the operational NAEP Reading Assessment (e.g., highlighters and look-back buttons) to reflect real-world experiences and how readers use technology. Amidst the use of these digital supports by all test-takers, NAEP has effectively maintained the ability to capture trends over time (NCES, 2021). There are increasingly complex reading purposes and more dynamic texts in today's society. The 2026 Framework calls for a modest expansion of UDEs to reflect increasingly complex reading purposes and more dynamic texts that students encounter in school (Mislevy, 2016). The 2026 NAEP Reading Framework includes three broad categories: task-based UDEs, motivational UDEs, and informational UDEs. The three categories of UDEs are designed to accomplish three different functions, as described below.

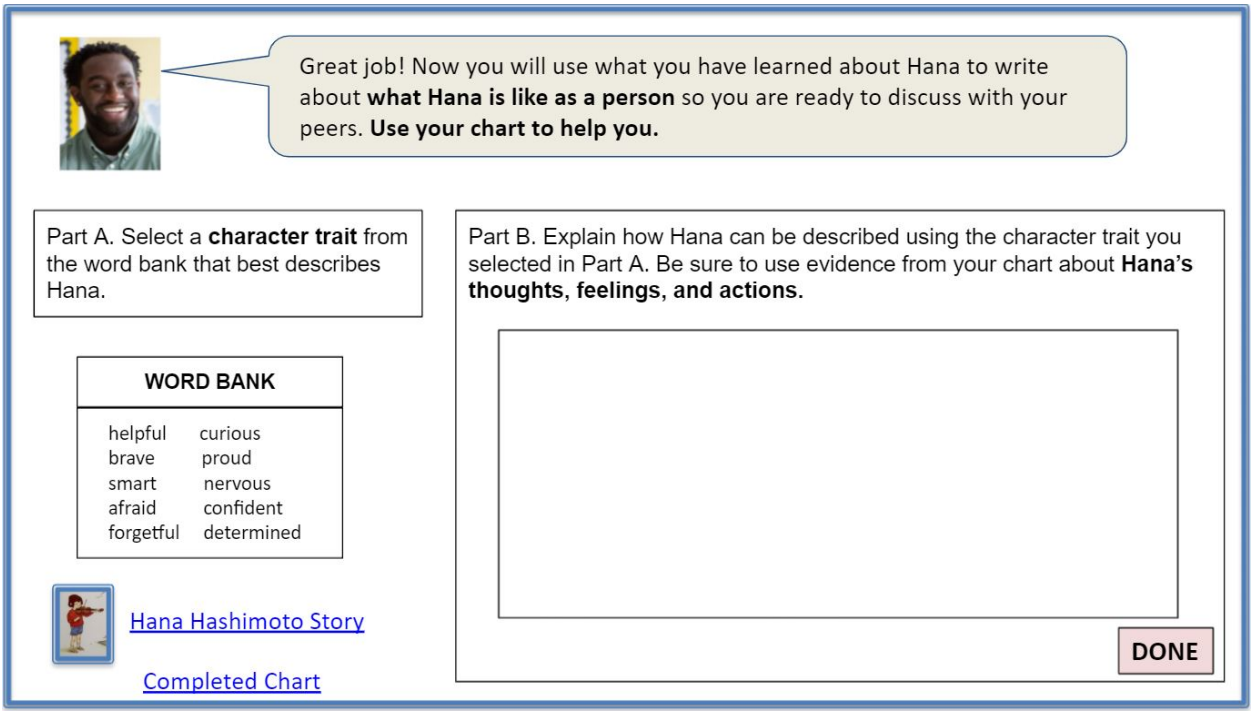
Task-based UDEs. In the 2026 NAEP Reading Assessment, task-based UDEs are used to clarify requirements, guide readers in their use of available resources in the testing space, and sustain readers' attention. A task-based UDE at the beginning of an activity (e.g., a sequential set of directions) might clearly communicate expectations for how and why readers should engage with a collection of texts. Such UDEs might also help readers plan and monitor their work across multiple texts and tasks (de Jong, 2006)

by providing guidance on how to move among the texts. As readers move through the block, task-based UDEs might include graphic organizers that allow readers to record and revisit their ideas; these types of UDEs aim to reduce time spent on low-level activities (scrolling to find the location) while providing students more time for higher order activity—reading, evaluating, and engaging with text content (Sparks & Deane, 2014).

Exhibit 3.34 illustrates an example of an Analyze and Evaluate item with a task-based UDE that is aligned with UDA principles calling for "assessment instructions and procedures…to be easy to understand, regardless of a student's experience, knowledge, language skills, or current concentration level" (Thompson et al., 2002, p. 13). The item is designed to measure the student's ability to describe a character in depth, drawing on specific details in the text. To demonstrate this skill, the student needs to identify a character trait that is relevant and then connect the selected character trait with a deeper interpretation of the character and the details of the text. In providing the word bank as a task-based UDE, all students have an equivalent opportunity to focus more of their time and attention on the Analyze and Evaluate Comprehension Target rather than on trying to generate a character trait word. This type of task-based UDE is an example of one that aims to assess more challenging comprehension processes while allowing readers to access the item in the relatively short period of time allotted by the assessment. This clarity of expectations also maximizes the likelihood that readers will cognitively engage with complex NAEP-designed reading experiences within the short time frame allotted to each block.

The use of a word bank as a task-based UDE also aligns with principles calling for "accessible, non-biased items" and the removal of "non-construct oriented...barriers" to the assessment content (Thompson et al., p. 9). In this case, the word bank decreases construct-irrelevance by providing a set of words from which test-takers can *select*, rather than *generate*, a relevant character trait. The provided words allow all readers, and especially English learners, to access the test and validly engage with the item designed to measure their ability to make inferences about character traits and not their ability to generate unfamiliar words in a timed assessment context.

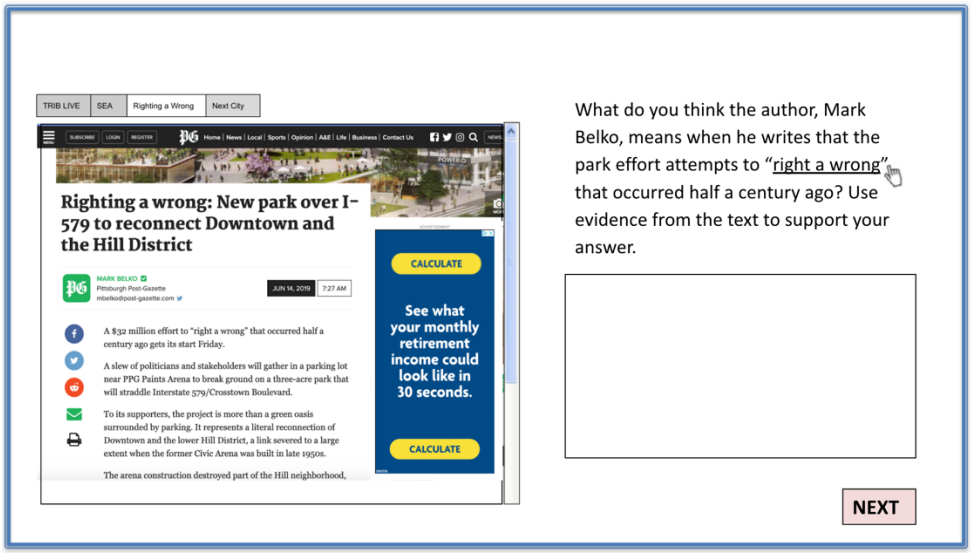
Exhibit 3.34. A Grade 4 Analyze and Evaluate item illustrating a task-based UDE in the form of a word bank providing a set of character traits from which readers can select their choice and then use as part of their constructed response



The photograph of Mr. Obas is sourced from https://images.all4ed.org/male-sixth-grade-math-teacher-with-protractor (photographer Allison Shelley for EDUimages).

Exhibit 3.35 shows a task-based UDE in the form of a look-back button. This type of UDE decreases construct-irrelevance by assisting all students in quickly locating content in a text relevant to the assessment item, without wasting valuable test-taking time and cognitive engagement by the student searching multiple texts that are part of the task.

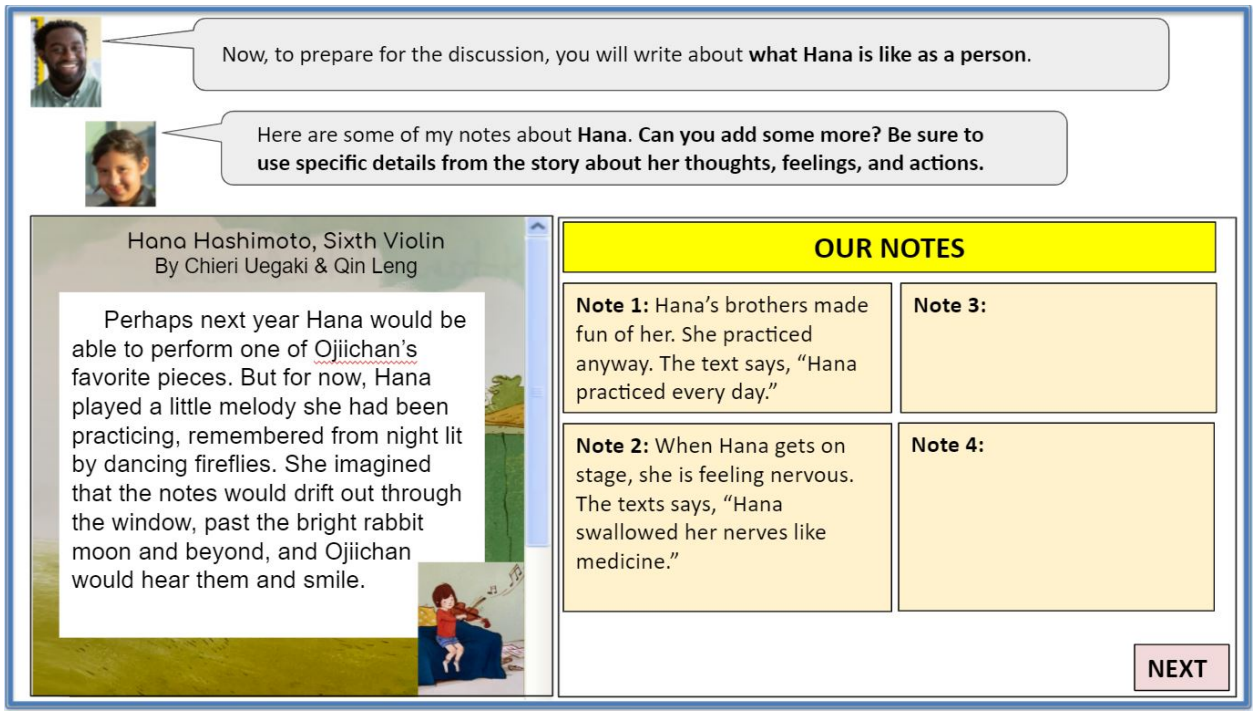
Exhibit 3.35. A Grade 12 short constructed-response item with a look-back button (task-based UDE) that asks readers to integrate and interpret information in an online newspaper article about the historical significance of a park's design



Motivational UDEs. In the 2026 NAEP Reading Assessment, motivational UDEs are designed to facilitate students' interest in assessment content and persistence with challenging tasks (Alton & Proctor, 2008; Buehl, 2017; CAST, 2020; Guthrie & Klauda, 2015). Motivational UDEs might, for example, provide an engaging pre-reading preview that helps to generate a minimal amount of interest in an assessment block. As with task-based UDEs, these kinds of motivational UDEs align with UDA principles calling for "accessible, non-biased items" as well as "precisely defined constructs" (Thompson et al., 2002, p. 10) by stimulating prior interest and motivation and thus removing some construct-irrelevant variance for students who might come to an assessment task with no prior interest in the topic or activity that is the focus of the assessment block.

Motivational UDEs may also maintain readers' interest by communicating explicit connections between the broader purpose for completing a block and the sub-tasks that need to be completed along the way. UDEs in the form of task characters may provide written and/or oral directions, or interact directly with readers as experts, teachers, or peers to provide information (see Exhibit 3.36). Task characters may also represent members of an authentic target audience to whom readers can represent and communicate new understandings about what they have read and learned. To the extent that assigned purposes (and related texts, tasks and goals) are viewed as meaningful and relevant, readers are more likely to be motivated to engage with or react to the reading activity as a whole (Guthrie & Klauda, 2015; van den Broek, Bon-Gettler, Kendeou, Carlson, & White, 2011).

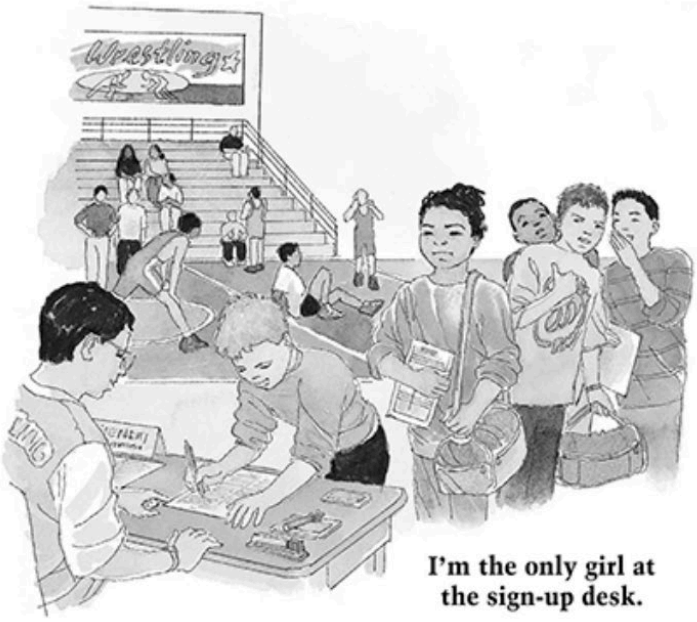
Exhibit 3.36. A Grade 4 motivational and task-based UDE with teacher and student task characters reminding the reader of the task goal for the second task.



The photograph of Mr. Obas is sourced from https://images.all4ed.org/male-sixth-grade-math-teacher-with-protractor (photographer Allison Shelley for EDUimages). The photograph of Gia is sourced from https://images.all4ed.org/elementary-boy-with-backpack-and-girl-with-notebook/ (photographer Allison Shelley for EDUimages).

Exhibit 3.37, from a NAEP grade 4 block, illustrates a motivational UDE in the form of an illustration and caption. Together, the illustration and caption reading, "I'm the only girl at the sign-up desk." serve to pique readers' interest in the text. The illustration and caption also serve as a informational UDE because they briefly introduce the context of the story students are about to read (a girl signing up for something, among only boys).

Exhibit 3.37 Example of a Motivational UDE, from NAEP's "Tough as Daisy" Block



Tough as Daisy

by David M. Simon

The sign on the YMCA door says *Wrestling Tournament Today.*

I enter the gym and take a deep breath. It smells like old sweat socks and the stuff they use to wash wrestling mats.

I love that smell. Weird, huh? Not to me.

My dad always says, "Pound for pound, no one's as tough as Daisy."

I see my family in the stands. I wave to them and smile, but I'm nervous.

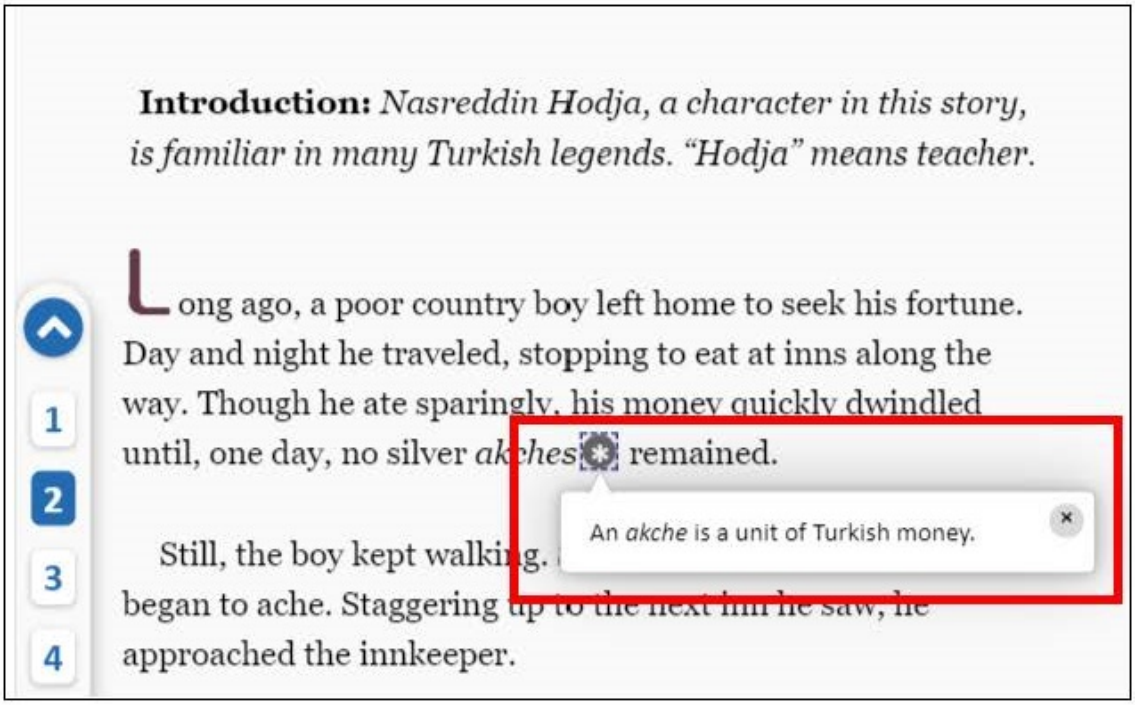
Lots of boys are already on the mats, loosening up. I'm the only girl at the sign-up desk. Some of

Informational UDEs. In the 2026 NAEP Reading Assessment, informational UDEs will provide two types of information: (a) topic previews in the form of short introductions to either the entire block or to a specific task and text, and (b) definitions or examples for obscure vocabulary unless a word is explicitly tested in a comprehension test item. Obscure vocabulary refers to words of very limited application, such as highly technical terms or non-English referents. In most cases, obscure words will already be defined in the authentic texts, but occasionally the assessment developer may consider whether an additional definition is necessary. Topic previews may take the form of written texts only, unless video, image, or other kinds of introductions are already part of an authentic source text. Topic previews should be offered as appropriate any time when additional context about the author or text is needed to orient students to the passage. A determination must be made by assessment developers about whether a UDE is construct relevant. Finally, as noted in Chapter 2, blocks without UDEs, including those without informational UDEs, are part of the current assessment and will continue to exist in the 2026 NAEP Reading Assessment.

Importantly, informational UDEs never provide answers to comprehension test items. Instead, they preview untested topic information, activate readers' knowledge, and pique interest in ways that permit readers to engage in the types of literal, interpretive, evaluative, and application processes (i.e., the four Comprehension Targets described in Chapter 2) required to demonstrate their comprehension of challenging text (Alexander & Jetton, 2000; Buehl, 2017).

Exhibit 3.38, from a NAEP Grade 4 block, illustrates two informational UDEs. The first informational UDE appears in the form of an introduction to the story "Five Boiled Eggs," which introduces students to Nasreddin Hodja, a character in the story whose last name means "teacher" in Turkish. The second informational UDE appears in the form of a vocabulary pop-up box defining the Turkish word "akche."

Exhibit 3.38 Example of Two Informational UDEs from NAEP's "Five Boiled Eggs" Block



Because the meaning or use of the words "Hodja" and "akches" is not directly assessed in this block, this informational UDE also aligns with UDA principles calling for "precisely defined constructs" and the removal of "non-construct oriented...barriers" to the assessment content (Thompson et al., p. 9).

In this case, the introduction defining "Hodja" and the pop-up box defining an "akche" is designed to decrease construct-irrelevant variance. The NAEP Reading Assessment does not assess what students know about obscure topics; that is the job of disciplinary assessments (e.g., the NAEP Science Assessment). Instead, the NAEP Reading Assessment measures how well students can reason about the information provided in texts. Therefore, informational UDEs like these two orient readers to the topic of the text and ensure that all students have an opportunity to make sense of the story and make inferences about the characters.

Exhibit 3.39, from PISA's Reading Literacy test for 15-year-olds, provides an informational UDE in which students are introduced to the first source they will read—a blog entry written by a professor while living in Rapa Nui. This example also illustrates how readers are situated, at the beginning of the block,

within a specific reading purpose: To conduct research on the history of Rapa Nui in order to prepare for a lecture at a local library.

Exhibit 3.39. Example of a Specific Reading Purpose and an Informational UDE from PISA's Rapa Nui Block

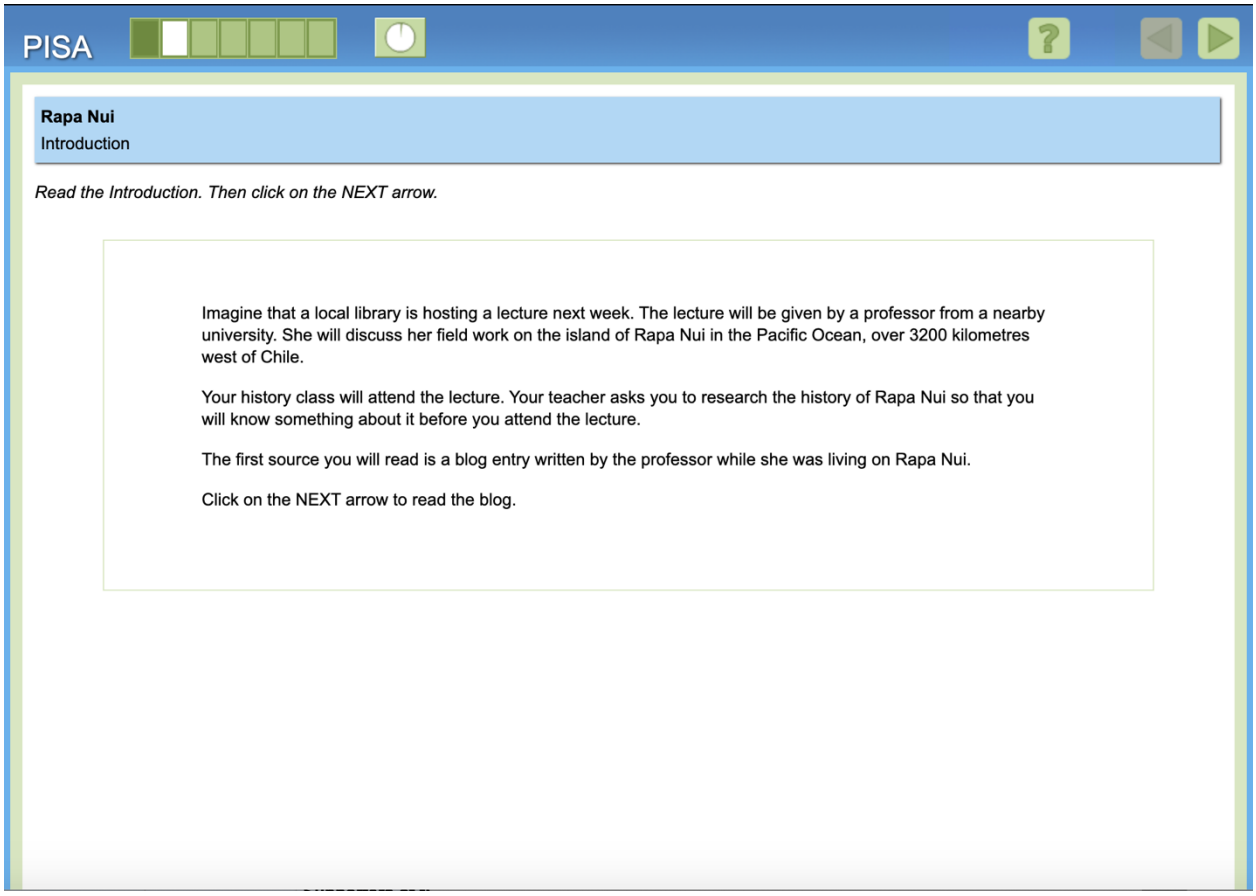


Exhibit 3.40 illustrates two different written introductions, one for each of two texts. In Example 1, an informational UDE appears in the form of an introduction to an article about the writer E. B. White. In Example 2, an informational UDE appears in the form of an introduction to an essay by E. B. White, which explains that the author of the essay is also a children's author.

Exhibit 3.40. Two Examples of Informational UDEs in the Form of Passage Introductions from a Released NAEP 2019 Block on E. B. White

Example 1

Meet the author: *E. B. White, the author of children's classics* Charlotte's Web *and* Stuart Little, *was also a great essayist.*

Not Just for Kids Anymore

"I have a lot of the cat in me," said author E. B. White, "and cats are not joiners."

Perhaps that is why White, one of the country's greatest writers, is so hard to label. His essays for *The New Yorker* appealed to an urbane crowd, but he is best remembered for his

Example 2

E. B. White *was not only a great author for children, he was also the preeminent essayist of his time. This essay, written as a "Talk of the Town" piece for* The New Yorker, *provides a hint of his powers.*

Twins

by E. B. White

On a warm, miserable morning last week we went up to the Bronx Zoo to see the moose calf and to break in a new pair of black shoes. We

Exhibit 3.41, from Michigan's reading assessment for grade 4 students, illustrates three informational UDEs in the form of passage introductions for each of three different sources within a block. In this task, students are asked to learn from reading each source and to then write an informational article using what they have learned.

Exhibit 3.41. Example of Three Informational UDEs in the Form of Passage Introductions from the Michigan Student Test of Educational Progress

Source #1
You have found an article that describes how animals survive in different environments, the places where plants and animals live.

Source #2
You have found an article from *Appleseeds* magazine that describes how some animals build their homes.

Source #3
You have found an article that discusses plants and animals that live in the same place. The article describes how these plants and animals depend on each other to stay alive.

Selecting appropriate locations for UDEs. Developers decide on appropriate locations in which to insert UDEs into each block of the assessment. Because some 2026 NAEP Reading Assessment tasks will involve complexities in response to handling multiple tasks and texts, readers may be asked to check and reflect on their reading progress in an activity and allocate their attention accordingly. Intuitively designed transitions between each task, such as task characters, visual flow charts, or simple written statements may be used to guide readers through the task sequence and structure in any given block.

Process Data

Because 2026 NAEP Reading Assessment activities are situated in a fully digital environment, process data involving reader actions (e.g., number of mouse clicks, pathways through a task or hypertext, transcribed voice responses, length of time spent engaged with reading material or responding to an item) can be easily collected in digital log files stored in a database. While these data are not reported for individual students, aggregations of these types of data hold potential power to measure levels of engagement in purpose-driven reading activities (e.g., capturing frequency, density, and intensity of engagement or identifying and comparing novice to expert level of practice). Process data from log files can be aggregated and interpreted to characterize how reader attributes or other variables relate to reading comprehension performance at one or more locations in the NAEP assessment space. Examples of process data developers use to account for reader variations include

- timing data (e.g., time on passages and items),
- navigation data (e.g., navigating among passages, pages within passages, hyperlinks, using the next button to move through a block);
- data on using other affordances (e.g., the "Look Back Button," glossing), and
- item response process data (e.g., which answers readers choose, order of selections, answer changes, response mode, use of eliminating options in multiple choice items).

Exhibit 3.42 shows that navigation data can be collected via an embedded element (an advertisement as would be seen in a real-world website page context) alongside the task's text.

Exhibit 3.42. Example of a Constructed Response Item from ePIRLS 2016 for Grade 4 that Collects Navigational Process Data. The Space Camp image and blast off button serve as a type of distractor designed to capture process data about readers who click on irrelevant details (i.e., advertisements) on a webpage rather than attending to the comprehension item at hand.

Overall, the strategic use of UDEs and determination of process data collected in each block enables the 2026 NAEP Reading Assessment to fully engage test-takers in complex comprehension tasks while also generating information to further analyze the reading performance of students in grades 4, 8, and 12. Additional research by NCES can inform decisions about the continued use of UDEs.

The purpose of Chapter 4-S is to describe how the results of the NAEP Reading Assessment will be communicated to the nation from the year 2026 onward. The chapter addresses the central communication responsibility of NAEP—to report scores in a manner that informs the public about current results and performance trends over time on NAEP Reading Assessments in what has become known as The Nation's Report Card (Governing Board, n.d.). In addition to describing how scores will be reported, Chapter 4 outlines how the 2026 NAEP Reading Assessment will collect information that can help contextualize and explain the results it reports and serve as a useful resource for informing educational policy.

Reporting Results

Historically, NAEP Reading assessments have reported data for the nation as a whole, for participating states, and for large urban school districts that volunteer to participate in the NAEP Trial Urban District Assessment (TUDA). Results of the NAEP Reading Assessment administrations are reported in terms of average scores for groups of students on the NAEP 0–500 scale and as percentages of students who attain each of the three achievement levels (*NAEP Basic*, *NAEP Proficient*, and *NAEP Advanced*) discussed below. By design, the assessment reports results of overall achievement; it is not a tool for diagnosing the needs of individuals or groups of students. Reported scores are at the aggregate level; by law, scores are not produced for individual schools or students.

In addition to reporting aggregate results for the nation, states, and TUDA school districts, *The Nation's Report Card* (Governing Board, n.d.) allows for examination of results by school characteristics (urban, suburban, rural; public and nonpublic) and other student characteristics (race/ethnicity, gender, English learner status, socioeconomic status, and disability status, i.e., supported by an Individualized Education Program), as required by law. The NAEP Data Explorer is a publicly accessible online tool that allows users to customize reports and investigate specific aspects of student reading achievement, such as performance on different Comprehension Targets or by selected contextual variables. Additionally, reports of the results of survey questionnaires are produced each year on relevant topics, such as instructional emphasis on reading activities, confidence in reading knowledge and skills, teachers' satisfaction with and views on available school resources.

Legislative Provisions for NAEP Reporting

As stated in Chapter 1, under the provisions of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA, 2015) legislation, states receiving Title I grants must include assurance in their state plans that they will participate in the reading and mathematics state NAEP at grades 4 and 8. Local districts that receive Title I funds must agree to participate in biennial NAEP Reading and Mathematics assessment administrations at grades 4 and 8 if they are selected to do so. Their results are included in state and national reporting. Participation in NAEP does not substitute for the mandated state-level assessments in reading and mathematics at grades 3 to 8. An important development over the last 20 years has been an evolving understanding of how NAEP complements state assessments, which are tightly aligned with state standards.

In 2002, NAEP initiated TUDA in five large urban school districts that are members of the Council of the Great City Schools (the Atlanta City, City of Chicago, Houston Independent, Los Angeles Unified, and New York City Public Schools Districts). Ten large districts participated in 2003 and 2005. The number of districts participating in TUDA has grown over time to a total of 27 beginning in 2017. TUDA is administered biennially in odd-numbered years in tandem with NAEP state-level assessments. Sampled students in TUDA districts are assessed in the same subjects and use the same NAEP field materials as students selected as part of national main or state samples. TUDA results are reported separately from the state in which the TUDA is located, but results are not reported for individual students or schools. With student performance results by district, participating TUDA districts can use results for evaluating their

achievement trends and for comparative purposes. Here too the complementarity of NAEP with state and local assessments is important to support so as to avoid unnecessary additional testing and to maximize useful information for educators and policymakers to use.

Through ESSA and the NAEP TUDA program, the NAEP Reading Assessment results report student achievement for the nation, states, and select large urban districts, enabling comparisons between states, large urban districts, and various student demographic groups.

Achievement Levels

Reporting on achievement levels provides one way for NAEP results to reach the general public and policymakers. Since 1990, the National Assessment Governing Board has used student achievement levels for reporting results on NAEP assessments. Generic policy definitions for achievement at the *NAEP Basic, NAEP Proficient,* and *NAEP Advanced* levels describe in general terms what students at each grade level should know and be able to do on the assessment. Reading achievement levels specific to the NAEP Reading Framework were developed to elaborate on the generic definitions. Exhibit 4.1 presents the generic policy definitions. See Appendix A for the preliminary achievement level descriptions.

Exhibit 4.1. Generic Achievement Level Policy Definitions for NAEP

Achievement Level	Definition
NAEP Advanced	This level signifies superior performance beyond *NAEP Proficient.*
NAEP Proficient	This level represents solid academic performance for each NAEP assessment. Students reaching this level have demonstrated competency over challenging subject matter, including subject-matter knowledge, application of such knowledge to real-world situations, and analytical skills appropriate to the subject matter.
NAEP Basic	This level denotes partial mastery of prerequisite knowledge and skills that are fundamental for performance at the *NAEP Proficient* level.

Reporting Results of the Updated 2026 NAEP Reading Assessment

While satisfying legislative requirements and maintaining the scale score and achievement level reporting structures, the 2026 NAEP Reading Framework updates and enhances the assessment and its reporting system to accomplish the following broad goals:

- Revise items included in the reading-specific and the general (i.e., core) parts of the questionnaires administered to students, teachers, and administrators whose schools participate in the NAEP Reading Assessment to increase knowledge about opportunities to learn.
- Transform the navigational data (sometimes called process data [Ho, 2017]), referring to how students make their way through the texts and test items) into measures that help explain test performance, as well as student interest and metacognition.
- Increase the capacity of NAEP Reading Assessment databases (including enhancements for the NAEP Data Explorer) in ways that encourage educators, policymakers, and researchers to conduct more nuanced analyses of NAEP Reading Assessment performance.

To provide more nuanced reports and useful data to key stakeholders, the NAEP reporting system will

- disaggregate scores for demographic subgroups in greater detail to provide a more accurate and dynamic description of student performance,
- expand the number of categories for reporting the achievement of English learners to better reflect the variability of English language proficiency within this population, and
- provide information on research-based contextual variables (derived from demographic, questionnaire, and process data) that can contribute to more nuanced interpretations of group results.

Reporting Categories

The reporting system from the 2026 NAEP Reading Framework, and also described below, provides opportunities to interpret results from the 2026 NAEP Reading Assessment by amplifying the demographic and descriptive student categories. The reporting system expands use of the data derived from the assessment to afford deeper understanding of how socioeconomic status (SES) and race/ethnicity, whenever feasible, intersect with opportunities to learn in schools and communities (e.g., the availability of libraries or access to challenging curricula). This disaggregation of SES within race/ethnicity allows for examination of diversity within groups. To support productive interpretations of results, the reporting of achievement results for the NAEP Reading Assessment will also disaggregate reporting by current and former English learner status.

NAEP Reading Assessment results have provided indispensable information on students' performance with traditional reporting variables parsing results into subgroups to portray how students perform within specific contexts—state, region, access to technology, and socioeconomic level. By expanding reporting categories and adding contextual variables, NAEP reporting will provide more robust information on the factors that influence student reading development. Thus, the 2026 NAEP Reading Framework builds on the strengths of the prior NAEP reporting system by including enhancements to the reporting capacity of NAEP through reporting by disciplinary contexts, disaggregating results within demographic categories, and expanding reporting categories for English learners.

Reporting by Disciplinary Contexts

The 2009–2019 NAEP Reading Framework describes two subscales for reporting: reading for literary experience and reading for information. The 2026 NAEP Reading Framework identifies three subscales for reporting on reading performance within and across three disciplinary contexts: Reading to Engage in Literature, Reading to Engage in Science, and Reading to Engage in Social Studies. In addition to reporting the percentage of students whose performance falls within each achievement level (*NAEP Basic, NAEP Proficient, NAEP Advanced*), the 2026 NAEP Reading Assessment will report disciplinary context subscales. This enhancement aligns with increased attention to reading in the content areas in state standards across the nation.

Disaggregating Results Within Demographic Categories

NAEP law (Governing Board, 2017b) requires reporting according to various student populations (see section 303[b][2][G]), including:

- Gender,
- Race/ethnicity,
- Eligibility for free/reduced-price lunch,
- Students with disabilities, and
- English language learners.

Therefore, NAEP will continue to report reading scores by selected student subgroups. In addition, results will be reported by school characteristics, such as public/private, urban/rural, and region of the country.

Because the 2026 NAEP Reading Framework seeks to capture the dynamic variability within student groups, NAEP disaggregates student group data to show, at a minimum, differences of SES within the student subgroup of race/ethnicity. In the NAEP Reading Assessment, as in other large-scale assessments, lower levels of achievement historically are correlated with poverty. Disaggregating results by SES within subgroups will reveal subgroup differences in reading achievement that are associated with SES. At the same time, the success of many schools in supporting high levels of achievement among students from low-SES backgrounds suggests that SES alone does not offer a sufficient explanation for reading performance and that additional contextual variables are crucial to better understand variability in reading (Mullis & Martin, 2019; OECD, 2019). Enhanced reporting can help stakeholders better understand reading performances in context. For example, these data may drive stakeholders to consider how access to resources that support rich literacy opportunities may serve as an underlying driver of achievement.

Additional parsing of the results in the ways described above could be important because the results might suggest that what is, on the surface, presumed to be a cohesive and static category (e.g., a particular subgroup of students) may in fact include significant differences in subgroup members' access to resources. Examining SES and race/ethnicity with a more nuanced lens has the potential to surface factors that are highly amenable to change, such as resource allocation. When the data are disaggregated by states and TUDA districts as described in the 2026 NAEP Reading Framework, they should thus be more helpful to stakeholders for addressing the needs revealed by the assessment.

Expanding Reporting Categories for English Learners

ELs are defined by NAEP as students "who are in the process of acquiring English language skills and knowledge" (NCES, 2019b). These students have not yet reached state-established standards for grade-level English proficiency and so are at the beginning or intermediate phases of acquiring English. In the prior NAEP reporting system, students were designated either as *not English learners* or *English learners* at the time of the assessment. The results for students who had been classified as ELs but who were no longer classified as such were reported along with students who had never been identified as ELs; thus, there was no way to disaggregate data to observe or track the successes and increases in achievement of former ELs.

The 2026 NAEP Reading Framework Update expands reporting categories in order to present data that is more attuned to the complex composition of today's student populations, and, thus, more informative for states and school communities (Durán, 2006; Hopkins, et al., 2013; Governing Board, 2014; Kieffer & Thompson, 2018). In keeping with the latest research and current requirements for state-level reporting under ESEA, Section 3121(a), the reporting system outlined in the 2026 NAEP Reading Framework disaggregates scores by three English proficiency categories for which school systems that participate in NAEP already collect data:

- *Current English Learners* – students designated as English learners at the time of the assessment
- *Former English Learners* – students who have reached grade-level standards of English proficiency within the last two years prior to the assessment and who have formally exited that status
- *Non-English Learners* – monolingual students who speak only English; bilingual students who speak English and another language and who were never previously identified as English learners; bilingual students who reached grade-level standards of English proficiency more than two years ago

Reporting NAEP results for these three categories will allow more nuanced interpretation of data for students who are designated as current or former ELs and highlight challenges these students may face. Focusing exclusively on the current EL subgroup can obscure the progress that educational systems make in moving students toward English proficiency and higher levels of reading achievement. This expansion of EL reporting categories will shed light on any progress—or lack thereof—that might be detectable in the group of former ELs. The 2026 NAEP Reading Framework expands reporting categories for English

learners in order to more accurately represent the descriptive data states and districts are already using to understand the performance of these students.

Contextual Variables

The *Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing* (AERA, APA, & NCME, 2014) recommend that reports of group differences in assessment performance be accompanied by relevant contextual information, where possible, to both discourage erroneous interpretation and enable meaningful analysis of the differences. That standard reads as follows:

> Reports of group differences in test performance should be accompanied by relevant contextual information, where possible, to enable meaningful interpretation of the differences. If appropriate contextual information is not available, users should be cautioned against misinterpretation. (Standard 13.6)

Contextual data about students, teachers, and schools are needed to fulfill the statutory requirement that NAEP include information, whenever feasible, that is disaggregated by race or ethnicity, SES, gender, disability, and English learner status. Contextual information serves the additional purpose of enriching the reporting of NAEP results by examining factors related to academic achievement in the specific subjects assessed. In addition to questionnaires, information on contextual variables is also obtained by analyzing process data derived from computer monitoring of students' navigation within the assessment tasks completed.

Contextual variables are selected to be of topical interest, timely, and directly related to academic achievement and current trends and issues in reading. Data for contextual variables are gathered from student, teacher, and school administrator responses to survey questionnaires and from process data derived from computer monitoring of students' navigation within the assessment tasks completed. Survey questions are intended to be non-intrusive; free from bias; secular, neutral, and non-ideological; and they do not elicit personal values or beliefs. To minimize the burden on those asked to complete the questionnaires, demographic information regarding school and student characteristics are gathered from non-NAEP sources, such as state, district, or school records, when possible.

Current NAEP contextual variables consist of factors that shape students' opportunities to learn, including time, content, instructional strategies, and instructional resources. Resulting data are used to predict or account for variance in the outcome of interest, reading comprehension scores on NAEP. The 2026 NAEP Reading Framework's emphasis on the cultural assets of individuals and the power of context to shape learning and development leads naturally to the need to identify and expand research-based contextual variables for reading. By taking into account students' differential engagement with reading and their access to home and community resources such as libraries, tutoring, and out-of-school programs, the expanded contextual variable data are intended to help contextualize and explain students' differential performance on the NAEP Reading Assessment.

The 2026 NAEP Reading Assessment uses an expanded set of research-based contextual variables (Guthrie & Klauda, 2015; Guthrie, Wigfield & Von Secker, 2000) to understand reading achievement (Solano-Flores, 2011; Solano-Flores & Nelson-Barber, 2001). Contextual variables are measurable, and some are also malleable (i.e., they can be influenced). These include *reader characteristics* (e.g., students' self-reports about engagement and motivation, knowledge, agency, effort, and interest) and *environmental characteristics* (students' perceptions about facets of home, community, or school settings, including their perceptions about classrooms, sense of belonging, and support).

The current NAEP Reading Framework collects and reports data on contextual variables, factors that shape students' opportunities to learn, including time, content, instructional strategies, and instructional resources. Contextual variables are used by researchers to try to predict or account for variance in the outcome of interest: reading comprehension scores on NAEP. The 2026 NAEP Reading Framework's

emphasis on the cultural assets of individuals and the power of context to shape learning and development leads naturally to the need to identify and expand research-based contextual variables for reading. By measuring students' differential engagement with reading and their access to home and community resources such as libraries, tutoring, and out-of-school programs, the expanded contextual variable data will support efforts by researchers, educators, and policymakers to interpret students' differential performance on the NAEP Reading Assessment.

The 2026 NAEP Reading Framework can guide the development of instruments to capture the proposed contextual variables by anticipating how students with different background experiences will interpret what is being asked of them. This approach to assessment acknowledges that reading is a complex process shaped by many factors. Factors may include how social and cultural practice influences how readers approach, engage with, and make meaning from texts (Mislevy, 2019; Moje, Afflerbach, Enciso, & Lesaux, 2020; Moje & Luke, 2009; NASEM, 2019; Pacheco, 2015, 2018). Readers' values, beliefs, experiences, and ways of communicating and thinking are all shaped by their everyday experiences (Lee, 2007, 2016a). Readers' histories of engagement with texts also affect how often they read, the types of texts they read, and their purposes for reading (Cazden, 2002; Heath, 1983, 2012; Lee 1993, 2005; 2020; Phillips Galloway, Brown, & Uccelli, 2020).

The 2026 NAEP Reading Framework envisions an integrated and coherent system of reporting. This reporting system would include research-based contextual variables that form an interrelated network intended to capture reader and environmental characteristics. Taken together, the network of contextual variables is intended to a) correlate with performance on the outcome measure of reading comprehension, b) be malleable (that is, influenced by differences in school and community settings), and c) comply with the provision of the NAEP law that prohibits assessment of personal or family beliefs and attitudes. Specific questionnaire items and process data queries are selected or created to address the variables in light of each one's potential contribution to the whole.

Reader Characteristics

Research demonstrates that when students do not see an assessment as meaningful or relevant, it may not adequately capture what they know and are able to do (Valencia, Wixson, & Pearson, 2014). With respect to reader characteristics, the 2026 NAEP Reading Framework seeks to describe the role of students' perception of the interest, difficulty, and familiarity of texts, tasks, and contexts on their performances (Pintrich and Schrauben 1992; Eccles, O'Neil et al. 2005; Valencia, Wixson, & Pearson, 2014). Reader characteristic data to be collected from questionnaires and process data include the following:

Cognition and Metacognition

1. **Cognitive strategies** in reading comprehension refer to skills used to understand a text, such as drawing inferences to connect sentences together and checking to be certain that text information is fully understood (OECD, 2018).
2. **Metacognitive strategies** in reading comprehension refer to, for example, a student's use of a mental guidance system to perform such operations as deciding which sections of text are most relevant to an assigned reading goal, how to link two sections, and/or when to reread to seek more information or clarify understanding (Cho & Afflerbach, 2017).
3. **Topical knowledge** refers to students' use of their pre-existing knowledge of the reading topic to enable them to understand text information and construct new knowledge (O'Reilly, Wang, & Sabatini, 2019).

Engagement and Motivation

1. **Volume of reading** refers to the amount of reading a student does for personal interest, pleasure or learning (Schaffner, Schiefele, & Ulferts, 2013).
2. **Reading for enjoyment** refers to the goals, uses, purposes, reasons and benefits students have for reading in school and out of school (Pitzer & Skinner, 2017).

3. **Motivations for reading** refer to students' attention, effort, interest, and value for reading a particular text with a unique set of tasks and questions related to it (NAEP Reading Special Study, 2019).

Environmental Characteristics

Like reader characteristics, environmental characteristics are also important in accounting for student performance. For example, students vary in their participation in cultural communities that may value reading in varied ways and integrate reading into their lives for different purposes (Skerrett, 2020). Students' histories of engagement and participation constitute resources readers accumulate across their lifetimes and bring to bear on reading tasks, including those on NAEP assessments. Furthermore, what it means to read has evolved over time as cultural communities and societies have employed texts for different purposes and goals. Understanding students' differential access to community resources that support literacy development (e.g., libraries, tutoring, out-of-school programs) is important, since as these environmental contexts shift, so do the roles of reading and texts in students' lives. The degree to which schools and communities offer access to out-of-school resources influences, to some degree, students' opportunities to learn, including their own self-initiated learning, which may vary considerably. These characteristics are surveyed with regard to students' perceptions of them. Environmental characteristic data to be collected from questionnaires include the following:

Self-Reports of School and Community Resources

1. **School social support** refers to the extent to which students perceive that their teachers and peers believe they contribute positively to classroom reading (through listening, speaking and interacting well with others) (Vaux, Phillips, Holly, Thompson, Williams, & Steward, 1986).
2. **Belonging in school** refers to the extent to which students perceive themselves to be accepted members of the school community (Faircloth & Hamm, 2005).
3. **Participation in out-of-school reading/literacy activities** refers to the degree to which students have access to resources (i.e., books, computers, media centers, camps, and community organizations) that utilize literacy for enjoyment, communication, learning, and the pursuit of a variety of activities (Bowen, Bowen & Ware, 2002).

Self-Reports of Teacher, Instructional, and Classroom Supports

1. **Teacher support for reading engagement** refers to the extent to which students perceive their teacher(s) as providing materials and tasks that encourage the development of their reading competence and engagement (Afflerbach, Hurt, & Cho, 2020).
2. **Teacher support for motivation** refers to the degree to which students perceive their teacher(s) to support their interests and reading goals (Wigfield & Wentzel, 2007).
3. **Teacher support for students' background experiences** refers to the students' perceptions that their teacher(s) recognizes and uses students' cultural, language, and social knowledge during reading instruction (Shin, Daly & Vera, 2007).
4. **Program and curricular support for reading development** refers to the extent to which teachers and administrators perceive that the school's reading program and curriculum enables them to support students' development of effective reading practices. This may also refer to the extent to which students perceive that the school's reading program and curriculum supports their development of effective reading practices.

The NAEP 2026 Reading Framework expands collecting and reporting of contextual variables via use of refined survey item design, thereby allowing policy makers and stakeholders to gain more actionable insights regarding the variables' potential correlations with students' efforts and their performances. For example, students' reported sense of reading engagement and motivation could be positively related to higher levels of NAEP Reading performance (Guthrie, Wigfield & You, 2012). Students' positive

perceptions of their teachers' support and classroom climate could also be associated with higher NAEP Reading performance (Pitzer & Skinner, 2017). If relations such as these emerge from NAEP, they could have meaningful implications for the need to attend to perceptions, identity, and affect to support reading comprehension and achievement (Durlak et al., 2015; Guthrie & Klauda, 2016; Katz et al., 2019; Shin et al., 2007; Skerrett, 2020), recognizing that the causal nature of these variables cannot be demonstrated with NAEP cross-sectional data.

Data Sources

Beyond expanding the coverage of contextual variables, the 2026 NAEP Reading Framework also updates the method for collecting such information. In addition to items in the *questionnaires* that are routinely completed by students, teachers, and administrators from participating schools or are drawn from available state, district, or school records, information about some variables will be obtained from the *process data* (computer-generated records of navigational data collected automatically as students engage with the assessment) (Ho, 2017; Bergner & Davier, 2018). Exhibit 4.2 provides a list of variables, along with their source in the revised contextual variable plan.

Exhibit 4.2. Contextual Variables

Variables	Source		
	Student Questionnaire	Teacher/ Administrator Questionnaires	Process Data
Reader Characteristics			
Cognition and Metacognition			
Cognitive strategies	√	√	√
Metacognitive strategies	√		√
Topical knowledge	√	√	
Engagement and Motivation			
Volume of reading	√	√	√
Reading for enjoyment	√	√	
Motivations for reading	√	√	
Environmental Characteristics			
Reports of School and Community Resources			
School social support	√	√	
Belonging in school	√	√	
Participation in out-of-school reading/literacy activities	√		
Reports of Teacher, Instructional, and Classroom Supports			
Teacher support for reading engagement	√	√	
Teacher support for motivation	√	√	
Teacher support for students' background experiences	√	√	
Program and curricular support for reading development	√	√	

Enhancing NAEP's Reporting Capacity

This chapter describes information that can help contextualize and explain the results NAEP reports and serve as a useful resource for informing educational policy related to teaching reading and learning to read. The evidence collected has the potential to both report on and offer insights into relations between reading outcomes, students' cognitive processes and perceptions about factors that contribute to reading comprehension. The importance and visibility of NAEP results are unquestioned within the educational policy arena at both the national and state levels. When the NAEP Report Card for Reading is issued every two years, policy makers and the public pay attention, particularly to trend data. Yet, NAEP results have also been subject to misinterpretation (Linn and Dunbar, 1992; Jaeger, 2003; NASEM, 2017). Because results are reported in broad categories (Race by Grade or Language Status by School Setting – Urban/Rural), they can be inappropriately interpreted. In addition, in the past, achievement results have seldom been reported as a function of malleable factors for either reader characteristics (e.g., student motivation) or environmental characteristics (e.g., opportunity to learn factors). Implementing the changes summarized below can mitigate potential misinterpretations and increase the usefulness of NAEP data.

1. **Reframe the Reporting System Within the Larger Assessment Construct.** The Framework reflects the field's evolving understanding of reading comprehension, cognitive processes, and the changing nature of reading demands in today's society (American Educational Research Association, American Psychological Association, and National Council of Measurement in Education, 2014; International Testing Commission, 2019; Task Force on Assessment of the International Reading Association, 2010). Importantly, it optimizes readers' opportunities to demonstrate reading comprehension that reflect the changing demands of our increasingly complex world (Mislevy, 2016; NASEM, 2018). Reframing and expanding the reporting system is as important as the assessment construct itself in enhancing the appropriateness of inferences based on NAEP results.
2. **Revise Questionnaires**. To increase the capacity to examine the relationships between readers and their environments, NAEP seeks to revise and refresh survey questions. A thorough review of current surveys—both the reading-specific and core questionnaires for the three categories of participants (students, teachers, and administrators)—will determine questions that need to be revised, replaced, or discarded. While continuing its history of ensuring the appropriateness and sensitivity of all NAEP questionnaire items, this review also enables development of questions that reflect improvements in survey item design and that will allow for data that reflect the constructs outlined for questionnaires in Exhibit 4.2.
3. **Disaggregate Scores to Achieve More Nuanced Reporting.** Just as international, state, and formative/benchmark assessments have increased disaggregation of data in reporting, it is essential to add nuance to the reporting of performance for the major demographic categories (e.g., SES within race/ethnicity) to keep NAEP reporting structures current and useful.
4. **Expand Reporting Categories for English Learners**. Expanding the number of categories for reporting the achievement of ELs enables NAEP to track the progress of different subgroups, which is important for the added category of former ELs. By reporting the performance of non-ELs and former ELs separately, it will be possible to determine whether the two groups perform at similar levels on the NAEP Reading Assessment.
5. **Mine Process Data for Evidence of Cognitive and Metacognitive Processing**. Initial forays evaluating the utility of the process data for NAEP (Bergner & von Davier, 2018) and other digitally delivered assessments and instructional programs (Ho, 2017) suggest that there is substantial potential for using these navigational data as indirect indices of cognitive and metacognitive processes. These indices can be used, perhaps in triangulation with measures of the same variables from reading questionnaire responses, to understand comprehension performance more deeply.

Simple bar graphs can be displayed in *The Nation's Report Card*, and data can be connected to reading performance in the NAEP Data Explorer.

6. **Enhance the Visibility and Utility of the NAEP Reporting Portfolio.** An effort to expand, energize, and advertise the untapped resources of the NAEP reporting portfolio would allow for more nuanced data analyses. The NAEP Data Explorer, for example, permits users to go online and generate more sophisticated analyses than typically appear in the *Report Card*, which, by its nature, can only provide foundational reporting. In the NAEP Data Explorer for the 2019 Reading Assessment, a user can query the database to obtain a report that, for fourth graders in the nation, breaks down the performance of low- versus high-SES students on the cognitive targets of Locate and Recall, Integrate and Interpret, and Analyze and Evaluate when reading literary and informational text. For sound psychometric reasons, NAEP results are not reported separately for the Comprehension Targets; regardless, NAEP data can be used to obtain more in-depth reports beyond the standard ones offered by *The Nation's Report Card*.

Conclusion

Reading comprehension performances vary depending on the combination of individual and contextual factors at the time of the assessment. Thus, NAEP Reading Assessment scores provide only a snapshot of the nation's students' reading comprehension performance as displayed in a particular testing situation at a certain moment in time. Recognizing these inherent limitations, the assessments derived from the 2026 NAEP Reading Framework offer increased opportunities to understand the validity, efficacy, and utility of students' assets and needs as readers.

The 2026 NAEP Reading Framework provides opportunities to examine malleable contextual variables that may be correlated with comprehension scores. The identification of malleable factors in the 2026 NAEP Reading Assessment reporting system also provides information that may eventually lead to policies and practices that improve students' reading comprehension instruction and performance. Moreover, the disaggregation of reporting that examines heterogeneity within groups (e.g., race/ethnicity, SES, gender, English learners) along with further disaggregations will provide opportunities for further understanding and greater utility for practice and research and facilitate the avoidance of some common misinterpretations of data (e.g., overgeneralizing about groups).

The enhanced reporting system for NAEP will provide a wealth of new data sources for policymakers at state and district levels. Having access to reporting by states and networks of districts, such as TUDA, can inform state- and district-level initiatives about factors that not only predict performance but that are also malleable. Finally, the updated reporting system offers opportunities for researchers, who will have access to a wider range of data for exploring foundational questions around the dynamic nature of reading comprehension.

The NAEP Reading Framework achievement level descriptions (ALDs) articulate specific expectations of student performance in reading at grades 4, 8 and 12. Like other subject-specific ALDs, the NAEP Reading Framework ALDs presented in this appendix translate the generic NAEP policy definitions into grade- and subject-specific descriptions of performance.

NAEP Policy Definitions

- ***NAEP Basic.*** This level denotes partial mastery of prerequisite knowledge and skills that are fundamental for performance at the *NAEP Proficient* level.
- ***NAEP Proficient.*** This level represents solid academic performance for each NAEP assessment. Students reaching this level have demonstrated competency over challenging subject matter, including subject-matter knowledge, application of such knowledge to real world situations, and analytical skills appropriate to the subject matter.
- ***NAEP Advanced.*** This level signifies superior performance beyond *NAEP Proficient*.

Range ALDs

This Specifications presents range ALDs for the NAEP Reading Assessment. For each achievement level, the corresponding range ALD details observable evidence of student achievement. In many cases, range ALDs also illustrate "changes" in skills across achievement levels, portraying an increasingly sophisticated grasp of the material from one achievement level (and from one grade level) to the next. Achievement levels are also cumulative, meaning each ALD in each grade includes all the reading achievement expectations identified in all the lower achievement levels and grade levels.

Range ALDs should not be confused with reporting ALDs. The fundamental difference between the two is straightforward; range ALDs communicate **expectations**, and reporting ALDs convey **results**. In other words, range ALDs are **conceptually driven**, based on the model of reading and the Assessment Construct in the NAEP framework. They answer the question, given what we know about the development of reading, what should students be able to do at different grade and achievement levels when responding to different combinations of texts and tasks? By contrast, reporting ALDs are **empirically driven**, based on **actual** performance of students who have taken NAEP. They answer the question, given the distribution of NAEP performance, what can students at different grade and achievement levels do when responding to various combinations of texts and tasks?

The 2026 NAEP Reading Framework does not provide reporting ALDs; those will be constructed using empirical data during a later stage in the NAEP cycle, i.e., an operational administration of the NAEP Reading Assessment. Further detail about the development of the reporting ALDs for NAEP is provided in the Governing Board's policy statement on achievement level setting.

Organizational Features and Structures of the Reading Construct: Contexts, Purposes, Comprehension Targets, and Text Complexity

The ALDs in this appendix are structured to mirror the presentation of the reading construct provided in the Framework narrative. The primary organizational structure in the Framework narrative is the disciplinary context. Whereas the prior (2009) NAEP Reading Framework identified two reading contexts (literary and informational) the 2026 Framework has identified three (literature, science, and social studies). In the ALDs below, all three disciplinary contexts are first described within each performance level at each grade, as also seen in the 2026 Framework. Following those general descriptions, for each grade, are listed (in bullet points) some of the possible disciplinary context-specific skills that are associated with the Comprehension Targets and which may appear in an administered NAEP assessment

block. **The skills included in these ALDs are illustrative of the range of possible skills that could be addressed in the NAEP Reading Assessment.** A NAEP Reading Assessment block targets a selection of skills appropriate to the reading text(s) in a disciplinary context at a given grade.

Comprehension Targets and Text Complexity

Over the course of the NAEP Reading Assessment, students will engage with texts of various discourse structures and an appropriate grade-level range of text complexity. While reading these texts, students will complete varied reading comprehension activities that include specific purposes, tasks, processes, and consequences. The reader, per his or her achievement level, will employ various knowledge types to accomplish the assessment's reading comprehension activities. In doing so, the reader will demonstrate achievement relative to four *Comprehension Targets*: (1) Locate and Recall; (2) Integrate and Interpret; (3) Analyze and Evaluate; and (4) Use and Apply. Items must be developed to address the range of Comprehension Targets with the expectation that there will be a distribution of Comprehension Targets at each achievement level. Students at each achievement level are expected to meet the demands of each Comprehension Target. However, as the complexity of texts increases on a given reading assessment, students, on average, are expected to demonstrate less competency with skills associated with higher-level Comprehension Targets, such as Use and Apply.

Broad and Specific Reading Purposes

Reading activities in an assessment block are situated within a disciplinary context as well as a broad reading purpose. Each assessment block is designated as having one of two *broad* purposes: Reading to Develop Understanding or Reading to Solve a Problem. Reading to Develop Understanding (RDU) blocks ask students to *read and comprehend deeply* (analyzing, inferencing, interpreting, and critiquing) in or across disciplinary contexts. By contrast, Reading to Solve a Problem (RSP) blocks ask students to demonstrate understanding across multiple texts and related perspectives in order to solve a problem. Reading to Solve a Problem activities do involve comprehending text, but in the service of a specific action or product, such as a classroom presentation.

Both RDU and RSP blocks also have ***specific*** purposes with reader roles that shape how and why readers engage with the tasks, texts, and items in each block. Unlike the broad purposes, these specific purposes are applicable only to the texts in a given task in the assessment block. The purpose-driven statements will reflect the contexts and scenarios in which reading in the real world occurs. The subsections below describe how specific reading purposes map to disciplinary contexts.

Literature Texts. People engage in reading literature for the following purposes:

- To understand human experience
- To entertain themselves and others
- To reflect on and solve personal and social dilemmas
- To appreciate and use authors' craft to develop interpretations

In school, students read, create, and discuss literature texts such as poems, short stories, chapter books, novels, and films. Outside of school, students participate in book clubs, create fan fiction and book reviews, follow and discuss authors, dramatize literary works with animation and music, and more. NAEP simulates these Contexts of Reading to Engage in Literature by providing test takers with activities to respond to literary and everyday texts like those read in and outside of school.

Science Texts. People engage in reading science for the following purposes:

- To understand natural and material phenomena
- To design solutions to problems
- To explore and discuss issues and ideas
- To consider impacts on themselves and society

In school, students read, create, and discuss science texts such as explanations, investigations, journal articles, trade books, and more. They design solutions to engineering challenges, use diagrams and flow charts, and follow step-by-step procedures to investigate scientific phenomena. Outside of school, students engage in reading science when participating in games, cooking, and crafts, and reading and viewing science and health news. NAEP simulates these Contexts of Reading to Engage in Science by providing test taskers with activities to respond to science and everyday texts like those read in and outside of school.

Social Studies Texts. People engage in reading social studies for the following purposes:

- To understand past events and how they may impact the present
- To explore and discuss issues and ideas
- To understand human motivation, perception, and ethics
- To advocate for change for themselves and society

In school, students read social studies texts such as primary and secondary source documents, historical narratives in textbooks, case studies, current events, maps, data, court cases, and more. They read, create, and discuss memoirs, timelines, and biographies. Outside of school, people engage in reading history and social studies when participating in trivia games, crafts, civic activities, community discussions, self-help, and community service. NAEP simulates these contexts of reading to engage in social studies by providing test tasks with activities to respond to history/social studies and everyday texts like those read in and outside of school.

NAEP Reading Achievement Levels: Grade 4

As noted above in the section "Organizational Features and Structures of the Reading Construct: Contexts, Purposes, Comprehension Targets, and Text Complexity," in regards to Comprehension Targets and text complexity, students will engage with texts of various discourse structures and an appropriate grade-level range of text complexity. While reading these texts, students will complete varied reading comprehension activities that include specific purposes, tasks, processes, and consequences. The reader, per his or her achievement level, will employ various knowledge types to accomplish the assessment's reading comprehension activities. In doing so, the reader will demonstrate achievement relative to four Comprehension Targets: (1) Locate and Recall; (2) Integrate and Interpret; (3) Analyze and Evaluate; and (4) Use and Apply. Items must be developed to address the range of Comprehension Targets with the expectation that there will be a distribution of Comprehension Targets at each achievement level. **Students at each achievement level are expected to meet the demands of each Comprehension Target.** However, as the complexity of texts increases on a given reading assessment, students, on average, are expected to demonstrate less competency with skills associated with higher-level Comprehension Targets, such as Use and Apply.

NAEP Basic

Fourth-grade students performing at the *NAEP Basic* level should be able to locate, recall, and/or record specific pieces of information, identify relationships between explicitly stated pieces of information, make simple inferences and interpretations in static, dynamic, and multimodal texts, determine the accuracy of summaries, and show understanding of vocabulary in the disciplinary contexts.

When engaged in reading literature texts such as fiction, drama, film, poetry, and literary nonfiction, fourth-grade readers performing at the *NAEP Basic* level should be able to use textual evidence as support to identify or determine literary elements such as character point of view, theme or central message, problem, and setting. Readers should be able to explain how a text's illustrations contribute to what is conveyed by the text, explain the differences (e.g., text features) among literature subgenres appearing in

specific task texts, and show understanding of vocabulary and simple figurative language. Readers should be able to determine the accuracy of a simple summary of a text and continue the narration of an incomplete story to a conclusion of their making.

When engaged in reading science texts such as exposition (including literary nonfiction), argumentation, and procedural texts (including investigations), fourth-grade readers performing at the *NAEP Basic* level should be able to use textual evidence as support to determine the main idea and how it is supported by key details, determine and interpret an author's point of view or purpose, and form an evidence-based opinion about a text. Readers should be able to interpret and integrate information presented in a text visually, quantitatively, and orally, analyze specific results of a simple multistep procedure, and show understanding of academic and domain-specific vocabulary. Readers should be able to apply simpler ideas acquired through reading to solve a new problem.

When engaged in reading social studies texts such as exposition (including literary nonfiction), argumentation, and documents of historical and literary significance, fourth-grade readers performing at the *NAEP Basic* level should be able to determine the main idea and how it is supported by key details, determine and interpret an author's point of view or purpose, and form an evidence-based opinion about a text. Readers should be able to describe text structures as they pertain to the presentation of content in a specific text, and compare and contrast explicit information found in a firsthand and secondhand account of the same event or topic. Readers should be able to determine the accuracy of a simple summary of a text and integrate information from lower complexity sources to apply to a new context.

NAEP Proficient

Fourth-grade students performing at the *NAEP Proficient* level should be able to make more complex inferences and interpretations, reconcile inconsistencies within and across static, dynamic, and multimodal texts, and explain how an author uses reasons and evidence to support particular points in a text.

When engaged in reading literature texts such as fiction, drama, film, poetry, and literary nonfiction, fourth-grade readers performing at the *NAEP Proficient* level should be able to use textual evidence as support to describe in depth character, setting, and plot, and to explain how a theme or central message is conveyed through details in a text. Readers should be able to analyze how information from a multimedia source contributes to understanding of a printed text and show understanding of nuances in word meaning. Readers should be able to apply understanding of a character to an interpretation of another character's point of view.

When engaged in reading science texts such as exposition (including literary nonfiction), argumentation, and procedural texts (including investigations), fourth-grade readers performing at the *NAEP Proficient* level should be able to use textual evidence as support to explain events, procedures, ideas, and concepts based on specific information in and across texts. Readers should be able to make predictions based upon content in the text and to interpret an author's point of view or purpose, including in reference to a procedure and in comparison to another text's author. Readers should be able to determine missing steps in a procedure (e.g., a simple investigation; craft-making related to a scientific concept) based on information gained from reading texts.

When engaged in reading social studies texts such as exposition (including literary nonfiction), argumentation, and documents of historical and literary significance, fourth-grade readers performing at the *NAEP Proficient* level should be able to use textual evidence as support to explain events, procedures, ideas, and concepts based on specific information in and across texts. Readers should be able to explain how information presented in a text visually, quantitatively, and orally contributes to an understanding of a text. Readers should be able to adopt the persona of a historical figure when applying information learned to a new context.

NAEP Advanced

Fourth-grade students performing at the *NAEP Advanced* level should be able to make complex inferences and to support their interpretations, conclusions, and their judgments based upon evidence within and across static, dynamic, and multimodal texts.

When engaged in reading literature texts such as fiction, drama, film, poetry, and literary nonfiction, fourth-grade readers performing at the *NAEP Advanced* level should be able to use textual evidence as support to explain character motivation and behavior and how characters interact with setting and plot. Readers should be able to evaluate how characters or themes resonate with common human experiences. Readers should be able to apply knowledge acquired about author's craft to explain how an author achieves an effect.

When engaged in reading science texts such as exposition (including literary nonfiction), argumentation, and procedural texts (including investigations), fourth-grade readers performing at the *NAEP Advanced* level should be able to determine the significance of information and arguments made in a text. Readers should be able to make predictions based upon content in the text, to interpret an author's point of view or purpose, and to argue for or against a particular interpretation.

When engaged in reading social studies texts such as exposition (including literary nonfiction), argumentation, and documents of historical and literary significance, fourth-grade readers performing at the *NAEP Advanced* level should be able to determine the significance of information and arguments made in a text. Readers should be able to make predictions based upon content in the text, to interpret an author's point of view or purpose, and to argue for or against a particular interpretation. Readers should be able to use and apply information from texts in a new context, such as proposing a caption for an illustration or cartoon, or to create a set of recommendations.

To summarize these NAEP Reading Achievement Levels for Grade 4, Exhibit A.1 shows some of the illustrative skills in table format. Additional illustrative skills are located below the table.

Exhibit A.1. NAEP Reading Achievement Levels: Grade 4

	Reading to Engage in Literature	**Reading to Engage in Science**	**Reading to Engage in Social Studies**
	When reading static, dynamic, and multimodal texts, students will:		
NAEP Basic	• Locate, recall, and/or record specific pieces of information. • Identify relationships between explicitly stated pieces of information. • Make simple inferences and interpretations in texts. • Determine the accuracy of summaries. • Show understanding of vocabulary in the disciplinary contexts.		
	• Use textual evidence as support to identify or determine literary elements such as character point of view, theme or central message, problem, and setting. • Explain how a text's illustrations contribute to what is conveyed by the text. • Explain the differences (e.g., text features) among literature subgenres	• Use textual evidence as support to determine the main idea and how it is supported by key details. • Determine and interpret an author's point of view or purpose. • Form an evidence-based opinion about a text. • Interpret and integrate information presented in a text visually, quantitatively, and orally.	• Determine the main idea and how it is supported by key details. • Determine and interpret an author's point of view or purpose. • Form an evidence-based opinion about a text. • Describe the text structures as they pertain to the presentation of content in a specific text.

	appearing in specific task texts. • Show understanding of vocabulary and simple figurative language. • Determine the accuracy of a simple summary of a text. • Continue the narration of an incomplete story to a conclusion of their making.	• Analyze specific results of a simple multistep procedure. • Show understanding of academic and domain-specific vocabulary. • Apply simpler ideas acquired through reading to solve a new problem.	• Compare and contrast explicit information found in a firsthand and secondhand account of the same event or topic. • Determine the accuracy of a simple summary of a text. • Integrate information from lower complexity sources to apply to a new context.
NAEP Proficient	• Make more complex inferences and interpretations. • Reconcile inconsistencies within and across texts. • Explain how an author uses reasons and evidence to support particular points in a text.		
	• Use textual evidence as support to describe in depth character, setting, and plot, and to explain how a theme or central message is conveyed through details in a text. • Analyze how information from a multimedia source contributes to understanding of a printed text. • Show understanding of nuances in word meaning. • Apply understanding of a character to an interpretation of another character's point of view.	• Use textual evidence as support to explain events, procedures, ideas, and concepts based on specific information in and across texts. • Make predictions based upon content in the text. • Interpret an author's point of view or purpose, including in reference to a procedure and in comparison to another text's author. • Determine missing steps in a procedure (e.g., a simple investigation; craft-making related to a scientific concept) based on information gained from reading texts.	• Use textual evidence as support to explain events, procedures, ideas, and concepts based on specific information in and across texts. • Explain how information presented in a text visually, quantitatively, and orally contributes to an understanding of a text. • Adopt the persona of a historical figure when applying information learned to a new context.
NAEP Advanced	• Make complex inferences. • Support their interpretations, conclusions, and their judgments based upon evidence within and across texts.		
	• Use textual evidence as support to explain character motivation and behavior and how characters interact with setting and plot. • Evaluate how characters or themes resonate with common human experiences.	• Determine the significance of information and arguments made in a text. • Make predictions based upon content in the text. • Interpret an author's point of view or purpose. • Argue for or against a particular interpretation.	• Determine the significance of information and arguments made in a text. • Make predictions based upon content in the text. • Interpret an author's point of view or purpose. • Argue for or against a particular interpretation.

	• Apply knowledge acquired about author's craft to explain how an author achieves an effect.		• Use and apply information from texts in a new context, such as proposing a caption for an illustration or cartoon, or to create a set of recommendations.

Illustrative Skills Associated with NAEP Reading Comprehension Targets: Grade 4

At each achievement level and with texts at each of the three text complexity levels (low; medium; high), students are expected to demonstrate to varying degrees, per achievement level and text complexity, skills associated with the Comprehension Targets, including but not limited to the skills listed below for each disciplinary context.

Reading to Engage in Literature

- Locate/recall/record specific information or details related to the text
- Determine theme, central message, lesson, moral, or central idea
- Explain how a theme, central message, lesson, or moral is conveyed through details in a text
- Evaluate and form an opinion about a specified aspect of a text or texts and support that opinion with text-based information
- Demonstrate an understanding of the purpose/function of specified text features (e.g., introductions, sidebars, headings, illustrations, charts)
- Determine the accuracy of a summary of a text
- Describe in depth character(s), setting(s), and event(s) in the plot
- Explain how characters' actions contribute to the sequence of events
- Demonstrate an understanding of how the parts of a text are related
- Demonstrate an understanding of differences in point of view across texts
- Determine and interpret the point of view of character(s)
- Explain how specific aspects of a text's illustrations contribute to what is conveyed by the words in a text
- Compare two or more texts in relation to the above skills
- Explain and/or evaluate how information from a multimedia source contributes to understanding of a printed text
- Show understanding of vocabulary, figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings (e.g., shades of meaning)
- Use information from text(s) in a new situation

Reading to Engage in Science

- Locate/recall/record specific information or details related to the text
- Determine the main idea and explain how the main idea is supported by key details
- Evaluate and form an opinion about a specified aspect of a text or texts and support that opinion with text-based information
- Demonstrate an understanding of the purpose/function of specified text features (e.g., introductions, sidebars, headings, illustrations, charts)
- Determine the accuracy of a summary of a text
- Explain events, procedures, or ideas or concepts, based on specific information in the text
- Show understanding of how to follow precisely a simple multistep procedure

- Analyze the specific results of a simple multistep procedure based on explanations in the text
- Demonstrate an understanding of how an author organizes information in a text or part of a text
- Determine and interpret an author's point of view or purpose
- Explain how specific aspects of a text's illustrations (e.g., maps, photographs) contribute to what is conveyed by the words in a text
- Interpret information presented in a text visually, quantitatively, and orally (e.g., in charts, graphs, diagrams, timelines, animations, interactive elements on web pages) and explain how the information contributes to an understanding of the text
- Evaluate the type and nature of information in a text
- Explain how an author uses reasons and evidence to support particular points in a text
- Explain and/or evaluate how information from a multimedia source contributes to understanding of a printed text
- Compare two or more texts in relation to the above skills
- Show understanding of general academic and domain-specific vocabulary and of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings (e.g., shades of meaning)
- Use information from text(s) in a new situation

Reading to Engage in Social Studies

- Locate/recall/record specific information or details related to the text
- Determine the main idea and explain how the main idea is supported by key details
- Evaluate and form an opinion about a specified aspect of a text or texts and support that opinion with text-based information
- Demonstrate an understanding of the purpose/function of specified text features (e.g., introductions, sidebars, headings, illustrations, charts)
- Determine the accuracy of a summary of a text
- Explain events, procedures, or ideas or concepts, based on specific information in the text
- Describe the overall structure (e.g., chronology, comparison, cause/effect, problem/solution) of events, procedures, concepts, or information in a text or a part of a text
- Determine and interpret an author's point of view or purpose
- Compare and contrast a firsthand account and a secondhand account of the same event or topic, including describing the differences in focus and the information presented
- Explain how specific aspects of a text's illustrations (e.g., maps, photographs) contribute to what is conveyed by the words in a text
- Interpret information presented in a text visually, quantitatively, and orally (e.g., in charts, graphs, diagrams, timelines, animations, interactive elements on web pages) and explain how the information contributes to an understanding of the text
- Evaluate the type and nature of information in a text
- Explain how an author uses reasons and evidence to support particular points in a text
- Explain and/or evaluate how information from a multimedia source contributes to understanding of a printed text
- Compare two or more texts in relation to the above skills
- Show understanding of general academic and domain-specific vocabulary and of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings (e.g., shades of meaning)
- Use information from text(s) in a new situation

NAEP Reading Achievement Levels: Grade 8

As noted above in the section "Organizational Features and Structures of the Reading Construct: Contexts, Purposes, Comprehension Targets, and Text Complexity," in regards to Comprehension Targets

and text complexity, students will engage with texts of various discourse structures and an appropriate grade-level range of text complexity. While reading these texts, students will complete varied reading comprehension activities that include specific purposes, tasks, processes, and consequences. The reader, per his or her achievement level, will employ various knowledge types to accomplish the assessment's reading comprehension activities. In doing so, the reader will demonstrate achievement relative to four Comprehension Targets: (1) Locate and Recall; (2) Integrate and Interpret; (3) Analyze and Evaluate; and (4) Use and Apply. Items must be developed to address the range of Comprehension Targets with the expectation that there will be a distribution of Comprehension Targets at each achievement level. **Students at each achievement level are expected to meet the demands of each Comprehension Target.** However, as the complexity of texts increases on a given reading assessment, students, on average, are expected to demonstrate less competency with skills associated with higher-level Comprehension Targets, such as Use and Apply.

NAEP Basic

Eighth-grade students performing at the *NAEP Basic* level should be able to find information in static, dynamic, and multimodal texts, make simple inferences and interpretations within and across texts, make predictions based upon content in the text, determine the accuracy of summaries, analyze word choice, and show understanding of vocabulary in the disciplinary contexts.

When engaged in reading literature texts such as fiction, drama, film, poetry, and literary nonfiction, eighth-grade readers performing at the *NAEP Basic* level should be able to use textual evidence as support to determine theme or central idea and aspects of character, setting, and plot. They should be able to compare basic literary attributes of two or more texts and make judgments about how each author presents events. Readers show understanding of vocabulary and figurative language. They should be able to determine the accuracy of a summary of a text and construct an argument that prosecutes or defends the actions of a character by using evidence from the reading text.

When engaged in reading science texts such as exposition (including literary nonfiction), argumentation, and procedural texts (including experiments), eighth-grade readers performing at the *NAEP Basic* level should be able to use textual evidence as support to determine the central ideas and conclusions of a text and explain how a text makes connections among and distinctions between individuals, ideas, and/or events. Readers should be able to integrate quantitative or technical information expressed in words in a text with a version of that information expressed visually (e.g., in a flowchart, diagram, model, graph, or table), show understanding of how to follow precisely a multistep procedure, and show understanding of academic and domain-specific vocabulary, key terms, and symbols. Readers should be able to apply simpler ideas acquired through reading to solve a new problem.

When engaged in reading social studies texts such as exposition (including literary nonfiction), argumentation, and documents of historical and literary significance, eighth-grade readers performing at the *NAEP Basic* level should be able to determine the central ideas, determine and interpret an author's point of view or purpose, and distinguish between fact, opinion, and reasoned judgment in a text. They should be able to demonstrate an understanding of the purpose/function of specified text features (e.g., introductions, sidebars, headings, illustrations, charts). Readers should be able to identify key steps in a text's description of a process related to social studies (e.g., how a bill becomes law). Readers should be able to use information from multiple sources to apply to a new context.

NAEP Proficient

Eighth-grade students performing at the *NAEP Proficient* level should be able to make more complex inferences and interpretations, form explanations and generalizations, generate alternatives, and apply new ideas acquired through reading to a new problem or context when reading static, dynamic, and multimodal texts. Students should be able to use text-based evidence to support arguments and conclusions.

When engaged in reading literature texts such as fiction, drama, film, poetry, and literary nonfiction, eighth-grade readers performing at the *NAEP Proficient* level should be able to analyze the development of the theme or central idea over the course of a text and how particular lines of dialogue or incidents in a text propel, the action, provoke a decision, or reveal aspects of character. Readers should be able to analyze how information from a multimedia source contributes to understanding of a printed text and how text structure contributes to meaning and style. They should be able to analyze how word choice impacts a text's meaning and tone. Readers should be able to apply analysis of multiple texts to an explanation of how different authors developed a similar theme or central idea.

When engaged in reading science texts such as exposition (including literary nonfiction), argumentation, and procedural texts (including experiments), eighth-grade readers performing at the *NAEP Proficient* level should be able to use textual evidence as support to analyze the specific results of a multistep procedure based on explanations in the text, analyze how the author acknowledges and responds to conflicting evidence and/or viewpoints, and analyze how two or more texts provide conflicting information on the same topic, identifying where the texts disagree on matters of fact or interpretation. Readers should be able to compare and contrast information gained from multimedia sources with that gained from reading a text on the same topic. Readers should be able to generate an alternative procedure based on knowledge acquired from information gained from reading texts.

When engaged in reading social studies texts such as exposition (including literary nonfiction), argumentation, and documents of historical and literary significance, eighth-grade readers performing at the *NAEP Proficient* level should be able to use textual evidence as support to explain how a text makes connections among and distinctions between individuals, ideas, and/or events (e.g., through comparisons, analogies, or categories). Readers should be able to analyze the relationship between a primary and secondary source on the same topic and analyze how two or more texts provide conflicting information on the same topic, identifying where the texts disagree on matters of fact or interpretation. They should be able to analyze the structure an author uses to organize a text. Readers should be able to present an argument that proposes a form of social action based on knowledge acquired and opinions formed from the reading texts.

NAEP Advanced

Eighth-grade students performing at the *NAEP Advanced* level should be able to make complex inferences and to support their interpretations, conclusions, and their judgments based upon evidence within and across texts. Students should be able to evaluate the relevance and strength of evidence to support an author's claims.

When engaged in reading literature texts such as fiction, drama, film, poetry, and literary nonfiction, eighth-grade readers performing at the *NAEP Advanced* level should be able to use textual evidence as support to analyze how multiple literary elements in a text relate to each other and to analyze points of view of and between character(s) and the reader/audience. They should be able to determine how the text structure contributes to the development of theme, setting, or plot. Readers should be able to describe how a story might change if written from the perspective of another character.

When engaged in reading science texts such as exposition (including literary nonfiction), argumentation, and procedural texts, eighth-grade readers performing at the *NAEP Advanced* level should be able to analyze the development of the central idea over the course of the text. They should be able to delineate and evaluate the argument, claims, and reasoning in a text, including whether the evidence is relevant and sufficient to support the claims. Readers should be able to construct an argument or explanation that synthesizes information from a range of sources to demonstrate a coherent understanding of a process, phenomenon, or concept.

When engaged in reading social studies texts such as exposition (including literary nonfiction), argumentation, and documents of historical and literary significance, eighth-grade readers performing at the

NAEP Advanced level should be able to analyze the development of the central idea over the course of the text and analyze how the author acknowledges and responds to conflicting evidence and/or viewpoints. Readers should be able to delineate and evaluate the argument, claims, and reasoning in a text, including whether the evidence is relevant and sufficient to support the claims. They should be able to trace and connect various factors (e.g., economic and societal) by incorporating acquired knowledge through reading multiple sources and conducting brief research.

To summarize these NAEP Reading Achievement Levels for Grade 8, Exhibit A.2 shows some of the illustrative skills in table format. Additional illustrative skills are located below the table.

Exhibit A.2. NAEP Reading Achievement Levels: Grade 8

<table>
<tr><th></th><th>Reading to Engage in Literature</th><th>Reading to Engage in Science</th><th>Reading to Engage in Social Studies</th></tr>
<tr><td></td><td colspan="3">When reading static, dynamic, and multimodal texts, students will:</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="2">NAEP Basic</td><td colspan="3">• Find information in texts.
• Make simple inferences and interpretations within and across texts.
• Make predictions based upon content in the text.
• Determine the accuracy of summaries.
• Analyze word choice.
• Show understanding of vocabulary in the disciplinary contexts.</td></tr>
<tr><td>• Use textual evidence as support to determine theme or central idea and aspects of character, setting, and plot.
• Compare basic literary attributes of two or more texts and make judgments about how each author presents events.
• Show understanding of vocabulary and figurative language.
• Determine the accuracy of a summary of a text.
• Construct an argument that prosecutes or defends the actions of a character by using evidence from the reading text.</td><td>• Use textual evidence as support to determine the central ideas and conclusions of a text.
• Explain how a text makes connections among and distinctions between individuals, ideas, and/or events.
• Integrate quantitative or technical information expressed in words in a text with a version of that information expressed visually (e.g., in a flowchart, diagram, model, graph, or table).
• Show understanding of how to follow precisely a multistep procedure.
• Show understanding of academic and domain-specific vocabulary, key terms, and symbols.
• Apply simpler ideas acquired through reading to solve a new problem.</td><td>• Determine the central ideas.
• Determine and interpret an author’s point of view or purpose.
• Distinguish between fact, opinion, and reasoned judgment in a text.
• Demonstrate an understanding of the purpose/function of specified text features (e.g., introductions, sidebars, headings, illustrations, charts).
• Identify key steps in a text’s description of a process related to social studies (e.g., how a bill becomes law).
• Use information from multiple sources to apply to a new context.</td></tr>
<tr><td>NAEP Proficient</td><td colspan="3">• Make more complex inferences and interpretations.
• Form explanations and generalizations.
• Generate alternatives.
• Apply new ideas acquired through reading to a new problem or context.</td></tr>
</table>

	• Use text-based evidence to support arguments and conclusions.		
	• Analyze the development of the theme or central idea over the course of a text. • Analyze how particular lines of dialogue or incidents in a text propel, the action, provoke a decision, or reveal aspects of character. • Analyze how information from a multimedia source contributes to understanding of a printed text. • Analyze how text structure contributes to meaning and style. • Analyze how word choice impacts a text's meaning and tone. • Apply analysis of multiple texts to an explanation of how different authors developed a similar theme or central idea.	• Use textual evidence as support to analyze the specific results of a multistep procedure based on explanations in the text. • Analyze how the author acknowledges and responds to conflicting evidence and/or viewpoints. • Analyze how two or more texts provide conflicting information on the same topic, identifying where the texts disagree on matters of fact or interpretation. • Compare and contrast information gained from multimedia sources with that gained from reading a text on the same topic. • Generate an alternative procedure based on knowledge acquired from information gained from reading texts.	• Use textual evidence as support to explain how a text makes connections among and distinctions between individuals, ideas, and/or events (e.g., through comparisons, analogies, or categories). • Analyze the relationship between a primary and secondary source on the same topic. • Analyze how two or more texts provide conflicting information on the same topic, identifying where the texts disagree on matters of fact or interpretation. • Analyze the structure an author uses to organize a text. • Present an argument that proposes a form of social action based on knowledge acquired and opinions formed from the reading texts.
NAEP Advanced	• Make complex inferences • Support their interpretations, conclusions, and their judgments based upon evidence within and across texts. • Evaluate the relevance and strength of evidence to support an author's claims.		
	• Use textual evidence as support to analyze how multiple literary elements in a text relate to each other and to analyze points of view of and between character(s) and the reader/audience. • Determine how the text structure contributes to the development of theme, setting, or plot. • Describe how a story might change if written from the perspective of another character.	• Analyze the development of the central idea over the course of the text. • Delineate and evaluate the argument, claims, and reasoning in a text, including whether the evidence is relevant and sufficient to support the claims. • Construct an argument or explanation that synthesizes information from a range of sources to demonstrate a coherent understanding of a	• Analyze the development of the central idea over the course of the text. • Analyze how the author acknowledges and responds to conflicting evidence and/or viewpoints. • Delineate and evaluate the argument, claims, and reasoning in a text, including whether the evidence is relevant and sufficient to support the claims.

		process, phenomenon, or concept.	• Trace and connect various factors (e.g., economic and societal) by incorporating acquired knowledge through reading multiple sources and conducting brief research.

Illustrative Skills Associated with NAEP Reading Comprehension Targets: Grade 8

At each achievement level and with texts at each of the three text complexity levels (low; medium; high), students are expected to demonstrate to varying degrees, per achievement level and text complexity, skills associated with the Comprehension Targets, including but not limited to the skills listed below for each disciplinary context.

Reading to Engage in Literature

- Locate/recall/record specific information or details related to the text
- Determine theme or central idea and aspects of character, setting, and plot
- Analyze the development of the theme or central idea over the course of the text
- Analyze how literary elements relate to each other
- Analyze how particular lines of dialogue or incidents in a story, drama, or narrative poem propel the action, provoke a decision, or reveal aspects of character
- Analyze points of view of and between character(s) and the reader/audience
- Evaluate and form an opinion about a specified aspect of a text or texts and support that opinion with text-based information
- Demonstrate an understanding of the purpose/function of specified text features (e.g., introductions, sidebars, headings, illustrations, charts)
- Determine the accuracy of a summary of a text
- Determine how the text structure contributes to meaning and style, or to the development of theme, setting, or plot
- Compare two or more texts in relation to the above skills
- Explain and/or evaluate how information from a multimedia source contributes to understanding of a printed text
- Show understanding of vocabulary, figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings (e.g., connotations)
- Analyze how word choice impacts a text's meaning and tone, including how rhymes and other repetitions of sounds (e.g., alliteration) impact a specific section of a text
- Use information from text(s) in a new situation

Reading to Engage in Science

- Locate/recall/record specific information or details related to the text
- Determine the central ideas and conclusions of a text
- Analyze the development of the central idea over the course of the text
- Evaluate and form an opinion about a specified aspect of a text or texts and support that opinion with text-based information
- Demonstrate an understanding of the purpose/function of specified text features (e.g., introductions, sidebars, headings, illustrations, charts)
- Determine the accuracy of a summary of a text

- Explain how a text makes connections among and distinctions between individuals, ideas, and/or events (e.g., through comparisons, analogies, or categories)
- Show understanding of how to follow precisely a multistep procedure
- Analyze the specific results of a multistep procedure based on explanations in the text
- Analyze the structure an author uses to organize a text, including how major sections contribute to the whole and to the development of the ideas, or how a specific paragraph in a text develops and refines a key concept
- Analyze an author's point of view or purpose
- Analyze how the author acknowledges and responds to conflicting evidence and/or viewpoints
- Understand relations among quantitative or technical information expressed in words in a text with a version of that information expressed visually (e.g., in a flowchart, diagram, model, graph, or table)
- Distinguish among fact, opinion, and reasoned judgment within and across multiple sources of information
- Delineate and evaluate the argument, claims, and reasoning in a text, including whether the evidence is relevant and sufficient to support the claims
- Explain and/or evaluate how information from a multimedia source contributes to understanding of a printed text
- Analyze how two or more texts provide conflicting information on the same topic, identifying where the texts disagree on matters of fact or interpretation
- Compare and contrast information gained from multimedia sources with that gained from reading a text on the same topic
- Show understanding of general academic and domain-specific vocabulary, key terms, and symbols
- Show understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings (e.g., connotations)
- Analyze how word choice impacts a text's meaning and tone
- Use information from text(s) in a new situation

Reading to Engage in Social Studies

- Locate/recall/record specific information or details related to the text
- Determine the central ideas
- Analyze the development of the central idea over the course of the text
- Evaluate and form an opinion about a specified aspect of a text or texts and support that opinion with text-based information
- Demonstrate an understanding of the purpose/function of specified text features (e.g., introductions, sidebars, headings, illustrations, charts)
- Determine the accuracy of a summary of a text
- Explain how a text makes connections among and distinctions between individuals, ideas, and/or events (e.g., through comparisons, analogies, or categories)
- Identify key steps in a text's description of a process related to history/social studies (e.g., how a bill becomes law; how interest rates are raised or lowered)
- Analyze the relationship between a primary and secondary source on the same topic
- Analyze the structure an author uses to organize a text, including how major sections contribute to the whole and to the development of the ideas, or how a specific paragraph in a text develops and refines a key concept
- Determine an author's point of view or purpose
- Analyze how the author acknowledges and responds to conflicting evidence and/or viewpoints

- Integrate visual information (e.g., in charts, graphs, photographs, videos, or maps) with other information in print and digital texts
- Distinguish among fact, opinion, and reasoned judgment within and across multiple sources of information
- Delineate and evaluate the argument, claims, and reasoning in a text, including whether the evidence is relevant and sufficient to support the claims
- Explain and/or evaluate how information from a multimedia source contributes to understanding of a printed text
- Analyze how two or more texts provide conflicting information on the same topic, identifying where the texts disagree on matters of fact or interpretation
- Show understanding of general academic and domain-specific vocabulary and of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings (e.g., connotations)
- Analyze how word choice impacts a text's meaning and tone
- Use information from text(s) in a new situation

NAEP Reading Achievement Levels: Grade 12

As noted above in the section "Organizational Features and Structures of the Reading Construct: Contexts, Purposes, Comprehension Targets, and Text Complexity," in regard to Comprehension Targets and text complexity, students will engage with texts of various discourse structures and an appropriate grade-level range of text complexity. While reading these texts, students will complete varied reading comprehension activities that include specific purposes, tasks, processes, and consequences. The reader, per his or her achievement level, will employ various knowledge types to accomplish the assessment's reading comprehension activities. In doing so, the reader will demonstrate achievement relative to four Comprehension Targets: (1) Locate and Recall; (2) Integrate and Interpret; (3) Analyze and Evaluate; and (4) Use and Apply. Items must be developed to address the range of Comprehension Targets with the expectation that there will be a distribution of Comprehension Targets at each achievement level. **Students at each achievement level are expected to meet the demands of each Comprehension Target.** However, as the complexity of texts increases on a given reading assessment, students, on average, are expected to demonstrate less competency with skills associated with higher-level Comprehension Targets, such as Use and Apply.

NAEP Basic

Twelfth-grade students performing at the *NAEP Basic* level should be able to find information in static, dynamic, and multimodal texts, make inferences and interpretations within and across texts, make predictions based upon content in the text, determine the accuracy of summaries, analyze word choice, and show understanding of vocabulary in the disciplinary contexts.

When engaged in reading literature texts such as fiction, drama, film, poetry, and literary nonfiction, twelfth-grade readers performing at the *NAEP Basic* level should be able to use textual evidence as support to analyze the development of the theme or central idea over the course of a text and to analyze points of view of and between character(s) and the reader/audience. They should be able to compare literary attributes of two or more texts and make judgments about how each author presents events. Readers show understanding of vocabulary and figurative language. They should be able to determine the accuracy of a summary of a text and apply a common theme or central idea culled from multiple texts to common human experiences.

When engaged in reading science texts such as exposition (including literary nonfiction), argumentation, and procedural texts, twelfth-grade readers performing at the *NAEP Basic* level should be able to use textual evidence as support to analyze the specific results of a multistep procedure based on explanations in the text, explain how specific individuals, ideas, and/or events interact and develop over the

course of a text, and analyze how a text structures information to serve an author's purpose and help readers organize their thinking. Readers should be able to compare and contrast findings presented in a text to those from other sources and show understanding of general academic and domain-specific vocabulary, key terms, and symbols. Readers should be able to apply findings described in a text to a new context or situation.

When engaged in reading social studies texts such as exposition (including literary nonfiction), argumentation, and documents of historical and literary significance, twelfth-grade readers performing at the *NAEP Basic* level should be able to explain how specific individuals, ideas, and/or events interact and develop over the course of a text, determine and interpret an author's point of view or purpose, and distinguish between fact, opinion, and reasoned judgment in a text. Readers should be able to show understanding of general academic and domain-specific vocabulary and of figurative language. They should be able to use information from multiple sources to construct an explanation or argument.

NAEP Proficient

Twelfth-grade students performing at the *NAEP Proficient* level should be able to make more complex inferences and interpretations, form explanations and generalizations, generate alternatives, and apply new ideas acquired through reading to a new problem or context when reading static, dynamic, and multimodal texts. Students should be able to use text-based evidence to support arguments and conclusions.

When engaged in reading literature texts such as fiction, drama, film, poetry, and literary nonfiction, twelfth-grade readers performing at the *NAEP Proficient* level should be able to analyze how two or more themes or central ideas interact and build on one another to produce a complex account over the course of the text. Readers should be able to analyze how text structure contributes to meaning and style. They should be able to analyze how word choice impacts a text's meaning and tone. Readers should be able to present an opinion regarding a universal problem that is elicited from an analysis of the text.

When engaged in reading science texts such as exposition (including literary nonfiction), argumentation, and procedural texts, twelfth-grade readers performing at the *NAEP Proficient* level should be able to use textual evidence as support to analyze an author's point of view or purpose, including in providing an explanation or describing a procedure, identifying important issues that remain unresolved. Readers should be able to integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in diverse media or formats (visually or in words) in order to address a question or solve a problem. Readers should be able to construct an argument or an explanation that synthesizes information from a range of sources to demonstrate a coherent understanding of a process, phenomenon, or concept.

When engaged in reading social studies texts such as exposition (including literary nonfiction), argumentation, and documents of historical and literary significance, twelfth-grade readers performing at the *NAEP Proficient* level should be able to use textual evidence as support to analyze how the central ideas interact and build on one another to produce a complex account. They should be able to analyze the themes, purposes, and rhetorical features of historical documents and evaluate the effectiveness of the structure in the text's exposition or argument. Readers should be able to evaluate multiple sources of information presented in different media or formats (visually or in words) in order to construct an argument with evidence to support a judgment.

NAEP Advanced

Twelfth-grade students performing at the *NAEP Advanced* level should be able to make complex inferences and to support their interpretations, conclusions, and their judgments based upon evidence within and across static, dynamic, and multimodal texts. Students should be able to use an understanding of legal and ethical principles to develop a text or presentation on a matter of social debate.

When engaged in reading literature texts such as fiction, drama, film, poetry, and literary nonfiction, twelfth-grade readers performing at the *NAEP Advanced* level should be able to use textual evidence as

support to analyze and evaluate multiple interpretations of text (e.g., multimedia versions of a text) compared to the source text. Readers should be able to use or apply information gained from a literary text or a poem to analyze a new text.

When engaged in reading science texts such as exposition (including literary nonfiction), argumentation, and procedural texts, twelfth-grade readers performing at the *NAEP Advanced* level should be able to delineate and evaluate the argument, claims, and reasoning in a text, and analyze and evaluate the hypotheses, data, analysis, and conclusions in a text. They should be able to explain how style and content contribute to the power, persuasiveness, or beauty of the text. Readers should be able to construct an argument, explanation, or recommendation that requires the application of scientific content from a text.

When engaged in reading social studies texts such as exposition (including literary nonfiction), argumentation, and documents of historical and literary significance, twelfth-grade readers performing at the *NAEP Advanced* level should be able to delineate and evaluate argument, claims, and reasoning in a text. They should be able to explain how style and content contribute to the power, persuasiveness, or beauty of the text. Readers should be able to construct an argument, explanation, or recommendation that utilizes an understanding of legal and ethical principles to address a societal matter of debate (e.g., indigenous peoples' land rights).

To summarize these NAEP Reading Achievement Levels for Grade 12, Exhibit A.3 shows some of the illustrative skills in table format. Additional illustrative skills are located below the table.

Exhibit A.3. NAEP Reading Achievement Levels: Grade 12

<table>
<tr><th></th><th>Reading to Engage in Literature</th><th>Reading to Engage in Science</th><th>Reading to Engage in Social Studies</th></tr>
<tr><td></td><td colspan="3">When reading static, dynamic, and multimodal texts, students will:</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="2">NAEP Basic</td><td colspan="3">• Find information in texts.
• Make inferences and interpretations within and across texts.
• Make predictions based upon content in the text.
• Determine the accuracy of summaries.
• Analyze word choice.
• Show understanding of vocabulary in the disciplinary contexts.</td></tr>
<tr><td>• Use textual evidence as support to analyze the development of the theme or central idea over the course of a text and to analyze points of view of and between character(s) and the reader/audience.
• Compare literary attributes of two or more texts and make judgments about how each author presents events.
• Show understanding of vocabulary and figurative language.
• Determine the accuracy of a summary of a text.
• Apply a common theme or central idea culled from</td><td>• Use textual evidence as support to analyze the specific results of a multistep procedure based on explanations in the text.
• Explain how specific individuals, ideas, and/or events interact and develop over the course of a text.
• Analyze how a text structures information to serve an author's purpose and help readers organize their thinking.
• Compare and contrast findings presented in a text to those from other sources.</td><td>• Explain how specific individuals, ideas, and/or events interact and develop over the course of a text.
• Determine and interpret an author's point of view or purpose.
• Distinguish between fact, opinion, and reasoned judgment in a text.
• Show understanding of general academic and domain-specific vocabulary and of figurative language.
• Use information from multiple sources to</td></tr>
</table>

	multiple texts to common human experiences.	• Show understanding of general academic and domain-specific vocabulary, key terms, and symbols. • Apply findings described in a text to a new context or situation.	construct an explanation or argument.
NAEP Proficient	• Make more complex inferences and interpretations. • Form explanations and generalizations. • Generate alternatives. • Apply new ideas acquired through reading to a new problem or context. • Use text-based evidence to support arguments and conclusions.		
	• Analyze how two or more themes or central ideas interact and build on one another to produce a complex account over the course of the text. • Analyze how text structure contributes to meaning and style. • Analyze how word choice impacts a text's meaning and tone. • Present an opinion regarding a universal problem that is elicited from an analysis of the text.	• Use textual evidence as support to analyze an author's point of view or purpose, including in providing an explanation or describing a procedure, identifying important issues that remain unresolved. • Integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in diverse media or formats (visually or in words) in order to address a question or solve a problem. • Construct an argument or an explanation that synthesizes information from a range of sources to demonstrate a coherent understanding of a process, phenomenon, or concept.	• Use textual evidence as support to analyze how the central ideas interact and build on one another to produce a complex account. • Analyze the themes, purposes, and rhetorical features of historical documents. • Evaluate the effectiveness of the structure in the text's exposition or argument. • Evaluate multiple sources of information presented in different media or formats (visually or in words) in order to construct an argument with evidence to support a judgment.
NAEP Advanced	• Make complex inferences. • Support their interpretations, conclusions, and their judgments based upon evidence within and across texts. • Use an understanding of legal and ethical principles to develop a text or presentation on a matter of social debate.		
	• Use textual evidence as support to analyze and evaluate multiple interpretations of text (e.g., multimedia versions of a text) to the source text.	• Delineate and evaluate the argument, claims, and reasoning in a text. • Analyze and evaluate the hypotheses, data, analysis, and conclusions in a text.	• Delineate and evaluate argument, claims, and reasoning in a text. • Explain how style and content contribute to the power, persuasiveness, or beauty of the text.

	• Use or apply information gained from a literary text or a poem to analyze a new text.	• Explain how style and content contribute to the power, persuasiveness, or beauty of the text. • Construct an argument, explanation, or recommendation that requires the application of scientific content from a text.	• Construct an argument or explanation that utilizes an understanding of legal and ethical principles to address a societal matter of debate (e.g., indigenous peoples' land rights).

Illustrative Skills Associated with NAEP Reading Comprehension Targets: Grade 12

At each achievement level and with texts at each of the three text complexity levels (low; medium; high), students are expected to demonstrate to varying degrees, per achievement level and text complexity, skills associated with the Comprehension Targets, including but not limited to the skills listed below for each disciplinary context.

Reading to Engage in Literature

- Locate/recall/record specific information or details related to the text
- Determine theme or central idea and aspects of character, setting, and plot
- Analyze how two or more themes or central ideas interact and build on one another to produce a complex account over the course of the text
- Analyze how literary elements relate to each other
- Analyze points of view of and between character(s) and the reader/audience
- Evaluate and form an opinion about a specified aspect of a text or texts and support that opinion with text-based information
- Demonstrate an understanding of the purpose/function of specified text features (e.g., introductions, sidebars, headings, illustrations, charts)
- Determine the accuracy of a summary of a text
- Determine how the text structure contributes to meaning and style
- Compare two or more texts in relation to the above skills
- Analyze and evaluate multiple interpretations of text (e.g., multimedia versions of a text) to the source text
- Show understanding of vocabulary, figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings (e.g., connotations)
- Analyze how word choice impacts a text's meaning and tone
- Use information from text(s) in a new situation

Reading to Engage in Science

- Locate/recall/record specific information or details related to the text
- Determine the central ideas and conclusions of a text
- Evaluate and form an opinion about a specified aspect of a text or texts and support that opinion with text-based information
- Demonstrate an understanding of the purpose/function of specified text features (e.g., introductions, sidebars, headings, illustrations, charts)
- Determine the accuracy of a summary of a text
- Explain how specific individuals, ideas, and/or events interact and develop over the course of a text
- Show understanding of how to follow precisely a complex multistep procedure

- Analyze the specific results of a multistep procedure based on explanations in the text
- Analyze how a text structures information to serve an author's purpose and help readers organize their thinking
- Analyze an author's point of view or purpose, including in providing an explanation, describing a procedure, or discussing an experiment, identifying important issues that remain unresolved
- Explain how style and content contribute to the power, persuasiveness, or beauty of the text
- Integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in diverse media or formats (visually or in words) in order to address a question or solve a problem
- Delineate and evaluate the argument, claims, and reasoning in a text
- Compare and contrast findings presented in a text to those from other sources
- Show understanding of general academic and domain-specific vocabulary, key terms, and symbols
- Analyze how word choice impacts a text's meaning and tone
- Analyze the themes, purposes, and rhetorical features of primary sources
- Use information from text(s) in a new situation

Reading to Engage in Social Studies

- Locate/recall/record specific information or details related to the text
- Determine the central ideas and how the central ideas interact and build on one another to produce a complex account
- Evaluate and form an opinion about a specified aspect of a text or texts and support that opinion with text-based information
- Demonstrate an understanding of the purpose/function of specified text features (e.g., introductions, sidebars, headings, illustrations, charts)
- Determine the accuracy of a summary of a text
- Explain how specific individuals, ideas, and/or events interact and develop over the course of a text
- Analyze the themes, purposes, and rhetorical features of primary sources
- Analyze how a text structures information to serve an author's purpose and help readers organize their thinking
- Evaluate the effectiveness of the structure in the text's exposition or argument
- Determine an author's point of view or purpose
- Explain how style and content contribute to the power, persuasiveness, or beauty of the text
- Evaluate multiple sources of information presented in different media or formats (visually or in words)
- Delineate and evaluate the argument, claims, and reasoning in a text
- Show understanding of general academic and domain-specific vocabulary and of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings (e.g., connotations)
- Analyze how word choice impacts a text's meaning and tone
- Use information from text(s) in a new situation

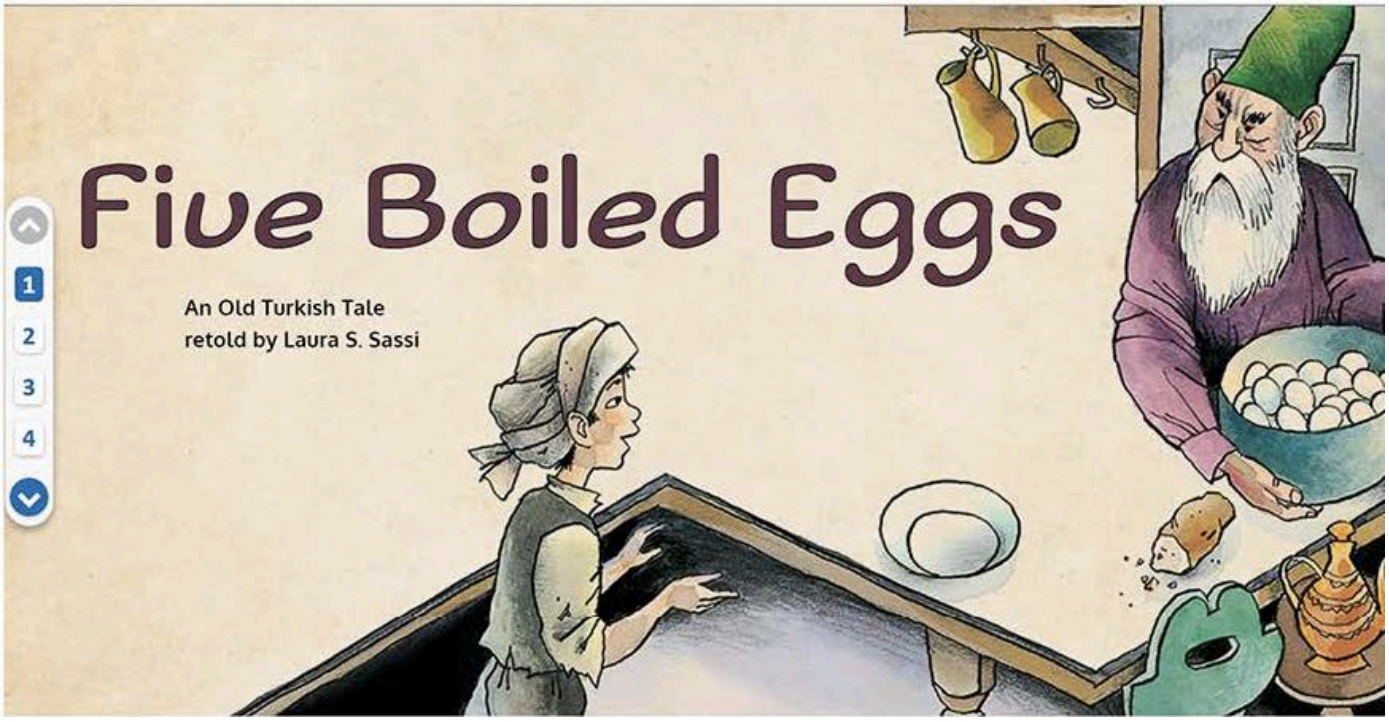
The reading items illustrating NAEP ALDs are organized by disciplinary context (literature; science; social studies), then by each grade level (4; 8; 12) and the achievement levels (Basic; Proficient; Advanced).

Disciplinary Context: Literature

Grade 4

The items illustrating NAEP ALDs at the Basic, Proficient, and Advanced levels in the Grade 4 literature disciplinary context are associated with the text "Five Boiled Eggs."

"Five Boiled Eggs"



Introduction: *Nasreddin Hodja, a character in this story, is familiar in many Turkish legends. "Hodja" means teacher.*

Long ago, a poor country boy left home to seek his fortune. Day and night he traveled, stopping to eat at inns along the way. Though he ate sparingly, his money quickly dwindled until, one day, no silver *akches* remained.

Still, the boy kept walking. Soon, however, his empty belly began to ache. Staggering up to the next inn he saw, he approached the innkeeper.

"Please feed me!" he said. "I don't have any money now, but I promise to pay you as soon as I can."

"I'll see what I can spare," the innkeeper grumbled. He took five boiled eggs out of a large bowl and put them on a plate with some stale bread. "Here," he said, plopping the platter in front of the boy.

The famished lad gratefully gobbled every morsel. Then, repeating his promise to pay back the innkeeper, he journeyed on.

Revived by his five-egg breakfast, the boy soon reached a bustling seaport. Intent on finding his fortune, he set sail on the first ship that was leaving the harbor.

Years passed, and the lad prospered. As a sea merchant, he sailed far, stopping in many exotic ports. However, he never forgot his humble beginnings or the money he owed the innkeeper.

When he finally returned home, he stopped by the old roadside inn.

"Kind sir," he respectfully inquired, "how much for the five boiled eggs that you served me so long ago?"

In truth, the innkeeper did not remember him, for this fine-looking fellow looked nothing like the scrawny lad who had begged for food some ten years before. Still, eager to make a profit, he readily added up the charges. "That'll be ten thousand *akches*," he declared.

"For five eggs?" The rich stranger gasped. He had thought that he would have to pay no more than ten or twenty *akches*.

"Ah, but you must consider their lost worth," the greedy innkeeper replied. "Had you not eaten those eggs, they would have hatched into hens. Those hens, in turn, would have laid eggs that would have hatched into hens. . . ." On and on he ranted until at last he reached his grand total.

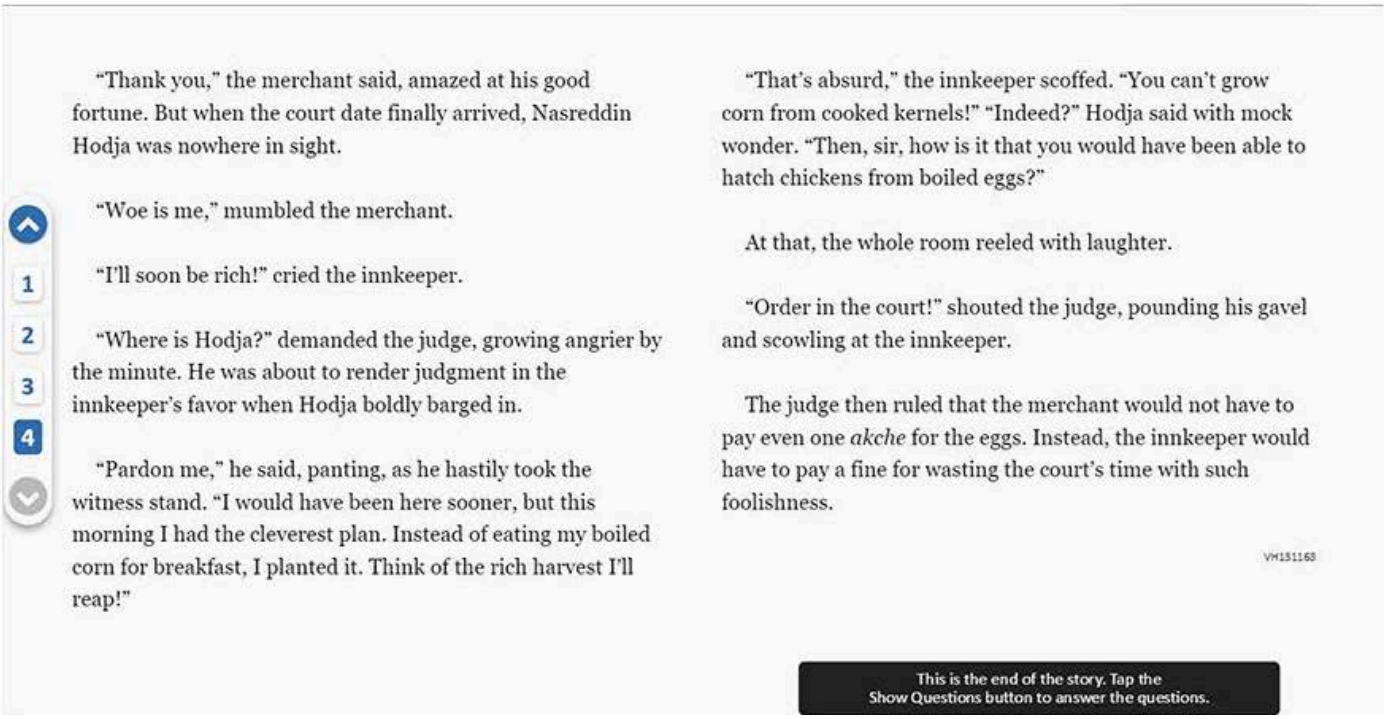
When the stunned merchant refused to pay, the innkeeper declared that he would take him to court.

A trial was set for the following week. Alas, rumor had it that the judge was a close friend of the innkeeper.

"I'm ruined!" the merchant muttered as he sat in the village square. "What will I do?"

At that moment, he was approached by a sturdy little man wearing a white turban and riding a donkey. "Nasreddin Hodja, at your service," the man said with a friendly nod. "What seems to be the problem?"

After hearing the merchant's story, Hodja announced, "This is your lucky day! It would be my honor to defend you. I have great experience in these matters."



"Thank you," the merchant said, amazed at his good fortune. But when the court date finally arrived, Nasreddin Hodja was nowhere in sight.

"Woe is me," mumbled the merchant.

"I'll soon be rich!" cried the innkeeper.

"Where is Hodja?" demanded the judge, growing angrier by the minute. He was about to render judgment in the innkeeper's favor when Hodja boldly barged in.

"Pardon me," he said, panting, as he hastily took the witness stand. "I would have been here sooner, but this morning I had the cleverest plan. Instead of eating my boiled corn for breakfast, I planted it. Think of the rich harvest I'll reap!"

"That's absurd," the innkeeper scoffed. "You can't grow corn from cooked kernels!" "Indeed?" Hodja said with mock wonder. "Then, sir, how is it that you would have been able to hatch chickens from boiled eggs?"

At that, the whole room reeled with laughter.

"Order in the court!" shouted the judge, pounding his gavel and scowling at the innkeeper.

The judge then ruled that the merchant would not have to pay even one *akche* for the eggs. Instead, the innkeeper would have to pay a fine for wasting the court's time with such foolishness.

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1 2 3 4

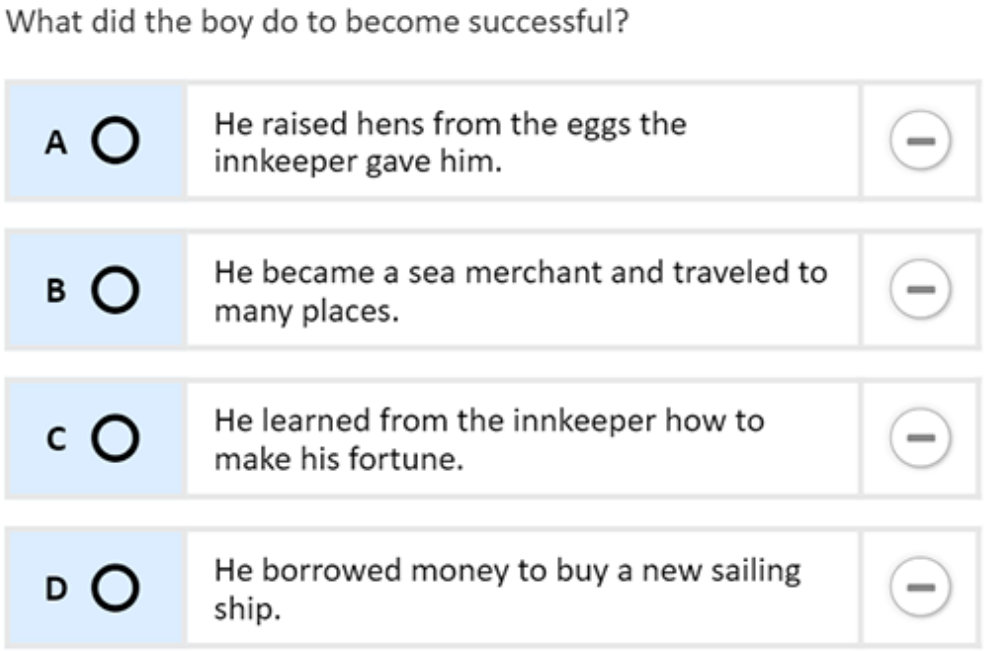
This is the end of the story. Tap the Show Questions button to answer the questions.

This text appeared in the 2017 NAEP grade 4 Reading administration in Block 4R5.

NAEP Basic

In this item, students are given options of how a main character in the story became successful, addressing the NAEP Basic level language of "identify relationships between explicitly stated pieces of information."

Comprehension Target: Locate and Recall; **Item Format:** SR-SSMC; **Key:** B
Skill: Recognize paraphrase of explicit details about main character in a story

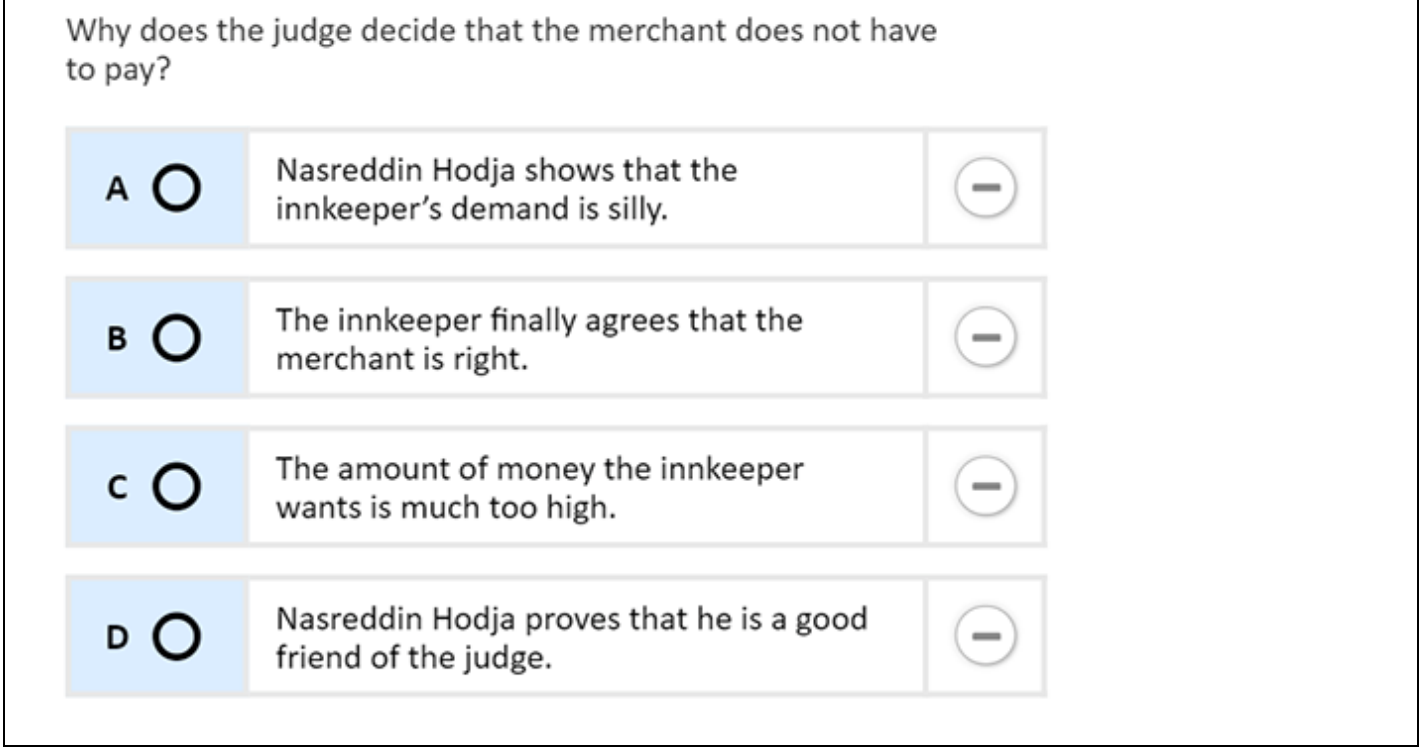


This item appeared in the 2017 NAEP grade 4 Reading administration with NAEP Item ID 2017-4R5 #1.

NAEP Proficient

In this item, students are given options regarding how the plot of a story is resolved based upon analysis of the story's plot and character interactions, addressing the NAEP Proficient level language of making "more complex inferences and interpretations."

Comprehension Target: Integrate and Interpret; **Item Format:** SR-SSMC; **Key:** A
Skill: Recognize reason for plot resolution in a story



This item appeared in the 2017 NAEP grade 4 Reading administration with NAEP Item ID 2017-4R5 #10.

NAEP Advanced

In this item, students are asked to evaluate how a character does or does not change over the course of a story, addressing the NAEP Advanced level language of making "complex inferences and to support their interpretations, conclusions, and their judgments based upon evidence."

Comprehension Target: Analyze and Evaluate; **Item Format:** ECR; **Key:** N/A
Skill: Evaluate character development using text support from beginning and end of a story

Do you think that the innkeeper changes in the story? Use specific information from the beginning and end of the story to support your opinion.

This item appeared in the 2017 NAEP grade 4 Reading administration with NAEP Item ID 2017-4R5 #6.

Grade 8

The items illustrating NAEP ALDs at the Basic, Proficient, and Advanced levels in the Grade 8 literature disciplinary context are associated with the task-based texts of an excerpt from the novel *The Black Pearl* and the poem "The Last Bargain."

> Read the passage from *The Black Pearl*, in which pearl dealers visit the Salazar family. Then answer the questions.
>
> From *The Black Pearl* by
> Scott O'Dell
>
> They came early in the afternoon, dressed in their best black suits and carrying a scale and calipers and their money in a crocodile bag. The excitement in the town had died after a couple of days, but when word got around that the dealers were going to the Salazars to buy the great black pearl a crowd followed them and stood outside our gate.
>
> My mother and my two sisters had come back from Loreto, for they too had heard the news of the pearl, and so the fountain in the patio was turned on and the parlor was fixed up with flowers and all the furniture shone.
>
> The four men wore serious faces and they put their calipers and scales on the parlor table and their brown crocodile bag. They sat down and folded their hands and said nothing.
>
> Then my father said, "The bag is very small, gentlemen. I doubt that it holds enough money to buy the great Pearl of Heaven."
>
> The four dealers did not like this. One of them, named Arturo Martín, was big and shaped

like a barrel and had small white hands.

“I have heard that the pearl is the size of a grapefruit,” he said. “In which case we have more money than we need. For as you know the large ones are of little value.”

“They do not live long, these monsters,” said Miguel Palomares, who was as fat as Martín and had a bald head that glistened. “They often die or become dull before a year passes.

“And so do many of the small ones,” my father said. “Like the pink one Señor Palomares sold us last month.”

Señor Palomares shrugged his shoulders.

“Before I show the Pearl of Heaven,” my father said, “I will tell you the price. It is twenty thousand pesos, no more and no less.”

The four men looked at each other and smiled thin smiles, as if to say that they had made up their minds already about what they would pay.

My father went out of the room and came back with the pearl wrapped in a piece of white velvet. He laid it on the table in front of the four dealers.

“Now, gentlemen.” With a flourish he unwrapped the pearl and stepped back so all of them could see it. “The Pearl of Heaven!”

The great pearl caught the light, gathered it and softened it into a moon of dark fire. None of the dealers spoke for a moment or two.

Then Señor Martín said, “It is as I feared, more like a grapefruit than a pearl.”

“It is a monster all right,” Señor Palomares said. “The kind that often has a brief life and is very hard to sell.”

One of the dealers who had not spoken cleared his throat and said, “But still we will make an offer.”

The other dealers nodded solemnly.

“Ten thousand pesos,” said Martín.

Señor Palomares grasped the pearl in a small, white hand and studied it.

“I think that I see a flaw,” he said after a long time. “Ten thousand is too much.”

“There is no flaw,” my father said. “And the price, gentlemen, remains twenty thousand pesos.”

The great pearl was passed around to the other dealers and they all turned it in their hands and squinted at it. At last Señor Martín used the calipers and placed the pearl on the scales. His readings were the same as I had made, almost.

“Eleven thousand pesos,” he said.

“Nine thousand more is required,” my father answered. “In your lives you have never seen a pearl like this one nor will you.”

“Twelve thousand,” said Señor Palomares.

After that and for most of an hour the price the dealers offered went up two hundred and fifty pesos at a time until the figure reached the sum of fifteen thousand pesos. And then tempers began to rise and my mother brought in a pitcher of cold juice and a platter of buñuelos. I knew that she wanted to take the dealers’ offer, for I stood where I could see her in the hall making gestures to my father. She had set her mind on a beautiful red carriage and four white horses she had seen in Loreto and was fearful of losing her wish if my father did not lower

the price.

Señor Martín wiped his mouth and said, “Fifteen thousand pesos is our last offer.”

“Then,” said my father, “I shall take the great pearl to Mexico City and ask twice that amount and sell it without haggling to dealers who know its true worth.”

Señor Palomares picked up the pearl and put it down. His small head was sunk deep in the folds of his fat neck. Suddenly his head came forth like the head of a turtle and he looked at my father who was pacing back and forth.

“If you remember,” he said, “you made the long journey to the City of México once before. And what did you find there? You found that the dealers are not so generous with their money as we are here in La Paz. And you came home after the long journey with your tail between your legs.”

Señor Palomares got to his feet and the others followed him.

“Fifteen thousand, two hundred and fifty pesos,” he said. “This is final offer.”

From THE BLACK PEARL by Scott O’Dell. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Publishing Company ©1967.

Read the poem “The Last Bargain.” Then answer the questions.

The Last Bargain

by Rabindranath Tagore

“Come and hire me,” I cried, while in the morning I was walking on the stone-paved road.

Sword in hand, the King came in his chariot.

He held my hand and said, “I will hire you with my power.”

But his power counted for nought, and he went away in his chariot.

In the heat of the midday the houses stood with shut doors.

I wandered along the crooked lane.

An old man came out with his bag of gold.

He pondered and said, “I will hire you with my money.” He weighed his coins one by one, but I turned away.

It was evening. The garden hedge was all aflower.

The fair maid came out and said, “I will hire you with a smile.”

Her smile paled and melted into tears, and she went back alone into the dark.

The sun glistened on the sand, and the sea waves broke waywardly. A child sat playing with shells.

He raised his head and seemed to know me, and said, “I hire you with nothing.”

From thenceforward that bargain struck in child’s play made me a free man.

“The Last Bargain” by Rabindranath Tagore—Public Domain

These texts appeared in the 2019 Grade 8 Released Items published by New Meridian.

NAEP Basic

In this item, students are asked to determine the tone of a paragraph in a fictional text, addressing the NAEP Basic level language of “analyze word choice, and show understanding of vocabulary.”

Comprehension Target: Integrate and Interpret; **Item Format:** SR-SSMC; **Key:** A
Skill: Analyze how word choice impacts a text's meaning and tone.

Which word **best** describes the tone of the excerpt from *The Black Pearl*?

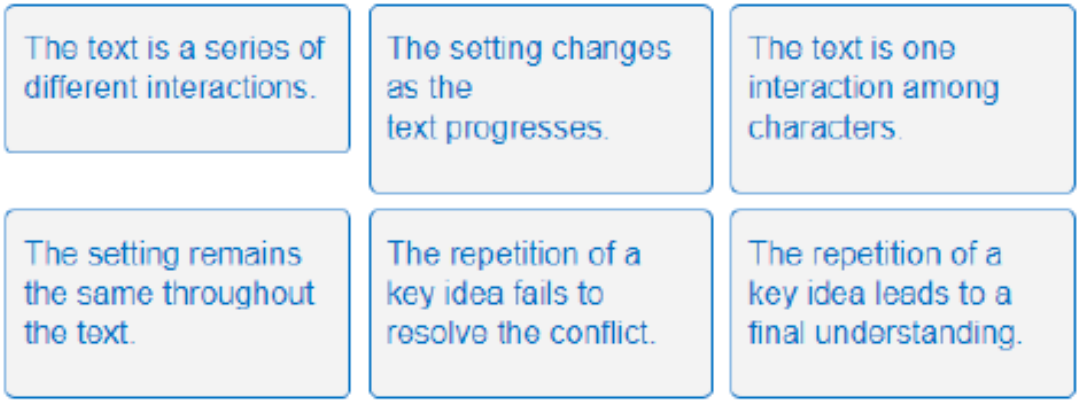
A. tense
B. eager
C. consoling
D. desperate

This item is adapted from a New Meridian item. The original item appeared in the 2019 Grade 8 Released Items published by New Meridian with Item ID FF429340799.

NAEP Proficient
In this item, students are asked to compare and contrast structure of two texts, addressing the NAEP Proficient level language of "make more complex inferences and interpretations."

Comprehension Target: Analyze and Evaluate; **Item Format:** SR-Match; **Key:** See below the item.
Skill: Compare two or more texts in relation to text structure and literary elements.

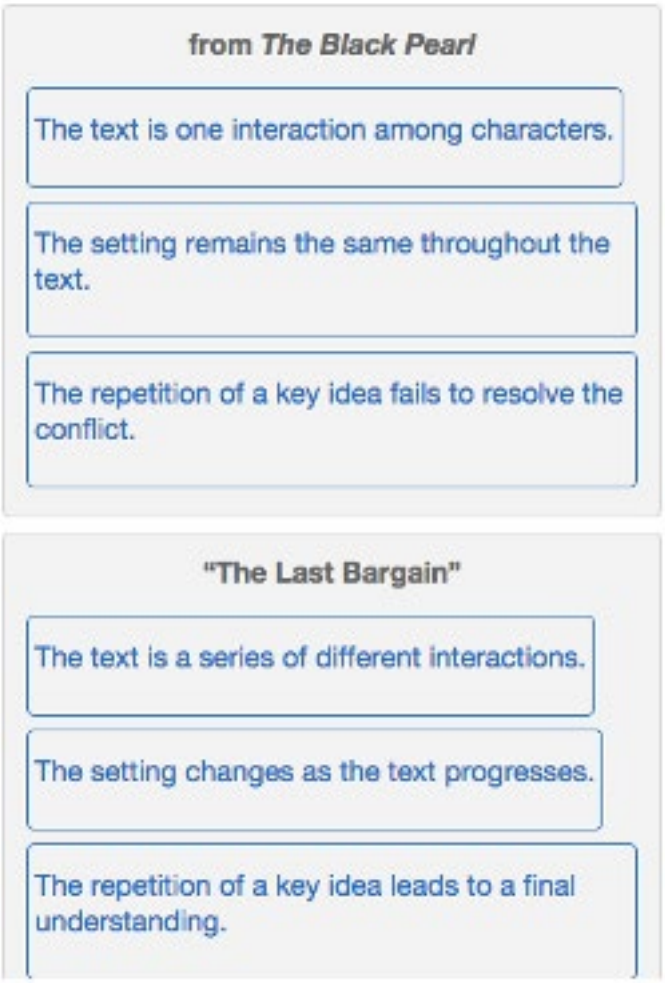
Compare and contrast the structure of the passage from *The Black Pearl* and the structure of the poem "The Last Bargain." Drag **each** description into the appropriate box. All descriptions will be used.



from *The Black Pearl*

"The Last Bargain"

KEY:



This item appeared in the 2019 Grade 8 Released Items published by New Meridian with Item ID FF429350528.

NAEP Advanced
In this item, students are asked to analyze how events contribute to the development of theme in each text of a paired text task, addressing the NAEP Advanced level language of "make complex inferences and to support their interpretations, conclusions, and their judgments based upon evidence."

Comprehension Target: Analyze and Evaluate; **Item Format:** ECR; **Key:** N/A
Skill: Analyze how events in a text contribute to the text's theme.

You have read a passage from *The Black Pearl* and the poem "The Last Bargain."

Analyze how the events in each text contribute to the development of each text's theme. Be sure to use evidence from **both** texts in your analysis.

This item is adapted from a New Meridian item. The original item appeared in the 2019 Grade 8 Released Items published by New Meridian with Item ID FF429354786.

Grade 12

The items illustrating NAEP ALDs at the Basic, Proficient, and Advanced levels in the Grade 12 literature disciplinary context are associated with the task-based text from *The Odyssey* and the painting *Penelope and the Suitors*.

Today you will read a passage from the epic poem *The Odyssey* and view the painting *Penelope and the Suitors*. *The Odyssey* tells the story of Ulysses, who, after the decade-long war between the Greeks (the Achaeans) and the Trojans, spends an additional ten years journeying back to his home in Greece, where his son Telemachus and wife Penelope await his return. As you read, you will gather information about the passage and the painting and answer questions about them so you can write a narrative story.

Read the passage from *The Odyssey*. Then answer the questions.

from *The Odyssey*

by Homer

"The sons of all the chief men among you are pestering my mother to marry them against her will. They are afraid to go to her father Icarius, asking him to choose the one he likes best, and to provide marriage gifts for his daughter, but day by day they keep hanging about my father's house, sacrificing our oxen, sheep, and fat goats for their banquets, and never giving so much as a thought to the quantity of wine they drink. No estate can stand such recklessness; we have now no Ulysses to ward off

harm from our doors, and I cannot hold my own against them. I shall never all my days be as good a man as he was, still I would indeed defend myself if I had power to do so, for I cannot stand such treatment any longer; my house is being disgraced and ruined. Have respect, therefore, to your own consciences and to public opinion. Fear, too, the wrath of heaven, lest the gods should be displeased and turn upon you. I pray you by Jove and Themis, who is the beginning and the end of councils, [do not] hold back, my friends, and leave me singlehanded—unless it be that my brave father Ulysses did some wrong to the Achaeans which you would now avenge on me, by aiding and abetting these suitors. Moreover, if I am to be eaten out of house and home at all, I had rather you did the eating yourselves, for I could then take action against you to some purpose, and serve you with notices from house to house till I got paid in full, whereas now I have no remedy."

With this Telemachus dashed his staff to the ground and burst into tears. Every one was very sorry for him, but they all sat still and no one ventured to make him an angry answer, save only Antinous, who spoke thus:—

"Telemachus, insolent braggart that you are, how dare you try to throw the blame upon us suitors? It is your mother's fault not ours, for she is a very artful woman. This three years past, and close on four, she has been driving us out of our minds, by encouraging each one of us, and sending him messages without meaning one word of what she says. And then there was that other trick she played us. She set up a great tambour frame in her room, and began to work on an enormous piece of fine needlework. 'Sweet hearts,' said she, 'Ulysses is indeed dead, still do not press me to marry again immediately, wait—for I would not have my skill in needlework perish unrecorded—till I have completed a pall for the hero Laertes, to be in readiness against the time when death shall take him. He is very rich, and the women of the place will talk if he is laid out without a pall.'

"This was what she said, and we assented; whereon we could see her working on her great web all day long, but at night she would unpick the stitches again by torchlight. She fooled us in this way for three years and

we never found her out, but as time wore on and she was now in her fourth year, one of her maids who knew what she was doing told us, and we caught her in the act of undoing her work, so she had to finish it whether she would or no. The suitors, therefore, make you this answer, that both you and the Achaeans may understand—'send your mother away, and bid her marry the man of her own and of her father's choice'; for I do not know what will happen if she goes on plaguing us much longer with the airs she gives herself on the score of the accomplishments Minerva has taught her, and because she is so clever. We never yet heard of such a woman; we know all about Tyro, Alcmena, Mycene, and the famous women of old, but they were nothing to your mother any one of them. It was not fair of her to treat us in that way, and as long as she continues in the mind with which heaven has now endowed her, so long shall we go on eating up your estate, and I do not see why she should change, for she gets all the honour and glory, and it is you who pay for it, not she. Understand, then, that we will not go back to our lands neither here nor elsewhere, till she has made her choice and married some one or other of us."

From THE ODYSSEY by Homer—Public Domain

This text and art appeared in the 2017 Grade 11 Released Items published by Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC).

NAEP Basic

In this item, students are asked to distinguish the key events in a text and order them chronologically into an objective summary of the text, addressing the NAEP Basic level language of "create objective summaries."

Comprehension Target: Integrate and Interpret; **Item Format:** SR-Match; **Key:** See below the item.
Skill: Determine an accurate summary of a text.

Provide an objective summary of the passage from *The Odyssey*. Drag and drop key events from the list of sentences into the boxes in chronological order.

- Penelope confesses her love for Ulysses in his absence.
- Telemachus is told that until his mother chooses a new husband, the suitors will not leave his estate.
- The leaders acknowledge the artistry of Penelope's needlework.
- One of the suitors challenges Telemachus's claim that the situation is their fault.
- Telemachus details his financial and emotional challenges and asks for understanding.
- Antinous reveals how Penelope has delayed making a decision about a new husband.
- Telemachus gets into a physical confrontation with one of the suitors.

1.
2.
3.
4.

KEY:

1. Telemachus details his financial and emotional challenges and asks for understanding.
2. One of the suitors challenges Telemachus's claim that the situation is their fault.
3. Antinous reveals how Penelope has delayed making a decision about a new husband.
4. Telemachus is told that until his mother chooses a new husband, the suitors will not leave his estate.

This item is adapted from a PARCC item. The original item appeared in the 2017 Grade 11 Released Items published by Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) with Item ID VH130123.

NAEP Proficient

In this item, students are asked to determine which central ideas apply to the text, the painting, or to both stimuli, addressing the NAEP Proficient level language of "make more complex inferences and interpretations."

Comprehension Target: Analyze and Evaluate; **Item Format:** SR-Grid; **Key:** See below the item.
Skill: Determine the central ideas of a text.

Complete the table by selecting the boxes in the appropriate columns to indicate whether the central ideas listed apply to either the passage from *The Odyssey*, the painting *Penelope and the Suitors*, or both the passage and the painting.

Central Idea	Penelope focuses on her project and ignores the suitors.	Penelope's weaving is revealed as a way for her to challenge the suitors.	The suitors are destroying Ulysses's estate.	The suitors are determined to achieve their objective.
The Odyssey	○	○	○	○
Penelope and the Suitors	○	○	○	○
Both	○	○	○	○

KEY:

Central Idea	Penelope focuses on her project and ignores the suitors.	Penelope's weaving is revealed as a way for her to challenge the suitors.	The suitors are destroying Ulysses's estate.	The suitors are determined to achieve their objective.
The Odyssey	☐	☑	☑	☐
Penelope and the Suitors	☑	☐	☐	☐
Both	☐	☐	☐	☑

This item appeared in the 2017 Grade 11 Released Items published by Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) with Item ID VH130226.

NAEP Advanced

In this item, students are asked to write an original narrative, using the point of view of a character, based on what they have learned from the text and the painting, addressing the NAEP Advanced level language of "make complex inferences and to support interpretations, conclusions, and judgments based upon evidence."

Comprehension Target: Use and Apply; **Item Format:** ECR; **Key:** N/A
Skill: Analyze the point of view of characters and of multiple interpretations of a text (e.g., multimedia versions of a text) to the source text.

You have read a passage from *The Odyssey* and viewed the painting *Penelope and the Suitors.* Using what you have learned from these sources, write a journal entry from Penelope's point of view, describing what happens after she finishes weaving the cloth. Using details from the passage, your journal entry should offer insight into Penelope's thoughts and interactions with other characters.

This item is adapted from a PARCC item. The original item appeared in the 2017 Grade 11 Released Items published by Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) with Item ID VH130242.

Disciplinary Context: Science

Grade 4

The items illustrating NAEP ALDs at the Basic, Proficient, and Advanced levels in the Grade 4 science disciplinary context are associated with the task-based texts “An Eye for Ants” and “Life in an Ant Colony.”

Source #1

This article from *Appleseeds* magazine is about a scientist who studies ants.

An Eye for Ants
by Gretchen Noyes-Hull

Dr. Edward O. Wilson, scientist and teacher, has spent his life peeking into the nests of ants. He's curious about the job of each ant in the colony. He wants to uncover the secrets of any colonies' success.

As a child, Edward was often alone. . . . Wherever he lived, snakes, fish, and insects became his friends. For a time, he even kept a colony of harvester ants in a jar under his bed.

The summer he was 7, Edward hurt his right eye in a fishing accident. As he says: "The attention of my surviving eye turned to the ground." It wasn't long before Edward decided to become an entomologist—a scientist who studies insects.

Ants live almost everywhere—from tropical climates to beyond the Arctic Circle, from dry deserts to shady rain forests, from city sidewalks to wild woodlands, and from deep in the ground to the tops of the tallest trees. They live in colonies. An ant colony can have as many as 20 million members.

There is only one queen ant in a colony. It's the queen's task to lay the eggs. Out of the eggs grow worker ants and sometimes a new queen. Every ant in a colony has a job. The main goal of all the worker ants is to take care of the queen and her offspring. This they do in some amazing ways.

For 50 years, Dr. Wilson has traveled around the world looking for new kinds of ants. Sometimes he brings entire colonies back to his laboratory to observe them more closely. He wants to learn about each ant's job within its colony. He wants to know how each ant's job contributes to the future survival of its species.

Dr. Wilson's discoveries help us understand why many animal species develop social organization. In a social organization, each member of the group has a specific job. Each job is important to the entire species' success.

Whenever possible, Dr. Wilson still returns to the place where he first watched ants. He notes the changes in ant species that have occurred over the past 60 years. And today he still relies on the observations and collections of the specimens that he made when he was a young boy.

An Ant Experiment to Try

Worker ants must build, feed, and guard their colony. To do this, they need to communicate with each other. Like most living things, ants depend on chemical odors (known as pheromones) to send messages, such as, "I found food over here . . . alert! there's a stranger in here." Over the years, Dr. Wilson has carried out hundreds of experiments to find the meanings of these odor signals. Although he's made important discoveries, many mysteries remain.

You can do an experiment to test the odor signals of ants. Put several drops of sugar water on a piece of paper. Place the paper near some ants. Watch as one ant discovers the food. Other ants will soon follow the first ant's odor trail. Turn the paper sideways. The ants will still follow the scent of the odor trail, although the sugar water is now in a different place.

Amazing Ant Facts

There are almost 10,000 known species of ants and many more remaining to be discovered. At any one time, 10 million billion (that's 10,000,000,000,000,000) ants are alive. (The world's population of humans is only about 6.6 billion!)

Most ants are scavengers. They find food outside the nest. But some kinds of ants actually "farm" their food. Some "farming" ants grow fungus on underground leaf farms. . . .

Some ants drop pebbles down other colonies' holes. The pebbles block the other ants and keep them from going after the same food.

Some worker ants act like storage containers. They fill themselves up with food like a balloon. If food becomes scarce, they regurgitate it for the rest of the colony. (Regurgitate is the scientific way to say "throw up.")

Source #2

This source is about what happens inside an ant colony.

Life in an Ant Colony

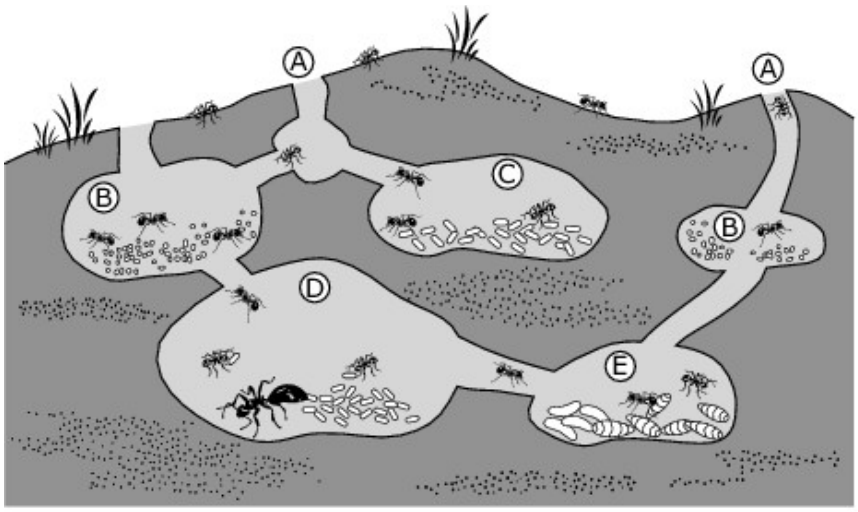
You can find an ant almost anywhere in the world. You will know it is an ant by the six tiny legs, the skinny body in three parts, the bent antennae, and the strong chewing parts. It will be brown, red, yellow, or black.

Ants like to live in the tropics best, but they live on every continent except Antarctica. There are so many ants in the world that if you piled them together, they would weigh about as much as all the people on Earth.

As small as ants are, they are very tough. Many ants bite, and some sting. An ant can carry up to 100 times its own body weight. That is like a child picking up a car! But ants are also strong in another way, and that is in working together in big groups in order to survive. Ant nests are a great example.

Many ants build nests. These ants build nests on the ground, inside logs, under stones, and in trees. They often use wood, leaves, or soil to build nests. Some ant colonies are small enough to nest inside an acorn. Other nests rise above the earth in large mounds. Some colonies extend for a mile or more underground.

Most ant nests have layers of chambers with tunnels to connect them. Most nests also have nurseries where eggs hatch and workers care for young ants.



An ant colony usually has many entrances (A). There are many chambers located underground. Some areas are used to store food (B). One chamber is just for the queen (D). Workers look after unhatched eggs in another chamber (C). One room deep below the surface is used as a nursery for larvae and cocoons (E).

Within the nest there are storerooms for the food that the ants collect. If stored food gets damp during heavy rains, workers bring the wet food up to the surface on the first sunny day. When the food dries out, they return it to the nest.

There are even "stables" within the nest where workers hold and care for other insects. An aphid is a sap-sucking insect that gives off a sugary substance called honeydew. Some ants love honeydew, so they keep a group of aphids to make it for them. This is similar to a farmer having cows that produce milk.

Other ant nests include fungus gardens. Farmer ants grow and take care of this food made from leaves and bits of vegetable matter.

Scout ants go out looking for food. They may wander as far as 700 feet from the nest. If they find food—seeds, grains, or animal matter—they eat it. The food to take home goes into a separate stomach. When the scout ants return to the colony, they regurgitate this food to feed the other ants.

The scouts leave a special chemical called pheromone along the way to the nest. Their nest mates will pick up the scent and follow it back to get more food.

Ants also communicate to protect the colony. When there is danger, the ants release alarm chemicals from their bodies to warn the other ants.

In some ant colonies, a soldier ant sits inside the nest, facing outward. The soldier's head matches the size of the nest entrance. When a worker ant wants to come back inside the nest, it touches the soldier ant's head or antennae to let the soldier know it belongs to the colony.

More than 12,000 species of ants have been classified. There are many differences between them. But they have one important thing in common. Each ant colony thrives on working together for the good of all.

Sources Used:

Ant facts for kids/Ants habitat/Ants diet. (2013). *Animals Time*. Retrieved from http://animalstime.com/ant-facts-kids-ant-habitat-ant-diet/

Ants.(2002-2013). *BioKIDS University of Michigan.* Retrieved from http://www.biokids.umich.edu/critters/Formicidae/

Hadley, D.(2013). 10 fascinating facts about ants. *About.com.Insects.* Retrieved from http://insects.about.com/od/antsbeeswasps/a/10-cool-facts-about- ants.htm

These texts appeared in the 2019–20 Smarter Balanced Grade 4 Sample Items published by The Regents of the University of California.

NAEP Basic

In this item, students are asked to match main ideas from multiple source texts to its appropriate source text, addressing the NAEP Basic level language of "locate specific pieces of information."

Comprehension Target: Locate and Recall; **Item Format:** SR-Grid; **Key:** People know so much about ants because of entomologists.: Source #1: An Eye for Ants; Ant colonies are able to survive because of the different jobs that the ants have.: Source #1: An Eye for Ants, Source #2: Life in an Ant Colony
Skill: Determine key ideas in a text.

Click on the boxes to match each source with the idea or ideas that it supports.

	Source #1: An Eye for Ants	Source #2: Life in an Ant Colony
People know so much about ants because of entomologists.	☐	☐
Ant colonies are able to survive because of the different jobs that the ants have.	☐	☐

This item appeared in the 2019–20 Grade 4 Smarter Balanced Sample Items published by The Regents of the University of California with Item ID 61164.

NAEP Proficient

In this item, students are asked to briefly explain, using textual evidence, key details that support central ideas by locating the details in multiple source texts, addressing the NAEP Proficient level language of "uses reasons and evidence to support particular points in a text."

Comprehension Target: Locate and Recall; **Item Format:** SCR; **Key:** N/A
Skill: Locate information to support central ideas.

The sources describe jobs ants do in a colony. Explain some of the specific jobs ants do that help the colony. Give **one** detail from Source #1 and **one** detail from Source #2 to support your answer. For each detail, give the source title or number.

This item appeared in the 2019–20 Grade 4 Smarter Balanced Sample Items published by The Regents of the University of California with Item ID 61160.

NAEP Advanced

In this item, students are asked to produce a narrative, synthesizing and incorporating information learned from multiple source texts, addressing the NAEP Advanced level language of "make complex inferences and to support their interpretations, conclusions, and their judgments based upon evidence."

Comprehension Target: Use and Apply; **Item Format:** ECR; **Key:** N/A
Skill: Use information learned from sources and apply to a new context.

A book author comes to your class and talks about his book of short stories. After his talk, he asks your class to write their own short stories and says he will come back to the class and listen to all of the stories.

After your research on ants, you decide to write a story about what happens when you shrink, fall into a hole in the ground, and find yourself part of an ant colony.

Write a scene for your story about how you help the ants with their food on a rainy day. Use information and details from the two sources in your story. Make sure you include one or more characters, a setting, and a plot.

This item is adapted from a Smarter Balanced Item. The original item appeared in the 2019–20 Grade 4 Smarter Balanced Sample Items published by The Regents of the University of California with Item ID 54697.

Grade 8

The items illustrating NAEP ALDs at the Basic, Proficient, and Advanced levels in the Grade 8 science disciplinary context are associated with the task-based texts "How Do We Remember," "Memory Masters," and "Interpreters: Silver-Tongued Masters of Memory."

Task:

You are learning about the brain in science class. You are curious. Why are some people able to memorize their student number with ease, but you can't remember the four items you are supposed to pick up at the store? You decide to do some research on memory and the brain. As part of your initial research, you have uncovered three articles about memory.

After you have reviewed these sources, you will answer some questions about them. Briefly scan the sources and the questions that follow. Then, go back and read the sources carefully to gain the information you will need to answer the questions and finalize your research. You may click on the NOTES box to take notes on the information you find in the sources as you read. Your notes will be available to you as you answer the questions.

In Part 2, you will write an explanatory article on a topic related to the sources.

Directions for Beginning:
You will now examine several sources. You can reexamine any of the sources as often as you like.

Research Questions:
After examining the research sources, use the remaining time in Part 1 to answer question(s) about them. Your answers will be scored. Also, your answers will help you think about the research sources you have read and viewed, which should help you write your explanatory article.

You may click on the NOTES button above the sources to look at your notes when you think it would be helpful. Answer the questions in the spaces provided below them.

Part 1

Sources for Performance Task:

Source #1
Read the article about memory from a popular science website for kids.

How Do We Remember?

You need to go to the store and pick up milk, eggs, butter, and bread. You repeat the list of foods over and over on the way to the store. When you arrive at the store, you collect the milk, eggs, bread, and . . . What was the other thing? How did you already forget the other item that was on your mental list? How does your memory work, and why does it let you down sometimes?

When most people refer to memory, they think of it as one part of the brain. The truth is your memory isn't one particular part of your brain. Memory involves several parts of your brain working together. It is a concept. It is the idea of remembering.

Formerly, scientists used to describe memory as a miniature filing cabinet full of many files that contained memories. Others described memory as a tiny supercomputer located in the brain. Today, scientists believe that memory is much more complicated than that.

How Memory Works
Memories begin as a result of the senses. The memory is then encoded, or stored, in your brain with electrical impulses and chemicals. Your brain is full of nerve cells. There are electrical pulses carrying messages from one cell to another. The electrical pulses trigger chemical messengers to be released. The chemical messengers are called neurotransmitters. The connection that is made between the cells isn't necessarily permanent. It is changing all of the time. Brain cells work together as a team, organizing themselves into groups. The groups specialize in different kinds of information processing. Each time one cell sends a message to another, the connection between those two cells gets stronger. With each new experience your brain changes a little. If you keep using your brain the same way over and over again, it shapes how your brain will be organized.

Types of Memory
There are three types of memory: sensory memory, short-term memory, and long-term memory.

Sensory memory hangs on to information for a very short period of time, only a second or two. When you look at a picture of a beautiful landscape, an almost exact image of that landscape is stored momentarily in your visual sensory memory. Your visual sensory memory requires your eyes and parts of your brain to work together. Unless you make an active effort to think about the landscape the image will quickly fade.

Short-term memory stores what you are actively thinking about at any given moment. Your short-term memory is able to hold on to information for as long as you are thinking about it. You use your short-term memory to remember the list of things your mom wants you to pick up at the store. If you continually repeat this information to yourself, you can remember it, but the moment you start thinking about something else, like where in the store the milk is located, the list of groceries will only stick around for about 20 or 30 seconds.

Long-term memory stores information, experiences, and ideas long after you stop thinking about them. When you consciously process information, short-term and long-term memory work together. For example, when you think or solve problems, the short-term and long-term memory systems are working together. Long-term memory includes an enormous amount of information. Some of this information is there for a lifetime. Scientists believe that over the course of a lifetime, the long-term memory has stored vast amounts of information. Much more than an encyclopedia!

Forgetting
As time passes, memory fades or we forget all of the specific details. An hour after you read a book, you can remember most of what it was about. Two days later, you might recall only a bit of the information that was in the book. After a month has passed, you probably remember even less.

There are several explanations as to why we may forget things. Maybe the information was not encoded in our memory properly. For instance, while reading over your notes for the test you were trying to watch your favorite show on television. This type of distraction can really interfere in encoding memories and the information is not successfully saved in your memory.

Alternatively, another reason that you may not be able to remember something is not because you actually have forgotten the information. The problem could be that you are having trouble retrieving it from your memory. You can't remember the answer to write it down on the test. It is right there, you know the answer, but it just won't come to you. As soon as the test is over and you walk out of the classroom, there it is—that answer you were trying so hard to come up with. This is a problem with retrieval. Your brain is having trouble locating that information again. It is similar to looking for a small object inside a room that is full of stuff. It can be very frustrating!

References

Loftus, E.F. (2013). Memory. *World Book Advanced*. Retrieved from http://www.worldbookonline.com/advanced/printarticle?id=ar354840

Mohs, R.C. (2007, May 8). How human memory works. *HowStuffWorks.com*. Retrieved from http://science.howstuffworks.com/life/inside-the-mind/human-brain/human-memory.htm

Source #2
Read the article about people who participate in memory championships from a 2012 issue of *Appleseeds* magazine.

Memory Masters
by Alice Andre-Clark

Nelson Dellis can look at a deck of cards for 5 minutes and then tell you the order of every single card in 63 seconds.

If you give teenager Sophia Hu a list of random words and let her study it for just 15 minutes, she might remember as many as 120 words.

Dellis and Hu were contestants in the USA Memory Championship, which has been crowning our top "mental athletes" since 1997. At the Memory Championship you start by studying the pictures of 117 strangers for 15 minutes, then try to remember all their names. In 2010, Hannan Khan listed 159 first and last names. Later, try meeting five guests at a pretend tea party and see if you can later recall their names, addresses, pets' names, hobbies, favorite foods, and more.

Think you have a knack for numbers? Try memorizing a sheet of 500 digits. It'll be tough to beat Dellis, who once remembered 248 numbers after only 5 minutes of studying.

Most of our top mental athletes say they weren't born with amazing memories. Brain scientists agree that there's probably nothing physically unusual about the brains of memory champions. They just happen to know a few tricks for keeping a lot of facts in their minds at once. . . .

Building a Memory Palace
Memories get stronger if you associate them with a place. To remember your shopping list, build it a "memory palace." Picture a building you know well, perhaps your own house. Now imagine each item in a different part of the house. Marshmallows strung like pearls, dangling from your mom's jewelry drawer. A graham-cracker fan on the coffee table. Chocolate bars popping out of the toaster.

Person + Action + Object = ?
Need to memorize a long string of numbers? Start by thinking of a person, an action, and an object for each number from 00 to 99. . . .

Now you're ready to learn a bigger number. For 872,936, combine the person from 87 with the action from 29 and the object from 36. . . .

What's in a Name? A Picture
Names can be hard to recall. Words like "mirror" and "table" may bring up lots of memories, but the first time you meet a Peyton or a Mrs. Cohen, you might not associate those words with anything. Change names just a little, and Cohen becomes "cold hen," an unhappy chicken sitting on a nest filled with ice cubes.

Use pictures to match faces with names too. If Mrs. Cohen has curly red hair, give the hen some fluffy red feathers. Long-necked Peyton ("pay ten") could become a stretched-out ten-dollar bill. Soon you'll rarely forget a name.

Andre-Clark, Alice. (2012, July/August). Memory Masters. *Appleseeds*, pp. 8-11.

Source #3
Read the article about interpreters and memory from a 2008 issue of *Odyssey* magazine.

Interpreters: Silver-Tongued Masters of Memory
by Charles Capaldi

Today, Murielle Pérégovoy sits in a glass-enclosed booth. An ultra-light headset rests on her ears. A microphone hovers in mid-air, inches from her mouth. Pérégovoy doesn't see any of it. Her attention is riveted on the space between her ears, which is currently filled with short bursts of angry Russian from a participant who has the floor on the other side of the conference room. Her voice rises and falls to match that of the speaker, filling the booth and the headsets of everyone tuned to the French channel. The participant finishes speaking and sits down. Murielle finishes one sentence behind him and reaches out to turn off her microphone. On any given day, she could be the voice of an ambassador, a distraught mother in war-torn Iraq, or an orthopedic surgeon. Pérégovoy is a simultaneous interpreter, and her workday has just ended.

In addition to knowing their native languages, professional interpreters are expected to understand two or more languages as well as any educated native speaker. More than 50 percent of the world's population is *bilingual* (speaks a second language from early infancy), and many bilingual people are drawn to the field.

By the age of two, most children have a vocabulary of about 2,000 words. The average American high school graduate has a vocabulary of about 50,000 words. A bilingual high school graduate can possess a vocabulary twice that size, split across two languages. Imagine the vast vocabulary stored in the long-term memory of an interpreter. Interpreters, then, seem to have amazing memories. But do they really? Questions like this one keep neuroscientists up late at night.

One of these neuroscientists is Dr. Michel Paradis, who teaches at McGill University in Montreal, Canada, and researches aphasia in bilingual people. *Aphasia* (the inability to understand or use language) usually results from a traumatic brain injury such as a stroke or accident. In the course of his research, Paradis has learned a lot about memory and language in people who are not aphasic. So, when asked whether interpreters have better memories than average, he says, "In the same way that the term intelligence covers many different types of capabilities, memory is an umbrella term that refers to many different kinds of capacity."

"Much of an interpreter's brain power is devoted to keeping information in short-term memory," says Paradis. "Simultaneously listening in one language and speaking in another makes the task much more challenging." How then does Murielle's brain undertake this seemingly impossible task?

As the message flows through her headphones, Pérégovoy must decode it. Decoding does not mean knowing what each word means. Interpretation focuses on the message being conveyed, rather than the words used to convey it. Understanding the speech flowing through her headset requires the use of procedural (a type of non-declarative) memory—the kind of memory we use for automated tasks, skills, and habits. The interpreter knows the language of the speaker well enough to understand it effortlessly. Similarly, when you hear an utterance in English you probably aren't even aware of trying to understand it. The fact that you comprehend it subconsciously is the hallmark of procedural memory.

Once Pérégovoy's brain has decoded the message, it identifies blocks of information that should be stored for later use. This identification process is a conscious activity. Murielle's memory clings to facts, events, people, and objects, relying on what neuroscientists call declarative memory. Where procedural memory is subconscious, declarative memory requires effort and focused attention.

Murielle stores the decoded message in her short-term memory and holds it there until it has been correctly translated. She must retrieve the information and compare it to her translation before uttering a single word into the microphone. This step involves working memory. Think of working memory as a tub being filled with water and drained simultaneously. Water cannot flow into the tub at a faster rate than water drains from the tub or else the tub will overflow.

While all this is happening in Pérégovoy's brain, the speaker continues talking. The average person speaks at 120 words per minute, with bursts that reach 180 words per minute. Neuroscientists have identified that working memory has about 10 seconds (or 20 words) of storage capacity. As new information is continually added to the tub, previously stored information is constantly being compared to the memory store, putting an extra burden on working memory.

For instance, Dr. Franco Fabbro at the University of Udine in Italy found that advanced interpreting students remembered fewer details of a story when they were asked to interpret it than when they just listened to it. Other studies show that sign language interpreters have better recall than interpreters of spoken languages. Sign language interpreters undertake the same process of decoding and encoding the message in another language, but sign language does not require them to speak their translation. Instead, they deliver the message through their hands and upper bodies. Dr. Fabbro and his colleagues reasoned that the demand on interpreters to speak and listen simultaneously might be at the root of the memory interference. To test this hypothesis, he asked the students to listen to another set of stories and told them not to interpret, but to keep

repeating "the . . . the . . . the. . ." while they listened. He found that these students remembered fewer details than when just listening to the stories. Working memory is taxed by the need to listen and speak at the same time, and when working memory is burdened, memorizing information becomes more difficult.

Interpreters may start out with the same three pounds of gray matter that everyone else has, but they have trained their short-term memory to help perform a particular task. Not everyone with a three-pound brain will have what it takes to become an interpreter, in much the same way that not everyone with a good pair of lungs and a love of music will grow up to become an opera singer. A lot depends on how you train, how committed you are, and your natural inclinations. "You can be good at one type of memory and poor at another," Paradis explains. "But you can improve each type of memory with practice. If you want to increase your memory, EXERCISE IT!" Do interpreters have better memories than the average person? Probably not better—just more buff.

Sweating to the Oldies? A Short-Term Memory Workout
Student interpreters often begin their studies with short-term memory workouts, called "lag exercises," which also teach them to listen and speak at the same time.

Record the following list of words into a tape recorder, or have a friend read them to you at a slow, steady pace. Leave a gap between one word and the next by reading one word every two seconds (approximately 30 words per minute).

tree	memory
car	tin
baby	ocean
tool	house
burp	computer
box	scratch
smooth	look
letter	lunch
pretty	pet
write	type
hello	table
lady	game
groove	bowl
tongue	dream
talk	breakfast

Play the tape, or have your friend start reading. Listen to the first word. When you hear the second word, cover it up by saying the first word. You'll be saying "tree" as you hear the word "car." Be careful not to speak in the gap between words—it's important to be speaking and listening at the same time. Student interpreters often practice this exercise in the same language until they can maintain a seven-word lag.

Capaldi, C. (2008, May/June). Silver-Tongued Masters of Memory. *Odyssey Adventures in Science*, pp. 30-33.

These texts appeared in the 2019–20 Smarter Balanced Grade 8 Sample Items published by The Regents of the University of California.

NAEP Basic

In this item, students are asked to determine the whether the textual evidence of each source supports the stated claims provided in the item, addressing the NAEP Basic level language of "make simple inferences and interpretations."

Comprehension Target: Integrate and Interpret; **Item Format:** SR-Grid; **Key:** See below the item.
Skill: Determine whether textual evidence supports claims.

Click on the boxes to show the claim(s) that each source supports. Some sources will have more than one box selected.

	Source #1: How Do We Remember?	Source #2: Memory Masters	Source #3: Interpreters: Silver-Tongued Masters of Memory
Find out how your memory systems process information.	☐	☐	☐
Learn how to improve your memory skills.	☐	☐	☐
Learn about the kinds of challenges presented at a memory competition.	☐	☐	☐

KEY:

Find out how your memory systems process information.: Source #1: How Do We Remember?, Source #3: Interpreters: Silver-Tongued Masters of Memory

Learn how to improve your memory skills.: Source #2: Memory Masters

Learn about the kinds of challenges presented at a memory competition.: Source #2: Memory Masters

This item appeared in the 2019–20 Grade 8 Smarter Balanced Sample Items published by The Regents of the University of California with Item ID 61235.

NAEP Proficient

In this item, students are asked to determine which source is most relevant to a specified topic and provide written justification with evidence in their response, addressing the NAEP Proficient level language of "form explanations and generalizations."

Comprehension Target: Analyze and Evaluate; **Item Format:** SCR; **Key:** N/A
Skill: Gather relevant information from multiple print and digital sources.

All of the sources provide information about memory. Which source would be **most** relevant to students researching ways to help remember information? Justify your answer and support it with details from the source.

This item appeared in the 2019–20 Grade 8 Smarter Balanced Sample Items published by The Regents of the University of California with Item ID 55409.

NAEP Advanced
In this item, students are tasked to write a multi-paragraph article using relevant information from the source texts, addressing the NAEP Advanced level language of "make complex inferences and to support their interpretations, conclusions, and judgments based upon evidence" and to "evaluate the relevance and strength of evidence to support an author's claims."

Comprehension Target: Use and Apply; **Item Format:** ECR; **Key:** N/A
Skill: Synthesize information from a range of sources into a coherent understanding of a process, phenomenon, or concept.

In your school, the Science Club is encouraging students to provide articles for its new website. For your contribution to the website, you will write a brief explanatory article about improving memory.

Using more than one source, explain how to improve memory. Be sure to include information from the sources you choose to use, and to reference any quotations or paraphrasing of details or facts from the sources.

This item is adapted from a Smarter Balanced item. The original item appeared in the Grade 8 Smarter Balanced Sample Items published by The Regents of the University of California with Item ID 55074.

Grade 12

The items illustrating NAEP ALDs at the Basic, Proficient, and Advanced levels in the Grade 12 science disciplinary context are associated with the text "Blue Crabs Provide Evidence of Oil Tainting Gulf Food Web."

Blue Crabs Provide Evidence of Oil Tainting Gulf Food Web
by John Flesher, *Staff Writer*

Weeks ago, before engineers pumped in mud and cement to plug the gusher, scientists began finding specks of oil in crab larvae plucked from waters across the Gulf coast.

The government said last week that three-quarters of the spilled oil has been removed or

naturally dissipated from the water. But the crab larvae discovery was an ominous sign that crude had already infiltrated the Gulf's vast food web—and could affect it for years to come.

"It would suggest the oil has reached a position where it can start moving up the food chain instead of just hanging in the water," said Bob Thomas, a biologist at Loyola University in New Orleans. "Something likely will eat those oiled larvae . . . and then that animal will be eaten by something bigger and so on."

Tiny creatures might take in such low amounts of oil that they could survive, Thomas said. But those at the top of the chain, such as dolphins and tuna, could get fatal "megadoses."

Marine biologists routinely gather shellfish for study. Since the spill began, many of the crab larvae collected have had the distinctive orange oil droplets, said Harriet Perry, a biologist with the University of Southern Mississippi's Gulf Coast Research Laboratory.

"In my 42 years of studying crabs I've never seen this," Perry said.

She wouldn't estimate how much of the crab larvae are contaminated overall, but said about 40 percent of the area they are known to inhabit has been affected by oil from the spill.

While fish can metabolize dispersant and oil, crabs may accumulate the hydrocarbons, which could harm their ability to reproduce, Perry said in an earlier interview with *Science* magazine.

She told the magazine there are two encouraging signs for the wild larvae—they are alive when collected and may lose oil droplets when they molt.

Tulane University researchers are investigating whether the splotches also contain toxic chemical dispersants that were spread to break up the oil but have reached no conclusions, biologist Caz Taylor said.

If large numbers of blue crab larvae are tainted, their population is virtually certain to take a hit over the next year and perhaps longer, scientists say. The spawning season occurs between April and October, but the peak months are in July and August.

How large the die-off would be is unclear, Perry said. An estimated 207 million gallons of oil have spewed into the Gulf since an April 20 drilling rig explosion triggered the spill, and thousands of gallons of dispersant chemicals have been dumped.

Scientists will be focusing on crabs because they're a "keystone species" that play a crucial role in the food web as both predator and prey, Perry said.

Richard Condrey, a Louisiana State University oceanographer, said the crabs are "a living repository of information on the health of the environment."

Named for the light-blue tint of their claws, the crabs have thick shells and 10 legs, allowing them to swim and scuttle across bottomlands. As adults, they live in the Gulf's bays and estuaries amid marshes that offer protection and abundant food, including snails, tiny shellfish, plants and even smaller crabs. In turn, they provide sustenance for a variety of wildlife, from redfish to raccoons and whooping cranes.

Adults could be harmed by direct contact with oil and from eating polluted food. But scientists are particularly worried about the vulnerable larvae.

That's because females don't lay their eggs in sheltered places, but in areas where estuaries meet the open sea. Condrey discovered several years ago that some even deposit offspring on shoals miles offshore in the Gulf.

The larvae grow as they drift with the currents back toward the estuaries for a month or longer. Many are eaten by predators, and only a handful of the 3 million or so eggs from a single female live to adulthood.

But their survival could drop even lower if the larvae run into oil and dispersants.

"Crabs are very abundant. I don't think we're looking at extinction or anything close to it," said Taylor, one of the researchers who discovered the orange spots.

Still, crabs and other estuary-dependent species such as shrimp and red snapper could feel the effects of remnants of the spill for years, Perry said.

"There could be some mortality, but how much is impossible to say at this point," said Vince Guillory, biologist manager with the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries.

Perry, Taylor and Condrey will be among scientists monitoring crabs for negative effects such as population drop-offs and damage to reproductive capabilities and growth rates.

Crabs are big business in the region. In Louisiana alone, some 33 million pounds are harvested annually, generating nearly $300 million in economic activity, Guillory said.

Blue crabs are harvested year-round, but summer and early fall are peak months for harvesting, Guillory said.

Prices for live blue crab generally have gone up, partly because of the Louisiana catch scaling back due to fishing closures, said Steve Hedlund, editor of SeafoodSource.com, a website that covers the global seafood industry.

Fishers who can make a six-figure income off crabs in a good year now are now idled—and worried about the future.

"If they'd let us go out and fish today, we'd probably catch crabs," said Glen Despaux, 37, who sets his traps in Louisiana's Barataria Bay. "But what's going to happen next year, if

this water is polluted and it's killing the eggs and the larvae? I think it's going to be a long-term problem."

Excerpt from "Blue Crabs Provide Evidence of Oil Tainting Gulf Food Web" by John Flesher. Copyright © 2010 by The Associated Press. Reprinted by permission of The Associated Press.

This text appeared in the 2019–20 Smarter Balanced Grades 11–12 Sample Items published by The Regents of the University of California.

NAEP Basic

In this item, students are asked to determine which two pieces of textual evidence support an inference provided in the stem, addressing the NAEP Basic level language of "find information" and "make inferences and interpretations."

Comprehension Target: Locate and Recall; **Item Format:** SR-MSMC; **Key:** 1) She told the magazine there are two encouraging signs . . .; 2) "Crabs are very abundant. I don't think we're looking at extinction . . ."
Skill: Cite explicit text evidence to support inferences made or conclusions drawn from a text.

Select the **two** sentences from the text that **best** support the inference that blue crabs may be less impacted by the oil spill than some scientists predict.

- ☐ Tiny creatures might take in such low amounts of oil that they could survive, Thomas said.
- ☐ "In my 42 years of studying crabs I've never seen this," Perry said.
- ☐ She told the magazine there are two encouraging signs for the wild larvae—they are alive when collected and may lose oil droplets when they molt.
- ☐ "Crabs are very abundant. I don't think we're looking at extinction or anything close to it," said Taylor, one of the researchers who discovered the orange spots.
- ☐ Still, crabs and other estuary-dependent species such as shrimp and red snapper could feel the effects of remnants of the spill for years, Perry said.

This item appeared in the 2019–20 Grades 11–12 Smarter Balanced Sample Items published by The Regents of the University of California with Item ID 183102.

NAEP Proficient

In this item, students are asked to determine an author's point of view based upon the author's inclusion of conflicting information in the text, addressing the NAEP Proficient level language of "use text-based evidence to support arguments and conclusions."

Comprehension Target: Analyze and Evaluate; **Item Format:** SR-SSMC; **Key:** A
Skill: Determine an author's point of view or purpose in a text by analyzing style and content.

What does the conflicting information about the effects of oil on blue crab larvae reveal about the author's point of view?

Ⓐ It reinforces the author's belief that scientists do not yet know how the oil will affect the blue crab population.

Ⓑ It suggests that the author disagrees with scientists who predict long-term damage to the blue crab population.

Ⓒ It reinforces the author's feeling that scientists may never know the true effects of oil on the blue crab population.

Ⓓ It suggests that the author feels scientists have not devoted enough attention to the effects of oil on blue crab larvae.

This item appeared in the 2019–20 Grades 11–12 Smarter Balanced Sample Items published by The Regents of the University of California with Item ID 183143.

NAEP Advanced

In this item, students are asked to write a short response based upon an analysis of the evidence an author uses to support claims in a text, addressing the NAEP Advanced level language of "make complex inferences and to support their interpretations, conclusions, and their judgments based upon evidence."

Comprehension Target: Analyze and Evaluate; **Item Format:** SCR; **Key:** N/A
Skill: Delineate and evaluate the argument, claims, and reasoning in a text.

What inference can be made about the evidence the author uses to support claims in the text? Support your answer with evidence from the text.

This item appeared in the 2019–20 Grades 11–12 Smarter Balanced Sample Items published by The Regents of the University of California with Item ID 183109.

Disciplinary Context: Social Studies

Grade 4

The items illustrating NAEP ALDs at the Basic, Proficient, and Advanced levels in the Grade 4 social studies disciplinary context are associated with the text “Marian’s Revolution.”

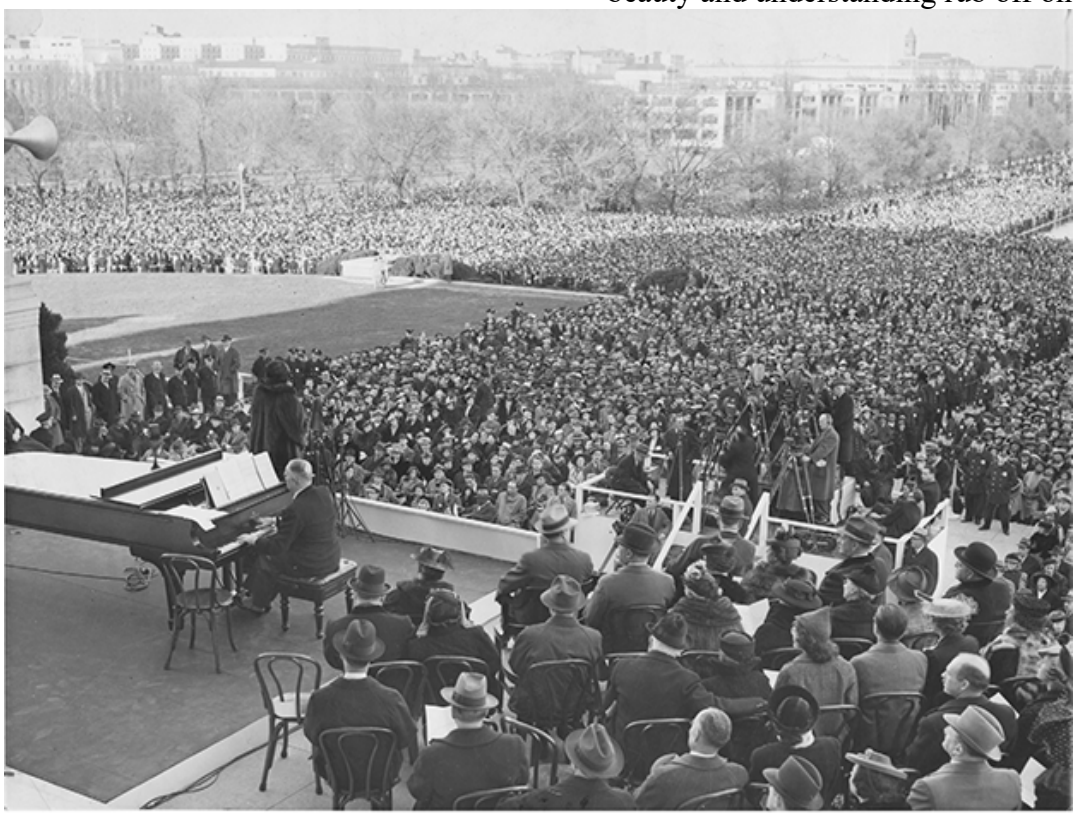
Marian's Revolution

by Sudipta Bardhan-Quallen

By 1939, Marian Anderson had performed for presidents and kings. She had been praised for having "a voice ... one hears once in a hundred years." Despite her success, when Marian wanted to sing at Constitution Hall that year, she was banned from doing so. The owner of the hall, an organization called the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR), felt that Marian couldn't be allowed to sing there because she was African American.

Chosen by Music

That wasn't the first time Marian had been turned away because she was black. When she was 18 years old, she applied to music school. The clerk at the desk rudely sent her home because of her race. Marian was shocked by the clerk's words. "I could not conceive of a person," Marian said, "surrounded as she was with the joy that is music without having some sense of its beauty and understanding rub off on her."



Marian Anderson sings to a crowd of 75,000 people at the Lincoln Memorial on April 10, 1939.

Page 2

"I don't think I had much to say in choosing it. I think music chose me."
—Marian Anderson

Because of segregation—the practice of keeping blacks and whites separate—the early 1900s were a difficult time for a young black woman to begin a professional singing career. But Marian was determined to sing. "It was something that just had to be done," she remembered. "I don't think I had much to say in choosing it. I think music chose me."

In 1925, Marian won a voice contest in New York, and sang with the New York Philharmonic. Still, her chances to perform in the United States were limited. To build her career, Marian traveled to Europe in 1928, where she became very successful.

A World-Class Singer Faces Racism

By 1939, Marian was a world-class singer. She returned to the United States to continue her career. But back at home, she faced racism in many ways. Segregation was still common on trains and in hotels and restaurants. No amount of vocal talent could spare Marian from that.

Even concert halls were segregated, although usually that was limited to the audience. Because black performers often appeared on stage in segregated halls, Marian had no reason to think she would be turned away from Constitution Hall. She believed that musical skill would be the only factor that the DAR would consider.

At first, the DAR told Marian that the date she requested was not available. Then they told her that all of her alternate dates were booked. Eventually, the DAR upheld their policy that only white performers could appear in Constitution Hall.

A Voice for Civil Rights

When news of the DAR's policy got out, many people were outraged. First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt resigned from the DAR. In a letter, she wrote: "I am in complete

disagreement with the attitude taken in refusing Constitution Hall to a great artist .... You had an opportunity to lead in an enlightened way, and it seems to me your organization has failed."

Marian believed strongly in the civil rights movement. She knew firsthand the pain that racism caused. She understood that the way the controversy with the DAR was resolved would be a milestone for civil rights.

Despite public outcry, the DAR would not back down and let Marian sing. With Mrs. Roosevelt's support, the Secretary of the Interior arranged a special concert for Marian, to be held at the Lincoln Memorial. Seventy-five thousand people attended. In many ways, Marian's concert was considered to be America's first civil rights rally. That night, she took a stand against discrimination and for equality. The first words she sang were: "My country, 'tis of thee, sweet land of liberty, of thee I sing."

Marian realized that equality in the United States would be achieved when every person was willing to stand up for what is right. As a public figure, she felt a responsibility to set an example. After the 1939 incident, she did her part by turning down concerts for segregated audiences.

"The minute a person whose word means a great deal dares to take the openhearted and courageous way," she said, 'many others follow."

As Marian's career progressed, America changed. She performed in many prestigious locations, including Constitution Hall, where she sang after the DAR changed its policies. By 1954, segregation was declared unconstitutional. The Civil Rights Act was signed into law in 1964, the year Marian retired from performing. By then, many of the barriers she'd had to fight through were disappearing. Marian's farewell tour began in front of an admiring crowd at Constitution Hall.

Eleanor Roosevelt honors singer Marian Anderson.

This text appeared in the 2011 NAEP grade 4 Reading administration in Block 4R10.

NAEP Basic
In this item, students are asked to identify the main idea of an article, addressing the NAEP Basic level language of "make simple inferences and interpretations."

Comprehension Target: Integrate and Interpret; **Item Format:** SR-SSMC; **Key:** D
Skill: Identify the main idea of an article.

What is the article mainly about?

A. Civil rights songs that Marian Anderson liked to sing

B. Marian Anderson's friendship with Eleanor Roosevelt

C. How Marian Anderson learned to sing

D. How segregation affected Marian Anderson's career

This item appeared in the 2011 NAEP grade 4 Reading administration with NAEP Item ID 2011-4R10 #1.

NAEP Proficient
In this item, students are asked to determine the meaning of a vocabulary word via surrounding context, addressing the NAEP Proficient level language of "make more complex inferences and interpretations."

Comprehension Target: Integrate and Interpret; **Item Format:** SR-SSMC; **Key:** B
Skill: Show understanding of vocabulary, figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings (e.g., shades of meaning).

On page 4, the article says that Marian Anderson performed in many **prestigious** locations. This means that she sang in places that were

A. far away from each other

B. famous and important

C. open to people of all races

D. large and crowded

This item appeared in the 2011 NAEP grade 4 Reading administration with NAEP Item ID 2011-4R10 #9.

NAEP Advanced

In this item, students are asked to explain how a key detail supports the main idea of an article, addressing the NAEP Advanced level language of "make complex inferences and to support their interpretations, conclusions, and judgments based upon evidence."

Comprehension Target: Analyze and Evaluate; **Item Format:** SCR; **Key:** N/A
Skill: Analyze how key details support the main idea.

Why do you think Marian Anderson began her concert by singing the words, "My country, 'tis of thee, sweet land of liberty, of thee I sing"? Use information from the article to support your answer.

This item appeared in the 2011 NAEP grade 4 Reading administration with NAEP Item ID 2011-4R10 #8.

Grade 8

The items illustrating NAEP ALDs at the Basic, Proficient, and Advanced levels in the Grade 8 social studies disciplinary context are associated with the text "1920: Women Get the Vote."

1920: Women Get the Vote

by Sam Roberts

The 19th Amendment was ratified in 1920, after decades of campaigning by the women's suffrage movement.

When John Adams and his fellow patriots were mulling independence from England in the spring of 1776, Abigail Adams famously urged her husband to "remember the ladies and be more generous and favorable to them than your ancestors." Otherwise, she warned, "we are determined to foment a rebellion, and will not hold ourselves bound by any laws in which we have no voice or representation."

That summer, the Declaration of Independence proclaimed that all men are created equal but said nothing of women's equality. It would take another 144 years before the U.S. Constitution was amended, giving women the right to vote in every state.

That 19th Amendment says simply: "The right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of sex." It took effect after a dramatic ratification battle in Tennessee in which a 24-year-old legislator cast the deciding vote.

The amendment was a long time coming. At various times, women could run for public office in some places, but

More than 20,000 marchers took part in this 1915 parade in New York City in support of women's suffrage.

Courtesy of Library of Congress #LC-USZ62-50393

ELIZABETH CADY STANTON

Courtesy of Library of Congress
#LC-USZ62-28195

SUSAN B. ANTHONY

Courtesy of Library of Congress
#LC-USZ62-111423

could rarely vote. (As far back as 1776, New Jersey allowed women property owners to vote, but rescinded that right three decades later.)

"WOMANIFESTO"

The campaign for women's rights began in earnest in 1848 at a Women's Rights convention in Seneca Falls, N.Y., organized by 32-year-old Elizabeth Cady Stanton and other advocates. Stanton had drafted a "Womanifesto" patterned on the Declaration of Independence, but the one resolution that shocked even some of her supporters was a demand for equal voting rights, also known as universal suffrage. "I saw clearly," Stanton later recalled, "that the power to make the laws was the right through which all other rights could be secured."

Stanton was joined in her campaign by Susan B. Anthony, Sojourner Truth, Lucretia Mott, and other crusaders who would become icons of the women's movement. Some were militant. Many were met with verbal abuse and even violence. Already active in the antislavery movement and temperance campaigns (which urged abstinence from alcohol), women often enlisted in the fight for voting rights too.

WYOMING IS FIRST

They staged demonstrations, engaged in civil disobedience, began legal challenges, and pressed their case state by state. In 1869, the Wyoming Territory gave women the vote, with the first permanent suffrage law in the nation. ("It made sense that a place like Wyoming would embrace women's rights," Gail Collins of *The New York Times* wrote in her book *America's Women*. "With very few women around, there was no danger that they could impose their will on the male majority.")

In 1878, a constitutional amendment was introduced in Congress. The legislation languished for nine years. In 1887, the full Senate considered the amendment for the first time and defeated it by about 2-to-1.

But the suffrage movement was slowly gaining support. With more and more women graduating from high school, going to college, and working outside the home, many Americans began asking: Why couldn't women vote too?

Plenty of opposition existed, according to Collins: Democrats feared women would vote for more socially progressive Republicans. The liquor industry, afraid of prohibition, also opposed women's suffrage, as did many people in the South, where blacks had been largely disenfranchised since Reconstruction.

In 1918, after much cajoling and picketing by suffragists, President Woodrow Wilson changed his mind and backed the amendment. The next year, both houses of Congress voted to amend the Constitution. Suffrage advocates predicted quick ratification by the states. (By 1919, 28 states permitted women to vote, at least for President.) Within a little more than a year, 35 of the required 36 states had voted for ratification.

The last stand for anti-suffragists was in Tennessee in the summer of 1920. Their showdown in the State Legislature became known as the "War of the Roses." (Pro-amendment forces sported yellow roses; the antis wore red.)

After two roll calls, the vote was still tied, 48-48. On the third, Harry T. Burn, a Republican and, at 24, the youngest member of the legislature. switched sides. He was wearing a red rose but voted for ratification because he had received a letter from his mother that read, in part: "Hurrah and vote for suffrage! Don't keep them in doubt!"

Burn said later: "I know that a mother's advice is always safest for her boy to follow and my mother wanted me to vote for ratification. I appreciated the fact that an opportunity such as seldom comes to mortal man-to free 17,000,000 women from political slavery-was mine."

GRADUAL CHANGE

In 1920, women across America had the right to vote in a presidential election. (In the South, black women and men would be kept off voter rolls in large numbers until 1965, after passage of the Voting Rights Act.)

But newly enfranchised women voted in much smaller numbers than men. "Women who were adults at that time had been socialized to believe that voting was socially inappropriate for women," says Susan J. Carroll, senior scholar at the Center for American Women and Politics.

The political and social change sought by suffragists came gradually and not without fits and starts. An Equal Rights Amendment, stipulating equal treatment of the sexes under the law, was passed by Congress and sent to the states in 1972, but later failed after being ratified by only 35 of the necessary 38 states.

In 1980, however, women surpassed men for the first time in turnout for a presidential election. Since then, there has also been a substantial rise in the number of women running for and holding political office.

VC176436
From *THE NEW YORK TIMES UPFRONT* magazine, September 5, 2005 issue.

This text appeared in the 2011 NAEP grade 12 Reading administration in Block 8R11.

NAEP Basic
In this item, students are asked to determine the meaning of a word based on context, addressing the NAEP Basic level language of "show understanding of vocabulary."

Comprehension Target: Integrate and Interpret; **Item Format:** SR-SSMC; **Key:** C
Skill: Show understanding of general academic and domain-specific vocabulary.

On page 3, the article says that Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony would beomce **icons** of the women's movement. This means that the two women would

A. beome religious leaders

B. be pictured on the "Womanifesto" document

C. become important symbols of the movement

D. be ready to sacrifice everything for the movement

This item appeared in the 2011 NAEP grade 8 Reading administration with NAEP Item ID 2011-8R11 #5.

NAEP Proficient
In this item, students are asked to explain the how events described in the text affect the central idea of the text, addressing the NAEP Proficient level language of "make more complex inferences and interpretations."

Comprehension Target: Integrate and Interpret; **Item Format:** SCR; **Key:** NA
Skill: Explain how a text makes connections between individuals, ideas, and/or events.

The section "Wyoming Is First" describes changes in United States society in the late 1800s and early 1900s. Choose one of these changes and explain its effect on women's progress in getting the vote.

This item appeared in the 2011 NAEP grade 8 Reading administration with NAEP Item ID 2011-8R11 #10.

NAEP Advanced
In this item, students are asked to XXX, addressing the NAEP Advanced level language of "make complex inferences and to support their interpretations, conclusions, and their judgments based upon evidence."

Comprehension Target: Analyze and Evaluate; **Item Format:** ECR; **Key:** NA
Skill: Analyze how word choice impacts a text's meaning and tone.

In describing the women's suffrage movement, the author uses such words as "battle," "militant," and "showdown." Do you think this is an effective way to describe the women's suffrage movement? Support your answer with two references to the article.

This item appeared in the 2011 NAEP grade 8 Reading administration with NAEP Item ID 2011-8R11 #7.

Grade 12

The items illustrating NAEP ALDs at the Basic, Proficient, and Advanced levels in the Grade 12 social studies disciplinary context are associated with the text "Inaugural Address of Theodore Roosevelt."

Theodore Roosevelt

United States President (1901-1909)

Inaugural Address

Saturday, March 4, 1905

The energetic Republican President had taken his first oath of office upon the death of President McKinley, who died of an assassin's gunshot wounds on September 14, 1901. Mr. Roosevelt had been President himself for three years at the election of 1904. The inaugural celebration was the largest and most diverse of any in memory—cowboys, American Indians (including the Apache Chief Geronimo), coal miners, soldiers, and students were some of the groups represented. The oath of office was administered on the East Portico of the Capitol by Chief Justice Melville Fuller.

Theodore Roosevelt

MY FELLOW CITIZENS, no people on Earth have more cause to be thankful than ours, and this is said reverently, in no spirit of boastfulness in our own strength, but with gratitude to the Giver of Good who has blessed us with the conditions which have enabled us to achieve so large a measure of well-being and of happiness.

To us as a people it has been granted to lay the foundations of our national life in a new continent. We are the heirs of the ages, and yet we have had to pay few of the penalties which in old countries are exacted by the dead hand of a bygone civilization.... Our life has called for the vigor and effort without which the manlier and hardier virtues wither away.

Under such conditions it would be our own fault if we failed; and the success which we have had in the past, the success which we confidently believe the future will bring, should cause in us no feeling of vainglory, but rather a deep and abiding realization of all which life has offered us; a full acknowledgment of the responsibility which is ours; and a fixed determination to show that under a free government a mighty people can thrive best, alike as regards the things of the body and the things of the soul.

Much has been given us, and much will rightfully be expected from us. We have duties to others and duties to ourselves; and we can shirk neither. We have become a great nation, forced by the fact of its greatness into relations with the other nations of the Earth, and we must behave as beseems a people with such responsibilities.

Toward all other nations, large and small, our attitude must be one of cordial and sincere friendship. We must show not only in our words, but in our deeds, that we are earnestly desirous of securing their goodwill by acting toward them in a spirit of just and generous recognition of all their rights.

But justice and generosity in a nation, as in an individual, count most when shown not by the weak but by the strong. While ever careful to refrain from wrongdoing others, we must be no less insistent that we are not wronged ourselves. We wish peace, but we wish the peace of justice, the peace of righteousness. We wish it because we think it is right and not because we are afraid. No weak nation that acts manfully and justly should ever have cause to fear us, and no strong power should ever be able to single us out as a subject for insolent aggression.

Our relations with the other powers of the world are important; but still more important are our relations among ourselves. Such growth in wealth, in

population, and in power as this nation has seen during the century and a quarter of its national life is inevitably accompanied by a like growth in the problems which are ever before every nation that rises to greatness. Power invariably means both responsibility and danger. Our forefathers faced certain perils which we have outgrown. We now face other perils, the very existence of which it was impossible that they should foresee.

Modern life is both complex and intense, and the tremendous changes wrought by the extraordinary industrial development of the last half century are felt in every fiber of our social and political being. Never before have men tried so vast and formidable an experiment as that of administering the affairs of a continent under the forms of a democratic republic. The conditions which have told for our marvelous material well-being—which have developed to a very high degree our energy, self-reliance, and individual initiative—have also brought the care and anxiety inseparable from the accumulation of great wealth in industrial centers.

To do so we must show, not merely in great crises, but in the everyday affairs of life, the qualities of practical intelligence, of courage, of hardihood, and endurance, and above all the power of devotion to a lofty ideal, which made great the men who founded this republic in the days of Washington, which made great the men who preserved this republic in the days of Abraham Lincoln.
Text courtesy of Bartleby Library.
Photograph courtesy of Library of Congress #LC-D429-29129.

This text appeared in the 2013 NAEP grade 12 Reading administration in Block 12R11.

NAEP Basic
In this item, students are asked to evaluate why the author uses references to two historical figures in a speech, addressing the NAEP Basic level language of "make inferences and interpretations."

Comprehension Target: Analyze and Evaluate; **Item Format:** SR - SSMC; **Key:** C
Skill: Evaluate author's technique.

Roosevelt most likely refers to Washington and Lincoln at the end of the address in order to

A. praise the speaking styles of previous presidents

B. encourage listeners to study history

C. recall accomplishments from the past

D. suggest that government was more powerful in the past

This item appeared in the 2013 NAEP grade 12 Reading administration with NAEP Item ID 2013-12R11 #10.

NAEP Proficient
In this item, students are asked to determine the relationship between two ideas over the course of the text, addressing the NAEP Proficient level language of "make more complex inferences and interpretations."

Comprehension Target: Integrate and Interpret; **Item Format:** MC; **Key:** C
Skill: Explain how specific individuals, ideas, and/or events interact and develop over the course of a text.

Which of the following best describes Roosevelt's ideas about the relationship between progress and problems?

A. He believes that in the future progress will not lead to problems.

B. He believes progress solves most problems once thought unsolvable.

C. He believes a nation cannot have progress without also having problems.

D. He believes progress can solve only certain types of problems.

This item appeared in the 2013 NAEP grade 12 Reading administration with NAEP Item ID 2013-12R11 #8.

NAEP Advanced

In this item, students are asked to delineate the author's argument and explain why the author makes an argument, addressing the NAEP Advanced level language of "make complex inferences and to support their interpretations, conclusions, and their judgments based upon evidence."

Comprehension Target: Integrate and Interpret; **Item Format:** ECR; **Key:** N/A
Skill: Delineate and evaluate the argument, claims, and reasoning in a text.

Roosevelt emphasizes "responsibility" and "duty" throughout his address. According to Roosevelt, why should the nation take responsibility? What are two responsibilities or duties that Roosevelt believed were important?

This item appeared in the 2013 NAEP grade 12 Reading administration with NAEP Item ID 2013-12R11 #6.

This appendix is provided to describe design considerations, based on the principles outlined in the Framework, that assessment developers might weigh as they develop blocks. (This appendix is also included as Appendix C in the Framework.) Each design decision requires tradeoffs, and assessment developers must consider which tradeoffs to make and why. Such decisions are guided by the components of the assessment—the disciplinary context, broad purpose, tasks and texts, and Comprehension Targets. Moreover, developers must consider whether and how different design features (item response formats, UDEs, and process data) will be used so that a broad array of features are included, in purposeful ways, across the multiple blocks that are sampled.

Employing the 2026 NAEP Reading Assessment Framework Principles: Assessment Components

The 2026 NAEP Reading Assessment Framework describes three areas of design considerations about which developers will make decisions: the block components (disciplinary context, broad reading purpose, specific reading purpose, and reader role); the task components (tasks, texts, and items); and the design features (item response formats, UDEs, and process data). See Exhibit C.1 for an illustration of how these areas relate to one another.

It is important to note that developers do not necessarily make decisions about these three areas in this order; rather, some of these decisions might be iterative and mutually informative. For example, in developing a literature block for a certain grade level, the developer might first choose a text and broad reading purpose and then determine the reader's role and a specific purpose appropriate to the text. Thus, the areas are only used to illustrate the relationship of these considerations to one another and how students might experience the block.

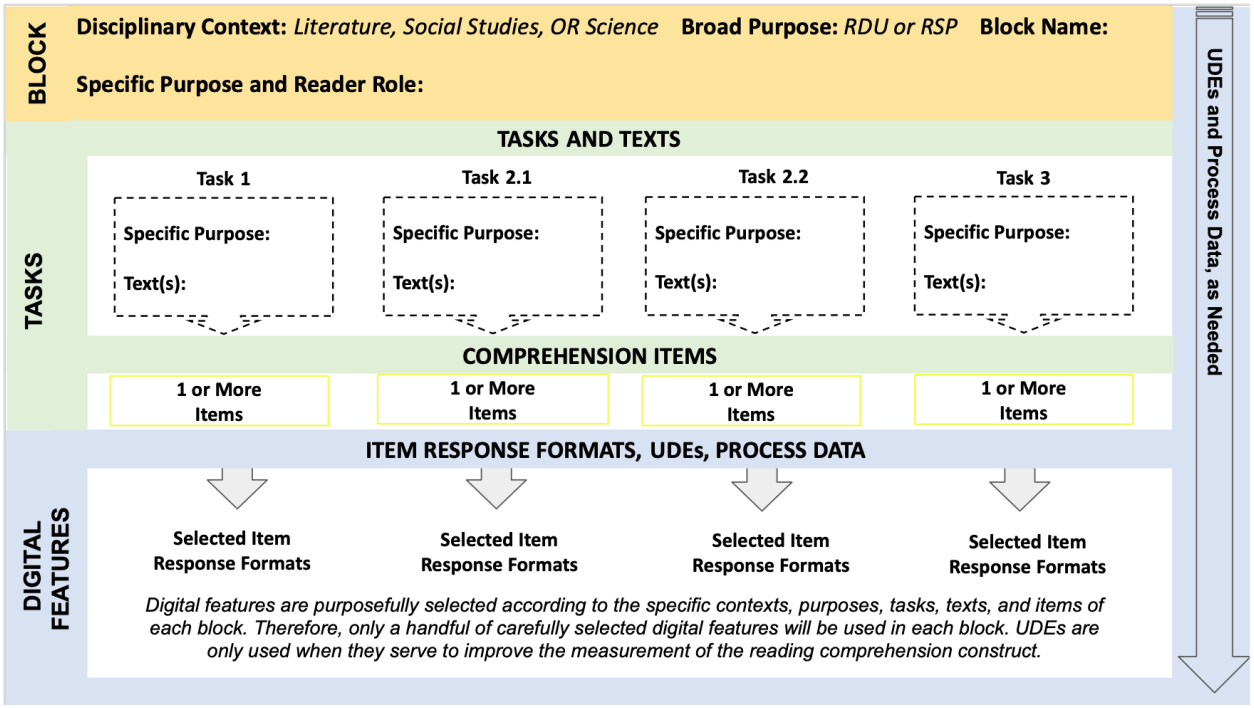
First, students learn what disciplinary context and broad purpose they are working in, and then they learn the specific purpose and their role. Second, students are given a text or texts to read and tasks to work on as they read that text. As students engage with the texts and tasks, they complete comprehension items, which are situated within the tasks, as illustrated in Exhibit C.1. Third, design features such as item formats, UDEs, and process data are used to leverage the digital assessment environment to measure how well students perform on the blocks. The relationships among all of these features of the assessment are synergistic. The disciplinary context and broad reading purpose drive the specific reading purpose, reader role, selection of texts, and the tasks; all of which, in turn, inform the comprehension items. Items are created in relation to item response formats, as different formats are used to collect different kinds of information. Similarly, all assessment components inform the use of UDEs because UDEs are used to help ensure that all students can gain access to the tasks required of them to complete the assessment and that the assessment measures students' reading comprehension of the texts and not something else (e.g., how well they can read or follow test directions). In this manner, a well-integrated block results, with all of the parts working in tandem.

Exhibit C.1 illustrates the assessment components and their relationship to one another. Each block defines a disciplinary context, broad purpose, block-specific purpose, and reader role. Each block also outlines 2-3 tasks, which are explicitly stated to the reader and which might include sub-tasks, for readers to complete as they read one or more texts. For each task, there

might be one or more comprehension items. UDEs are only employed as needed to bolster construct validity and ensure better measurement of the reading comprehension construct. Similarly, process data are only collected in places where developers think it might be useful for understanding why students perform the way that they do or for informing revision or future research and development.

As developers develop a block, they make decisions about each of the components described in Exhibit C.1. This exhibit provides one sample approach to an assessment block; other approaches are possible that would have variations in the components (e.g., the number of tasks and texts). In the following section, we describe some of the different considerations developers might think about as they make decisions about the assessment components illustrated.

Exhibit C.1. Design Components of a 2026 NAEP Reading Assessment Block



Considering the Range of Variations Within Assessment Components and Across a Block

When blocks are developed in accordance with the 2026 NAEP Reading Framework, the expectation, as outlined in Chapters 2 and 3, is that any of the components in a block (i.e., rows in the exhibit) can vary along a continuum, as depicted in Exhibit C.2. That is, some blocks are more likely to include static texts and less cumulative tasks, items, and/or UDEs from one item to the next (left of center on the continuum), while other blocks are more likely to include dynamic/multilayered texts and more cumulative tasks, items, and/or UDEs from one item to the next (right of center on the continuum).

Exhibit C.2 illustrates the continuum of design features from which developers might choose for each assessment component in the testing block. Note that within a given block, one component may have features that fall more on the left end of the continuum while features of another component fall more on the right. Further, the complexity of different design features, and therefore of assessment components, may vary within a task. For example, for one task/text,

the features might be less complex, but for a second task/text, they might be more complex. Or, for a single task/text, the purpose might be straightforward but the UDEs might be more complex. In all blocks, formats and features will continue to provide opportunities for readers to engage with an array of texts and tasks made possible in the digital platform used for all NAEP assessments.

Exhibit C.2. Continuum of Variation in Features of Assessment Components Within a Block

Assessment Component	Less Dynamic and Cumulative Across Content and Format		More Dynamic and Cumulative Across Content and Format
Specific Reading Purposes	Purposes allow readers to focus attention on developing a deep understanding of a theme, question, or issue to be explored during the block. Not all tasks or items within the block necessarily work directly toward this theme, and there are opportunities for items to be less related to the specific purpose.		Purposes are paired with an essential inquiry question or problem to be examined throughout the task. All tasks and items within the block help readers work towards this theme, question, or problem.
Reader Role	Fewer parameters are specified for the reader's role. The reader is placed in a situation that provides fewer pieces of information about how to engage with the provided tasks and texts. The reader might be placed within a situation that contextualizes expectations for how to engage with provided texts and tasks. However, this situation provides less information about that role.		More parameters are specified for the reader's role within the block. The reader is placed in a situation that provides multiple pieces of information about how to engage with the provided tasks and texts. Readers may be assigned a particular role, and their role may be more specified, particularly in relation to reading purpose(s) and expected outcome(s).
Tasks	Purpose-driven tasks and items are situated in line with disciplinary context, but tasks are less related to one another with less probability of		Purpose-driven tasks are situated in line with disciplinary context but tasks are more tightly structured so that one task builds on the previous; more probability that tasks are

	readers moving back and forth across items within tasks; less need for resetting. Less involved culminating task, or no culminating task. Task not necessarily a determinant of all items in block.		interdependent; may have more need for resetting. More involved culminating task at the end of an activity that directly addresses the question or problem; major driver of the block.
Texts	*Number*: 1-3 topically related texts; excerpts may be included. *Dynamism*: More static texts with minimal dynamic features. *Linearity:* Fewer nonlinear structures to navigate within or across texts; less variation in structures across texts. *Features*: Texts include a narrower range of features and fewer types of media.		*Number*: 2-4 topically related and interconnected texts may be included. Readers may be asked to choose only some texts to engage with and in line with task purposes. *Dynamism*: More texts with dynamic and/or or multimodal text features. *Linearity:* More nonlinear structures to navigate within or across texts; more variation in structures across texts. *Features*: Texts include a wider range of features and more types of media.
Items	Items are less connected to the overall specific reading purpose for the block and there are more opportunities for items to be related, but less connected, to this specific purpose and to the related tasks; Less dynamic item formats to support less complex tasks and items.		Items are more connected to the overall specific reading purpose for the block. There are more opportunities for items to be more directly related to the specific reading purpose for the block and to the related tasks; More dynamic item formats to support more complex/multilayered tasks and items.
Universal Design Elements (UDEs)	Fewer cumulative reading purposes that may require UDEs for knowledge or motivation and potentially lesser need for task-based UDEs.		More cumulative reading purposes that may require UDEs for knowledge or motivation and potentially greater need for task-based UDEs.

Process Data	Potentially fewer locations where process data involving reading actions could provide additional information about comprehension performance; sources may include, but not be limited to, timing data, navigation data (use of look back buttons), and use of varied item response formats.		Potentially more locations where process data involving reading actions could provide additional information about comprehension performance; sources might include, but not be limited to, timing data, more complex navigational practices across multiple sources and/or use of more dynamic item response formats.

Specific Guidelines for Block Development

Despite the range of variations in assessment components described above, as developers consider the different decisions they must make when designing a block, it is useful to keep the following points in mind:

1. Students deserve to know the tasks that lie ahead of them in the block. Guidance in the form of task-based UDEs is essential.
    a. Both block-specific purpose and reader role need to be made apparent at the outset of a block.
    b. Students should be reminded of purpose and role as appropriate within a block.
2. Since directions can be a source of construct irrelevant variance, they should always be conveyed in as accessible and straightforward a register as possible.
3. There is always a button available to allow students to listen to directions (or listen and read at the same time).
4. Just as expectations that students will be able to handle more complex text across the grades, so the expectations that they will be able to handle more complex guidance and activities also increases.
5. Cognitive labs, block tryouts, and pilot testing should ultimately guide NAEP in determining the optimal balance among these principles, especially when they come into conflict with one another. The experience in GISA (Sabatini, O'Reilly, Weeks & Wang, 2019) and in the current 2019 operational NAEP SBT blocks offer an existence proof that these guidance features are manageable by 4th, 8th, and 12th graders. When these sorts of guidance features were included along with other UDEs in the 2017 special study, the enhanced blocks provided an overall comprehension performance advantage and resulted in higher motivational ratings by students, especially in the earlier grades. NAEP needs to monitor these matters with great vigilance.

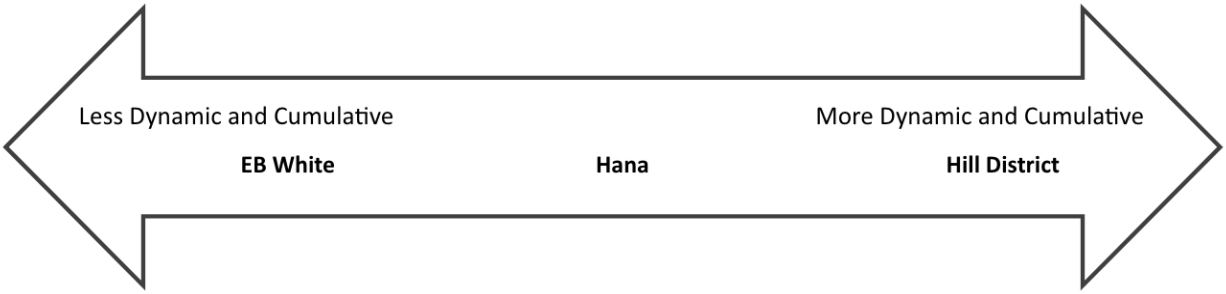
Block Sketches

Sketches of three different blocks are provided to illustrate a range activity within assessment blocks that students might encounter when they participate in the 2026 NAEP Reading Assessment. To accomplish this goal, the Appendix offers three hypothetical sketches of blocks (showing only a sampling of items from each) that might be developed using the components (from Chapter 2) and the design principles (from Chapter 3) of the 2026 NAEP

Reading Framework. Importantly, these sketches are designed to exemplify key concepts from the framework and do not represent blocks or items that will be used on future NAEP assessments. Tasks presented with multiple sample items are provided to help readers of the framework envision how theoretical ideas in the framework might guide assessment design. However, these sketches do not represent fully expectations for enacting the NAEP style guide and other test specifications.

The first example (labeled *Hana* because it is built upon a short story text entitled *Hana Hashimoto, Sixth Violin* by Chieri Uegaki and Qin Leng) illustrates a block developed for the broad purpose of Reading to Develop Understanding (RDU). The second example (labeled *Hill District* because it is built upon a set of activities surrounding an authentic civic issue in the Hill District neighborhood of Pittsburgh, PA) illustrates a block developed for the broad purpose of Reading to Solve a Problem (RSP). And the third (labeled *E. B. White* because it is built upon a pair of texts, one *about* and one *by* the author E. B. White) illustrates a second, but more traditional, RDU block. Referring to the underlying continuum of variation for assessment components within blocks as detailed in Exhibit C.2 above, these three block sketches are situated on three hypothetical points along that continuum, as illustrated in Exhibit C.3.

Exhibit C.3. Underlying Continuum of Variation in Assessment Components in the Block Design for E.B. White, Hana, and Hill District Block Sketches



An overview of the three block sketches. As suggested, *Hana* exemplifies what features of assessment components in RDU blocks might look like at the center of the continuum. In this block, grade 4 readers read and interpret story excerpts from the short story, Hana Hashimoto, by Chieri Uegaki in preparation for a book discussion with three peers. First, students are asked to read to develop an understanding of the characters, key events, and author's craft. Second, they apply their insights to describe what Hana is like as a person. so that they are ready to contribute to the discussion.

The *Hill District* block includes features of assessment components more characteristic of those toward the right of the continuum that 12th graders might encounter in a RSP block with texts situated in a social studies context. In this block, students engage in more cumulative reading tasks that might include two to four more dynamic or multilayered texts and involve greater integration across texts and items, all of which contribute to a generative opportunity to use and apply meaning from multiple texts to solve a problem.

E. B. White illustrates a second RDU block, but for an 8th grade literature context and

with a more traditional look and feel than the *Hana* block. It retains many of the features students might encounter in commercially available standardized tests of reading comprehension, on state reading examinations, or on blocks characteristic of NAEP tasks developed from earlier frameworks. In fact, this example was created by using the two texts from a released 8th grade NAEP Block drawn from the 2011 NAEP Assessment.

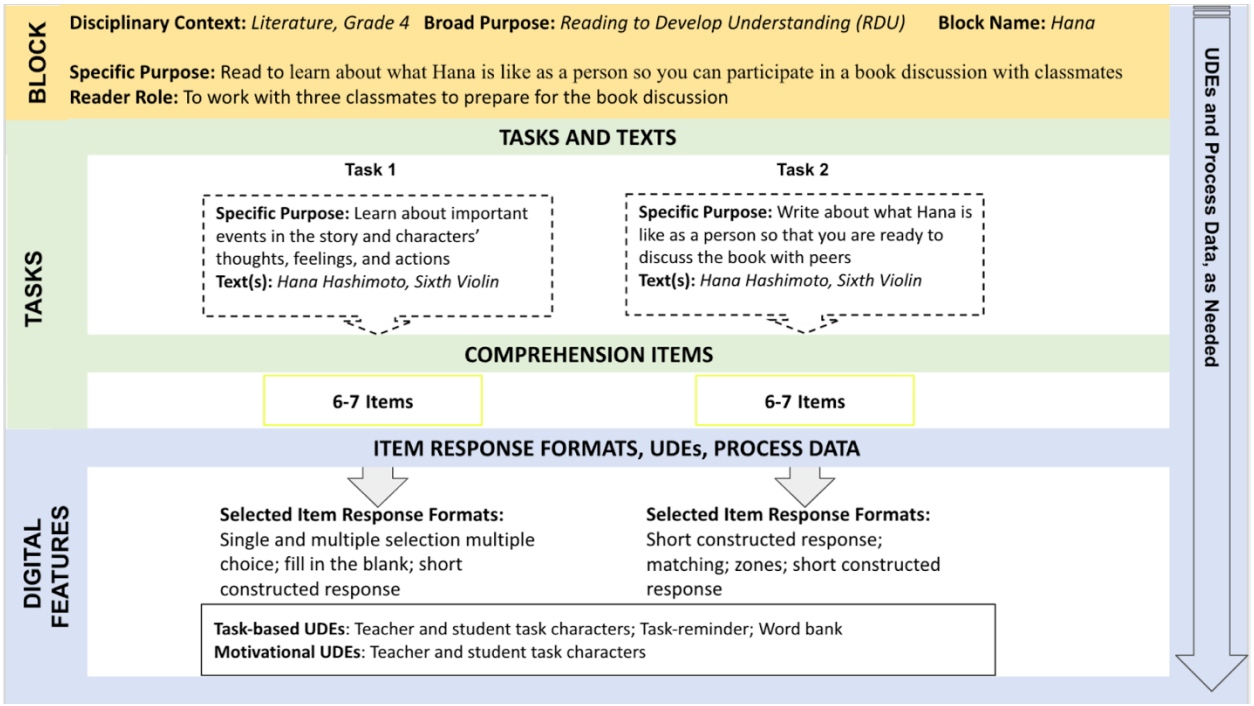
When viewing these examples, it is important to keep in mind the following points:

- The purpose of these block sketches is to help readers of this 2026 Reading Framework develop an understanding of the range of comprehension activity and assessment components students might experience when they participate in the NAEP Reading Assessment.
- None of the examples is complete in the sense that all of the components and features are fully developed in the exact form in which they would appear on a finished test booklet. These examples are more like elaborated sketches that provide a preview of what each block might look like, recognizing that not all of the actual items, UDEs, and other features are fully developed. Sometimes, for example, the type of UDE needed is specified but not actually provided (e.g., a particular word might make a plausible vocabulary definition), or the type of comprehension item is indicated but not actually developed (e.g., an analyze/evaluate item is needed here to test students' understanding of the author's use of irony). In some cases (e.g., the Hill District block), two exemplars with different formats are provided to illustrate alternative ways to design task and item features in any particular block.
- While all three exemplar blocks include purposes, contexts, tasks, texts, items, and UDEs, differences in what readers experience illustrate just a sampling of the range of possible design features from which developers might choose in creating purpose-driven tasks embedded in any single block.
- Any given block, even a block that is situated toward one or the other end of the continuum (from Exhibit A.7), may have some features that lean more toward the center or even in the other direction. In other words, a given block might lean toward the traditional end of the continuum on texts (as does the Hana block) but toward the innovative end on item formats (as does Hana). The *E. B. White* block lends is otherwise classic RDU block, but lends itself to a Use/Apply culminating task (which is more characteristic of RSP blocks).
- The inclusion of the *E. B. White* exemplar has been included intentionally to reflect NAEP's commitment to maintain a healthy sample of tasks that feature print-based texts, RDU purposes, relatively few UDEs, and items that reflect the entire array of Comprehension Targets. As in all aspects of development, NAEP builds on its current strengths as it incorporates important developments in the nature of texts and tasks that students encounter in the ever-changing world of literacy.

Hana Hashimoto, Sixth Violin, Grade 4

The following example (not intended to be a complete block or to represent an actual NAEP Reading assessment) offers a sketch of what a Grade 4 Reading to Develop Understanding in a Literature Context block might look like. In the sketch, we walk through the assessment components described in the framework and illustrated in the block design visual (see Exhibit C.4). These include the block components (context, purpose, grade level), the tasks (the tasks as well as the texts and items that students use to accomplish those tasks), and the digital features (item response formats, UDEs, and process data). In so doing, we describe how these components might be used by assessment developers when creating blocks to achieve some of the aims described in the framework.

Exhibit C.4. Block Design for Hana

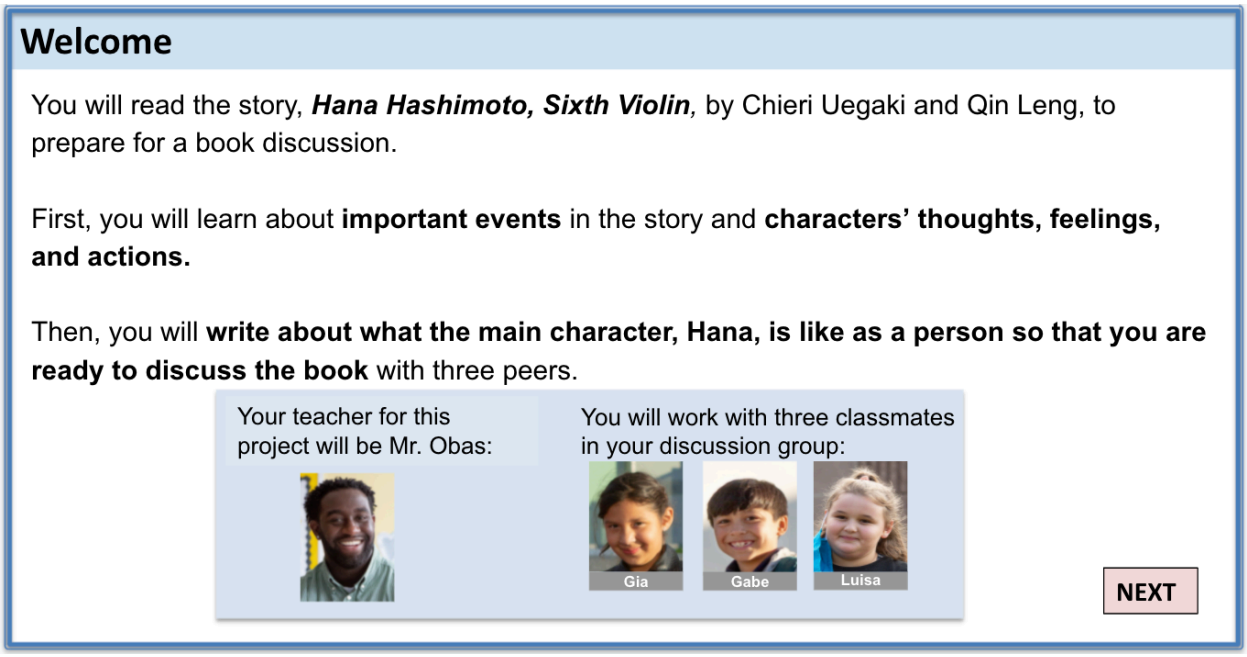


Block Components (Disciplinary Context, Purposes, and Reader Role). This block is designed to assess how Grade 4 readers develop understanding within a single, print text in a literature context. In this block, readers identify important events in the story and analyze how characters' thoughts, feelings, and actions describe the kind of people they are. Then, readers use and apply what they have learned to form an overall interpretation of the main character, Hana. They choose a character trait from a word bank and then explain how Hana fits that character trait based on the thoughts, feelings, and actions they have already interpreted.

Specific Reading Purpose(s) and Reader Role. At the beginning of the assessment (see Exhibit C.5), readers are told that they will read the story *Hana Hashimoto, Sixth Violin*, by Chieri Uegaki and Qin Leng. Then, they are introduced to the specific purpose and reader role of reading to participate in a small book discussion group with three fourth grade classmates (represented in the assessment by task characters Gia, Gabe, and Luisa). They are also introduced to their teacher for the project (represented by the task character Mr. Obas).

Then, a **task-based UDE** in the form of two statements informs students what tasks will be expected of them. Here, students are told that, to prepare for the book discussion, they will read the story and 1) learn about important events in the story and characters' thoughts, feelings, and actions; and, 2) use what they have learned about Hana to describe what she is like as a person. **Motivational UDEs** (here, student and teacher avatars) serve to motivate readers to engage with the block.

Exhibit C.5. Specific purpose, reader role, and task characters serve to situate readers in a Grade 4 Reading to Develop Understanding block involving the short story *Hana Hashimoto, Sixth Violin* by Chieri Uegaki and Qin Leng



Throughout Appendix C, the photograph of Mr. Obas is sourced from https://images.all4ed.org/male-sixth-grade-math-teacher-with-protractor (photographer Allison Shelley for EDUimages). The photograph of Gia is sourced from https://images.all4ed.org/elementary-boy-with-backpack-and-girl-with-notebook/ (photographer Allison Shelley for EDUimages). The photograph of Gabe is sourced from https://images.all4ed.org/third-grade-boy-with-backpack-outside/. The photograph of Luisa is sourced from https://images.all4ed.org/fifth-grade-girl-mask-break (photographer Allison Shelley for EDUimages).

Task Components (Tasks, Text(s), and Items).

Tasks. After students are asked to read the story, the teacher reminds them of the specific reading purpose for the block (to prepare for a discussion) as well as the students' first task as they prepare for this discussion: learning about the events and characters (see Exhibit C.6). In this case, the task reminder for the first task stays on the screen until students are ready to do the second task. At that point, the teacher offers a reminder of the second task, which is to write about what Hana is like as a person. To do this, students are asked to use evidence from the story that they have already collected and interpreted on Hana's thoughts, feelings, and actions.

Text: Hana Hashimoto, Sixth Violin. In this story, a young girl named Hana signs up to play the violin in her school's talent show after having had only three lessons. Through the story, readers learn that Hana's desire to take lessons was inspired by a recent visit to Japan to see her Ojiichan, or grandfather, who plays the violin. They also learn that despite much teasing and doubting from her brothers, Hana practices and practices for the talent show, inviting everyone

she can to be her audience. When it comes time to play her violin in the talent show, Hana is at first nervous and thinks to herself, "This is going to be a disaster." However, as she looks out at the audience, she sees her friends and family. Then, Hana recalls her Ojiichan telling her to do her best and decides that is what she will do. She plays some of the everyday sounds she recalls her grandfather playing for her (e.g., a mother crow calling her chicks"). At the end of her performance, Hana takes "a great big bow." That night, her family asks her to play more of her sounds. The story ends with Hana playing her violin to herself before she goes to sleep, imagining the notes drifting out through her window and to Ojiichan in Japan while the author hints that Hana will keep practicing so that she might perform again in next year's talent show.

In the digital assessment format, readers can scroll through the story as they read, and the items appear aside the text so that readers can easily refer to the text as they complete the comprehension items. At the Grade 4 level, some illustrations from the original source text might accompany the story, as they do here (see Exhibit C.6).

Comprehension Items. The array of items provides students with opportunities to develop their thinking across the story and demonstrate their understanding. Throughout the block, readers are asked to draw on textual evidence to make thoughtful interpretations of the text. The text and items are suitably independent of one another so that a student's performance on one item does not impact their performance on another item. The test block also includes opportunities to develop understanding around aspects of the story that may, or may not, contribute to the final task. Generally, however, the items help students work towards the specific purpose of the block (in this case, preparing for a book discussion), as well as the goal of each task. Exhibits C.6-C.11 illustrate items that help students accomplish the first task of learning about the events and characters. Exhibits C.12-C.14 illustrate items that then help students accomplish the second task of using what they have learned about the characters' thoughts, feelings, and actions to characterize Hana, in particular, by writing about what she is like as a person.

Item response types vary from simple multiple choice to short answer or hybrid constructed response items to give readers different kinds of opportunities to demonstrate their understanding in the block. **Sample questions** at this point might, for example, include single-selection multiple choice items to assess readers' ability to locate and recall important events and other details (see Exhibit C.6), short constructed-response items that include fill in the blank options (see Exhibit C.7), multiple-selection multiple choice items (see Exhibit C.8), and longer short constructed response items that ask readers to interpret and integrate details about the character's thoughts, feelings, and actions into their understanding of the story (see Exhibit C.10).

Exhibit C.6. A Grade 4 RDU block illustrating a Locate and Recall multiple choice item. The teacher reminds the reader of the specific purpose (to prepare for a discussion) and the first task (to learn about events and characters)

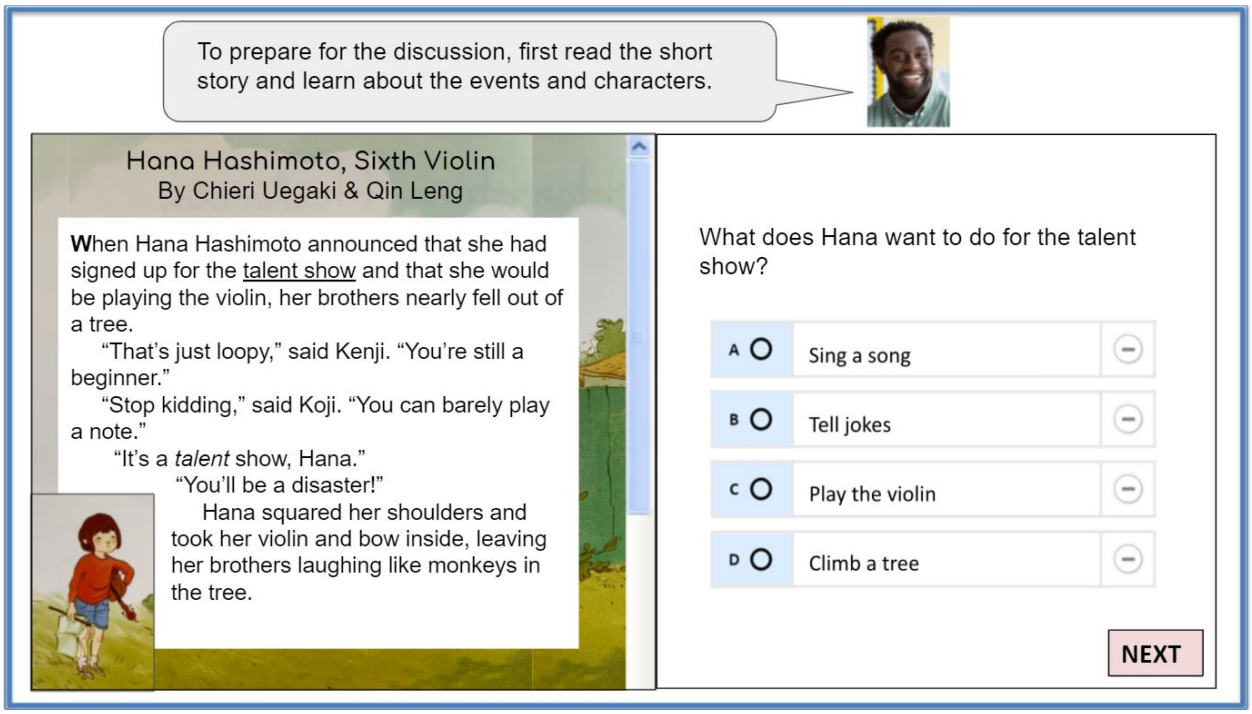


Exhibit C.7. A Grade 4 Locate and Recall item illustrating a fill in the blank short constructed response item

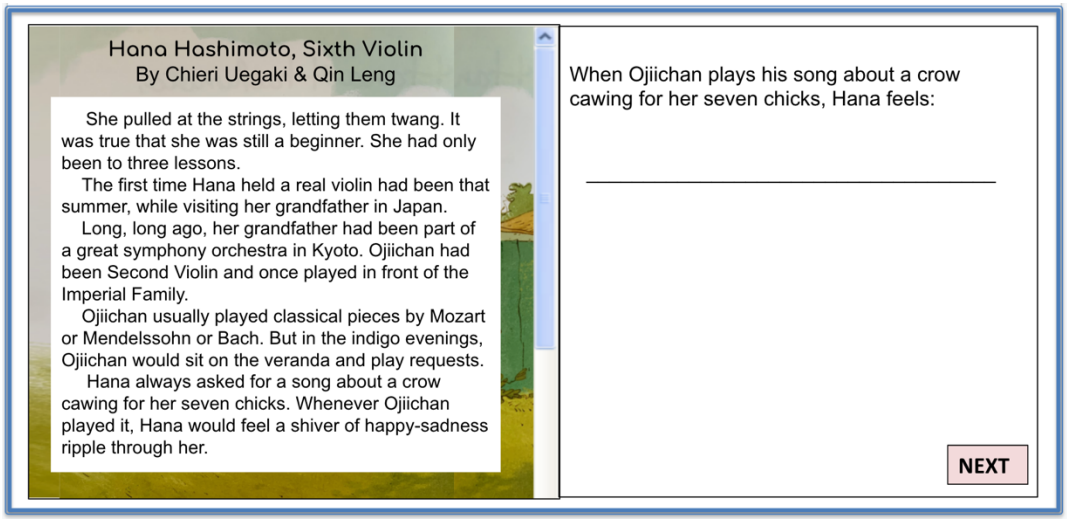
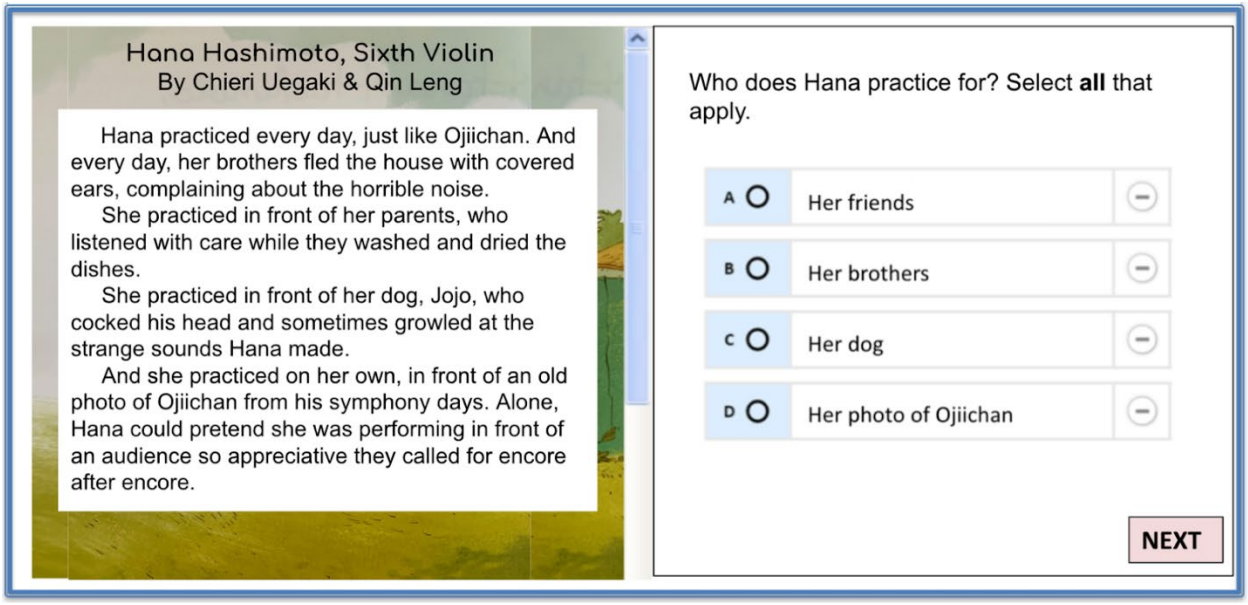
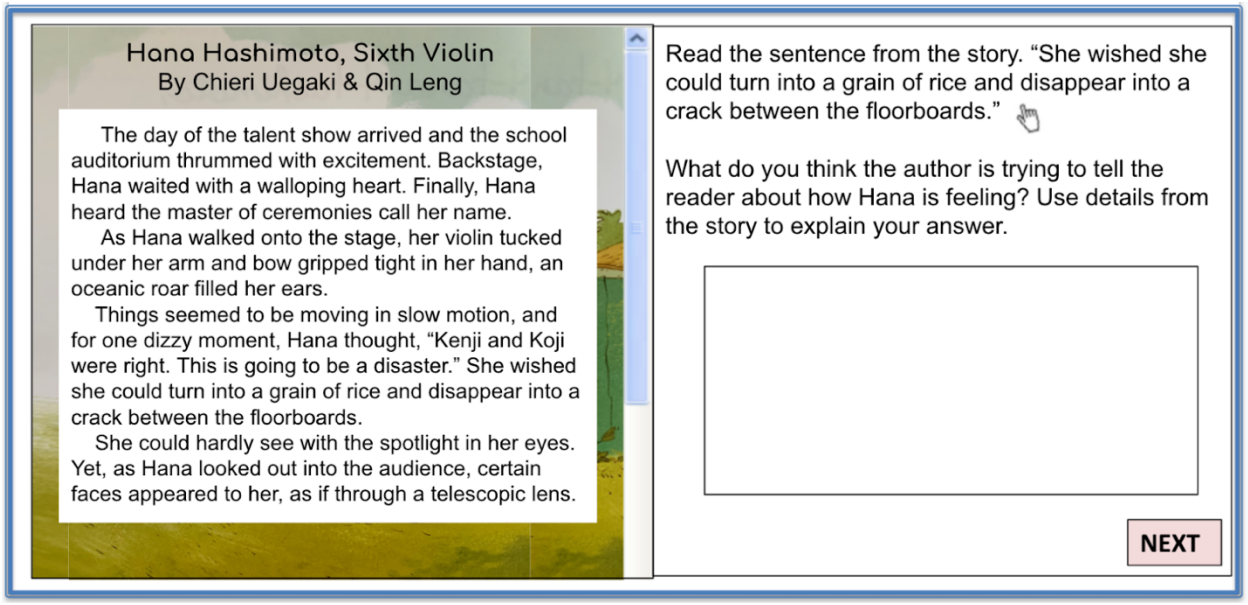


Exhibit C.8. A Grade 4 Locate and Recall item illustrating a multiple-selection multiple choice response format



In addition, **a look-back button (a task-based UDE)** is embedded into items with excerpted text (see Exhibits C.9 and C.10). If readers wish, they can click to see exactly where the excerpted text is located in the context of the original story in the assessment space. Multiple choice and constructed response item formats are interspersed throughout the assessment.

Exhibit C.9. A Grade 4 Analyze and Evaluate short constructed-response item illustrating a task-based UDE in the form of a look-back button that refers readers to the relevant section of text



Toward the end of the story, readers learn that when Hana is on stage, she first becomes nervous and doubts herself, but then imagines her Ojiichan telling her to do her best. Hana decides to play what she knows — the sound of a crow, lowing cows, her neighbor's cat. Her family loves her performance so much that later that evening, they ask her to play them more musical notes around the dinner table.

Exhibit C.10. The items for the first task help students develop an understanding of the events and characters as in this Grade 4 Integrate and Interpret short constructed response item

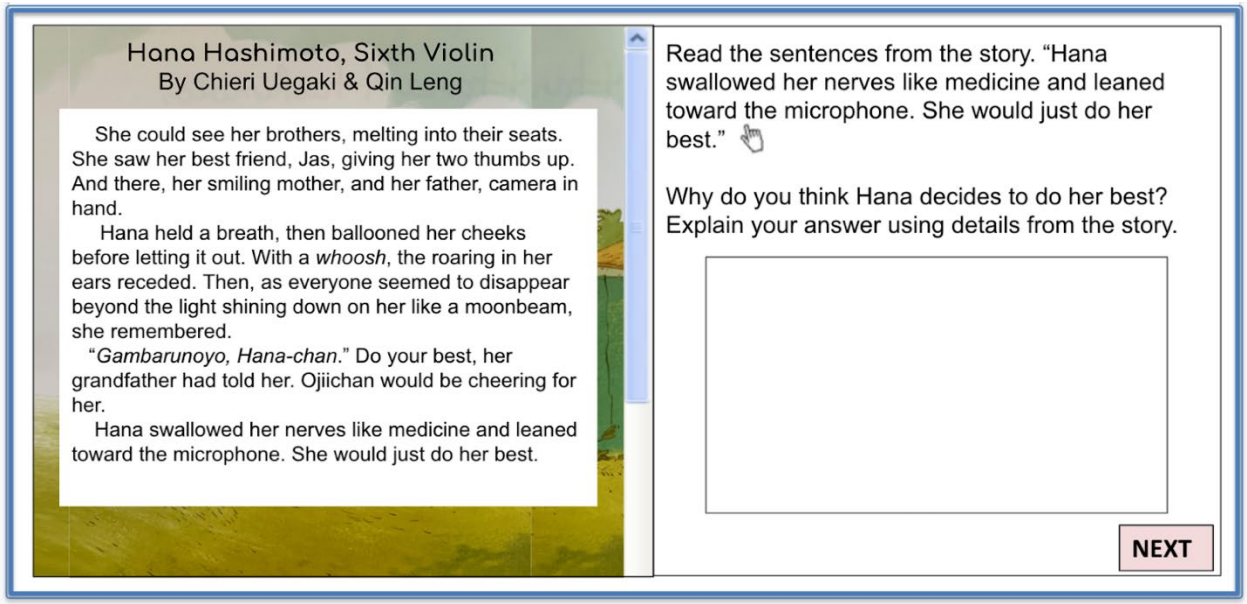
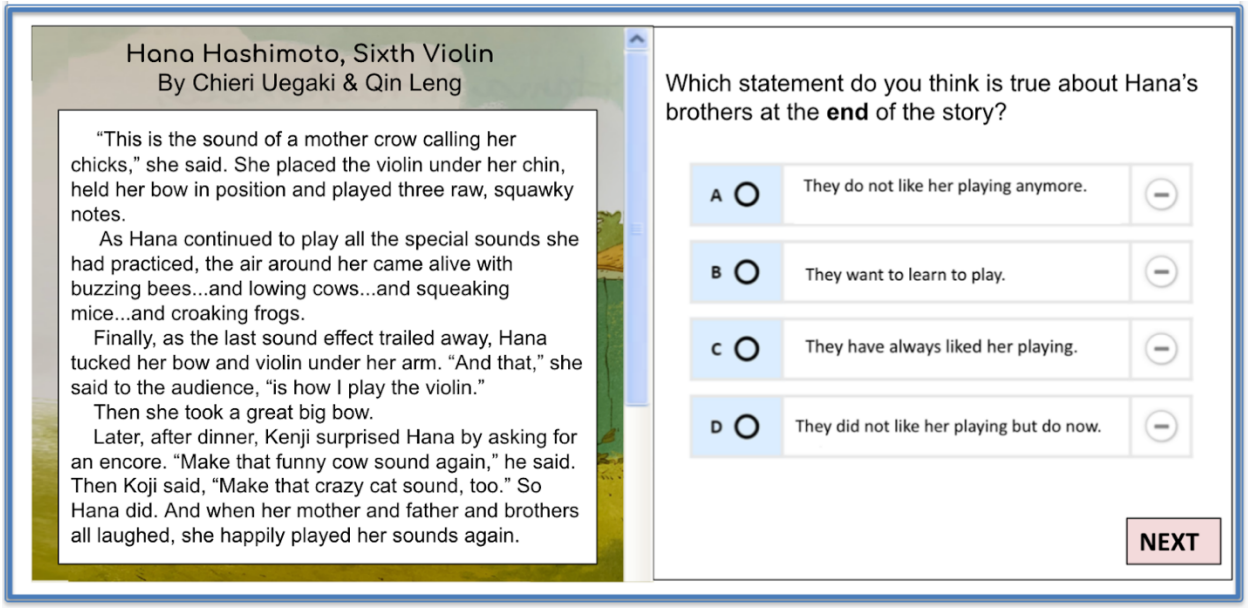


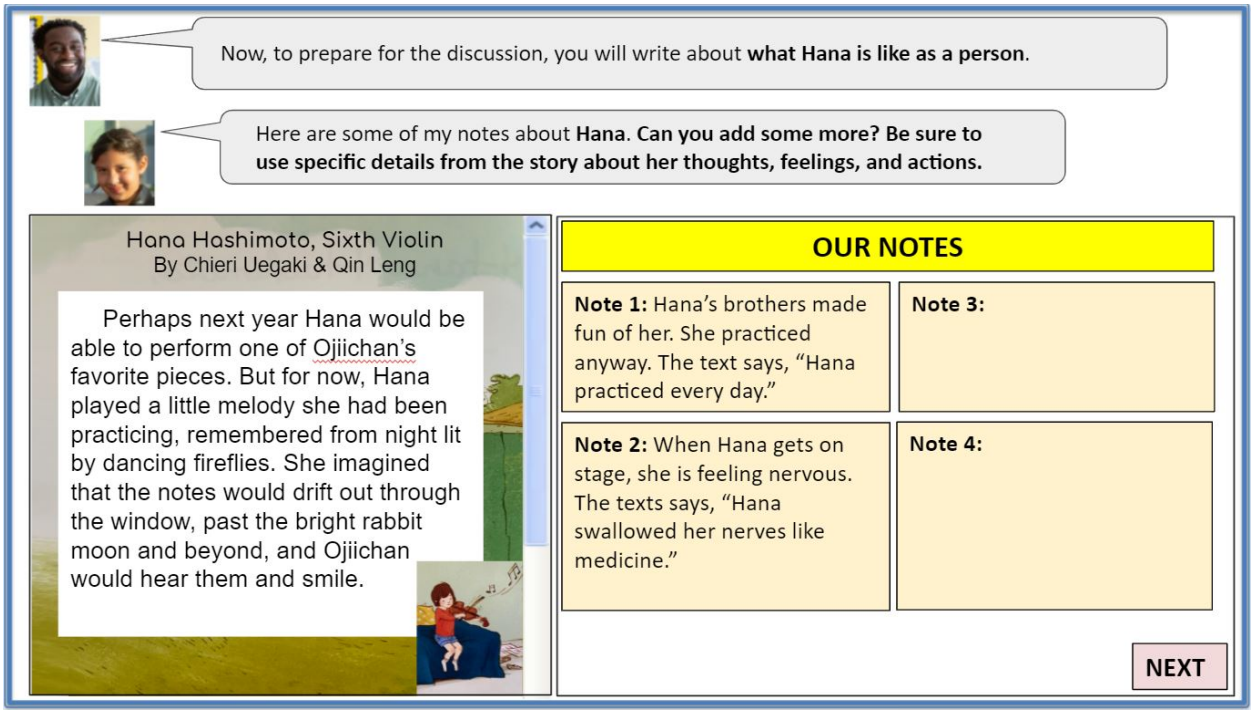
Exhibit C.11. A Grade 4 Integrate and Interpret Item for the first task using a single-selection multiple choice format



The story ends when Hana recalls the songs her Ojiichan shared with her and imagines what she might play in next year's talent show. At this point, students are invited by the teacher to start the second task, which is to write what Hana is like as a person in preparation for the book discussion (see Exhibit C.12).

One of the classmates (a task character in the assessment) acts as a **motivational UDE** to motivate the student to engage in collecting notes for the second task, as the classmate has already completed part of the activity. The task character also acts as a task-based UDE in reminding the student that they should use specific details from the story about Hana's thoughts, feelings, and actions. Once completed, students have access to the full set of notes, as these completed notes are transferred to the next item (see Exhibit C.13).

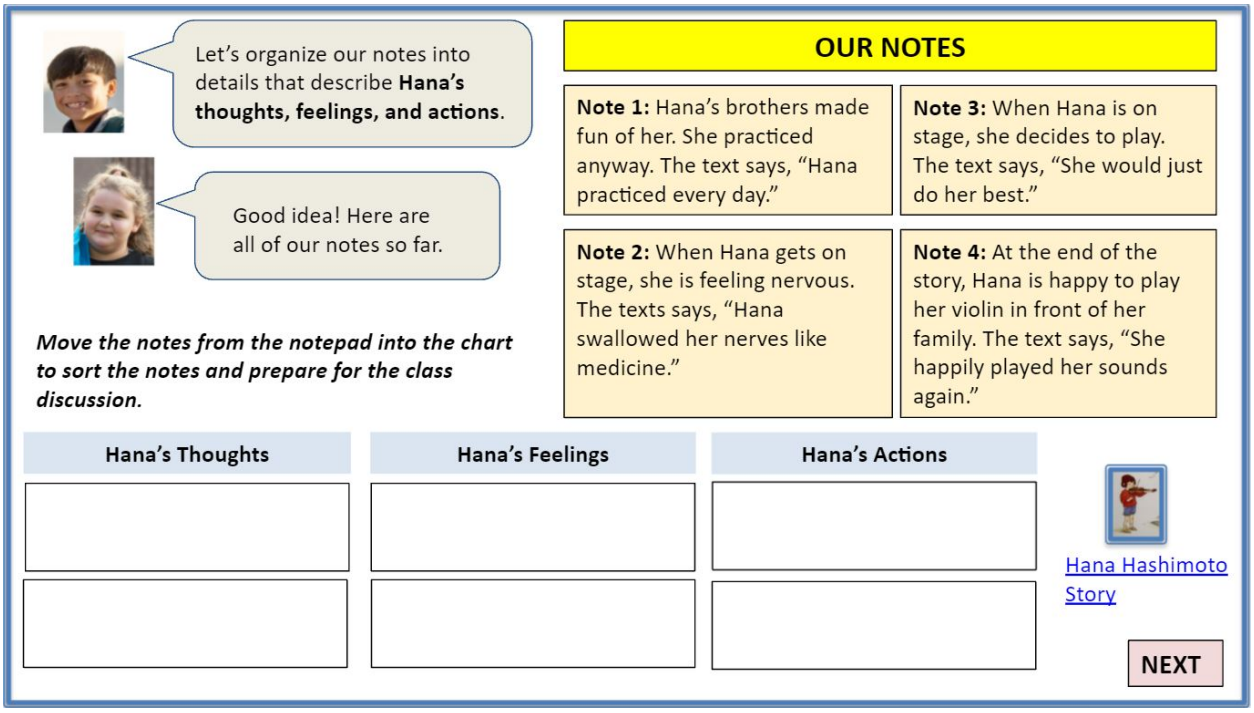
Exhibit C.12. Teacher and student task characters remind readers of the second task goal in this Integrate and Interpret item



In Exhibit C.13, the other two classmates serve as **motivational and task-based UDEs** to engage students in the task while also reminding them to stay focused on the character's thoughts, feelings, and actions. The student's responses from the previous item are carried over to the next item as the completed notes, which also serves to motivate the student since they have already completed the work. These notes could also be "reset" if the student did not enter appropriate notes in the previous item so that the student's score on this item is not dependent on how they responded previously.

In Exhibit C.13, the student is asked to move the notes from their notepad into the chart as they sort the notes into Hana's thoughts, feelings, and actions in preparation for writing about the kind of person she is. In the final task (see Exhibit C.14), the student has access to this chart as a writing support when they answer the final use and apply item. Again, notes that are incorrect are reset so that the final item is not dependent on the way they responded to this one.

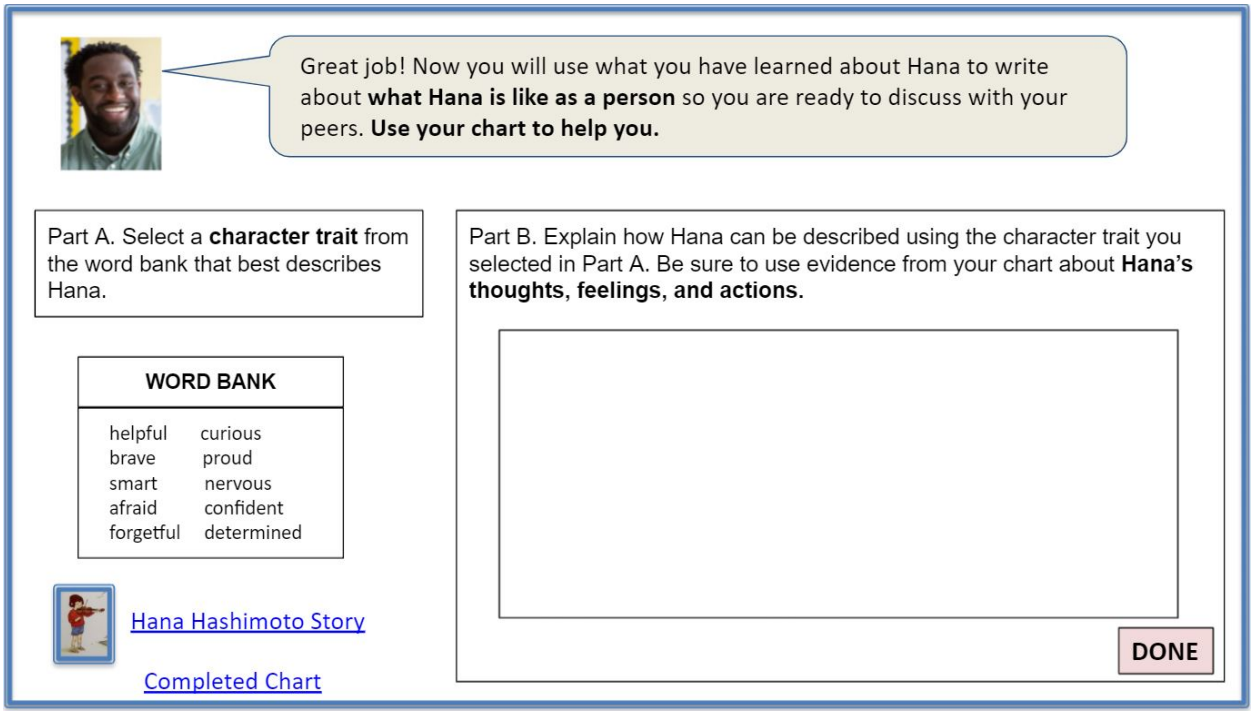
Exhibit C.13. The student's responses from their completion of the previous item are carried over to the next item as the completed notes. A graphic organizer with drag and drop features offers students an efficient way to demonstrate their understanding of how the text conveys the character's thoughts, feelings, and actions in this Grade 4 Integrate and Interpret item



A longer constructed response item such as the example shown in Exhibit C.14 is designed to assess readers' ability to Use and Apply understandings learned from the story to form a characterization of Hana. As readers engage with this final part of the block, the teacher invites them to use their chart (which they have access to) to write what Hana is like as a person in preparation for the discussion.

Then, as depicted in Exhibit C.14, in a Use and Apply item with a hybrid constructed response format, students are given a word bank (a task-based UDE) from which to select a relevant character trait (these could be hot spots; when readers click on a word, the word is highlighted and is recorded as the student's answer to Part A) when asked to describe the kind of person Hana is. Instead of spending time generating character trait words (which is not part of the construct this item aims to measure), the student can select from those provided. This allows the student to focus their limited time and cognitive resources on applying evidence from the text about Hana's thoughts, feelings, and actions to an analysis of the kind of person Hana is.

Exhibit C.14. This final, two-part Use and Apply item illustrates the use of a task-based UDE in the form of a word bank of character traits as well as an extended constructed-response item format. Students use what they have learned from the text about Hana as a person and apply that understanding to draw a conclusion about the kind of person she is.



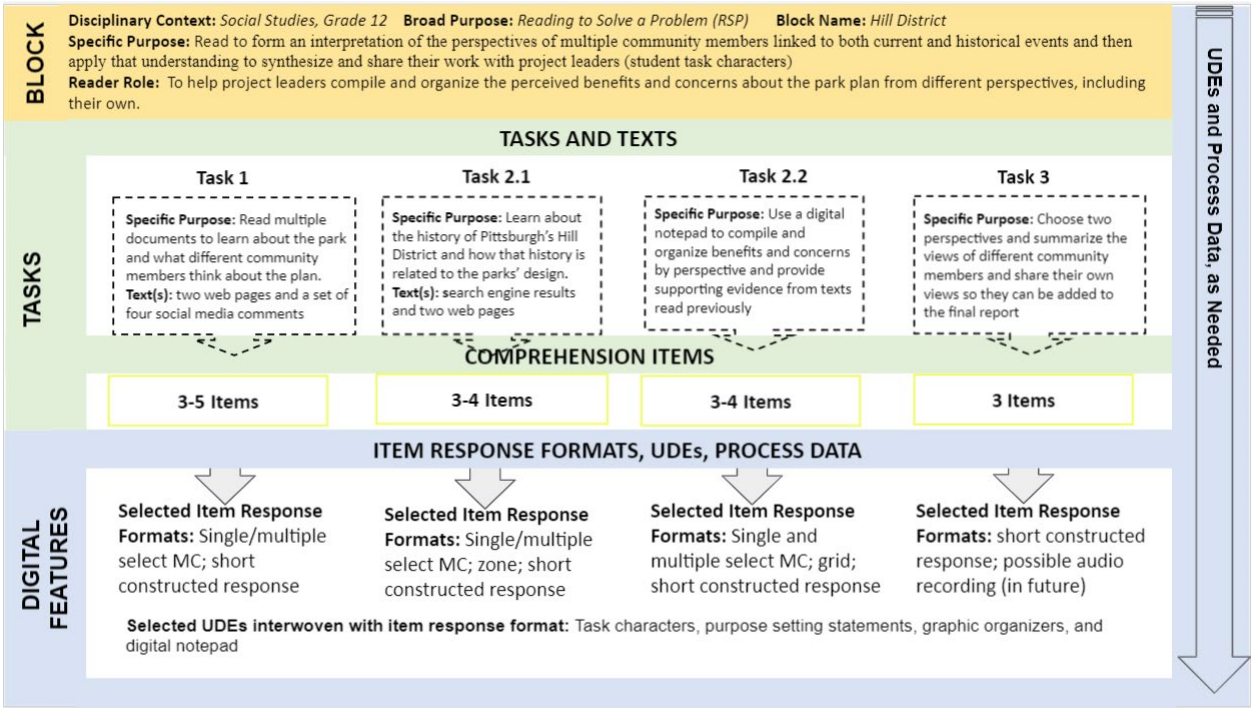
Performance Evidence and Indicators*. When interpreting reading achievement from performance on the 2026 NAEP Reading Assessment, multiple indicators can be used to explain what students are able to do. As indicated earlier in this chapter, each block would be classified with a primary disciplinary context, grade level, and broad purpose. Scores from the Hana Hashimoto, Sixth Violin block, then, describe what Grade 4 students can do in a literature context as part of a Reading to Develop Understanding block. The block is designed to measure students' ability to develop their understanding of a single text and then apply that understanding in a simple culminating event (in this case, describing the kind of person Hana is based on her thoughts, feelings, and actions in the story).*

Test developers keep a detailed account of all decisions that go into classifying texts and generating items from Comprehension Targets in each block. This process enables NAEP to compile a description of what 4th graders (or sub-groups of 4th graders) can do in each disciplinary context as they engage with texts and test items, while also being encouraged to draw from and use the knowledge, skills, and experiences they bring to that reading context.

Hill District, Grade 12

Block Components (Context, Purposes, and Reader Role). This block is designed to assess how 12th grade readers develop understanding across multiple texts in a social studies context by forming an interpretation of the perspectives of multiple community members linked to both current and historical events and then applying that understanding to solve a problem (See Exhibit C.15 for the block design and Exhibit C.16 for the introduction to the block).

Exhibit C.15. Block Design for Hill District Sketch



More specifically, readers are invited to engage with three students (represented by task characters in the assessment) who have been asked by the Mayor to compile and organize public reactions to an ambitious plan proposed by the City of Pittsburgh. Known as the "I-579 Cap Project," the plan involves the construction of an overpass park that reconnects the Hill District and Downtown. Park designers at a landscape architecture firm have created a proposed park design.

The tasks in this Reading to Solve a Problem block reflect design features that are more dynamic and cumulative in terms of content and format, as depicted toward the right side of the continuum in Exhibit C.2. For example, readers are constrained by specific purposes and role expectations about how to engage with provided texts. The four tasks (and related sub-tasks) are tightly structured so that one task builds on the previous, such that readers are asked to learn more about the project goals and get a general sense of the public's comments before they are asked to gain a deeper understanding of the historical significance of the proposed park.

The test block also includes opportunities for students to engage with several interconnected digital texts (e.g., excerpts from social media, search engine results, and multimedia websites and online news articles) that represent the perspectives of different kinds of community members and cuts across issues of contemporary and historical relevance.

Throughout the block, readers are asked to activate and employ their personal, cultural, and civics knowledge and resources by drawing on textual evidence in multiple modes to make thoughtful interpretations and evaluations of the text. Of note, several UDEs and dynamically formatted items are designed to motivate and guide students through the series of challenging assessment tasks in a multilayered digital environment.

Specific Reading Purpose(s) and Reader Role. At the beginning of the assessment (see Exhibit C.16), students learn that the city has recently unveiled the park plan to the public on its website and city residents have been invited to share their reactions on various social media. Students are also introduced to three high school aged task characters selected by the Mayor to help compile comments in preparation for a series of public working meetings (see Exhibit C.17). In a school partnership with the city, the three high schoolers have invited other students to help them organize comments from different community members. This situation inspires the question/problem that guides readers' inquiry in the assessment block: How do different community members feel about the proposed park project and what interests inform their comments?

Exhibit C.16. A social studies context and reader role serve to situate readers in a Grade 12 Reading to Solve A Problem block involving several interconnected digital texts

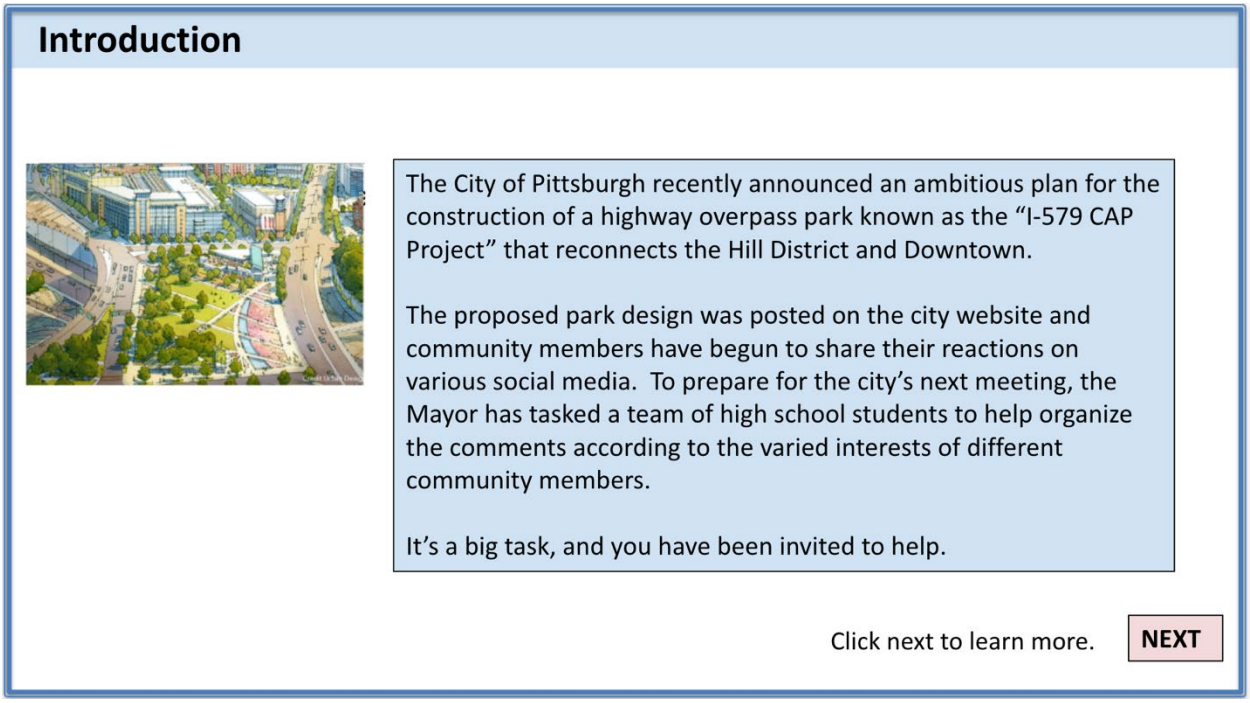
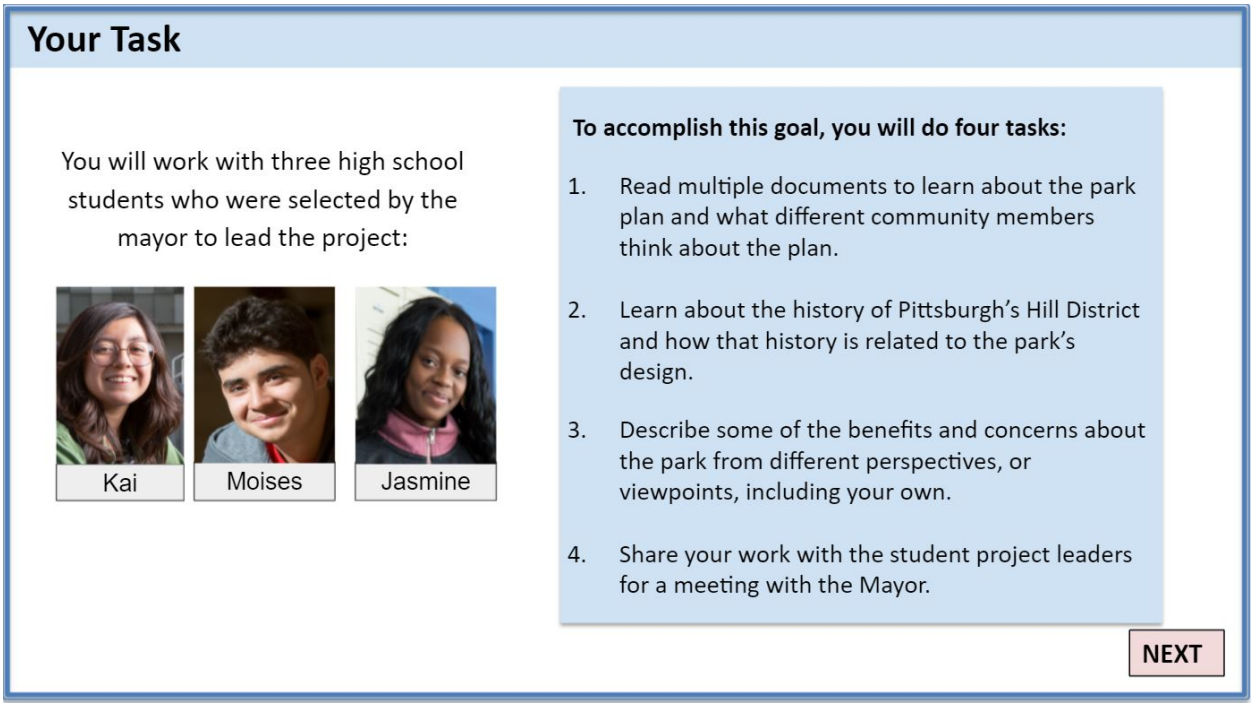


Exhibit C.17. Same-aged task characters and a task-based UDE in the form of four task-specific purposes serve to guide and motivate readers in the RSP block



Throughout Appendix C, the photograph of Kai is sourced from https://images.all4ed.org/high-school-boy-and-girl-near-playground (photographer Allison Shelley for EDUimages). The photograph of Moises is sourced from https://images.all4ed.org/high-school-boy-in-hallway (photographer Allison Shelley/The Verbatim Agency for EDUimages). The photograph of Jasmine is sourced from https://images.all4ed.org/high-school-boy-and-girl-drive-robots (photographer Allison Shelley/The Verbatim Agency for EDUimages).

Task Components (Tasks, Text(s), and Items).

Tasks. To support their inquiry, students are told they will read multiple documents and respond to items situated in four purpose-driven tasks to: a) learn more about the proposed park plan and keep notes about what different community members think about the plan; b) learn about the history of Pittsburgh's Hill District and how that history is related to the park's design; c) synthesize some of the benefits and concerns about the park from different perspectives, including their own and d) share their work with the student project leaders for a meeting with the Mayor. Several task-based UDEs (e.g., graphic organizers and purpose setting statements) and motivational UDEs (three student avatars, a recent event, and an opportunity to express their own opinions about the project) serve to guide and motivate readers to engage with the block.

Texts. After learning about the four task-specific purposes in this social studies block, readers engage with a digital text set that contains important information and viewpoints related to the proposed park plan. These include social media comments from community members; a set of search engine results and pull-down menu items from a website; and text passages on websites about the project embedded with comments from Pittsburgh residents, photographs, a short video, and an artist's rendering of the park plan. With each new text, readers learn more about proposed features of the park plan that help to build their understanding of how different community members view the park's features from various perspectives and how the history of Pittsburgh's Hill District is relevant to the park's plan.

Comprehension Items. Item response types would vary from simple multiple choice to short answer or hybrid constructed response items to give readers different kinds of opportunities

to demonstrate their understanding in the block and apply that understanding to solve the problem. While some items give students opportunities to demonstrate their understanding and develop thinking within a specific text, other items are designed to assess how readers navigate and make meaning across sources representing multiple and diverse perspectives.
After being asked to read text and watch a short video on a website about the park project (Exhibit C.18), sample questions may, for example, include single or multiple response formats for multiple choice items that ask readers to locate and recall important details about the project from the passages and the video (Exhibits C.19 and C.20). Other questions might assess students' ability to integrate and interpret textual and visual information from an artist's rendering of the site improvement plan on a different website (see Exhibit C.20). **Task-based UDEs** (e.g., one of three task characters) provide short prompts (shown at the top of Exhibits C.18 and C.21) designed to cue the reader about the steps they are completing as they read across different sources to solve the problem.

Exhibit C.18. A Grade 12 RSP block illustrating the directions that readers are asked to follow as they engage with texts and items. The task character reminds the reader of the specific purpose and the first task

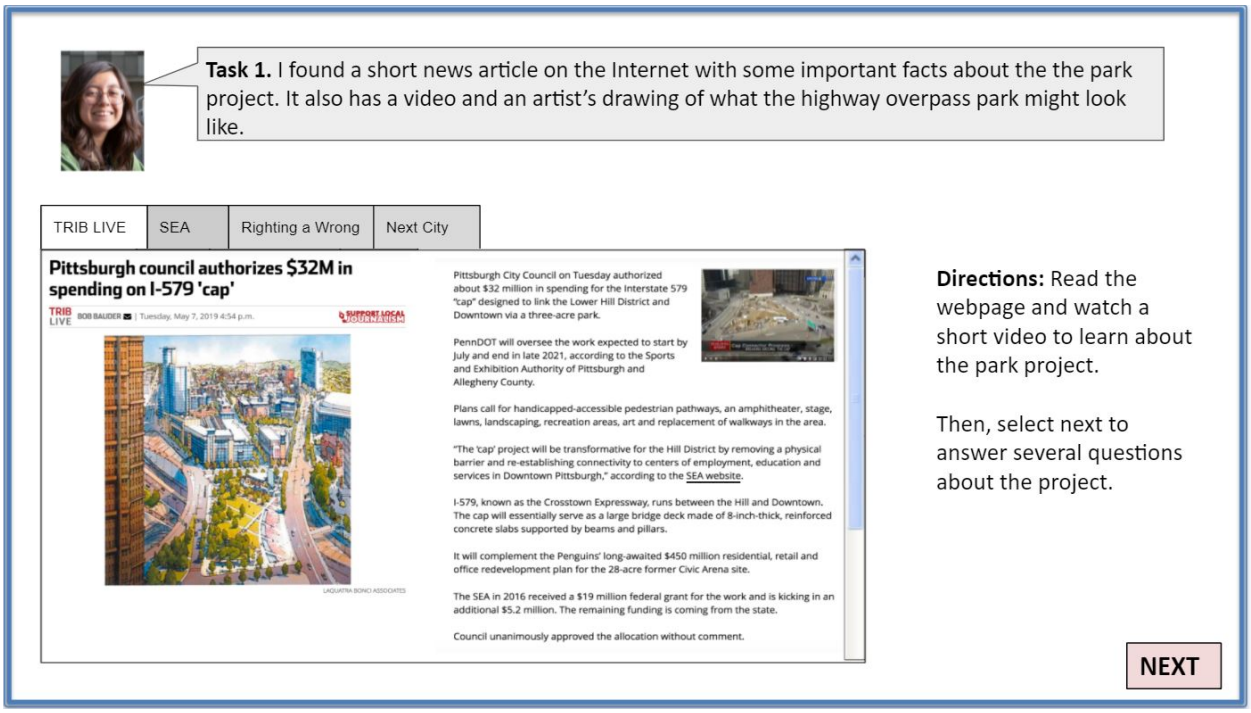


Exhibit C.19. A Grade 12 Locate and Recall item illustrating a multiple-selection multiple choice response format

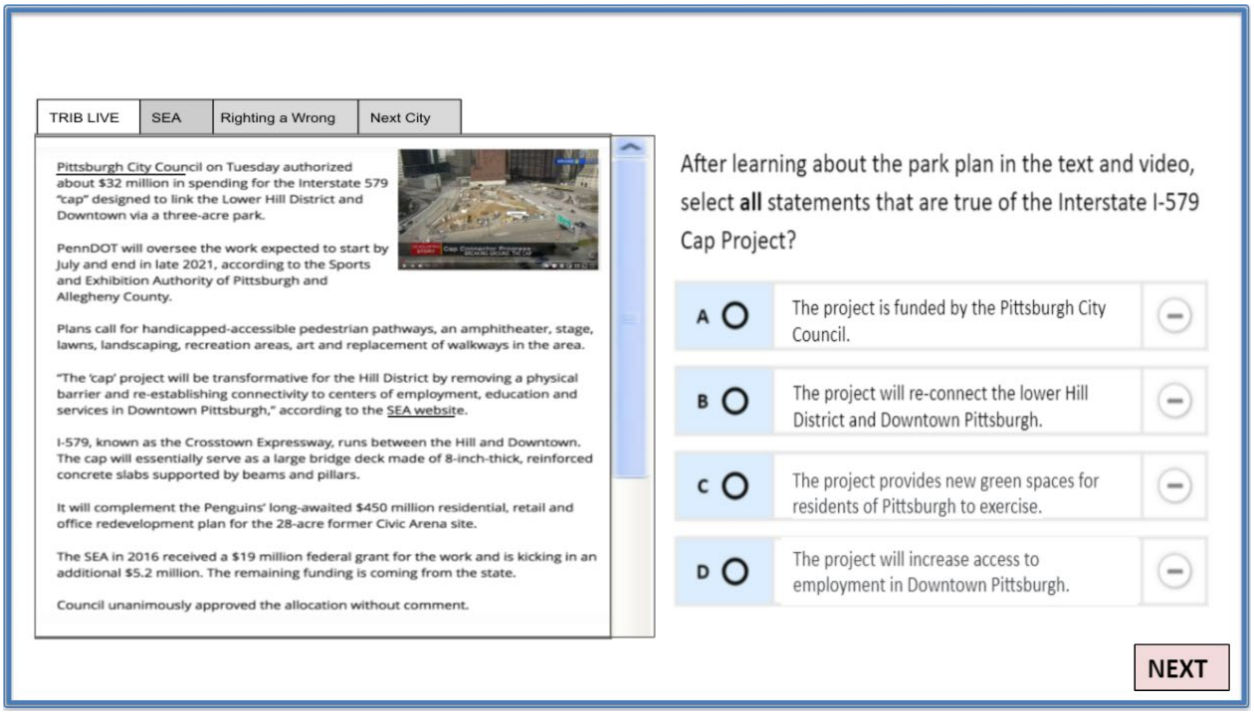


Exhibit C.20. A Grade 12 Locate and Recall item illustrating a single-select multiple choice item response format

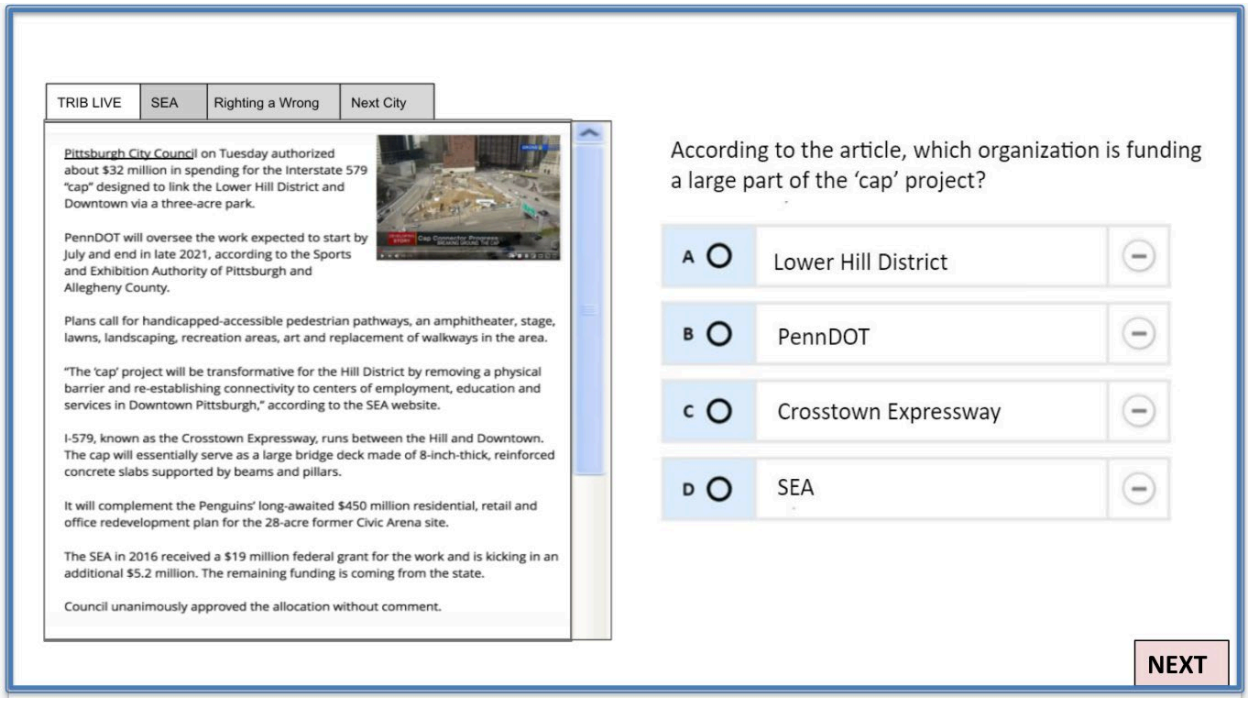
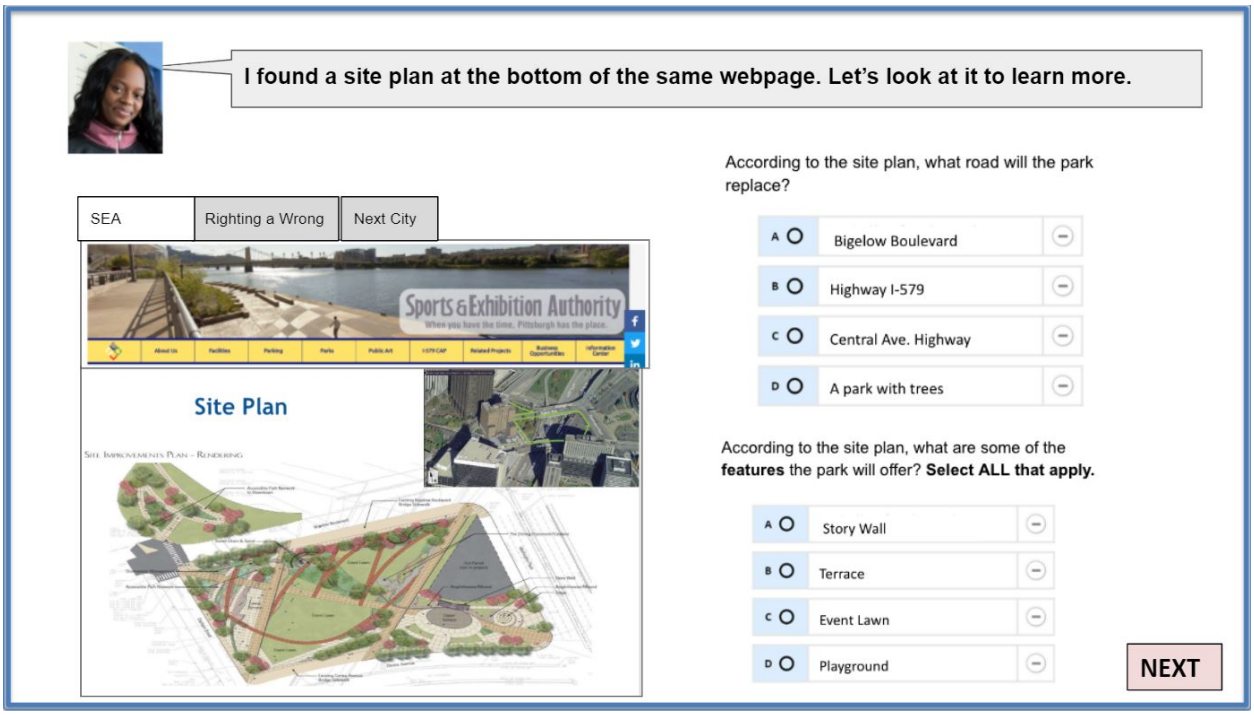


Exhibit C.21. Two Grade 12 items that ask readers to Integrate and Interpret (item 1) and Locate and Recall (item 2) textual and visual information from an artist's rendering of the site improvement plan published on a website



Examples of short constructed-response items earlier in the block might ask readers to integrate and interpret information about how park designers plan to modify the city's use of natural resources to address environmental concerns (Exhibit C.22). Later in the block, readers might be asked to integrate and interpret information in an online newspaper article about the historical significance of the park's design (Exhibit C.23) or to analyze and evaluate the requests of some community members to include park features that honor the history of their neighborhood (Exhibit C.24). Also depicted in Exhibit C.24 is a **task-based UDE** in the form of a task character that serves to remind students of their reading purpose in the second task.

Exhibit C.22. A Grade 12 RSP short constructed-response item that asks readers to integrate and interpret information about how park designers plan to address environmental concerns

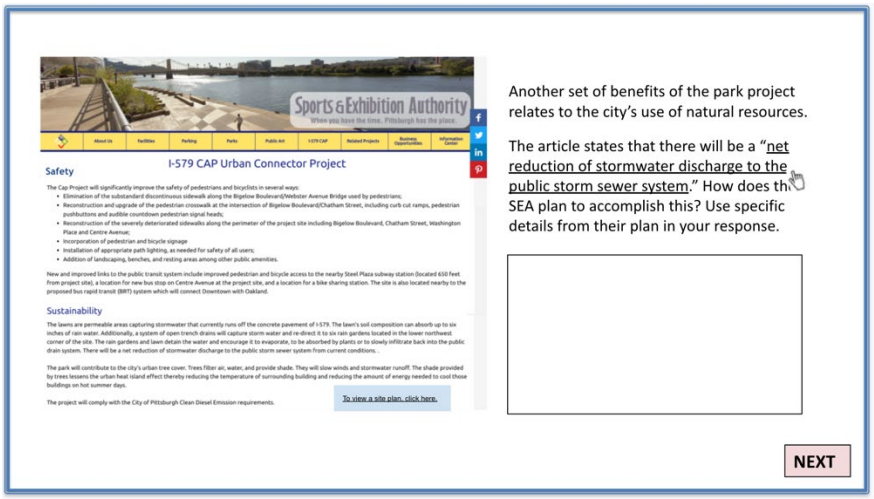


Exhibit C.23. A Grade 12 short constructed-response item with a look-back button (task-based UDE) that asks readers to integrate and interpret information in an online newspaper article about the historical significance of the park's design

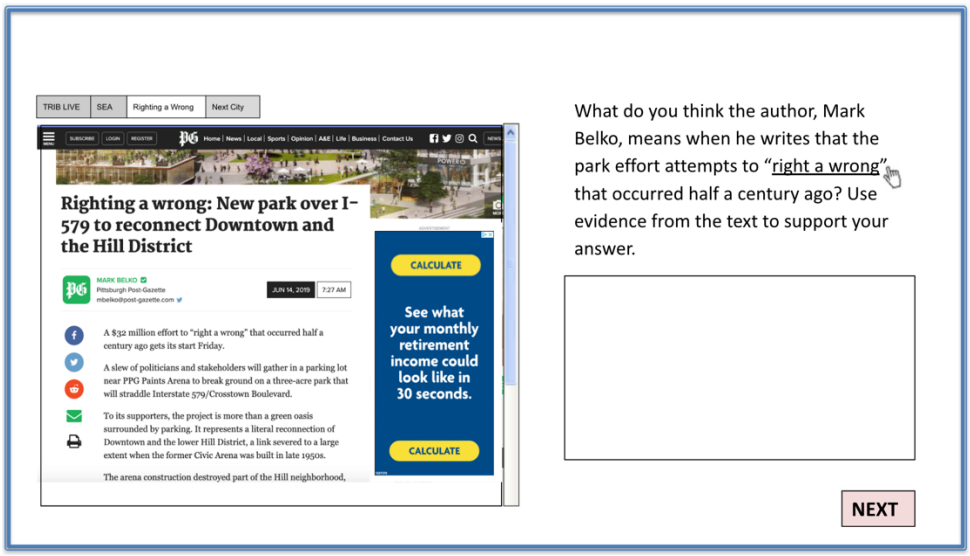
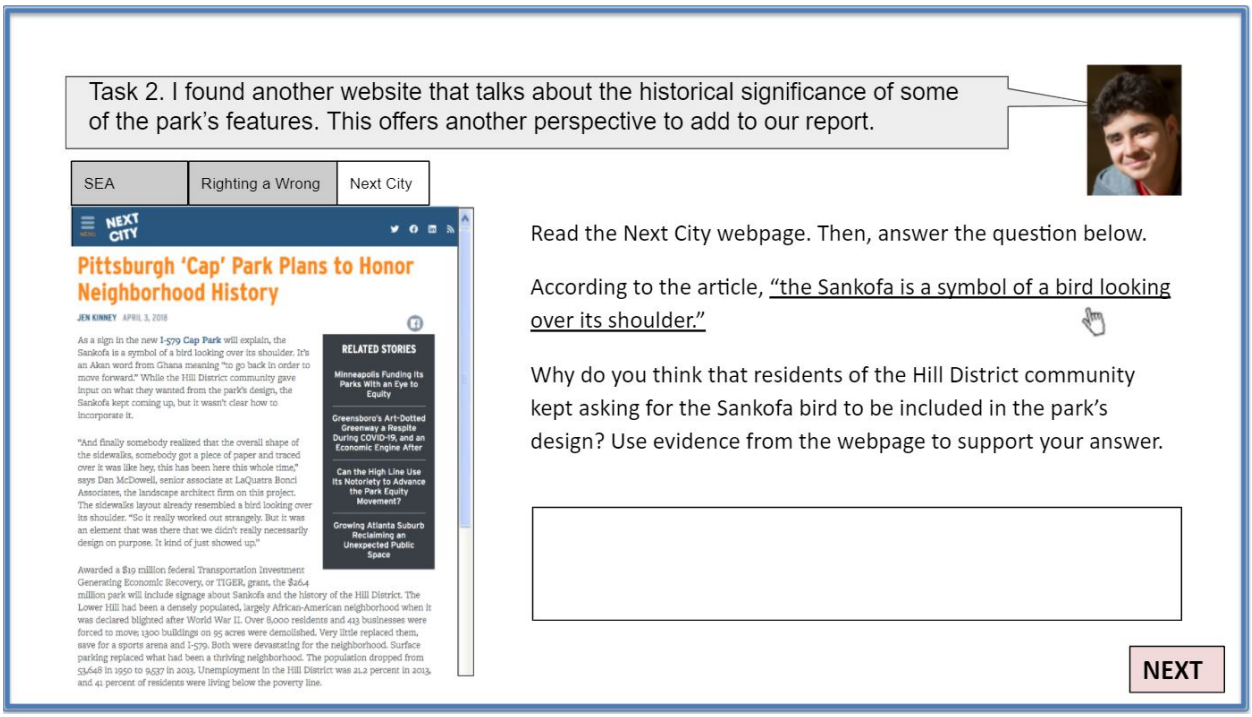


Exhibit C.24. A Grade 12 short constructed-response item that asks readers to integrate and interpret information on a web page with a look-back button (task-based UDE). The task character reminds readers of the specific purpose of the second task



Other potential items might ask readers to locate and evaluate the relevance of search engine results pertaining to the historical significance of some of the park's features (see Exhibit C.25) or locate (navigate to) and then analyze information from a website's menu to evaluate the expertise of the group responsible for publishing information about the park project (see Exhibits C.26 and C.27 respectively). Both of these tasks and items can be designed to collect timing and navigation process data about the choices readers make as they navigate multilayered digital environments such as search engines and websites with menus.

Exhibit C.25. A Grade 12 selected response zone item designed to capture process data about which link is selected and paired with a short constructed response scored item that asks readers to analyze and evaluate the relevance of their search engine choice

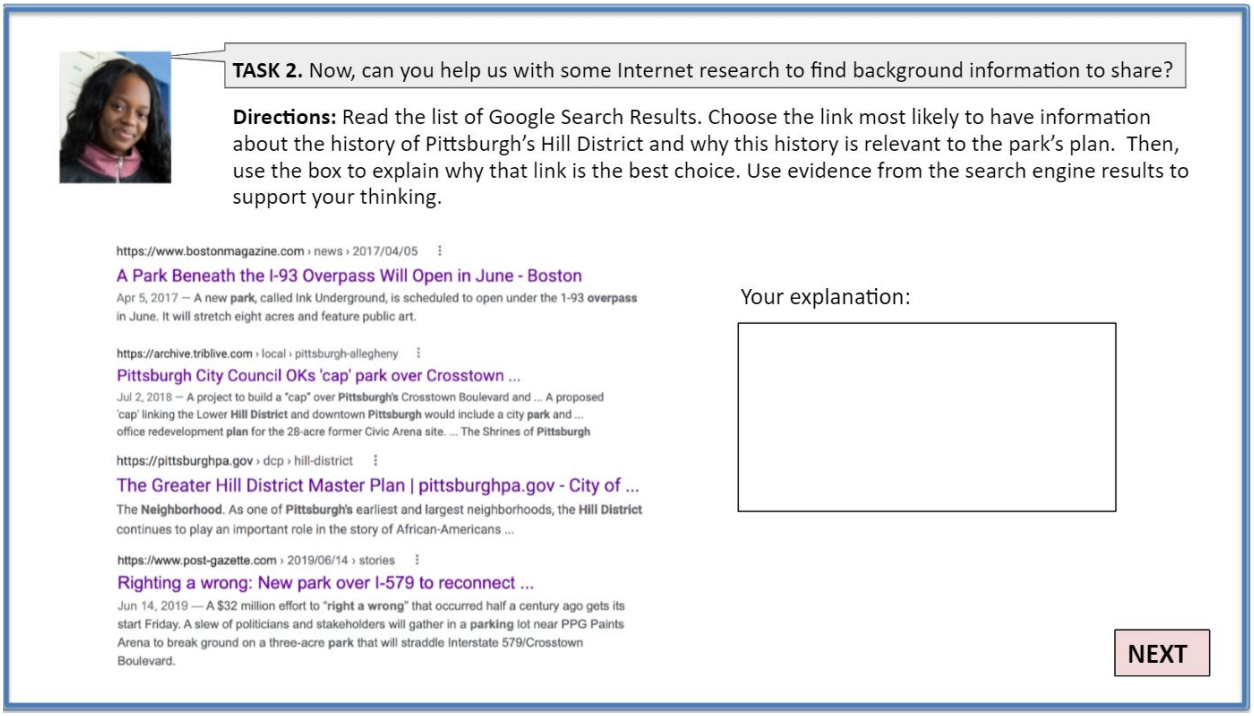


Exhibit C.26. A Grade 12 item selected response zone item designed to capture process data about how readers navigate through hyperlinked web pages

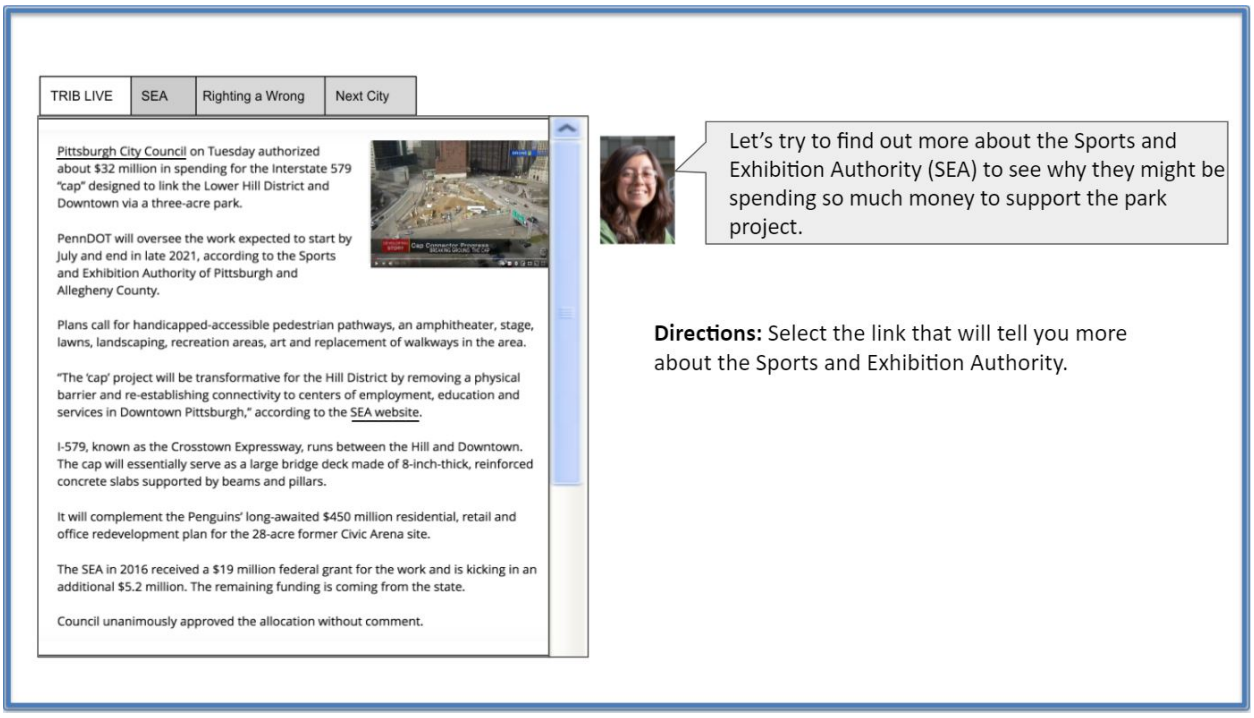
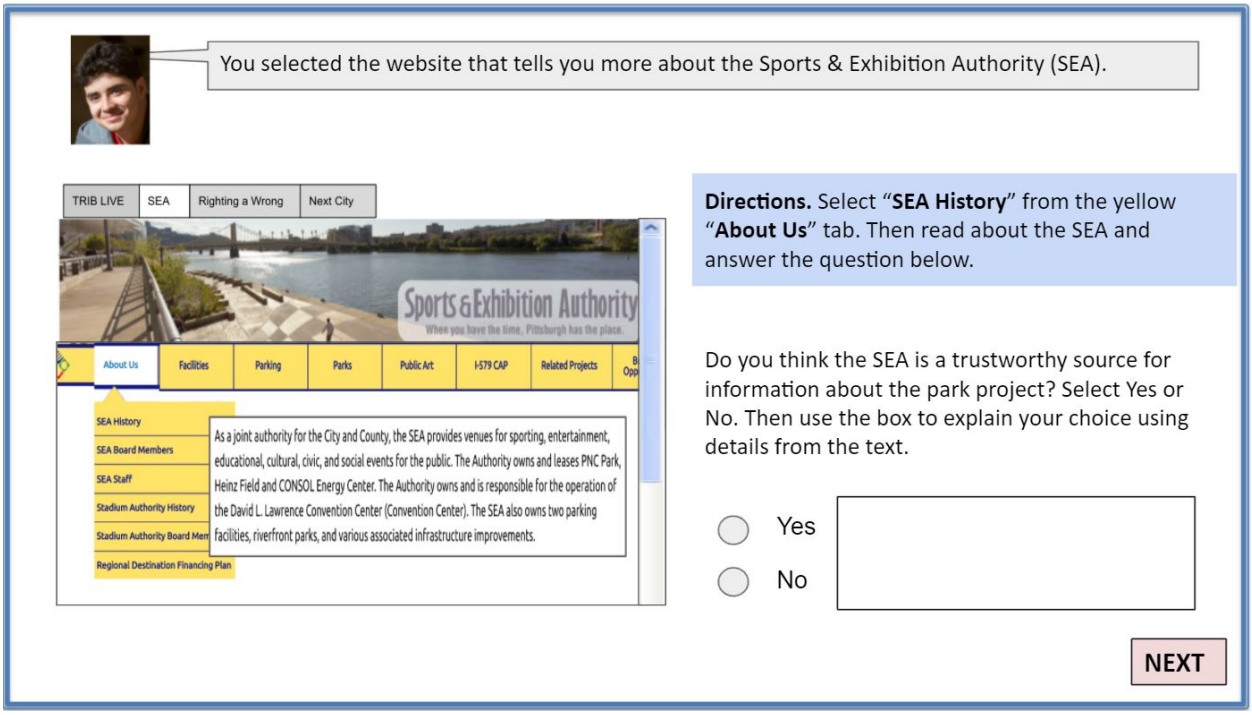
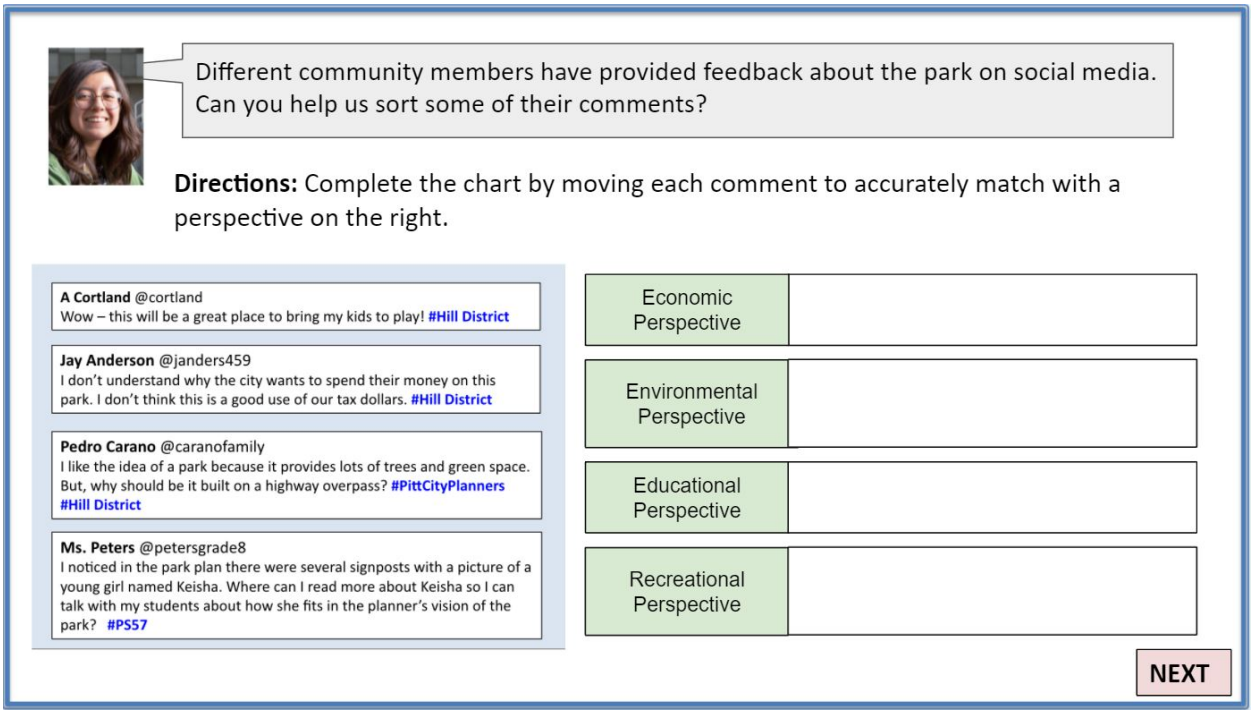


Exhibit C.27. A Grade 12 critical online resource evaluation item that asks readers to analyze and evaluate the extent to which an organization has the appropriate qualifications to publish details about the proposed park plan on their website using a hybrid constructed response



Dynamic response items in the testing block can also be used to capture process data (e.g., how long students take to complete the item and the order of selections and answer changes) while assessing reading comprehension performance. The item in Exhibit C.28, for example, asks readers to analyze and evaluate a small set of comments shared on social media in order to characterize the interests of different community members in relation to the proposed park plan. In this context, the drag-and-drop dynamic response format provides two additional functions; it serves as an alternative to writing each response as well as functioning as a **task-based UDE** to guide the language students use to classify comments into categories of accurately worded perspectives. This particular task-based UDE is also designed to introduce students to perspectives they will be asked to consider later in the testing block as part of the culminating Use and Apply task.

Exhibit C.28. A Grade 12 dynamic response item that asks readers to analyze and evaluate four comments on social media. The drag-and-drop response format serves as an alternative to writing and also serves as a task-based UDE to guide students' classification of items into categories of accurately worded perspectives



As was noted in Chapter 3, NAEP should continue the trend of exploring the use of other interactive or dynamic response formats made possible with emerging digital tools. To that end, the next pair of items (Exhibits C.29 and C.30) serves to provide an illustrative example of how task-based UDEs might be used alternatively to compare how readers engage with comprehension items that use different types of response formats.

In both instances, readers are asked to categorize comments from community members about the park project and the intentional pairing of motivation and task-based UDEs serve to guide students and sustain their willingness to persist with multiple document inquiry tasks. Exhibit C.29 applies a multiple-select response format with a **task-based UDE (table) and motivational UDE (task character)** that serve to support readers as they engage in one particular item in the block. That is, the table is designed to first help readers focus their attention on relevant comments on the left side (rather than referring back to them in the original text) and then, match each comment with one or more specific benefits on the right.

In contrast, Exhibit C.30 engages readers in a similar matching process, but for this item, a task character **(motivational UDE)** ask readers to move each comment into the appropriate cells of a table that is part of a retractable digital notepad **(task-based UDE** marked near a blue arrow to illustrate how it can be minimized and maximized on the screen as needed**)**. Readers use the notepad to store, organize, and recall important details as they read across multiple sources to solve the problem. Similar to how students engage in reading across multiple documents outside of a testing environment, the digital notepad enables students at several points in the testing

block to click on the notepad (which makes the table appear) to add and organize details as they continue to learn more and build a deeper understanding about how different community members feel about the park project from their varied and diverse perspectives. Exhibit C.31 illustrates how the same notepad could have been paired with a different item earlier in the task when students were reading on a different website.

Of course, as was also noted in Chapter 3, when selecting the format of any particular item, developers should be mindful of the cognitive and logistical demands of varied formats and how these may interact with reader familiarity and the time constraints of each activity. Pairing the development of any innovative task-based UDEs with careful piloting efforts will ensure that design features yield their intended outcomes for as many students as possible.

Exhibit C.29. A Grade 12 multiple-select response grid item with a task-based UDE (table) and motivational UDE (task character) that serve to support readers as they engage in one particular item in the RSP block

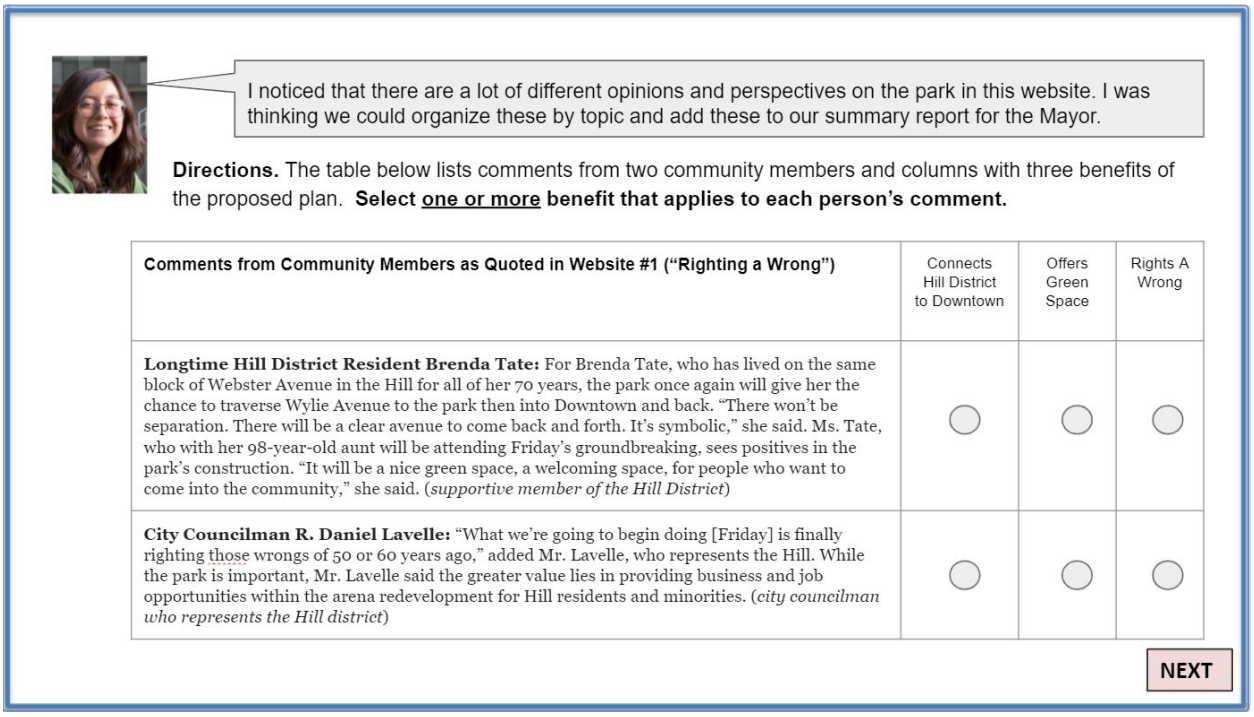


Exhibit C.30. A Grade 12 dynamic matching response grid item with a motivational UDE (task character) and task-based UDE (retractable digital notepad) that serve to support readers at multiple points in the RSP block as they read across multiple sources to solve the problem at hand

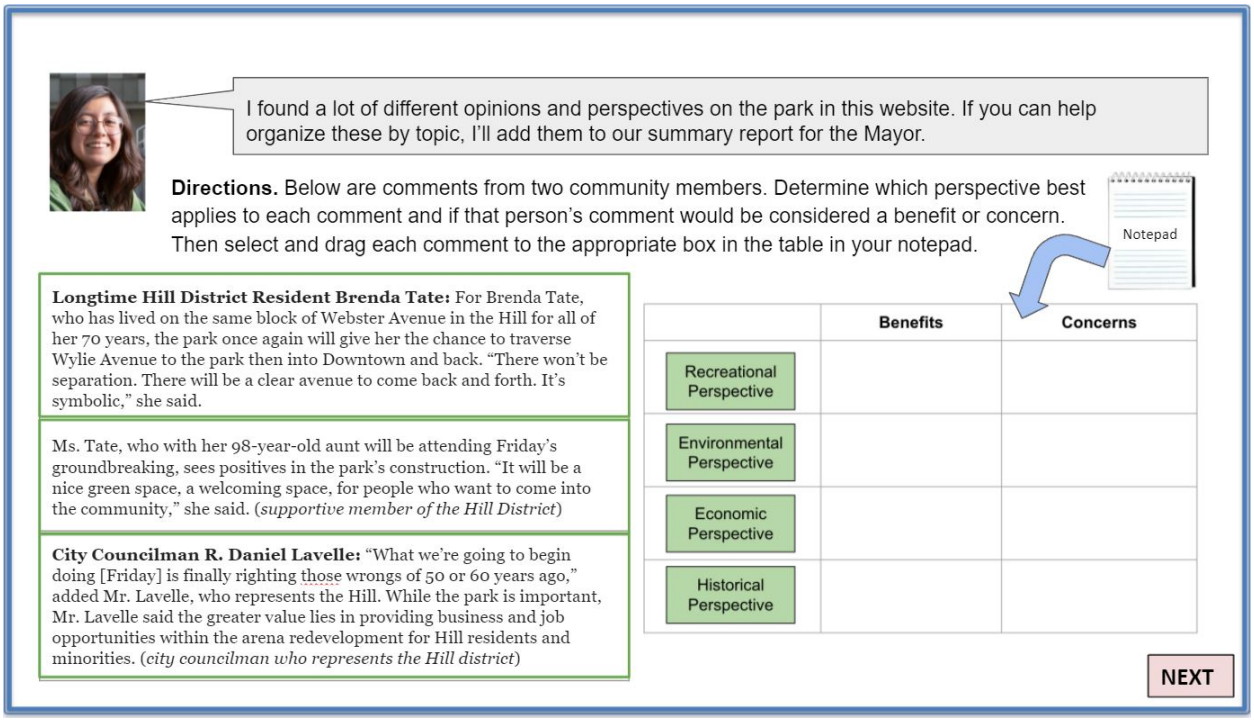
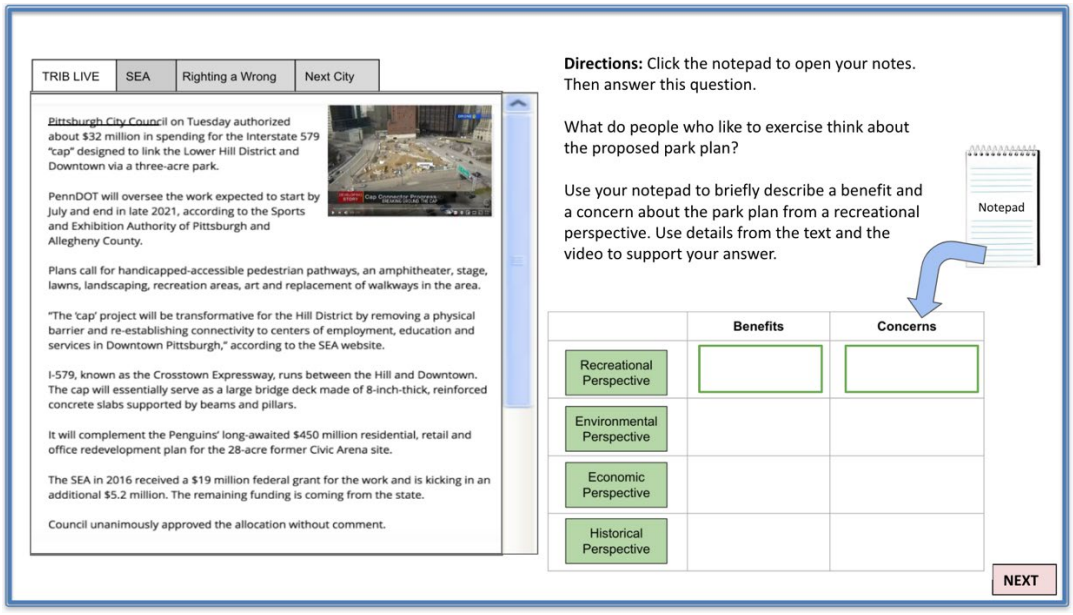


Exhibit C.31. A Grade 12 dynamic matching response grid item with a task-based UDE (retractable digital notepad) that serves to support readers at another point in the RSP block as they read across multiple sources to solve the problem at hand



Culminating Task. Toward the end of the Reading to Solve a Problem task, the three task characters remind students they are close to accomplishing their goal. In the first part of the task (Exhibit C.32), students are asked to use what they learned about what different community members think about the proposed park plan (as stored in their digital notepads) and apply that understanding to provide evidence-based descriptions of their benefits and concerns from a certain perspective to help the task characters submit their final report to the Mayor. By suggesting "this is a big task so can you help with two of the perspectives and then I'll find the other three?", the high-school aged avatars recognize the difficulty of the task and provide support, as a **motivational UDE,** while still asking students to demonstrate their ability to use and apply what they have learned about the views of different community members in preparation for the final report. Readers are also reminded that they have access to the four websites they have read and their digital notepad **(task-based UDEs)** to help them accomplish this culminating task.

For the second part of the task, students are asked to share their own evidence-based views of the park proposal plan and the task characters promise to also include their opinions in their final report. This item serves to validate the student's own voice and agency as an important contributor to the group's final summary. Exhibit C.33 illustrates how this item might look using a short-constructed response format, similar to those in existing NAEP assessment blocks, and Exhibit C.34 is included to depict what an item might look like in the future, as NAEP continues to explore alternative response formats that offer authentic opportunities for students to choose their preferred response format (e.g., written or audio recording) to express their own opinions to the problem posed by this testing block. Again, pairing the development of these innovative features with new considerations for scoring and careful piloting efforts will ensure that design features yield their intended outcomes for as many students as possible while never unintentionally disadvantaging some populations of students.

Exhibit C.32. This Use and Apply item with open-constructed response format illustrates the use of a task character (motivational UDE) that reminds students of their goal, recognizes the difficulty of the task, and provides support.

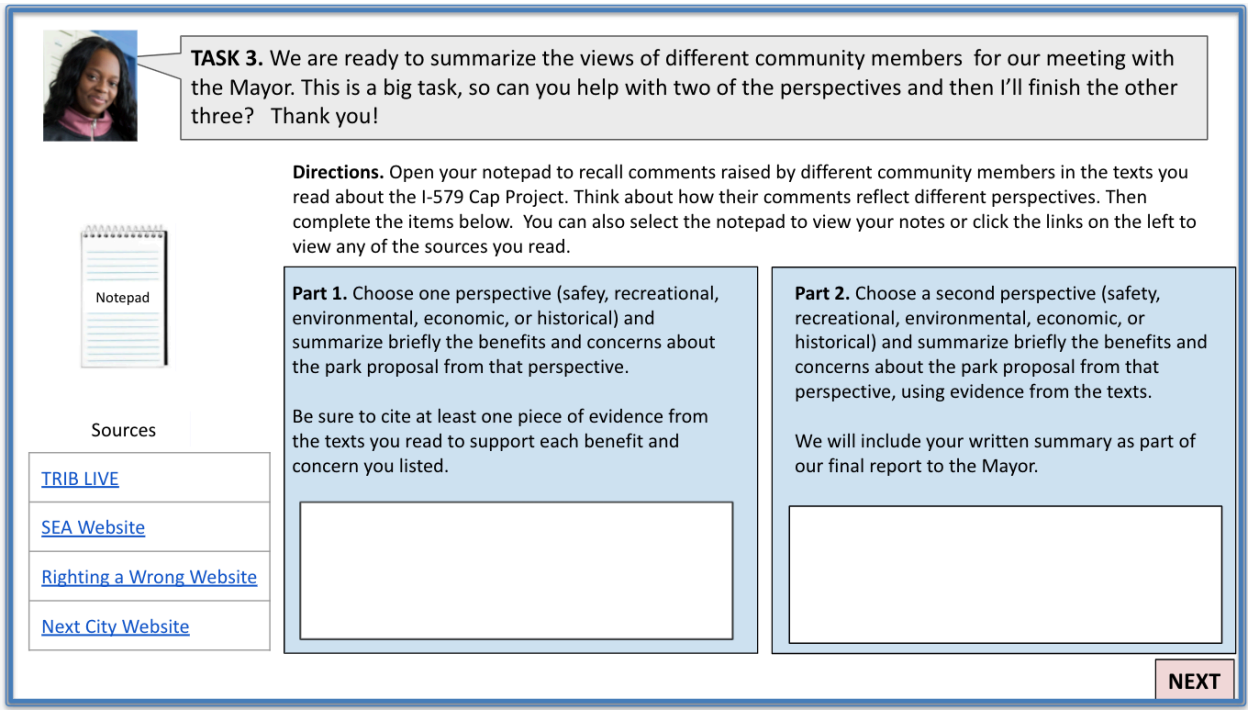


Exhibit C.33. This final Use and Apply item with open-constructed response format illustrates the use of a task character (motivational UDE) who reminds students they have accomplished their goal and validates the test-taker's role by inviting them to use what they learned and apply that understanding by sharing their own opinion.

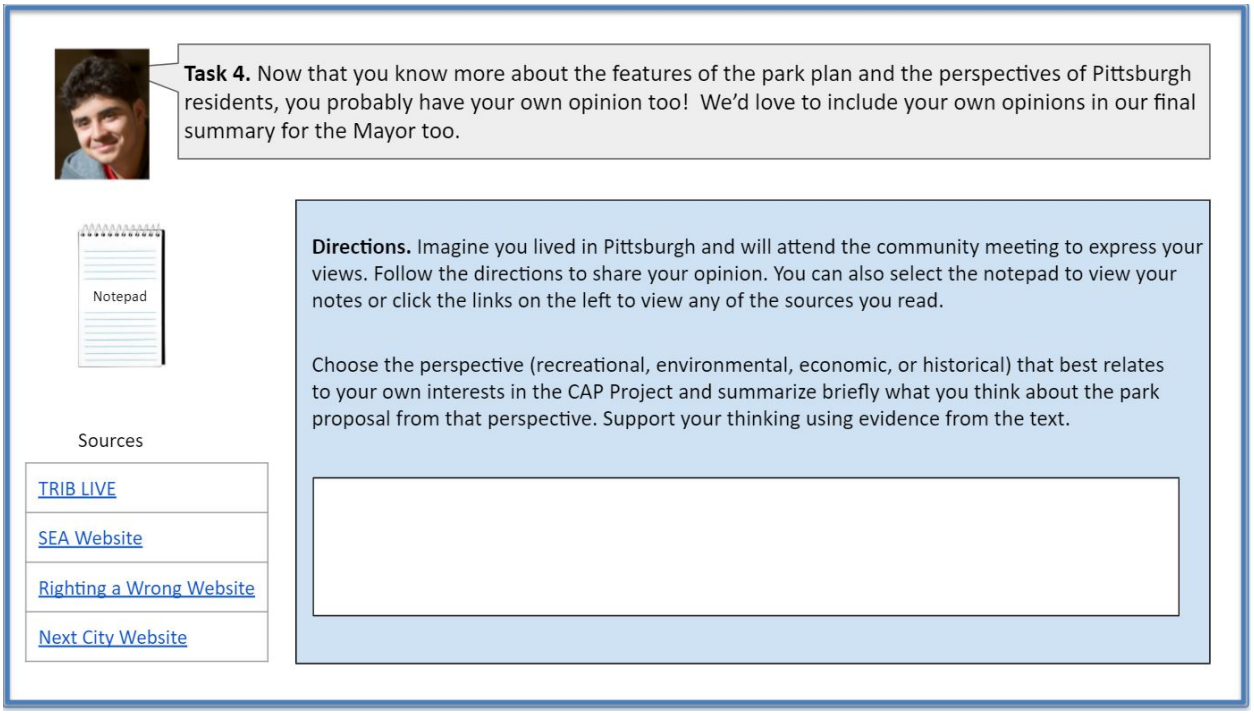
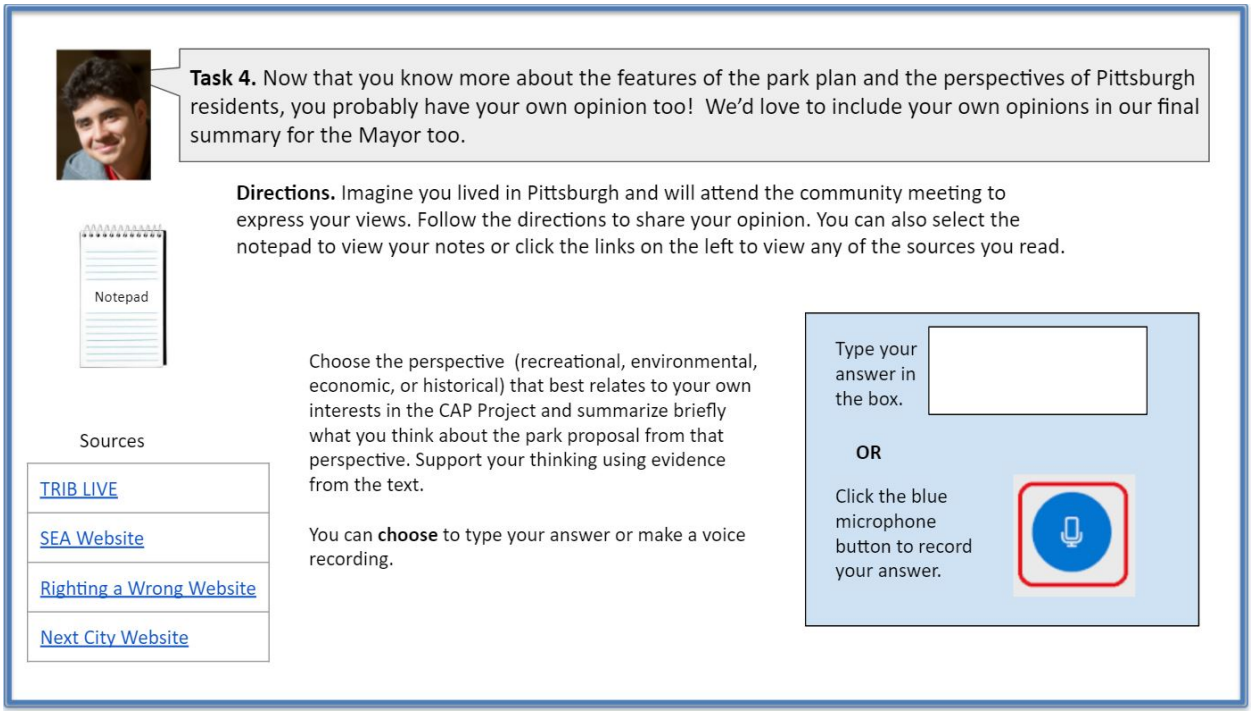


Exhibit C.34. This alternative format for the final Use and Apply item with open-constructed response format illustrates the use of motivational UDEs for two purposes: a task character who invites students' own opinion paired with an opportunity to choose their preferred format (text or audio) for expressing their opinion.



Performance Evidence and Indicators. *Scores from the Hill District block reveals what Grade 12 students can do when Reading to Solve a Problem in a social studies context. Ultimately, NAEP produces descriptions of what 12th graders (or sub-groups of 12th graders) can do in each disciplinary reading context. Thus, from students' participation in the Hill District block (and other assessment blocks designated as Reading to Solve a Problem in social studies contexts), it is possible to characterize how well Grade 12 students are able to comprehend and use multiple sources while engaging in social studies inquiries involving a collection of relatively short but nonetheless complex multilayered digital texts and a range of digitally enhanced items and access tools.*

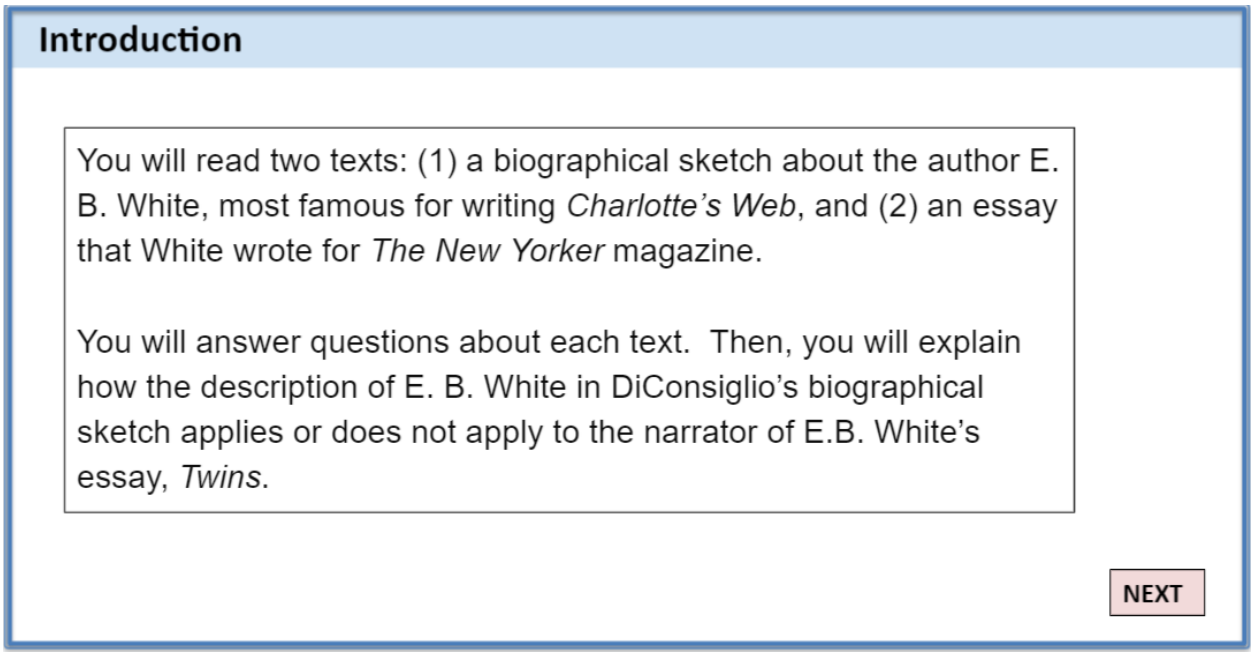
E. B. White

The last example offers a sketch of what a Grade 8 Reading to Develop Understanding in a Literature Context block might look like. This example illustrates what a block might look like if it occupied a space along the left end of the continuum portrayed in Exhibit C.2. Here, students have more time to develop deep understanding of the texts. Tasks are relatively simple, so fewer digital design features are needed to support the complexity of the task. When fully developed, this block should provide a good opportunity for students to demonstrate reading to develop understanding, by answering text-based questions that promote close reading of two texts as well as drawing inferences about how the ideas in the two texts inform one another.

Block Components (Disciplinary Context, Purposes, and Reader Role). In this example, students read and answer questions about two texts representing common literature genres: (a) a *biographical sketch* about the author E. B. White, and (b) a short human-interest *essay* by him. Some of the items will query the sketch, others will query the essay, and one item will require reasoning across the texts. These texts are a part of a NAEP released block that was used in the 2011 NAEP Assessment. The texts appear here (in Exhibits C.44 and C.45), as they did in that assessment.

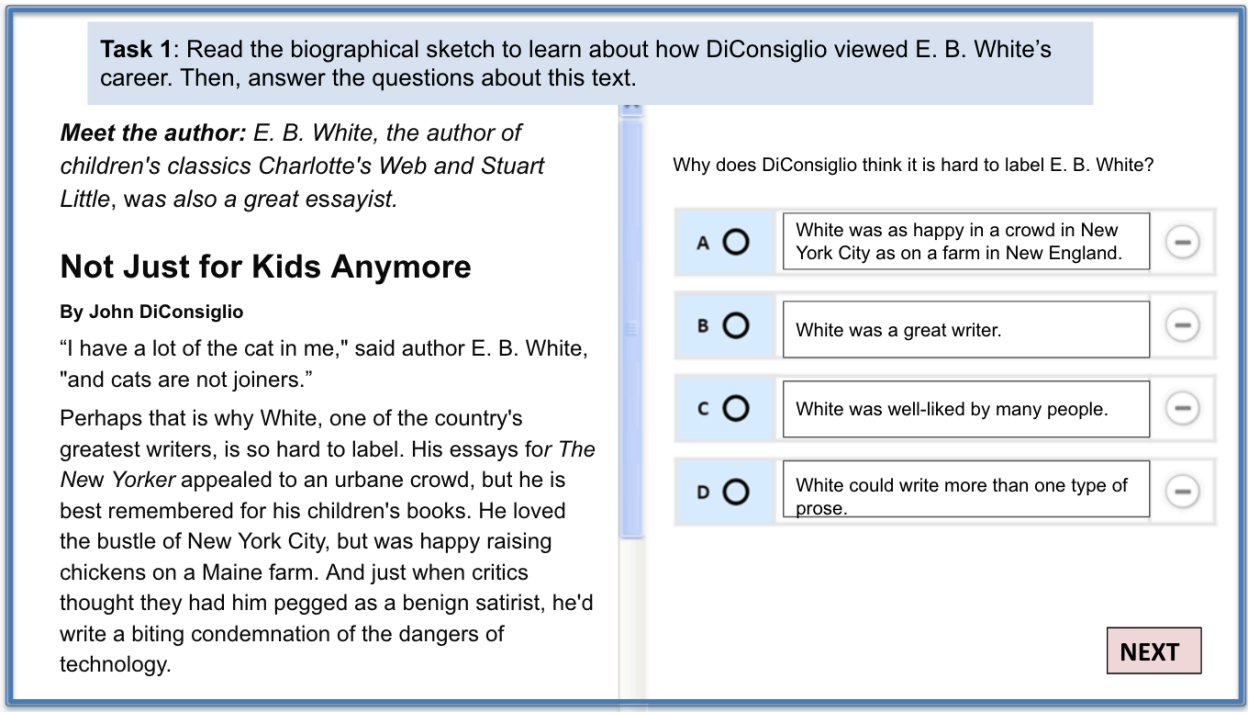
At the outset, readers are provided a specific reading purpose and informed about the role (working on their own) they will be asked to assume during the block, composed of two common literature genres—a biographical sketch and a human-interest essay (see Exhibit C.35).

Exhibit C.35. Introduction to E. B. White



Task Components: Tasks, Text(s), and Items). This E. B. White block has three tasks that include, 1) Reading and answering questions about the biographical sketch, *Not Just for Kids Anymore;* 2) Reading and answering question about the essay, *Twins*, and 3) Reasoning across the two texts to explain how what was learned in *Not Just for Kids Anymore* helps to understand E.B. White, the narrator of the essay, *Twins*. See Exhibit C.36, which shows task 1.

Exhibit C.36. Introduction to the grade 8 E. B. White literature block

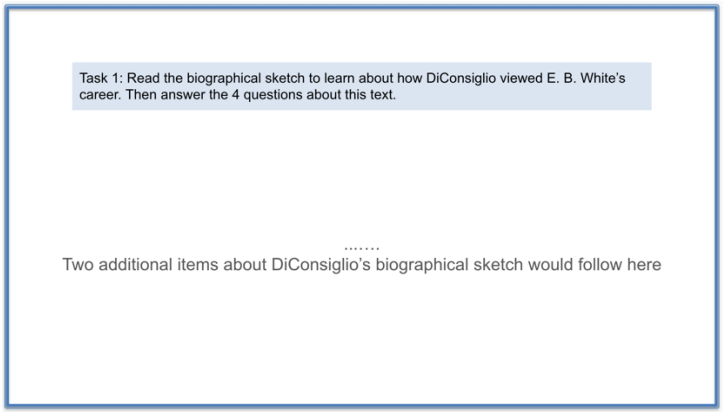


The comprehension items for Task 1 could help the reader develop understanding on segments of the biographical sketch that focus on characteristics of White that might be useful in Task 3 (see Exhibit C.37). Plausible segments for focus could be…

- The very first paragraph in which he compares himself to a cat.
- His adaptability (equally comfortable in NYC or Maine).
- Mood variation—benign satire to biting critique.
- The statement near the end suggesting that his essays matched his personality.
- The very last statement, suggesting that he was an eminently likeable character.

In terms of UDEs, note that there is an informational introductory UDE just before the title of the biographical sketch. Several relatively obscure terms are singled out as possible vocabulary pop-ups for a definition. No explicit motivational UDEs are provided.

Exhibit C.37. Task 1 would involve additional items



For Task 2, comprehension items should focus on the narrator White's statements that say something about his personality and attitudes toward the world around him (see Exhibits C.38-C.40). Candidates for items include:

- Getting more than we bargained for and the sighting of the doe and her twins.
- White's characterization of the doe being resentful of the onlookers
- The description of the mother and child as unaware of the special treat before their eyes
- The fawn's attempt to "hide" behind the leaf of the plant.
- One of several contrasts between the natural environment in a forest and the urban substitute of a zoo.

In terms of UDEs, similar to the biographical sketch there is an informational introductory UDE just before the title of the biographical sketch. Also several relatively obscure terms are singled out as possible vocabulary pop-ups for a definition. No explicitly motivational UDEs are provided.

Exhibit C.38. Task 2 for the grade 8 E. B. White block illustrating an Integrate and Interpret item with a short constructed response item format

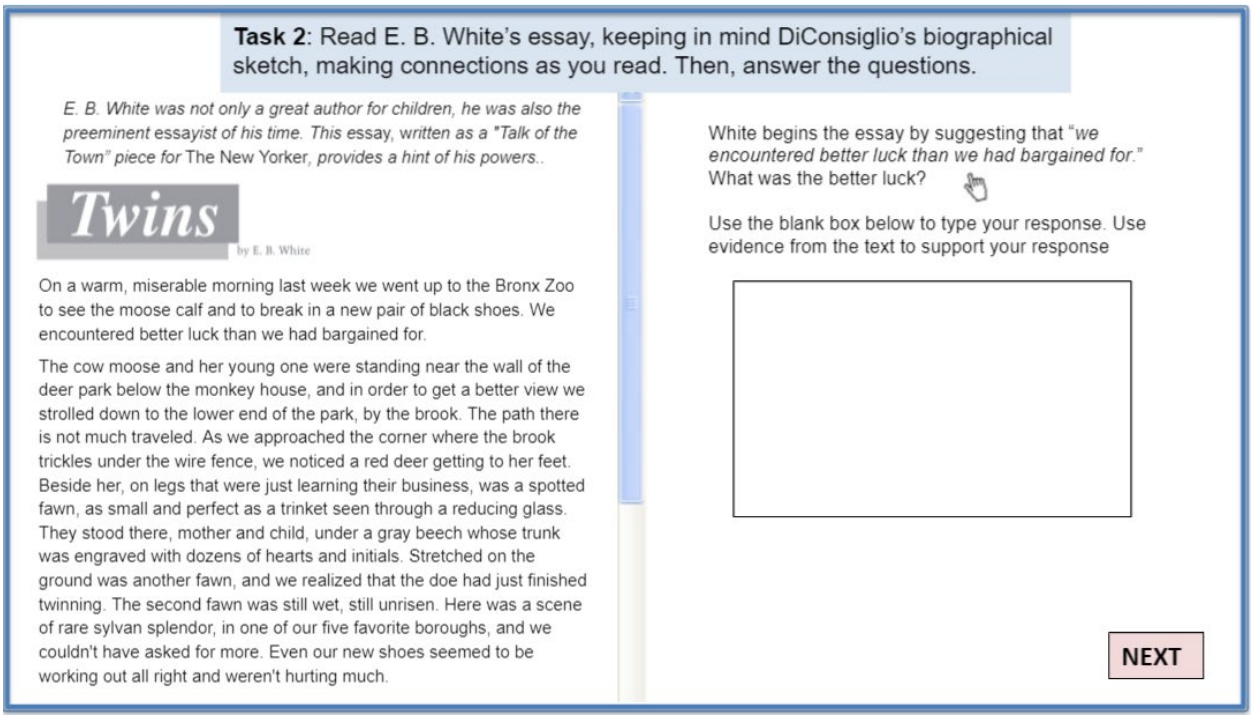


Exhibit C.39. Task 2 continues for the grade 8 E. B. White block illustrating an Analyze and Evaluate item with a multiple choice item response format

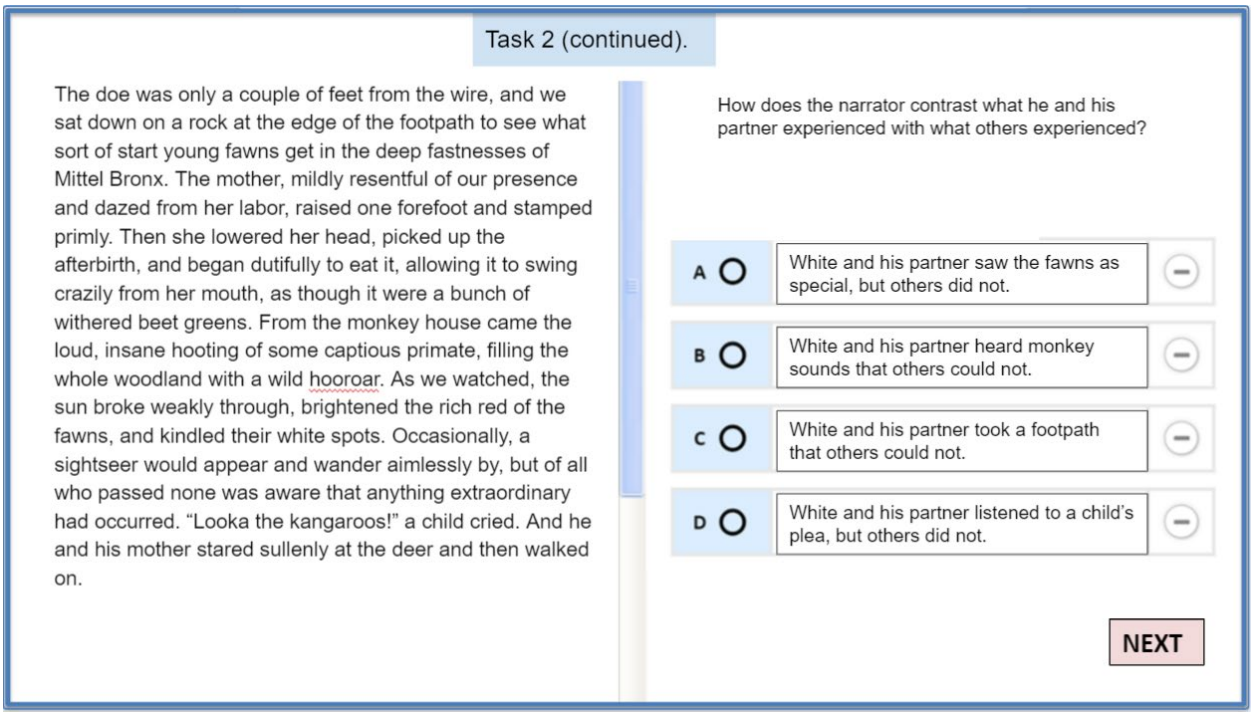
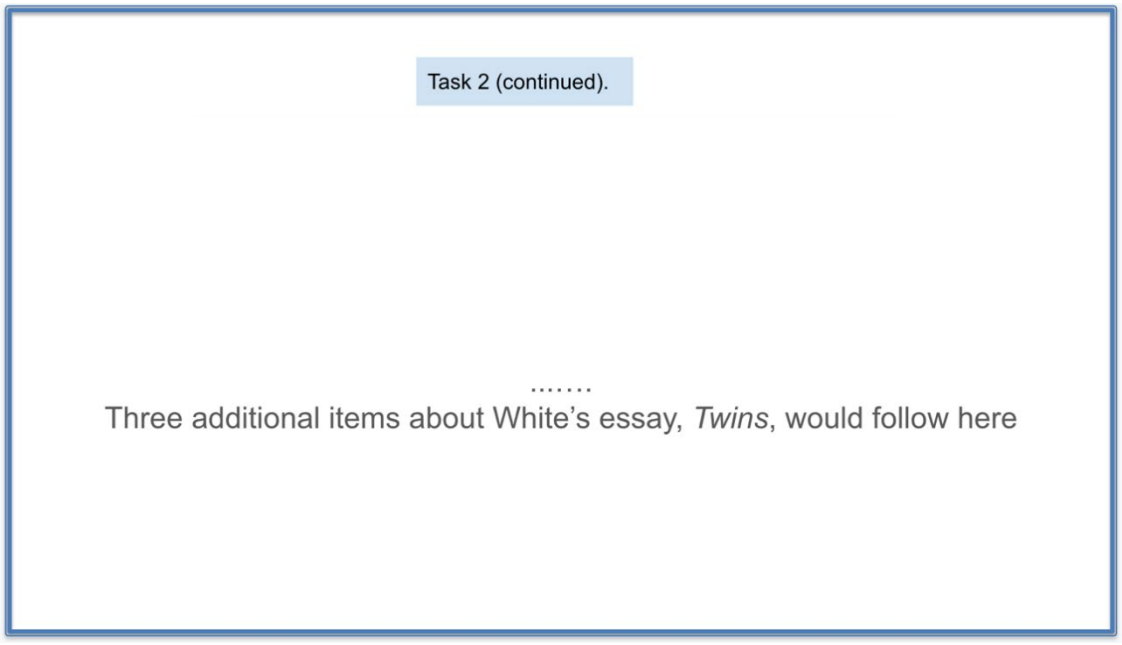
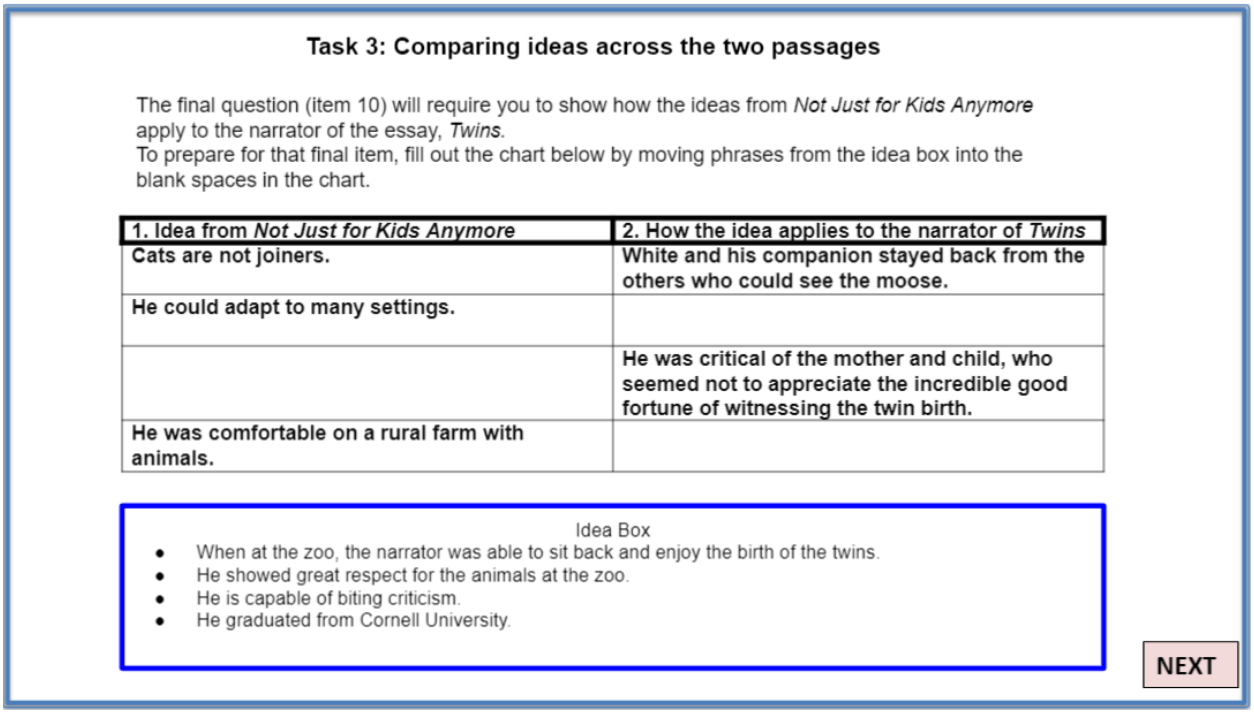


Exhibit C.40. Additional items accompany task 2



For Task 3, which was foreshadowed by the original block-specific purpose at the outset, both texts are involved. A task-based UDE, in the form of a partially completed note-taking chart (see Exhibits C.41 and C.42), might be provided to assist students in organizing their response to a final Use and Apply extended constructed response item (see Exhibit C.43).

Exhibit C.41. An Integrate and Interpret item illustrating a matching item response format



Task 3: Comparing ideas across the two passages

The final question (item 10) will require you to show how the ideas from *Not Just for Kids Anymore* apply to the narrator of the essay, *Twins*.
To prepare for that final item, fill out the chart below by moving phrases from the idea box into the blank spaces in the chart.

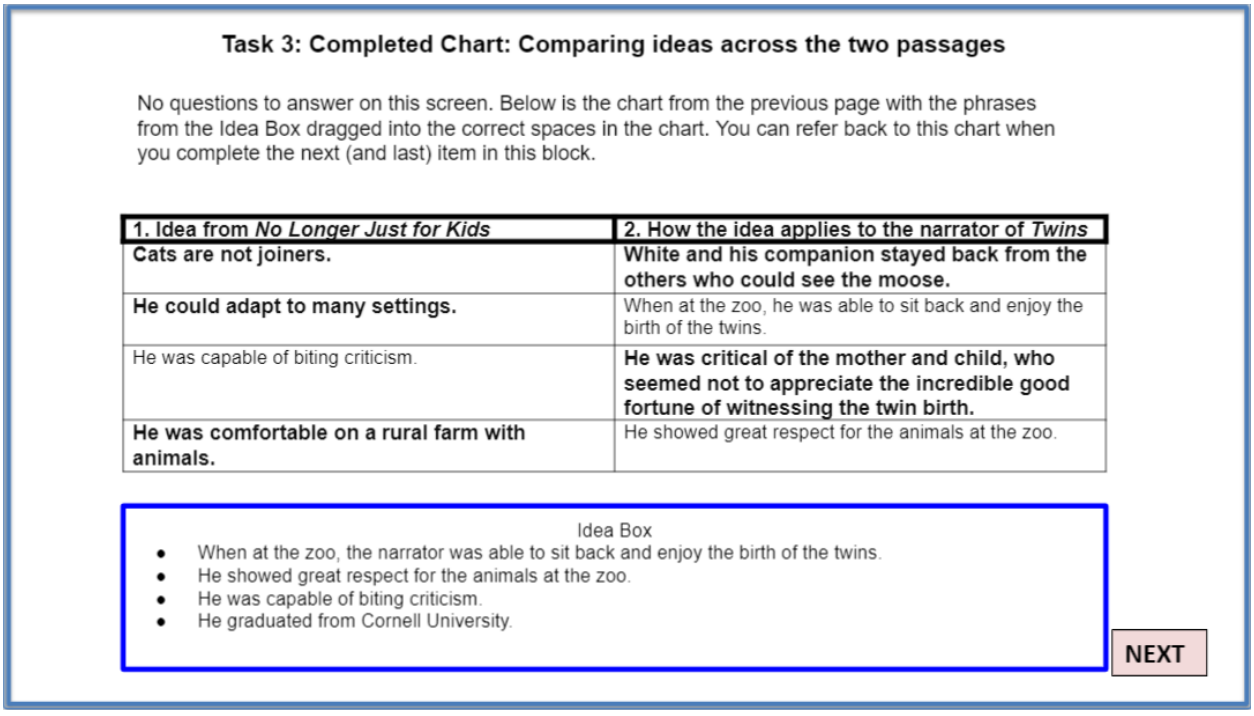
1. Idea from *Not Just for Kids Anymore*	2. How the idea applies to the narrator of *Twins*
Cats are not joiners.	**White and his companion stayed back from the others who could see the moose.**
He could adapt to many settings.	
	He was critical of the mother and child, who seemed not to appreciate the incredible good fortune of witnessing the twin birth.
He was comfortable on a rural farm with animals.	

Idea Box

- When at the zoo, the narrator was able to sit back and enjoy the birth of the twins.
- He showed great respect for the animals at the zoo.
- He is capable of biting criticism.
- He graduated from Cornell University.

NEXT

Exhibit C.42. Integrate and Interpret item illustrating resetting of item responses from prior item



Task 3: Completed Chart: Comparing ideas across the two passages

No questions to answer on this screen. Below is the chart from the previous page with the phrases from the Idea Box dragged into the correct spaces in the chart. You can refer back to this chart when you complete the next (and last) item in this block.

1. Idea from *No Longer Just for Kids*	2. How the idea applies to the narrator of *Twins*
Cats are not joiners.	**White and his companion stayed back from the others who could see the moose.**
He could adapt to many settings.	When at the zoo, he was able to sit back and enjoy the birth of the twins.
He was capable of biting criticism.	**He was critical of the mother and child, who seemed not to appreciate the incredible good fortune of witnessing the twin birth.**
He was comfortable on a rural farm with animals.	He showed great respect for the animals at the zoo.

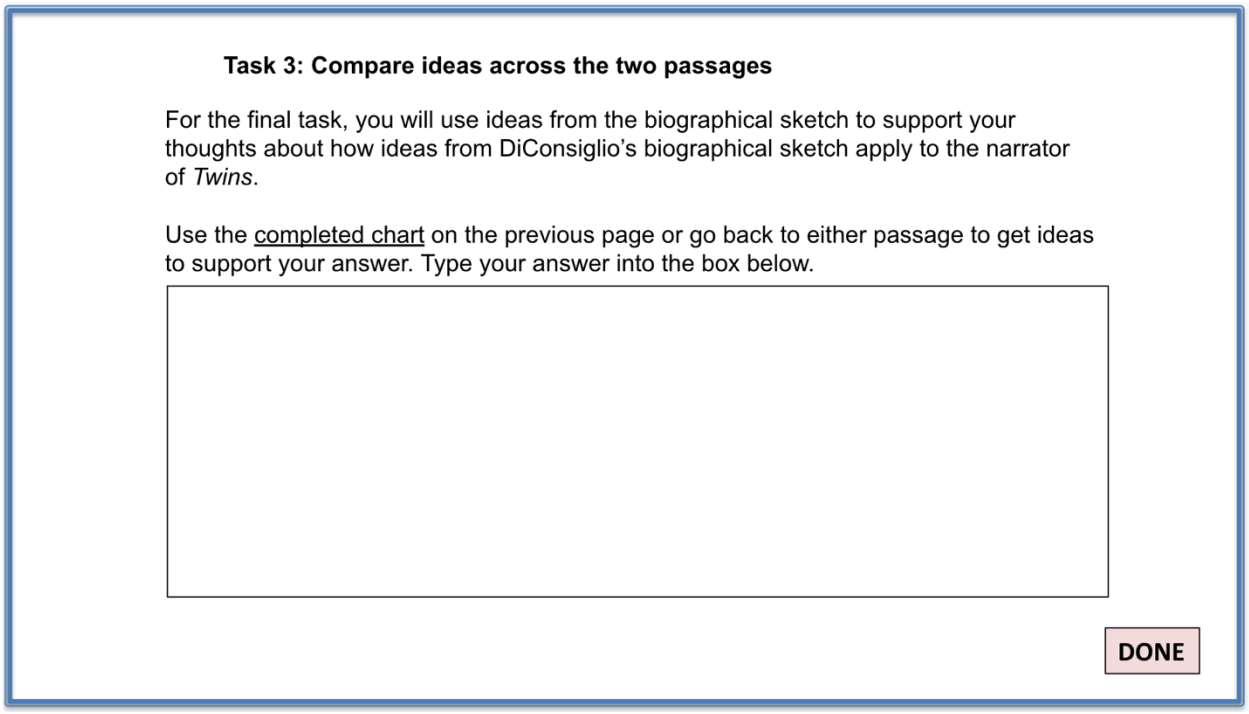
Idea Box

- When at the zoo, the narrator was able to sit back and enjoy the birth of the twins.
- He showed great respect for the animals at the zoo.
- He was capable of biting criticism.
- He graduated from Cornell University.

NEXT

After completing the drag and drop task with the chart (Exhibit C.41), students receive feedback about how the chart might best have been completed in Exhibit C.42. The task-based UDE, called resetting, is provided so that students do not carry misconceptions into the final item in Exhibit C.43.

Exhibit C.43. A Final Use and Apply item asks students to use ideas from the first text to develop ideas about the second text



As suggested earlier, the E. B. White block sketch provides an example of how blocks might look under the auspices of the 2026 assessment when they are developed with an RDU Broad Purpose as the driving force in design. Blocks like these have long been a part of the NAEP Reading Assessment portfolio and will continue to be included going forward. For the convenience of the reader, the full version of the two texts used for this block appear in Exhibits C.44 and C.45.

Exhibit C.44. The First Text for the E. B. White Task: A Biographical Sketch. Meet the author: E. B. White, the author of children's classics Charlotte's Web and Stuart Little, was also a great essayist.

Not Just for Kids Anymore

“I have a lot of the cat in me," said author E. B. White, "and cats are not joiners.”

Perhaps that is why White, one of the country's greatest writers, is so hard to label. His essays for *The New Yorker* appealed to an urbane crowd, but he is best remembered for his children's books. He loved the bustle of New York City, but was happy raising chickens on a Maine farm.

And just when critics thought they had him pegged as a benign satirist, he'd write a biting condemnation of the dangers of technology.

© The New York Times/Redux

E. B. White and Minnie, his dachshund, at *The New Yorker* offices in the late 1940s.

The son of a piano manufacturer, Elwyn Brooks White was born in Mount Vernon, New York, in 1899. His family was prosperous, and White was raised with the mix of sophistication and common sense that would mark his writing.

After graduation from Cornell University, White spent a year as a newspaper reporter in New York City, then decided to drive across the country with a friend in a Model T Ford. The trip gave White a lifetime of anecdotes, and spawned a legend or two. “When they ran out of money,” White's friend, James Thurber, noted, “they played for their supper—and their gasoline—on a fascinating musical instrument that White had made out of some pieces of wire and an old shoe.”

When White returned to New York City in the mid-1920s, he spent a few years bouncing between advertising jobs and unemployment before trying his hand again at writing Borrowing his brother's typewriter, he began pounding out sketches and poems. On a lark, he sent some essays to a fledgling magazine called *The New Yorker.* Since its founding in 1925, the magazine had struggled to find its niche, and White's work helped put *The New Yorker* on the map. His essays were funny and sophisticated; they spoke equally to socialites and cab drivers, professors and plumbers. Through his essays, which he wrote for nearly 50 years, White helped give *The New Yorker* its voice and identity.

In 1945, already a leading literary figure, White embarked on his second career: writing children's books. He moved from New York to a farm in Maine, where he raised chickens and geese. Seeking a way to amuse his nieces and nephews, White started to write stories for them. “Children were always after me to tell them a story and I found I couldn't do it,” he said. “So I had to get it down on paper."

A vivid dream about a mouselike character led to S*tuart Little*. Then, in 1952, White published *Charlotte's Web*. The book, which was inspired by White's own farm animals, is arguably the most famous children's story published in the 20th century.

By the time he died from Alzheimer's disease in 1985, White's essays had appeared in more college anthologies than those of any other writer. Many said his essays matched his personality: subtle without being simple, critical without being mean.

Indeed, one New *York Time*s critic wrote, “There are times reading an E. B. White book of essays when you think he must be the most likable man of letters alive. If you are some kind of writer yourself, you probably want to imitate him."

-By John DiConsiglio

Exhibit C.45. The Second Text for the E. B. White Task: An Essay from the *New Yorker*

E. B. White was not only a great author for children, he was also the preeminent essa*yist of his time. This e*ssay, w*ritten as a "Talk of the Town" piece for* The New Yorker*, provides a hint of his powers.*

Twins

by E. B. White

On a warm, miserable morning last week we went up to the Bronx Zoo to see the moose calf and to break in a new pair of black shoes. We encountered better luck than we had bargained for.

The cow moose and her young one were standing near the wall of the deer park below the monkey house, and in order to get a better view we strolled down to the lower end of the park, by the brook. The path there is not much traveled. As we approached the corner where the brook trickles under the wire fence, we noticed a red deer getting to her feet. Beside her, on legs that were just learning their business, was a spotted fawn, as small and perfect as a trinket seen through a reducing glass. They stood there, mother and child, under a gray beech whose trunk was engraved with dozens of hearts and initials. Stretched on the ground was another fawn, and we realized that the doe had just finished twinning. The second fawn was still wet, still unrisen. Here was a scene of rare sylvan splendor, in one of our five favorite boroughs, and we couldn't have asked for more. Even our new shoes seemed to be working out all right and weren't hurting much.

The doe was only a couple of feet from the wire, and we sat down on a rock at the edge of the footpath to see what sort of start young fawns get in the deep fastnesses of Mittel Bronx.

The mother, mildly resentful of our presence and dazed from her labor, raised one forefoot and stamped primly. Then she lowered her head, picked up the afterbirth, and began dutifully to eat it, allowing it to swing crazily from her mouth, as though it were a bunch of withered beet greens. From the monkey house came the loud, insane hooting of some captious primate, filling the whole woodland with a wild hooroar. As we watched, the sun broke weakly through, brightened the rich red of the fawns, and kindled their white spots. Occasionally, a sightseer would appear and wander aimlessly by, but of all who passed none was aware that anything extraordinary had occurred. “Looka the kangaroos!” a child cried. And he and his mother stared

sullenly at the deer and then walked on.

In a few moments the second twin gathered all his legs and all his ingenuity and arose, to stand for the first time sniffing the mysteries of a park for captive deer. The doe, in recognition of his achievement, quit her other work and began to dry him, running her tongue against the grain and paying particular attention to the key points. Meanwhile the first fawn tiptoed toward the shallow brook, in little stops and goes, and started across. He paused midstream to make a slight contribution, as a child does in bathing. Then, while his mother watched, he continued across, gained the other side, selected a hiding place, and lay down under a skunk-cabbage leaf next to the fence, in perfect concealment, his legs folded neatly under him. Without actually going out of sight, he had managed to disappear completely in the shifting light and shade. From somewhere a long way off a twelve-o'clock whistle sounded. We hung around awhile, but he never budged. Before we left, we crossed the brook ourself, just outside the fence, knelt, reached through the wire, and tested the truth of what we had once heard: that you can scratch a new fawn between the ears without starting him. You can indeed.

Footnote

Sample items in the framework are being provided to exemplify key concepts in the framework and do not represent items that will be used on future NAEP assessments. These sample items may not represent accurately the full set of NAEP style guide and other test specifications. Tasks presented with multiple sample items are provided to help readers of the framework envision how theoretical ideas in the framework might guide assessment design, but they do not represent fully expectations for enacting the NAEP style guide and other test specifications.

[PLACEHOLDER]

APPENDIX B: ACHIEVEMENT LEVEL DESCRIPTIONS

Commented [A1]: This is Appendix B from the Reading Assessment Framework approved by the Board on August 5. The tracked changes reflect edits that would need to be made to be consistent with the Reading Assessment and Item Specifications. These edits to the ALDs were made in response to concerns raised by Board staff, NCES staff, and Technical Advisory Committee members to eliminate references to knowledge and skills that NAEP cannot measure.

The NAEP Reading achievement level descriptions (ALDs) articulate specific expectations of student performance in reading at grades 4, 8 and 12. Like other subject-specific ALDs, the NAEP Reading ALDs presented in this appendix translate the generic NAEP policy definitions into grade- and subject-specific descriptions of performance.

NAEP Policy Definitions

- ***NAEP Basic.*** This level denotes partial mastery of prerequisite knowledge and skills that are fundamental for performance at the *NAEP Proficient* level.
- ***NAEP Proficient.*** This level represents solid academic performance for each NAEP assessment. Students reaching this level have demonstrated competency over challenging subject matter, including subject-matter knowledge, application of such knowledge to real world situations, and analytical skills appropriate to the subject matter.
- ***NAEP Advanced.*** This level signifies superior performance beyond *NAEP Proficient*.

Range ALDs

This Framework presents range ALDs for NAEP Reading. For each achievement level, the corresponding range ALD details observable evidence of student achievement. In many cases, range ALDs also illustrate "changes" in skills across achievement levels, portraying an increasingly sophisticated grasp of the material from one achievement level (and from one grade level) to the next. Achievement levels are also cumulative, meaning each ALD in each grade includes all the reading achievement expectations identified in all the lower achievement levels and grade levels.

Range ALDs should not be confused with reporting ALDs. The fundamental difference between the two is straightforward; range ALDs communicate **expectations**, and reporting ALDs convey **results**. In other words, range ALDs are **conceptually driven**, based on the model of reading and the Assessment Construct in the NAEP framework. They answer the question, given what we know about the development of reading, what should students be able to do at different grade and achievement levels when responding to different combinations of texts and tasks? By contrast, reporting ALDs are **empirically driven**, based on **actual** performance of students who have taken NAEP. They answer the question, given the distribution of NAEP performance, what can students at different grade and achievement levels do when responding to various combinations of texts and tasks?

The 2026 NAEP Reading Framework does not provide reporting ALDs; those ~~are~~ will be constructed using empirical data during a later stage in the NAEP cycle, i.e., ~~a live~~an operational administration of the NAEP Reading Assessment. Further detail about the development of the reporting ALDs for NAEP is provided in the Governing Board's policy statement on achievement level setting.

Organizational Features and Structures of the Reading Construct: Contexts, Purposes, Comprehension Targets, and Text Complexity

The ALDs in this appendix are structured to mirror the presentation of the reading construct provided in the Framework narrative. The primary organizational structure in the Framework narrative is the disciplinary context. Whereas the prior (2009) NAEP Reading Framework identified two reading contexts (literary and informational) this 2026 Framework has identified three (literature, science, and social studies~~, and literature~~). In the ALDs below, all three disciplinary contexts are described within each performance level.

Comprehension Targets and Text Complexity

Over the course of the NAEP Reading Assessment, students will engage with texts of various discourse structures and an appropriate grade-level range of text complexity. While reading these texts within an assessment block, students will complete varied reading comprehension activities that include specific purposes, tasks, processes, and consequences. The reader, per his or her achievement level, will employ various knowledge types to accomplish the assessment's reading comprehension activities. In doing so, the reader will demonstrate achievement relative to four *C~~c~~omprehension T~~t~~argets:* (1) Locate and Recall; (2) Integrate and Interpret; (3) Analyze and Evaluate; and (4) Use and Apply. Students at each achievement level are expected to meet the demands of each C~~c~~omprehension T~~t~~arget. However, as the complexity of texts increases on a given reading assessment, students, on average, are expected to demonstrate less competency with skills associated with higher-level C~~c~~omprehension T~~t~~argets, such as Use and Apply.

Broad and Specific Reading Purposes

Reading activities in an assessment block are situated within ~~not only~~ a disciplinary context ~~but~~ as well as~~also~~ a broad reading purpose. Each assessment block is designated as having one of two *broad* purposes: Reading to Develop Understanding or Reading to Solve a Problem. Reading to Develop Understanding (RDU) blocks ask students to *read and comprehend deeply* (analyzing, inferencing, interpreting, and critiquing) in or across disciplinary contexts. By contrast, Reading to Solve a Problem (RSP) blocks ask students to demonstrate understanding across multiple texts and related perspectives in order to solve a problem. Reading to Solve a Problem activities do involve comprehending text, but in the service of a specific action or product, such as a classroom presentation.

Both RDU and RSP blocks also have ***specific*** purposes with reader roles that shape how and why readers engage with the tasks, texts, and items in each block. Unlike the broad purposes, these specific purposes are applicable only to the texts in a given task in the assessment block. The purpose-driven statements will reflect the contexts and scenarios in which reading in the real world occurs. The subsections below describe how specific reading purposes map to disciplinary contexts.

Literature Texts. People engage in reading literature for the following purposes:

- To understand human experience
- To entertain themselves and others
- To reflect on and solve personal and social dilemmas
- To appreciate and use authors' craft to develop interpretations

In school, students read, create, and discuss literature texts such as poems, short stories, chapter books, novels, and films. Outside of school, students participate in book clubs, create fan fiction and book reviews, follow and discuss authors, dramatize literary works with animation and music, and more. NAEP simulates these Contexts of Reading to Engage in Literature by providing test takers with activities to respond to literary and everyday texts like those read in and outside of school.

Science Texts. People engage in reading science for the following purposes:

- To understand natural and material phenomena
- To design solutions to problems
- To explore and discuss issues and ideas
- To consider impacts on themselves and society

In school, students read, create, and discuss science texts such as explanations, investigations, journal articles, trade books, and more. They design solutions to engineering challenges, use diagrams and flow charts, and follow step-by-step procedures to investigate scientific phenomena. Outside of school, students engage in reading science when participating in games, cooking, and crafts, and reading and viewing science and health news. NAEP simulates these Contexts of Reading to Engage in Science by providing test taskers with activities to respond to science and everyday texts like those read in and outside of school.

Social Studies Texts. People engage in reading social studies for the following purposes:

- To understand past events and how they may impact the present
- To explore and discuss issues and ideas
- To understand human motivation, perception, and ethics
- To advocate for change for themselves and society

In school, students read social studies texts such as primary and secondary source documents, historical narratives in textbooks, case studies, current events, maps, data, court cases, and more. They read, create, and discuss memoirs, timelines, and biographies. Outside of school, people engage in reading history and social studies when participating in trivia games, crafts, civic activities, community discussions, self-help, and community service. NAEP simulates these contexts of reading to engage in social studies by providing test tasks with activities to respond to history/social studies and everyday texts like those read in and outside of school.

NAEP Reading Achievement Levels: Grade 4

NAEP Basic

Fourth-grade students performing at the *NAEP Basic* level should be able to locate, recall, and/or record specific pieces of information, identify relationships between explicitly stated pieces of information, make simple inferences and interpretations in static, dynamic, and multimodal texts, ~~create~~ determine the accuracy of summaries, and show understanding of vocabulary in the disciplinary contexts.

When engaged in reading literature texts such as fiction, drama, film, poetry, and literary nonfiction, fourth-grade readers performing at the *NAEP Basic* level should be able to use textual evidence as support to identify or determine literary elements such as character point of view, theme or central message, problem, and setting. Readers should be able to explain how a text's illustrations contribute to what is conveyed by the text, explain the differences ~~between poems, drama, and prosea~~(e.g., text features) among literature subgenres appearing in ~~a~~ specific task texts, and show understanding of vocabulary and simple figurative language. Readers should be able to ~~produce~~ determine the accuracy of a simple summary of a text and continue the narration of an incomplete story to a conclusion of their making.

When engaged in reading science texts such as exposition (including literary nonfiction), argumentation, and procedural texts (including investigations), fourth-grade readers performing at the *NAEP Basic* level should be able to use textual evidence as support to determine the main idea and how it is supported by key details, determine and interpret an author's point of view or purpose, and ~~distinguish between fact and opinion~~form an evidence-based opinion about a text. Readers should be able to interpret and integrate information presented in a text visually, quantitatively, and orally, analyze specific results of a simple multistep procedure, and show understanding of academic and domain-specific vocabulary. Readers should be able to apply simpler ideas acquired through reading to solve a new problem.

When engaged in reading social studies texts such as exposition (including literary nonfiction), argumentation, and documents of historical and literary significance, fourth-grade readers performing at the *NAEP Basic* level should be able to determine the main idea and how it is supported by key details, determine and interpret an author's point of view or purpose, and ~~distinguish between fact and opinion~~form an evidence-based opinion about a text. Readers should be able to describe ~~the overall structure of a text~~text structures as they pertain to the presentation of content in a specific text, and compare and contrast explicit information found in a firsthand and secondhand account of the same event or topic. Readers should be able to ~~produce~~ determine the accuracy of a simple summary of a text and integrate information from lower complexity sources to ~~produce a new text of informational or argumentative purpose~~apply to a new context.

NAEP Proficient

Fourth-grade students performing at the *NAEP Proficient* level should be able to make more complex inferences and interpretations, reconcile inconsistencies within and across static, dynamic, and multimodal texts, and explain how an author uses reasons and evidence to support particular points in a text.

When engaged in reading literature texts such as fiction, drama, film, poetry, and literary nonfiction, fourth-grade readers performing at the *NAEP Proficient* level should be able to use textual evidence as support to describe in depth character, setting, and plot, and to explain how a theme or central message is conveyed through details in a text. Readers should be able to analyze how ~~a printed version of a text relates to its multimedia version~~information from a multimedia source contributes to understanding of a printed text and show understanding of nuances in word meaning. Readers should be able to ~~produce a detailed summary of a text and rewrite a story~~

~~from a different character's perspective~~apply understanding of a character to an interpretation of another character's point of view.

When engaged in reading science texts such as exposition (including literary nonfiction), argumentation, and procedural texts (including investigations), fourth-grade readers performing at the *NAEP Proficient* level should be able to use textual evidence as support to explain events, procedures, ideas, and concepts based on specific information in and across texts. Readers should be able to make predictions based upon content in the text and to interpret an author's point of view or purpose, including in reference to a procedure ~~or experiment~~ and in comparison to another text's author. Readers should be able to ~~develop a new~~determine missing steps in a procedure ~~or experiment~~(e.g., a simple investigation; craft-making related to a scientific concept) based on ~~knowledge acquired from~~ information gained from reading texts.

When engaged in reading social studies texts such as exposition (including literary nonfiction), argumentation, and documents of historical and literary significance, fourth-grade readers performing at the *NAEP Proficient* level should be able to use textual evidence as support to explain events, procedures, ideas, and concepts based on specific information in and across texts. Readers should be able to explain how information presented in a text visually, quantitatively, and orally contributes to an understanding of a text. Readers should be able to ~~produce a detailed summary of a text and~~ adopt the persona of a historical figure when ~~producing a new text of informational or argumentative purpose~~applying information learned to a new context.

NAEP Advanced

Fourth-grade students performing at the *NAEP Advanced* level should be able to make complex inferences and to support their interpretations, conclusions, and their judgments based upon evidence within and across static, dynamic, and multimodal texts.

When engaged in reading literature texts such as fiction, drama, film, poetry, and literary nonfiction, fourth-grade readers performing at the *NAEP Advanced* level should be able to use textual evidence as support to explain character motivation and behavior and how characters interact with setting and plot. Readers should be able to evaluate how characters or themes resonate with common human experiences~~society and their personal lives~~. Readers should be able to apply knowledge acquired about author's craft to produce a literary work evidencing their understanding.

When engaged in reading science texts such as exposition (including literary nonfiction), argumentation, and procedural texts (including investigations), fourth-grade readers performing at the *NAEP Advanced* level should be able to determine the significance of information and arguments made in a text. Readers should be able to make predictions based upon content in the text, ~~and~~ to interpret an author's point of view or purpose, and to argue for or against a particular interpretation.

When engaged in reading social studies texts such as exposition (including literary nonfiction), argumentation, and documents of historical and literary significance, fourth-grade readers performing at the *NAEP Advanced* level should be able to determine the significance of information and arguments made in a text. Readers should be able to make predictions based

upon content in the text, ~~and~~ to interpret an author's point of view or purpose, and to argue for or against a particular interpretation. Readers should be able to use ~~acquired knowledge about a topic, conduct brief research, and produce a historical document, such as a caption to a political cartoon or a personal bill of rights~~and apply information from texts in a new context, such as proposing a caption for an illustration or cartoon, or to create a set of recommendations.

NAEP Reading Achievement Levels: Grade 8

NAEP Basic

Eighth-grade students performing at the *NAEP Basic* level should be able to find information in static, dynamic, and multimodal texts, make simple inferences and interpretations within and between texts, make predictions based upon content in the text, ~~create objective~~determine the accuracy of summaries, analyze word choice, and show understanding of vocabulary in the disciplinary contexts.

When engaged in reading literature texts such as fiction, drama, film, poetry, and literary nonfiction, eighth-grade readers performing at the *NAEP Basic* level should be able to use textual evidence as support to determine theme or central idea and aspects of character, setting, and plot. They should be able to compare basic literary attributes of two or more texts and make judgments about how each author presents events. Readers show understanding of vocabulary and figurative language. They should be able to ~~develop a simple objective~~determine the accuracy of a summary of a text and ~~produce an argumentative text~~construct an argument that prosecutes or defends the actions of a character by using evidence from the reading text.

When engaged in reading science texts such as exposition (including literary nonfiction), argumentation, and procedural texts (including experiments), eighth-grade readers performing at the *NAEP Basic* level should be able to use textual evidence as support to determine the central ideas and conclusions of a text and explain how a text makes connections among and distinctions between individuals, ideas, and/or events. Readers should be able to integrate quantitative or technical information expressed in words in a text with a version of that information expressed visually (e.g., in a flowchart, diagram, model, graph, or table), show understanding of how to follow precisely a multistep procedure ~~of an experiment~~, and show understanding of academic and domain-specific vocabulary, key terms, and symbols. Readers should be able to apply simpler ideas acquired through reading to solve a new problem.

When engaged in reading social studies texts such as exposition (including literary nonfiction), argumentation, and documents of historical and literary significance, eighth-grade readers performing at the *NAEP Basic* level should be able to determine the central ideas, determine and interpret an author's point of view or purpose, and distinguish between fact, opinion, and reasoned judgment in a text. They should be able to demonstrate an understanding of the purpose/function of a specified text features (e.g., introductions, sidebars, headings, illustrations, charts). Readers should be able to identify key steps in a text's description of a process related to social studies (e.g., how a bill becomes law). Readers should be able to ~~produce a simple objective summary of a text and integrate information from multiple sources to produce a new text of informational or argumentative purpose~~use information from multiple sources to apply to a new context.

NAEP Proficient

Eighth-grade students performing at the *NAEP Proficient* level should be able to make more complex inferences and interpretations, form explanations and generalizations, generate alternatives, and apply new ideas acquired through reading to a new problem or context when reading static, dynamic, and multimodal texts. Students should be able to use text-based evidence to support arguments and conclusions.

When engaged in reading literature texts such as fiction, drama, film, poetry, and literary nonfiction, eighth-grade readers performing at the *NAEP Proficient* level should be able to analyze the development of the theme or central idea over the course of a text and how particular lines of dialogue or incidents in a text propel, the action, provoke a decision, or reveal aspects of character. Readers should be able to analyze how ~~a printed version of a text relates to its multimedia version~~information from a multimedia source contributes to understanding of a printed text and how text structure contributes to meaning and style. They should be able to analyze how word choice impacts a text's meaning and tone. Readers should be able to ~~develop a detailed objective summary of a text and produce an informational text that analyzes how different authors developed a similar theme or central idea~~apply analysis of multiple texts to an explanation of how different authors developed a similar theme or central idea.

When engaged in reading science texts such as exposition (including literary nonfiction), argumentation, and procedural texts (including experiments), eighth-grade readers performing at the *NAEP Proficient* level should be able to use textual evidence as support to analyze the specific results of a multistep procedure based on explanations in the text, analyze how the author acknowledges and responds to conflicting evidence and/or viewpoints, and analyze how two or more texts provide conflicting information on the same topic, identifying where the texts disagree on matters of fact or interpretation. Readers should be able to compare and contrast information gained from ~~experiments, simulations, video, or~~ multimedia sources with that gained from reading a text on the same topic. Readers should be able to generate an alternative procedure or experiment based on knowledge acquired from information gained from reading texts.

When engaged in reading social studies texts such as exposition (including literary nonfiction), argumentation, and documents of historical and literary significance, eighth-grade readers performing at the *NAEP Proficient* level should be able to use textual evidence as support to explain how a text makes connections among and distinctions between individuals, ideas, and/or events (e.g., through comparisons, analogies, or categories). Readers should be able to analyze the relationship between a primary and secondary source on the same topic and analyze how two or more texts provide conflicting information on the same topic, identifying where the texts disagree on matters of fact or interpretation. They should be able to analyze the structure an author uses to organize a text ~~and develop a detailed objective summary of a text~~. Readers should be able to ~~produce~~ present an argument~~ative text~~ that proposes a form of social action based on knowledge acquired and opinions formed from the reading texts.

NAEP Advanced

Eighth-grade students performing at the *NAEP Advanced* level should be able to make complex inferences and to support their interpretations, conclusions, and their judgments

based upon evidence within and across static, dynamic, and multimodal texts. Students should be able to evaluate the relevance and strength of evidence to support an author's claims.

When engaged in reading literature texts such as fiction, drama, film, poetry, and literary nonfiction, eighth-grade readers performing at the *NAEP Advanced* level should be able to use textual evidence as support to analyze how multiple literary elements in a text relate to each other and to analyze points of view of and between character(s) and the reader/audience. ~~Readers should be able to analyze how a modern text draws on themes, patterns of events, or character types from myths or traditional stories, and then evaluate how these elements resonate with society and their personal lives. Readers should be able to produce a literary text that adapts elements of a myth into a contemporary retelling based upon the reader's personal experience~~They should be able to determine how the text structure contributes to the development of theme, setting, or plot. Reachers should be able to ~~rewrite a section of a story from another character's perspective~~describe how a story might change if written from the perspective of another character.

When engaged in reading science texts such as exposition (including literary nonfiction), argumentation, and procedural texts~~ (including experiments)~~, eighth-grade readers performing at the *NAEP Advanced* level should be able to analyze the development of the central idea over the course of the text. They should be able to delineate and evaluate the argument, claims, and reasoning in a text, including whether the evidence is relevant and sufficient to support the claims. Readers should be able to ~~produce a new argumentative or informative text~~construct an argument or explanation that synthesizes information from a range of sources to demonstrate a coherent understanding of a process, phenomenon, or concept.

When engaged in reading social studies texts such as exposition (including literary nonfiction), argumentation, and documents of historical and literary significance, eighth-grade readers performing at the *NAEP Advanced* level should be able to analyze the development of the central idea over the course of the text and analyze how the author acknowledges and responds to conflicting evidence and/or viewpoints. Readers should be able to delineate and evaluate the argument, claims, and reasoning in a text, including whether the evidence is relevant and sufficient to support the claims. They should be able to ~~produce an informative text that~~ trace~~s~~ and connect~~s~~ various factors (e.g., economic and societal) by incorporating acquired knowledge through reading multiple sources and conducting brief research.

NAEP Reading Achievement Levels: Grade 12

NAEP Basic

Twelfth-grade students performing at the *NAEP Basic* level should be able to find information in static, dynamic, and multimodal texts, make inferences and interpretations within and between texts, make predictions based upon content in the text, ~~create objective~~determine the accuracy of summaries, analyze word choice, and show understanding of vocabulary in the disciplinary contexts.

When engaged in reading literature texts such as fiction, drama, film, poetry, and literary nonfiction, twelfth-grade readers performing at the *NAEP Basic* level should be able to use textual evidence as support to analyze the development of the theme or central idea over the course of a text and to analyze points of view of and between character(s) and the reader/audience. They should be able to compare literary attributes of two or more texts and make judgments about how each author presents events. Readers show understanding of vocabulary and figurative language. They should be able to ~~develop an objective~~determine the accuracy of a summary of a text and ~~produce an informational text that applies~~apply a common theme or central idea culled from multiple texts to ~~a current societal issue~~common human experiences~~ew context or situation~~.

When engaged in reading science texts such as exposition (including literary nonfiction), argumentation, and procedural texts (including experiments), twelfth-grade readers performing at the *NAEP Basic* level should be able to use textual evidence as support to analyze the specific results of a multistep procedure based on explanations in the text, explain how specific individuals, ideas, and/or events interact and develop over the course of a text, and analyze how ~~the~~ a text structures information ~~or ideas into categories or hierarchies~~to serve an author's purpose and help readers organize their thinking. Readers should be able to compare and contrast findings presented in a text to those from other sources and show understanding of general academic and domain-specific vocabulary, key terms, and symbols. Readers should be able to ~~generate an alternative procedure or experiment based on knowledge acquired from information gained from reading texts~~apply findings described in a text to a new context or situation.

When engaged in reading social studies texts such as exposition (including literary nonfiction), argumentation, and documents of historical and literary significance, twelfth-grade readers performing at the *NAEP Basic* level should be able to explain how specific individuals, ideas, and/or events interact and develop over the course of a text, determine and interpret an author's point of view or purpose, and distinguish between fact, opinion, and reasoned judgment in a text. Readers should be able to show understanding of general academic and domain-specific vocabulary and of figurative language ~~and be able to develop an objective summary of a text by paraphrasing its complex concepts and information~~. They should be able to ~~integrate~~ use information from multiple sources to ~~produce a new text of informational or argumentative purpose~~construct an explanation or argument.

NAEP Proficient

Twelfth-grade students performing at the *NAEP Proficient* level should be able to make more complex inferences and interpretations, form explanations and generalizations, generate alternatives, and apply new ideas acquired through reading to a new problem or context when reading static, dynamic, and multimodal texts. Students should be able to use text-based evidence to support arguments and conclusions.

When engaged in reading literature texts such as fiction, drama, film, poetry, and literary nonfiction, twelfth-grade readers performing at the *NAEP Proficient* level should be able to analyze how two or more themes or central ideas interact and build on one another to produce a complex account over the course of the text. Readers should be able to analyze how text structure contributes to meaning and style. They should be able to analyze how word choice impacts a

text's meaning and tone. Readers should be able to ~~develop a detailed objective summary of a text and produce a new text of literary purpose based on an archetypal conflict discovered in the reading texts~~present an opinion regarding a universal problem that is elicited from an analysis of the text.

When engaged in reading science texts such as exposition (including literary nonfiction), argumentation, and procedural texts ~~(including experiments)~~, twelfth-grade readers performing at the *NAEP Proficient* level should be able to use textual evidence as support to analyze an author's point of view or purpose, including in providing an explanation or~~,~~ describing a procedure, ~~or discussing an experiment,~~ identifying important issues that remain unresolved. Readers should be able to integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in diverse media or formats (visually or in words) in order to address a question or solve a problem. Readers should be able to ~~produce a new argumentative or informative text~~construct an argument or an explanation that synthesizes information from a range of sources to demonstrate a coherent understanding of a process, phenomenon, or concept.

When engaged in reading social studies texts such as exposition (including literary nonfiction), argumentation, and documents of historical and literary significance, twelfth-grade readers performing at the *NAEP Proficient* level should be able to use textual evidence as support to analyze how the central ideas interact and build on one another to produce a complex account. They should be able to analyze the themes, purposes, and rhetorical features of ~~foundational U.S.~~historical documents and evaluate the effectiveness of the structure in the text's exposition or argument. ~~They should be able to develop a detailed objective summary of a text.~~ Readers should be able to evaluate multiple sources of information presented in different media or formats (visually or in words) in order to ~~produce an argumentative text~~construct an argument with evidence to ~~structure and~~ support a judgment.

NAEP Advanced

Twelfth-grade students performing at the *NAEP Advanced* level should be able to make complex inferences and to support their interpretations, conclusions, and their judgments based upon evidence within and across static, dynamic, and multimodal texts. Students should be able to use an understanding of legal and ethical principles to develop a text or presentation on a matter of social debate.

When engaged in reading literature texts such as fiction, drama, film, poetry, and literary nonfiction, twelfth-grade readers performing at the *NAEP Advanced* level should be able to use textual evidence as support to analyze and evaluate multiple interpretations of text (e.g., multimedia versions of a text) compared to the source text. Readers should be able to use ~~acquired knowledge to produce an informational text analyzing how elements of an era's poetry (e.g., Romanticism's celebration of nature; rejection of industrialization) are evidenced in the work of one or more poets~~or apply information gained from a literary text or a poem to analyze a new text.

When engaged in reading science texts such as exposition (including literary nonfiction), argumentation, and procedural texts (including experiments), twelfth-grade readers performing at the *NAEP Advanced* level should be able to delineate and evaluate the argument, claims, and

reasoning in a text, and ~~evaluate~~ analyze the hypotheses, data, analysis, and conclusions in a text. They should be able to explain how style and content contribute to the power, persuasiveness, or beauty of the text. Readers should be able to ~~produce a new argumentative or informative text~~construct an argument, ~~or~~ explanation, or recommendation that ~~utilizes an understanding of legal and ethical principles to address a scientific matter of debate (e.g., uses of genetic databases)~~requires the application of scientific content from a text.

When engaged in reading social studies texts such as exposition (including literary nonfiction), argumentation, and documents of historical and literary significance, twelfth-grade readers performing at the *NAEP Advanced* level should be able to delineate and evaluate argument, claims, and reasoning in a text. They should be able to explain how style and content contribute to the power, persuasiveness, or beauty of the text. Readers should be able to ~~produce a new argumentative or informative text~~construct an argument, ~~or~~ explanation, or recommendation that utilizes an understanding of legal and ethical principles to address a societal matter of debate (e.g., indigenous peoples' land rights).