



State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR®)
Performance Level Descriptors
Grade 8 Reading Language Arts

Performance Level Descriptors

When reading texts of increasing complexity,* students achieving Masters Grade Level Performance can

- Synthesize information and make insightful connections between ideas in multiple texts
- Analyze authors' choices and purposeful use of language and how they influence and communicate meaning within a variety of texts
- Make complex inferences about texts based on explicit and implicit text evidence
- Write skillfully developed essays that demonstrate grade-level mastery of writer's craft with advanced command of language conventions

When reading texts of increasing complexity,* students achieving Meets Grade Level Performance can

- Determine or clarify the meaning of academic and multiple-meaning words using context, root words, or reference materials
- Explain the author's purpose and message and analyze the use of text structures, various types of language, and print and graphic features to achieve specific purposes
- Demonstrate an understanding of informational and argumentative texts by identifying the thesis or claim and the audience and analyzing how the author uses various types of evidence
- Make connections between multiple texts by identifying meaningful similarities and differences in terms of key ideas, themes, and messages
- Synthesize information in a text to create new understanding
- Make logical inferences and predictions based on explicit and implicit text evidence
- Write well-developed essays that are suited to the writing task, with consistent command of grade-level appropriate conventions
- Demonstrate proficient skills in revising and editing

When reading texts of increasing complexity,* students achieving Approaches Grade Level Performance can

- Determine the meaning of words using context and reference materials
- Explain the elements of literary texts by recognizing themes and plot development and explain the characteristics of informational and argumentative texts such as supporting evidence, print and graphic features, and key ideas
- Recognize how literal and figurative language conveys meaning in texts
- Describe the author’s purpose and recognize text structures and the use of literary devices such as multiple points of view in a text
- Identify connections and make comparisons between texts of similar or different genres
- Make simple inferences and predictions based on explicit and implicit text evidence
- Write basic essays that are generally suited to the writing task, with a partial command of grade-level appropriate conventions
- Demonstrate developing skills in revising and editing

When reading texts of increasing complexity,* students achieving Did Not Meet Grade Level Performance can

- Determine the meaning of words using reference materials or explicit contextual evidence
- Describe fundamental elements of literary texts such as character, setting, and plot, and identify characteristics of informational and argumentative texts such as thesis or claim
- Make simple inferences about texts based on explicit text evidence
- Write limited essays that are minimally developed and only marginally suited to the writing task, with little to no command of grade-level appropriate conventions
- Demonstrate limited skills in revising and editing

*Text complexity increases from grade to grade. Texts can become increasingly complex for a variety of reasons: (1) vocabulary/use of language may be more varied and challenging because it is nonliteral/figurative, abstract, or academic/technical; (2) sentence structure may be more varied, dense, and sophisticated; (3) the author’s use of literary elements/devices, rhetorical strategies, organizational patterns, and text features may be more nuanced or sophisticated; (4) the topic/content may be less familiar or more cognitively demanding; and (5) relationships among ideas may be less explicit and require more interpretation, reasoning, and inferential thinking to understand the subtlety, nuances, and depth of ideas. The rigor of the writing task also increases from grade to grade due to the text complexity of the source text(s) students use in developing the essay and the sophistication of the topic.