Standardized Assessment Tasks for STAAR Alternate

Grade 8 Reading
The following definitions clarify terms used in the grade 8 reading assessment tasks to ensure that the content of the tasks is understood. When appropriate, examples and nonexamples have been provided for further clarification. These are just examples and do not represent all the appropriate ways to test the skills in the STAAR Alternate assessment tasks.

**Level 3: page 4**

An **unfamiliar word** is a word a student may or may not have been exposed to, but has not received instruction and does not have an understanding for the meaning of the word.

A familiar word is a word the student knows and whose meaning is immediately understood and is NOT appropriate for the Level 3 task.

The Level 3 task requires the student to predict the meaning of an unfamiliar word using context. **Context** is the words that surround an unfamiliar word and help the reader figure out the meaning. The student must make a **reasonable prediction** based on the surrounding words and/or sentences in order to receive credit.

**Level 2: page 5**

**Homophones** are words that are pronounced the same but have two different meanings and spellings. For this task the students will be presented with sentences that include a pair of **homophones**. Examples of sentences with a pair of **homophones** are:

- **ate, eight**—I was so hungry that I ate eight sandwiches.
- **blew, blue**—The policeman blew his whistle at the driver in the blue car.
- **knight, night**—The knight rode his horse into the forest last night.
- **hair, hare**—The hair on the hare was as white as snow.
- **hoarse, horse**—The girl was hoarse from calling to her horse.
- **made, maid**—The maid came to the house and made the beds.

**Context** is the words that surround an unfamiliar word and help the reader figure out the meaning.

**Level 1: page 5**

A **compound word** is made when two words are joined together to make one word. In this task, the student is presented with two words that each has a concrete representation. Both words should retain their original meaning when they are joined to create the compound word. Examples of **compound words** appropriate for the task are:

- lunchbox
- raincoat
- sandpaper
- birdhouse
- toothbrush
- flowerpot
The following examples are compound words that do NOT retain their meaning when the two words are combined and therefore NOT appropriate for the task:

- cowboy
- butterfly
- ladybug
- hairdresser
STAAR Reporting Category 1 – Understanding and Analysis Across Genres: The student will demonstrate an ability to understand and analyze a variety of written texts across reading genres.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TEKS Knowledge &amp; Skills Statement / STAAR-Tested Student Expectations</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>(8.2) Reading/Vocabulary Development.</strong> Students understand new vocabulary and use it when reading and writing. The student is expected to</td>
<td><strong>Essence Statement A:</strong> Identifies new vocabulary words in text using a variety of strategies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(A) determine the meaning of grade-level academic English words derived from Latin, Greek, or other linguistic roots and affixes; Readiness Standard</td>
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<tr>
<td>(B) use context (within a sentence and in larger sections of text) to determine or clarify the meaning of unfamiliar or ambiguous words or words with novel meanings; Readiness Standard</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(E) use a dictionary, a glossary, or a thesaurus (printed or electronic) to determine the meanings, syllabication, pronunciations, alternate word choices, and parts of speech of words. Readiness Standard</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Level 3**

**Prerequisite skill:** use the context of the sentence (e.g., in-sentence example or definition) to determine the meaning of unfamiliar words or multiple meaning words

A paragraph about a topic of interest to the student will be presented and read. The paragraph will include an unfamiliar vocabulary word that is not defined in the paragraph or represented by pictures. The student will locate the unfamiliar word in the paragraph. The student will predict the meaning of the word based on context. Using a reference material, the student will compare the meaning of the word in the reference material to his or her prediction.

**Predetermined Criteria**
1. The student will locate the unfamiliar word in the paragraph.
2. The student will predict the meaning of the word based on context.
3. The student will compare the meaning of the word in the reference material to his or her prediction.

Reading Grade 8; Reporting Category 1 (8.2); Essence Statement: A
**Level 2**

**Prerequisite skill:** use context to determine the relevant meaning of unfamiliar words or distinguish among multiple meaning words and homographs

The student will be presented three sentences. Each sentence will include a pair of homophones. As the sentences are read, the student will identify the two homophones in each sentence. The student will be presented six cards each representing the meaning of one homophone from the original sentence. Using the context of the three sentences, the student will match the cards to the homophones. The student will be presented and read a fourth sentence with two blanks that can be completed with two of the six homophones from the original sentence. The student will complete this sentence using any two of the six homophones.

**Predetermined Criteria**
1. The student will identify the two homophones in each sentence.
2. The student will match the cards to the homophones.
3. The student will complete this sentence using any two of the six homophones.

**Level 1**

**Prerequisite skill:** recognize that compound words are made up of shorter words

The student will be presented two words that are meaningful for the student and retain their original meanings as a compound word. Each word will be presented and paired with a representation for the word. The student will explore the representation for each word when it is read. The student will participate in combining the words and representations to create a compound word. The student will be presented a new representation for the compound word. The student will participate in pairing the representation for the compound word with the word when it is read.

**Predetermined Criteria**
1. The student will explore the representation for each word when it is read.
2. The student will participate in combining the words and representations to create a compound word.
3. The student will participate in pairing the representation for the compound word with the word when it is read.
The following definitions clarify terms used in the grade 8 reading assessment tasks to ensure that the content of the tasks is understood. When appropriate, examples and nonexamples have been provided for further clarification. These are just examples and do not represent all the appropriate ways to test the skills in the STAAR Alternate assessment tasks.

**Levels 3, 2, and 1: pages 7 and 8**

**Informational text** includes expository, persuasive, and procedural text.

**Levels 3 and 2: pages 7 and 8**
The three purposes an author has for writing an informational text are as follows:
- To inform—for example, to inform the reader about the rainforest
- To persuade—for example, to persuade the reader to visit an aircraft carrier
- To explain how—for example, to explain to the reader how to fold paper to make an origami bird

**Level 3: page 7**

An **expository text** clarifies or explains something.

A **persuasive text** is a type of informational text written with the intent to persuade or convince the reader of something or to rally support for a cause or a belief.

Examples of persuasive text include:
- Speeches
- Editorials in newspapers
- Opinion pieces in magazines
- Essays

**Levels 2 and 1: page 8**

The **topic** is the subject or the single big idea that names what the text is about. The topic reflects the overall idea of the text and informs the reader of what to expect from the text. The topic should be simply stated and generally in one or two words.

Examples of topics include:
- Friendship
- The rainforest
- Birds of prey
- Aircraft carriers
- Origami

**Level 2: page 8**

Examples of how two texts can share a common link:
- Topic—two texts about the same object, idea or person
- Time—two texts written about or from the same time period
- Setting—two texts about the same place
STAAR Reporting Category 1 – Understanding and Analysis Across Genres: The student will demonstrate an ability to understand and analyze a variety of written texts across reading genres.

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<tr>
<td><strong>(8.9) Comprehension of Informational Text/Culture and History.</strong> Students analyze, make inferences and draw conclusions about the author's purpose in cultural, historical, and contemporary contexts and provide evidence from the text to support their understanding. The student is expected to (A) analyze works written on the same topic and compare how the authors achieved similar or different purposes. Supporting Standard</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Essence Statement B:</strong> Identifies authors’ purposes across informational texts.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Level 3**

**Prerequisite skill:** explain the difference between a stated and an implied purpose for an expository text

Two grade-appropriate informational texts will be presented and read. One will be an expository text about a place, and one will be a persuasive text encouraging people to visit the place. The student will compare the details of the two texts. The student will determine each author's purpose for writing the text. The student will analyze the effectiveness of each author’s presentation.

**Predetermined Criteria**  
1. The student will compare the details of the two texts.  
2. The student will determine each author's purpose for writing the text.  
3. The student will analyze the effectiveness of each author’s presentation.

Reading Grade 8; Reporting Category 1 (8.9); Essence Statement: B
**Level 2**

**Prerequisite skill:** identify the topic and locate the author's stated purposes in writing the text

Two grade-appropriate informational texts with a common link will be presented and read. The student will identify the topic of each text. The student will identify each author’s purpose for writing the text. The student will identify a statement that describes the common link between the two texts.

Predetermined Criteria
1. The student will identify the topic of each text.
2. The student will identify each author’s purpose for writing the text.
3. The student will identify a statement that describes the common link between the two texts.

**Level 1**

**Prerequisite skill:** identify the topic of an informational text heard

Two grade-appropriate informational texts on the same topic will be presented along with one representation for the topic of both texts. The student will explore the topic representation. The student will participate in pairing the topic representation to both texts. As the first text is read, the student will experience sensory input related to the text and the topic representation. As the second text is read, the student will experience different sensory input related to the second text and the topic representation.

Predetermined Criteria
1. The student will explore the topic representation.
2. The student will participate in pairing the topic representation to both texts.
3. The student will experience sensory input related to each text.
Definitions/Examples for STAAR Reporting Category 2 (8.6)
Essence Statement C

The following definitions clarify terms used in the grade 8 reading assessment tasks to ensure that the content of the tasks is understood. When appropriate, examples and nonexamples have been provided for further clarification. These are just examples and do not represent all the appropriate ways to test the skills in the STAAR Alternate assessment tasks.

Levels 3, 2, and 1: pages 10 and 11

**Fictional text** is literary work invented by the imagination such as novels, short stories, dramas, and poems. Fictional text may be about real people or animals, but the text is not written for the purpose of presenting factual information.

**Level 3: page 10**

**Conflict** is the opposition of characters that creates the action or the events that keeps the plot moving forward in the story. The conflict may be between two people or it may be between a person and some other force.

- **Internal Conflict** is a struggle that occurs within the main character. This struggle happens within the character's own mind. For example, in *The Red Badge of Courage* by Stephen Crane, Henry continually questions his own self-worth as he experiences fear, courage, bravery and shame on the battlefield.

- **External Conflict** is a struggle that the main character has with another character, with society, or with a natural force. For example, the conflict between a controlling father and a mischievous son, the tension that occurs between a girl and a boy, or the conflict that occurs when a character encounters a physical challenge such as a family lost in a snowstorm.

Many texts include both internal conflict and external conflict. For example, in *The Watsons Go To Birmingham* by Christopher Paul Curtis, external conflict is created by the impact Byron’s rebellious behavior has on his family. In the same book, the main character Kenny experiences internal conflict as he struggles to reconcile his feelings about friendship and later in dealing with the aftermath of his own near drowning.

Examples of grade eight appropriate fictional texts:

- *My Life in Pink and Green* by Lisa Greenwald
- *Zoobreak* by Gordon Korman
- *Keeper* by Mal Peet
- *Emma-Jean Lazurus Fell Out of a Tree* by Lauren Tarshis

Cited texts are provided only as examples and do not imply TEA endorsement.
STAAR Reporting Category 2 – Understanding and Analysis of Literary Texts:
The student will demonstrate an ability to understand and analyze literary texts.

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<tr>
<td>(8.6) Reading/Comprehension of Literary Text/Fiction. Students understand, make inferences and draw conclusions about the structure and elements of fiction and provide evidence from text to support their understanding. The student is expected to</td>
<td>Essence Statement C: Recognizes how elements of fiction contribute to plot development.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(A) analyze linear plot developments (e.g., conflict, rising action, falling action, resolution, subplots) to determine whether and how conflicts are resolved; Readiness Standard</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>(B) analyze how the central characters' qualities influence the theme of a fictional work and resolution of the central conflict; Readiness Standard</td>
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<tr>
<td>(C) analyze different forms of point of view, including limited versus omniscient, subjective versus objective. Supporting Standard</td>
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</table>

**Level 3**

**Prerequisite skill:** explain the roles and functions of characters in various plots, including their relationships and conflicts

The student will be presented and read a fictional text. The student will determine the conflict between characters in the text. The student will classify each character as either causing or reacting to the conflict. The student will determine how the conflict was resolved.

Predetermined Criteria

1. The student will determine the conflict between characters in the text.
2. The student will classify each character as either causing or reacting to the conflict.
3. The student will determine how the conflict was resolved.

Reading Grade 8; Reporting Category 2 (8.6); Essence Statement: C
**Level 2**

**Prerequisite skill:** describe the interaction of characters including their relationships and the changes they undergo

The student will be presented a fictional text in which the main character’s perspective changes at some point in the text due to an event. The student will identify the main character’s perspective at the beginning of the text. The student will identify the main character’s perspective at the end of the text. The student will identify an event that caused the change in the character’s perspective.

**Predetermined Criteria**

1. The student will identify the main character’s perspective at the beginning of the text.
2. The student will identify the main character’s perspective at the end of the text.
3. The student will identify an event that caused the change in the character’s perspective.

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**Level 1**

**Prerequisite skill:** describe the plot (problem and solution) and retell a story’s beginning, middle, and end with attention to the sequence of events

The student will be presented a brief fictional text with three events to be experienced by the student. A prop to be used for sensory experiences will be attached to each event in the text. The text will be read and stopped after each event. The student will participate in using the props to experience the events. After the entire text has been read, the student will participate in arranging the removed props in the order they occurred in the text. The student will experience each sensory experience again as the story is retold.

**Predetermined Criteria**

1. The student will participate in using the props to experience the events.
2. The student will participate in arranging the removed props in the order they occurred in the text.
3. The student will experience each sensory experience again as the story is retold.

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Reading Grade 8; Reporting Category 2 (8.6); Essence Statement: C
Definitions/Examples for STAAR Reporting Category 3 (8.11)
Essence Statement D

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Levels 3 and 2: pages 15 and 16

A **persuasive text** is a type of informational text written with the intent to convince the reader of something or to rally support for a cause or a belief.

The author’s position in a persuasive text is the author’s opinion he or she holds relative to the issue.

Level 3: page 15

**Parallelism** is the similarity in topics and ideas across texts. The Level 3 task requires the use of two persuasive texts. The texts should be on the same issue, but represent opposing viewpoints. Although the authors of the persuasive texts have different opinions about the issue, the texts must include some parallel (similar) details.
The teacher will present two texts to the student using a common object in different ways as shown in the two texts below. The teacher can pair real-life items with the text if photos are not appropriate for a particular student. The bottom section of each text can be removed for the student to give to another person in persuading that person to engage in the activities. The bottom sections could also be placed on a voice-output device with recorded speech persuading another person to engage in the activities.
Examples of other objects/activities texts:
- Seeds – plant them/eat them
- Water – drink it/clean with it/freeze it to make ice
- Basket – carry items in it/play a game with it by throwing a beanbag into it
- Ribbon – make a bow for a gift/wave it or dance with it to music
- Glass – drink from it/use it as a vase to put flowers in
- Hat – wear it/pass it around to make selections or donations
- Paper – write on it/fold it/recycle it
- Soda can – drink from it/crush it for recycling
- Sack – fill it with items/make a craft out of it
### STAAR Reporting Category 3 – Understanding and Analysis of Informational Texts: The student will demonstrate an ability to understand and analyze informational texts.

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>(8.11)</strong> Reading/Comprehension of Informational Text/Persuasive Text. Students analyze, make inferences and draw conclusions about persuasive text and provide evidence from text to support their analysis. The student is expected to**</td>
<td><strong>Essence Statement D: Recognizes the arguments presented in persuasive texts.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(B) analyze the use of such rhetorical and logical fallacies as loaded terms, caricatures, leading questions, false assumptions, and incorrect premises in persuasive texts. Supporting Standard</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

### Level 3

**Prerequisite skill:** identify the author's viewpoint or position and explain the basic relationships among ideas (e.g., parallelism, comparison, causality) in the argument

The student will be presented two persuasive texts on related issues in which the texts share some common details but have a different position. The student will determine the parallel details between the two texts. The student will determine the author’s position on the issues presented in each text. The student will locate the text evidence from each text that contributed to the different positions.

**Predetermined Criteria**
1. The student will determine the parallel details between the two texts.
2. The student will determine the author’s position on the issues presented in each text.
3. The student will locate the text evidence from each text that contributed to the different positions.

Reading Grade 8; Reporting Category 3 (8.11); Essence Statement: D
**Level 2**

**Prerequisite skill:** express an opinion supported by accurate information, employing eye contact, speaking rate, volume, and enunciation, and the conventions of language to communicate ideas effectively.

The student will be presented and read two persuasive texts having a common position and some shared details. The student will identify the topic of both texts. The student will be presented statements about the texts; some details found in both texts and some which are unique to each text. The student will identify the details shared by both texts. Using the shared details, the student will identify a statement about the common position of the two texts.

Predetermined Criteria
1. The student will identify the topic of both texts.
2. The student will identify the statements shared by both texts.
3. The student will identify a statement about the common position of the two texts.

**Level 1**

**Prerequisite skill:** share information and ideas by speaking audibly and clearly using the conventions of language.

The student will be presented two texts each about a different activity which uses the same object for both activities but in different ways. Each text will describe the activity focusing on the different use for the common object. The student will explore the object described in both texts. The student will participate in using the object as described in each text as the text is read. The student will participate in persuading another person to engage in the activities presented in each text.

Predetermined Criteria
1. The student will explore the object described in both texts.
2. The student will participate in using the object as described in each text as the text is read.
3. The student will participate in persuading another person to engage in the activities presented in each text.

Reading Grade 8; Reporting Category 3 (8.11); Essence Statement: D