

Common Core High School Reading/LA Performance Tasks

Grades 9-10 Sample Performance Tasks for Stories, Drama, and Poetry

- Students *analyze how* the *character* of the text (i.e. Odysseus from Homer’s *Odyssey*—a “man of twists and turns”) reflects *conflicting motivations* through his *interactions with other characters* in the text. They articulate how conflicting aspects (i.e. loyalties during his long and complicated journey home from the Trojan War) both *advance the plot* of the text and *develop themes*. [RL.9–10.3]

- Students *analyze* how the author of a novel (i.e. Michael Shaara in his Civil War novel *The Killer Angel*) creates a sense of *tension* and even *surprise* regarding the outcome of events through *pacing, ordering of events, and the overarching structure* of the novel. [RL.9–10.5]

- Students *analyze in detail the theme* of relationships between characters (i.e. mothers and daughters) and how that *theme develops over the course of the text* (i.e. Amy Tan’s *The Joy Luck Club*). Students search the text for *specific details* that show how the *theme emerges* and *how it is shaped and refined* over the course of the novel. [RL.9–10.2]

- Students *analyze how* the filmmaker (i.e. Japanese filmmaker Akira Kurosawa in his film *Throne of Blood*) *draws on and transforms the original text* (i.e. Shakespeare’s play *Macbeth*) in order to develop a similar plot set in a different setting. [RL.9–10.9]

- Students *analyze how* artistic *representations* of a character (i.e. Ramses II, the pharaoh who reigned during the time of Moses) vary, basing their analysis on *what is emphasized or absent in different* treatments of the character in works of art (e.g., images in the British Museum) and in other genres (i.e. Percy Bysshe Shelley’s poem “Ozymandias.”) [RL.9–10.7]

Grades 11-CCR Sample Performance Tasks for Stories, Drama, and Poetry

- Students *analyze* the first impressions given of specific characters (i.e. Mr. and Mrs. Bennet in the opening chapter of *Pride and Prejudice*) based on *the setting* and how the *characters are introduced*. By comparing these first impressions with their later understanding based on how *the action is ordered* and the *characters develop* over the course of the novel, students understand *the impact of the author's choices in relating elements of a story*. [RL.11–12.3]
- Students compare and contrast how the protagonists of the text (i.e. Herman Melville's *Billy Budd* and Nathaniel Hawthorne's *Scarlet Letter*) maintain their integrity when confronting authority, and they relate their *analysis* of that *theme* to other portrayals in *nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century foundational works of American literature* they have read. [RL.11–12.9]
- Students *analyze* how an author's (i.e. Anton Chekhov's) choice of *structuring his story* (i.e. "Home" by *beginning* in "midstream") *shapes the meaning of the text* and *contributes to its overall* narrative arc. [RL.11–12.5]
- Students *provide an objective summary* of a text selection (i.e. F. Scott's Fitzgerald's *Great Gatsby*) wherein they analyze how *over the course of the text* different characters try to escape the worlds they come from, including whose help they get and whether anybody succeeds in escaping. [RL.11–12.2]
- Students *analyze text* (i.e. Miguel de Cervantes's *Don Quixote* and Jean-Baptiste Poquelin Moliere's *Tartuffe*) for how *what is directly stated in a text differs from what is really meant*, comparing and contrasting the *point of view* adopted by the protagonist in each work. [RL.11–12.6]
- Students compare two or more *recorded or live productions* of a literary work (i.e. Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman*) to the written text, *evaluating how each version interprets the source text* and debating which aspects of the enacted *interpretations* of the play best capture a particular character, scene, or theme. [RL.11–12.7]

□ Students compare and contrast the *figurative and connotative meanings* as well as *specific word choices* in text (i.e. John Donne’s “Valediction Forbidding Mourning” and Emily Dickinson’s “Because I Would Not Stop for Death”) in order to *determine how* the metaphors of different objects (i.e. the carriage and the compass) *shape the meaning and tone* of each poem. Students *analyze* the ways both poets use *language that is particularly fresh, engaging, or beautiful* to convey the *multiple meanings* regarding the theme (i.e. death) contained in each poem. [RL.11–12.4]

□ Students *cite strong and thorough textual evidence* from text (i.e. John Keats’s “Ode on a Grecian Urn”) to *support* their *analysis* of what the poem says explicitly (i.e. about the urn) as well as what can be *inferred* (i.e. about the urn) from *evidence* in the poem. Based on their close reading, students *draw inferences from the text* regarding what meanings are conveyed (i.e. about the figures decorating the urn) as well as noting *where the poem leaves matters* (i.e. about the urn and its decoration) *uncertain*. [RL.11–12.1]

Grades 9-10 Sample Performance Tasks for Informational Texts: English Language Arts

- Students compare one piece of informational text (i.e. George Washington’s Farewell Address) to other related information texts (i.e. foreign policy statements, such as the Monroe Doctrine), and *analyze* how both texts *address similar themes and concepts (i.e. such as regarding “entangling alliances.”)* [RI.9–10.9]

- Students *analyze how an author of informational text (i.e. Abraham Lincoln in his “Second Inaugural Address”) unfolds* his examination of *ideas* (i.e. what led to the Civil War), paying particular attention to *the order in which the points are made, how the author introduces and develops* his points, *and the connections that are drawn between them.* [RI.9–10.3]

- Students *evaluate the argument and specific claims* about a concept (i.e. such as the “spirit of liberty” in Learned Hand’s “I Am an American Day Address,”) *assessing the relevance and sufficiency of the evidence and the validity of his reasoning.* [RI.9–10.8]

- Students *determine the purpose and point of view* in a piece of informational text (i.e. Martin Luther King, Jr.’s, “I Have a Dream” speech) and *analyze* how the writer *uses rhetoric to advance* his position. [RI.9–10.6]

Grades 11-CCR Sample Performance Tasks for Informational Texts: English Language Arts

- Students *delineate* and *evaluate* an *argument* (i.e. such as that Thomas Paine makes in *Common Sense*). They *assess the reasoning* present in his analysis, including the *premises and purposes* of his essay. [RI.11–12.8]

- Students *analyze informational text* (i.e. Thomas Jefferson’s Declaration of Independence), identifying its *purpose* and evaluating *rhetorical features* (i.e. such as the listing of grievances). Students compare and contrast the *themes* and argument found there to those of other *U.S. documents of historical and literary significance* (i.e. such as the Olive Branch Petition). [RI.11–12.9]

- Students *provide an objective summary* of informational text (i.e. Henry David Thoreau’s *Walden*) wherein they *analyze how* the writer articulates *the central ideas* (i.e. of living simply and being self-reliant) and how those ideas *interact and build on one another* (e.g., “According to Thoreau, how specifically does moving toward complexity in one’s life undermine self-reliance?”) [RI.11–12.2]

- Students *analyze how a key term* is interpreted, *used, and refined over the course of an essay* (i.e. *the term success* in G. K. Chesterton’s essay “The Fallacy of Success.”) [RI.11–12.4]

- Students determine a writer’s *purpose and point of view* (i.e. *Richard Hofstadter’s* in his work “*Abraham Lincoln and the Self-Made Myth,*”) *analyzing* how both the writer’s *style and content contribute* to the *eloquent and powerful* contrast he draws between elements or ideas (i.e. the younger, ambitious Lincoln and the sober, more reflective man of the presidential years). [RI.11–12.6]

Grades 9-10 Sample Performance Tasks for Informational Texts: History/Social Studies & Science, Mathematics, and Technical Subjects

- Students *compare the* similarities and differences in *point of view* in works (i.e. by Dee Brown and Evan Connell regarding the Battle of Little Bighorn), analyzing *how* the authors *treat the* same event and *which details they include and emphasize in their respective accounts*. [RH.9–10.6]
- Students analyze the role of humans (i.e. African American soldiers in the Civil War) by *comparing and contrasting primary source* materials against *secondary* syntheses (i.e. such as Jim Haskins’s *Black, Blue and Gray: African Americans in the Civil War*). [RH.9–10.9]
- Students *determine the meaning of words* such as *quadrant, astrolabe, equator, and horizon line* in text (i.e. Joan Dash’s *The Longitude Prize*) as well as technical *phrases* (i.e. such as *dead reckoning* and *sailing the parallel*) that reflect *social aspects of history*. [RH.9–10.4]
- Students *cite specific textual evidence* from technical text (i.e. Annie J. Cannon’s “Classifying the Stars”) *to support* their *analysis of* the scientific importance of the text (i.e. discovery that light is composed of many colors). Students *include* in their *analysis precise details* from the text (such as Cannon’s repeated use of the image of the rainbow) to buttress their explanation. [RST.9–10.1].
- Students *determine how the author* (i.e. Jearl Walker) clarifies the technical concepts (i.e. *phenomenon* of acceleration in his essay “Amusement Park Physics,”) *accurately summarizing* the author’s *conclusions* regarding the topic (i.e. physics of roller coasters) *and tracing* how *supporting details* regarding the technical concepts (i.e. *processes* of rotational dynamics and energy conversion) are incorporated in the explanation. [RST.9–10.2]
- Students read about a proposal in informational text (i.e. Phillip Hoose’s *Race to Save Lord God Bird* about the attempts scientists and bird-lovers made to save the ivory-billed woodpecker from extinction) and *assess the extent to which the reasoning and evidence* the writer presents *supports* his *scientific* analysis of the subject (i.e. why protecting this particular species was so challenging). [RST.9–10.8]

Grades 11-CCR Sample Performance Tasks for Informational Texts: History/Social Studies & Science, Mathematics, and Technical Subjects

□ Students *determine the central ideas* found in a piece of informational text (i.e. the Declaration of Sentiments by the Seneca Falls Conference), noting the parallels between it and other similar documents (i.e. the Declaration of Independence) and *providing a summary that makes clear the relationships among the key details and ideas* of each text and between the texts. [RH.11–12.2]

□ Students *evaluate the premises* of an argument (i.e. James M. McPherson’s argument regarding why Northern soldiers fought in the Civil War) by *corroborating the evidence* provided from the text to other primary and secondary sources and challenging claims where appropriate (i.e. the letters and diaries of these soldiers with *other* primary and secondary sources and *challenging* McPherson’s *claims* where appropriate). [RH.11–12.8]

□ Students *integrate the information* provided by informational text (i.e. such as by Mary C. Daly, vice president at the Federal Reserve Bank of San Francisco), with the data presented *visually*. In their analysis of these *sources of information presented in diverse formats*, students frame and *address a question or solve a problem* raised by their *evaluation* of the evidence. [RH.11–12.7]

□ Students *analyze the hierarchical* relationships between different aspects of informational text (i.e. such as different aspects of phrase searches and searches that use basic Boolean operators in Tara Calishain and Rael Dornfest’s *Google Hacks: Tips & Tools for Smarter Searching, 2nd Edition*). [RST.11–12.5]

□ Students *analyze a scientific concept* (i.e. the concept of mass) based on their close reading of informational text (i.e. Gordon Kane’s “The Mysteries of Mass”) and *cite specific textual evidence* from the *text* to answer a question (i.e. why elementary particles have mass at all). Students explain *important distinctions the author makes* regarding different scientific concepts (i.e. the Higgs field and the Higgs boson and their relationship to the concept of mass). [RST.11–12.1]

□ Students *determine the meaning of key terms (i.e such as hydraulic, trajectory, and torque) as well as other domain-specific words and phrases (i.e. such as actuators, antilock brakes, and traction control) used in informational text (i.e. Mark Fischetti’s “Working Knowledge: Electronic Stability Control.”) [RST.11–12.4]*