

2019 STAAR Grade 4 Writing Rationales

Item#	Rationale	
1	Option C is correct	Sentences 7 and 8 are short independent clauses that can stand alone as complete sentences. However, combining them eliminates the choppiness, and use of the coordinating conjunction "so" emphasizes the cause-and-effect relationship.
	Option A is incorrect	Combining the sentences with the coordinating conjunction "because" creates an inaccurate cause-and-effect relationship between Mo talking to his grandmother and not seeing any ties he liked.
	Option B is incorrect	Connecting the sentence with the phrase "even though" incorrectly suggests that Mo talked to his grandmother before discovering that he did not like any of the ties.
	Option D is incorrect	Connecting the two sentences with "when" suggests the inaccurate sequence of events that Mo was looking at ties and talking to his grandmother at the same time.

2019 STAAR Grade 4 Writing Rationales

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2	Option J is correct	A transition is a word, phrase, or sentence that connects topics or ideas. By adding the word "Soon" to the beginning of the sentence, the writer informs readers that little time had passed between when Mo began making ties and when he established Mo's Bows.
	Option F is incorrect	"However" is not a correct transition because there is no contradictory information presented in sentences 14 and 15.
	Option G is incorrect	The use of "Therefore" inaccurately suggests that Mo was selling his ties because he previously made ties and gave some away as gifts.
	Option H is incorrect	The transition "After all" is normally used to remind readers of a fact or idea already presented, but the need in this case is to convey how time progressed.

2019 STAAR Grade 4 Writing Rationales

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3	Option A is correct	A topic sentence is a sentence that captures the meaning of an entire paragraph. Adding a topic sentence to establish the popularity of Mo’s Bows is an effective way to connect the ideas presented in the paragraph.
	Option B is incorrect	The idea that Mo needed help with his business is introduced in the sixth paragraph, so including it as a topic sentence for the fourth paragraph creates confusion with the sequence of events.
	Option C is incorrect	The focus of the fourth paragraph is the popularity of Mo’s ties, not his own excitement about his business.
	Option D is incorrect	In the fourth paragraph, readers learn how sales of Mo’s Bows increase greatly. The idea that he “sold some bows to a few people” is vague and inaccurate and fails to contribute any meaningful information.

2019 STAAR Grade 4 Writing Rationales

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4	Option F is correct	Replacing "them" with "young people" in the sentence clarifies that Mo's mother encourages young people in general to do what they love, not just her son.
	Option G is incorrect	Changing "what" to "things" does not clear up the confusion regarding to whom "they" refers.
	Option H is incorrect	Changing the plural pronoun "they" to the singular pronoun "you" creates an incorrect reference to the plural pronoun "them."
	Option J is incorrect	Leaving the sentence unchanged does not clarify to whom Mo's mother is referring with use of the pronoun "them."

2019 STAAR Grade 4 Writing Rationales

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5	Option D is correct	Replacing sentence 2 with a more descriptive sentence improves the focus of the introduction by establishing that the writer will focus on his own experience at LEGO KidsFest.
	Option A is incorrect	This statement is related to ideas in the paper, but there is no improvement in focus because the topic of the writer’s experience is not mentioned.
	Option B is incorrect	Although this opinion may be supported by some details in the paper, there is little improvement in focus.
	Option C is incorrect	The fact that the writer “had never heard of LEGO KidsFest” is an extraneous detail that does little to improve the focus of the paper.

2019 STAAR Grade 4 Writing Rationales

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6	Option G is correct	The information in sentence 5 is pertinent to the history of LEGO bricks, but not to the writer’s attending LEGO KidsFest, which is the focus in the rest of the paragraph. The sentence is extraneous and should be removed.
	Option F is incorrect	Sentence 4 is not extraneous, as it is used to support the central idea by providing details about the activities visitors attending LEGO KidsFest can do.
	Option H is incorrect	Sentence 6 is important to the paper, as it is used to establish context for the writer’s firsthand experience at LEGO KidsFest.
	Option J is incorrect	Sentence 7 is important to the paper because it is used as a transition to set up the idea that the event exceeded the writer’s expectations.

2019 STAAR Grade 4 Writing Rationales

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7	Option A is correct	Removing the second reference to “a LEGO brick model” improves the coherence and organization of the sentence by removing the needless repetition.
	Option B is incorrect	It is unclear what “build a LEGO brick model to any state on the map” means. In addition, the sentence is a run-on sentence because two clauses are joined incorrectly.
	Option C is incorrect	The revision results in unnecessary repetition of “able to” and “LEGO model,” and it also introduces a comma-splice error, which occurs when two main clauses are connected only with a comma.
	Option D is incorrect	The revision results in unnecessary repetition of “visitors” and “LEGO brick model,” and it also introduces a comma-splice error.

2019 STAAR Grade 4 Writing Rationales

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8	Option J is correct	A closing sentence is intended to capture the overall meaning of a paper. By adding this sentence, the writer emphasizes his enthusiasm for improving his LEGO-building skills to prepare for the next LEGO KidsFest.
	Option F is incorrect	The LEGO models are described in the fourth paragraph, so mentioning them again at the end of the paper does not effectively tie the ideas together.
	Option G is incorrect	The information in this sentence is extraneous and has no connection to the ideas presented in this paper.
	Option H is incorrect	The sentence is too broad and vague, and it fails to capture anything meaningful about the paper.

2019 STAAR Grade 4 Writing Rationales

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9	Option C is correct	As written, sentence 3 is a run-on because two independent clauses, or clauses that can stand alone, are joined incorrectly. A comma should be added after "windows" to separate the two independent clauses.
	Option A is incorrect	The spelling of the plural form "Leaves" is correct and should not be changed.
	Option B is incorrect	The subject "Leaves" is plural and requires the plural verb "brush." Changing the verb to "brushes" introduces a subject-verb agreement error.
	Option D is incorrect	Changing "through" to "threw" creates a grammatical error. "Threw" is the past tense of the verb "throw" as well as a homonym of the correctly used preposition, "through."

2019 STAAR Grade 4 Writing Rationales

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10	Option G is correct	The misuse of the pronoun "we" incorrectly suggests that the writer participated in creating the tree house hotels. Using "they" in place of "we" is consistent with the third-person point of view in the paper and the phrase "Some people" in sentence 5.
	Option F is incorrect	The word "people" is a plural noun; therefore, it is correct to use the plural form of the verb "like," rather than the singular form "likes."
	Option H is incorrect	Since the writer is referring to tree house hotels that have already been built, it is appropriate to use the past tense "created" rather than the present participle "creating" to indicate present action.
	Option J is incorrect	Leaving sentence 5 unchanged would not correct the misuse of the pronoun "we."

2019 STAAR Grade 4 Writing Rationales

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11	Option B is correct	The writer incorrectly uses the adverb "thickly" in an attempt to describe the noun phrase "wilderness areas." The adjective "thick" is the form of the word that correctly describes "wilderness areas." The adverb "thickly" would be correct if the phrase read "thickly covered wilderness areas."
	Option A is incorrect	A possessive noun shows possession by the addition of an apostrophe. As written, "rain forests" correctly indicates a plural noun rather than a possessive noun. Adding an apostrophe creates a punctuation error.
	Option C is incorrect	A serial comma is a series of commas separating words or things in a series. The serial comma after "areas" correctly separates "wilderness areas" and "trees along an island shore."
	Option D is incorrect	Since the phrase "trees along an island shore" is the last phrase in a series, there is no need to add an additional comma after "shore."

2019 STAAR Grade 4 Writing Rationales

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12	Option G is correct	An infinitive is a verb form that often acts as a noun. In this sentence, the infinitive "to walk" serves as the direct object to explain what a person crossing bridges will need to do. It is not grammatically correct to use the singular verb form "walks" since infinitives are not modified for agreement.
	Option F is incorrect	The verb "will likely need" is in the future tense and, therefore, agrees with the singular subject "a person." It not correct to use the singular verb form or the present tense "needs."
	Option H is incorrect	Changing "use" to "using" creates an incorrect shift in verb tense.
	Option J is incorrect	Leaving sentence 13 unchanged would not correct the grammatical error in the infinitive in this sentence.

2019 STAAR Grade 4 Writing Rationales

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13	Option A is correct	The word "their" is a possessive pronoun used to indicate ownership or possession. Replacing "their" with "there" is correct since "there" should be used to indicate place or position.
	Option B is incorrect	This sentence is an independent clause, which is a clause that can stand alone as a complete sentence. Inserting a comma after "hotel" would incorrectly divide the independent clause.
	Option C is incorrect	The word "shaped" in sentence 18 is appropriate because it is an adjective that describes the current appearance of the hotel.
	Option D is incorrect	The use of the apostrophe in "bird's" indicates possession of the nest and does not refer to multiple birds.

2019 STAAR Grade 4 Writing Rationales

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14	Option G is correct	A run-on sentence is a sentence in which two or more main clauses are joined incorrectly. As written, sentence 22 combines two main clauses without any punctuation. Separating the clauses with a period creates two distinct sentences and corrects the run-on sentence.
	Option F is incorrect	This change separates essential information with incorrect punctuation, which incorrectly alters the meaning in the original clauses.
	Option H is incorrect	The original run-on is not corrected, and the comma is misplaced after "located." This change also introduces a cause-and-effect relationship that incorrectly alters the meaning in the original clauses.
	Option J is incorrect	Leaving sentence 22 unchanged would not correct the run-on sentence.

2019 STAAR Grade 4 Writing Rationales

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15	Option B is correct	"Greatest" is a superlative, or a form of an adjective used to indicate having more of a quality than all others. In sentence 26, "great" is correct because the writer is praising the Frio River Treetop Hotel, but not comparing it to other tree house hotels. Also, the use of the article "a" suggests that the Frio River Treetop Hotel is one "great" spot among other spots, rather than the single "greatest" spot.
	Option A is incorrect	Because the subject "this" is singular, the word "make" is appropriate. Changing "make" to "makes" introduces a subject-verb agreement error.
	Option C is incorrect	In this sentence, "for someone who is looking for a more active setting" is a dependent clause. An independent clause is a clause that can stand alone as a complete sentence, whereas a dependent clause cannot stand alone apart from an independent clause. A comma should not be used to separate a dependent clause when it follows the independent clause.
	Option D is incorrect	Leaving sentence 26 unchanged would not correct the misuse of the superlative form of "great."

2019 STAAR Grade 4 Writing Rationales

Item#	Rationale	
16	Option H is correct	Changing "traditionul" to "traditional" corrects a spelling error.
	Option F is incorrect	Changing "prefer" to "prefers" creates a subject-verb agreement error because a singular verb form is incorrect given the verb tense that is used.
	Option G is incorrect	An infinitive is a verb form that often acts as a noun; "to climb" is an infinitive because it serves as a direct object of the verb "prefer." As an infinitive, it is incorrect to change "climb" to "climbing."
	Option J is incorrect	Leaving sentence 28 unchanged would fail to correct the spelling error in the sentence.

2019 STAAR Grade 4 Writing Rationales

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17	Option D is correct	This sentence is written correctly.
	Option A is incorrect	Changing "provide" to the present progressive form "providing" creates an inconsistent verb tense in the paragraph and is grammatically incorrect.
	Option B is incorrect	The article "a" is used before nouns that begin with a consonant sound. The article "a" is used correctly before the noun phrase "great way."
	Option C is incorrect	Changing the spelling of "enjoy" to "injoy" would introduce a spelling error.

2019 STAAR Grade 4 Writing Rationales

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18	Option H is correct	The reflexive pronoun "selves" is the correct plural form. Therefore, the correct spelling "themselves" should replace the incorrect spelling "themselves."
	Option F is incorrect	The verb "find" in the present tense is consistent with the rest of the paragraph and should not be changed to the past tense.
	Option G is incorrect	An infinitive is a verb phrase that functions as a noun, adjective or adverb. In this sentence, the infinitive phrase "to entertain themselves" correctly describes "ways." It is grammatically incorrect to use "entertaining" because infinitives always use the simple form of the verb.
	Option J is incorrect	Leaving sentence 4 unchanged would not correct the spelling error in the sentence.

2019 STAAR Grade 4 Writing Rationales

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19	Option B is correct	The comma after "mammals" interrupts the sentence for no reason and should be deleted.
	Option A is incorrect	The verb "are" is correctly used in the present tense and should not be changed.
	Option C is incorrect	Changing "that" to "they" creates two independent clauses, or two clauses that can stand alone, without any punctuation. This results in a run-on sentence.
	Option D is incorrect	Leaving sentence 6 unchanged would not correct the error in the sentence.

2019 STAAR Grade 4 Writing Rationales

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20	Option J is correct	A run-on sentence is an error in which two or more main clauses are joined incorrectly. Dividing sentence 10 into two complete sentences eliminates the run-on sentence.
	Option F is incorrect	Inserting a period after "ring" is incorrect because it creates a sentence fragment, which is a group of words that is not a complete sentence. In addition, "happens" is incorrectly changed to "happening."
	Option G is incorrect	Adding "Then" before "it" creates a faulty relationship: that a circular air bubble becomes a perfect sea toy after being called a bubble ring.
	Option H is incorrect	Replacing the word "and" with a comma does not correct the run-on sentence and also incorrectly alters the meaning of the original sentence.

2019 STAAR Grade 4 Writing Rationales

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21	Option A is correct	Proper nouns, which are nouns that refer to a specific person, place, idea, or event, should be capitalized. The word "Scientists" in sentence 11 refers to scientists in general rather than to a specific scientist and should not be capitalized.
	Option B is incorrect	Although a comma and a conjunction should separate independent clauses in a compound sentence, "filmed and photographed" is a compound verb. It is incorrect to place a comma after the "and" to separate the verbs.
	Option C is incorrect	A participle is a verb used to indicate past or present action. The present-participle "playing" describes the behavior of dolphins while they are being filmed and should not be changed.
	Option D is incorrect	Based on the information in the sentence, there are multiple bubble rings, so it is correct to use the plural noun "rings" instead of "ring." The lack of an article ("the" or "a") also indicates the plural.

2019 STAAR Grade 4 Writing Rationales

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22	Option H is correct	Homonyms are words that have the same pronunciation but different meanings and/or spellings. While "braking" and "breaking" have the same pronunciation, they have different meanings. The verb "braking" means "slowing or stopping using a brake." The correct verb to use in sentence 17 is "breaking," which means "causing something to separate into smaller pieces or fall apart."
	Option F is incorrect	An infinitive phrase is a verb phrase that often functions as a noun. In this sentence, the infinitive phrase "to catch a bubble ring" is used as a direct object to explain what the dolphins are trying to do. It is grammatically incorrect to use the past tense "caught" because infinitives always use the simple form of the verb.
	Option G is incorrect	A coordinating conjunction joins words, phrases, clauses, or sentences. The coordinating conjunction "or" correctly joins "to catch" and "move," and a comma would unnecessarily interrupt the phrase.
	Option J is incorrect	Leaving sentence 17 unchanged would not correct the misuse of the word "braking."

2019 STAAR Grade 4 Writing Rationales

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23	Option B is correct	Sentence 20 describes thoughts scientists currently have, not thoughts they had in the past. Changing the verb "were thinking" to the present tense "think" is correct because it is consistent with the verb tense used in the rest of the paragraph.
	Option A is incorrect	Proper nouns refer to a specific person, place, idea, or event and should be capitalized. The word "experts" should not be capitalized because it represents a general category of people rather than a specific person.
	Option C is incorrect	An infinitive phrase is a verb phrase that functions as a noun, adjective, or adverb in a sentence. In sentence 20, the infinitive phrase "to help them hunt for food" correctly describes how dolphins use bubble rings. It is grammatically incorrect to use the singular verb form "helps" because infinitives always use the simple form of the verb.
	Option D is incorrect	The verb "hunt" is used correctly and should not be changed.

2019 STAAR Grade 4 Writing Rationales

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24	Option F is correct	Subjects and verbs must agree with each other in number. In sentence 22, the noun "bubbles" is plural, so the plural form of the verb, which is "cause," should be used in order to agree with the plural noun "bubbles."
	Option G is incorrect	The spelling of "surface" is correct and should not be changed.
	Option H is incorrect	A coordinating conjunction joins words, phrases, clauses, or sentences. The coordinating conjunction "and" correctly joins "to move toward the surface of the water" and "scatter," and a comma would unnecessarily interrupt the phrase.
	Option J is incorrect	The spelling of "scatter" is correct and should not be changed.