

2011 Grade 3 New York English Language Arts Test Specifications

The New York State Education Department redesigned the 2011 Grades 3-8 English Language Arts tests. The intent of the redesign is to assess a wider range of performance indicators for each grade level. To accomplish this, the state changed the format, time, and the administration dates for the tests.

Standards Assessed

The 2011 (and 2012) tests will continue to address the New York State Learning Standards, based on the 2005 ELA Standards. Specifically, the ELA tests will assess standards for listening, reading, and writing. After 2011-12, tests will be based on the Common Core Standards and State Standards (http://www.p12.nysed.gov/ciai/common_core_standards/ccstimeline.html).

On the 3rd grade test, the approximate percentage of questions assessing each of the standards is as follows:

Standard	Grade 3
1. Reading, Writing, Listening, and Speaking for Information and Understanding	33%
2. Reading, Writing, Listening, and Speaking for Literary Response and Expression	47%
3. Reading, Writing, Listening, and Speaking for Critical Analysis and Evaluation	20%

Genres

The third grade ELA, along with other grades, will have literary and informational reading passages.

“Literary passages” may include short stories, folktales, poetry, or other forms of literary writing. “Informational passages” may include articles, excerpts from biographies or autobiographies, essays, or other forms of informational writing.

Genres for the 2011 grades 3-8 tests include:

- Folktales
- Reports
- Letters
- Stories
- Informative pieces
- Poems

Literary pieces
Interviews
How-to pieces
Classical works
Plays

A **minimum of four genres** will be used on each test for interest and literary diversity.

Higher-order thinking skills will be required on some of the questions that accompany the reading passages. These skills include: summarizing, analyzing, inferring, interpreting, predicting, and evaluating information.

Structure of Grade 3 ELA for 2011

In 2011, the ELA Tests in all grades will have more reading passages and more multiple-choice questions in Book 1. In the 3rd grade, there will be 51 questions on the 2011 test. In 2010, there were only 24 questions. This reflects **an increase of 113%** for 2011. According to an email from the office of State Assessment, “in addition to more pages, there will also be **more higher order thinking questions to mirror the NAEP.**”

The Grade 3 extended-response question will be written based only on one preceding passage, not two passages as in the other grades. The Grade 3 test books will continue to have separately timed sections to ensure that students work through the entire books.

There will be three days of testing and three books.

However one fairly big difference is that *writing mechanics* (grammar, punctuation, and word usage) will now be addressed through **multiple-choice questions only**. In prior years, writing mechanics had been assessed through the editing paragraph and two extended-response questions (*Guide to the 2011 Grades 3–8 Testing Program*, 15). **Student writing will not be scored for mechanics.**

Writing mechanics questions may test any of the skills found in the **NY State Core Curriculum** including the following:

- 1) the elements of a complete sentence
- 2) subject-verb agreement
- 3) capitalization and punctuation
- 4) combining of sentences
- 5) separation of sentences

The length and complexity of test questions and answer choices will vary with the grade.

3rd Grade 2011 ELA

Day	Section	Subject	Number of Multiple-Choice Questions	Number of Short-Response Questions	Number of Extended-Response Questions	Total Number of Questions	Approximate Testing Time
One	1	Reading	35	0	0	35	70 minutes
Two	2	Listening/ Writing Mechanics	8	3	0	11	30 minutes
Three	3	Reading/ Writing	0	4	1	5	60 minutes
Total			43	7	1	51	160 minutes

Day One/Book 1	Day Two/Book 2	Day Three/Book 3	Total
6-7 passages (literary and informational) 35 multiple-choice questions	1 listening selection (literary) 5 multiple-choice questions 3 short-response questions 3-5 multiple-choice (writing mechanics questions)	2 passages (not paired) 4 short-response questions 1 extended-response question	9-10 passages 43-45 multiple-choice questions 7 short-response questions 1 extended-response question
60 minutes	30 minutes (excluding reading the listening selection)	60 minutes	150 minutes

Day One: Reading - 35 points, 56-58% of score

On the first day the students will be asked 35 multiple choice questions based on reading passages, both literary and informational.

- There will be six to seven passages on the first day.
- The students will have sixty minutes to read all passages and answer 35 questions.

Day Two: Listening/Writing Mechanics - 14-16 points, 22%-26% of score

On day two there will be 5 multiple-choice questions asked on the listening, 3 short-response, and 3- 5 writing mechanics questions.

- The listening passage will be literary
- Students will have thirty minutes to answer 11 questions (8-10 multiple choice, which include writing mechanics, and 3 short-response).

The 3rd grade examples of writing mechanics questions (from the NYSED's *Guide to the 2011 Grades 3-8 Testing Program*) addressed capitalization and punctuation, and sentence completion (see below for one example):

- Find the word or words that best complete the sentence.
_____ came from the pillow.
A. Feathers
B. Floating
C. Soft and white
D. All over the bed

Day Three: Reading/Writing - 11 points, 18% of score

On day three, students will be asked to read two passages. The passages will NOT be paired together.

- Students will be asked to complete 4 short-response questions and 1 extended-response question.
- Students will have 60 minutes to read the passages, complete the short responses and the extended-response.

Scoring for the 3rd Grade test:

- Multiple-choice questions - 1 point each.
- Short-response items - 2 points each.
- Extended-response items - 3 points each.

The multiple choice questions may be weighted differently. We won't know for sure until the item analysis is revealed after the test has been scored.

There will be 43 - 45 multiple choice questions (43 - 45 points, 72% of total score), 7 short response questions (14 points, 23% of total score), and 1 extended-response (3 points, 5% of total score), for a total of 60-62 points.

Short Response and Extended Response Scoring

The short-response questions will be scored individually, each question scored a 0,1,2. The extended response will be scored holistically 0,1,2,3,4.

Scores for *all* of the constructed responses are based on evidence of the following qualities:

- Meaning—the extent to which the response exhibits sound understanding, interpretation, and analysis of the task and text
- Development—the extent to which ideas are supported through the use of specific, accurate, and relevant evidence from the text.

Scores for the *extended responses in third grade* are *also* based on evidence of:

- Organization—the extent to which the response exhibits direction, shape, and coherence

The short-response and extended-response questions in the Listening and Reading sections of the test are scored individually with holistic rubrics. The short-response rubric allows for the scoring of meaning and development. The extended-response rubric allows for the scoring of meaning, development and organization (not language use).

3rd Grade Reading Standards and Performance Indicators

Standard 1: Students will read, write, listen, and speak for information and understanding (33% of the 3rd grade ELA in 2011, 20 points)

Read unfamiliar texts to collect data, facts, and ideas (You might notice the following skills are addressed: main idea questions, finding details, “right there” questions, cause and effect.)

- What did (a character) do first to (become a firefighter)...?
- According to the article, what does (water find in the ground)?
- The title of the article is (the Snowman's Gift). What is (the gift)? How does (the Snowman give it)? Use details from the story.
- According to the passage, how do the chicks let the mother hen know where they are?
- According to the passage, what did George Washington love best of all when he was growing up?
- Which of these facts about George Washington is included in this passage?
- According to the article, which statement is true about robots?
- According to the article, why do some people **not** like robots?
- Read this sentence from the article,... To give seeds a "rainstorm" most likely means...
- According to information in the article, which sentence about robins is true?
- Why does the mother robin sit on the eggs?
- Which item do you need for step one?

Read and understand written directions (You might notice the following skills are addressed: sequence “right there”, cause and effect, drawing conclusion)

- In the experiment, what should you do right after you pour water over the spoon?
- In step four, why do you pour the water over the spoon "slowly"?
- In which step of the experiment do you add the salt?
- What is the purpose of chairs in this game?
- If the balloon does **not** go over the net, the other side ...
- According to the article, when planting seeds, which step should you do first?
- According to the article, why should you stick your finger in the pot of soil?
- What do you do right after you pour most of the water out of the jar?

Locate information in a text that is needed to solve a problem (You might notice the following skills are addressed: Cause and effect and “right there”)

- What causes (a snowman to begin to melt)?
- In the article, what happens (when ice crystals are warm)?
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Identify main ideas and supporting details in informational texts (You might notice the following skills are addressed: finding main idea, “right there”, character, cause and effect, and sequence)

- What is this article mostly about?
- Why does (a character) say he or she does not (get afraid)?
- What does (a character) like most about being (a firefighter)?
- Which word best describes a chick **right after** it breaks out of its shell?
- According to the passage, which statement about chickens is true?
- What is another good title for this passage?
- Read the chart below. Which phrase **best** completes the chart?
- According to the article, what are two ways you can "trick" a seed into thinking it is in the tropics? Use details.
- Which title would be another good title for this article?
- What is this article mostly about?
- The article says that clouds...

Identify a conclusion that summarizes the main idea (You might notice the following skills are addressed: drawing a conclusion, and determining main idea)

- According to the article, which sentence is true?
- What is this passage **mostly** about?

Use graphic organizers to record significant details from informational texts (You might notice the following skills are addressed: sequence, compare and contrast)

- The chart below shows steps from the experiment. Which step belongs in the box?
- Complete the web below with two things you need to play balloon volleyball. One oval has been filled in for you.
- The chart below show events from the article. Which sentence best belongs in the empty box?

Determine the meaning of unfamiliar words by using context clues, dictionaries, and other classroom resources (You might notice the following skills are addressed: Identifying context clues, “right there” detail)

- What does the mother hen do during incubation?
- The article says to gently place the potato into the jar. What does the word "gently" mean?
- Read this sentence from the passage... Which words tell what “surveying” means?
- This article says that balloon volleyball is a good way to "get your energy out." This phrase most likely means that the game is...
- Read this sentence from the article... In this sentence, the word "trickles" most likely means

Use letter-sound correspondence, knowledge of grammar and overall context to determine meaning (You might notice the following skills are addressed: Using context clues to figure out new words.)

- Read this sentence from the article. The mud “glues” everything together. This sentence means that...

Standard 2: Students will read, write, listen, and speak for **literary response and expression.** (47% of the 3rd grade ELA in 2011)

Make predictions, draw conclusions, and make inferences about events and characters. (**You might notice the following skills are addressed:** identifying character traits, finding main idea, drawing conclusions, determining cause and effect.)

- What is the **main reason** (a character) does (x)?
- Which statement **best** describes (a character) in the passage?
- Which will **most likely** happen (on a character's first ride...)?
- What will most likely happen next in the poem?
- At the end of the story, what does Abby **most likely** want to buy from the store?
- Which sentence about Abby is most likely true?
- The polar bear in this poem will most likely...
- What finally causes Troll's tooth to come out?
- Which sentence best describes Mole in this story?

Use specific evidence from stories to describe characters, their actions and their motivations, and relate a sequence of events. (**You might notice the following skills are addressed:** identifying character traits, determining sequence, finding details to prove main idea, drawing conclusions.)

- Which word **best** describes (a character)?
- What happens **right after** (a character does or says...)?
- If the sun was shining, what would the speaker in this poem do first?
- In the poem, the speaker most likely wishes to...
- Which sentence is most important to the main idea of the story?
- What idea does Harold finally choose for Hundreds Day? How does he take the idea to school?
- What is this poem mostly about?
- What is one part of (a character's) plan to make her house look more cheerful?
- What happens right after Mole ties a string to the bedpost?

Use knowledge of story structure, story elements, and key vocabulary to interpret stories (**You might notice the following skills are addressed:** identifying character traits, understanding vocabulary, inferring, identifying “right there” answers, identifying the character’s problem.)

- What is (a character) trying to escape from?
- In the passage, (a character) says (this will be "no picnic"). What does he mean by this?
- What does Harold keep under his bed?
- Read the chart below. Which phrase best fits in the empty box?
- What is the surprise at the end of the poem?
- What is (a character's) main problem in this story?

Use graphic organizers to record significant details about characters and events in stories. (**You might notice the following skills are addressed:** identifying “right there” answers, finding details, determining sequence.)

- In this story, Pete eats different things. Complete the chart below with what Pete eats.
- Which way of travel is included in the poem?
- Read chart below...
- The chart below shows events from the story. Which belongs in the empty box?
- The chart below shows...
- In the story, Mole ties the string to three things. Using details from the story, complete the web with things Mole ties the string to. One has been done for you.
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Summarize main ideas and supporting details from imaginative texts. (**You might notice the following skills are addressed:** finding the main idea.)

- What is this story **mostly** about?
- This poem is mostly about someone who is thinking about...
- What is this poem mostly about?

Identify elements of character, plot and setting to understand the author's message or intent. (**You might notice the following skills are addressed:** finding the main idea, identifying character traits, determining sequence, drawing conclusions, identifying the setting, identifying the author’s purpose, inferring, identifying “right there” answers, performing a “think and search.”)

- What is the story **mostly** about?
- Which word **best** describes (a character) in the story?
- Why does (a character) go see (a character) in the story?
- How does (a character) feel at the end of the story? Why? Use details.
- What is this story mostly about?
- What happens each time Pete takes a bite of his food?
- What is the main thing Jaime learns in this story?
- Jaime and Pete are friends. Give two details from the story that show they are friends.
- What is the story mostly about?
- According to the story, when will Chip wake up?
- Why did Chip say he is **not** tired?
- How does Chip most likely feel when his mother says he can go outside?
- What does Chip's mom keep asking him to do? Why does this make Chip so tired that he wants to go to sleep?
- Chip becomes more and more tired in the story. Give two examples from the story that show Chip was tired.
- Where does the farmer find the missing horse?

- Why does the author most likely repeat "west, north, east, and south?"
- In the story, the farmer's wife is mostly...
- What is the first mystery in this story?
- Read these sentences from the story...The sentences show that Emma...
- When Emma solves the mystery of the rocks, she is...
- Give two examples

Determine the meaning of unfamiliar words by using context clues, dictionaries, and other classroom resources. (**You might notice the following skills are addressed:** finding the context clues.)

- "This time when she reeled in her line,..." The word "reeled" most likely means Abby...
- Read this line from the poem... The word "frigid" most likely means...

Use letter-sound correspondence, knowledge of grammar and overall context to determine meaning. (**You might notice the following skills are addressed:** finding the context clues.)

- At the end of the story, (the character) says her house is cheerful. The word "cheerful" means full of ...

Produce clear, well-organized responses to stories read or listened to, supporting the understanding of characters and events with details from the story. (**You might notice the following skills are addressed:** drawing conclusions.)

- How do you know that the farmer tried hard to find his missing horse? Use details

Standard 3: Students will read, write, listen, and speak for **critical analysis and evaluation.** (20% of the 3rd grade ELA in 2011)

Evaluate the content by identifying the author's purpose (You might notice the following skills are addressed: Identifying the author's purpose, Identifying the main idea)

- The author most likely wrote _____ to...
- Why did the author most likely write (the article)?
- Why did the author most likely write (the story)?
- The author most likely wrote "Robots" to...
- The author most likely wrote (the article) to...
- What is the main purpose of this article?

Identify important and unimportant details (You might notice the following skills are addressed: Finding the "right-there" questions, Identifying character traits, Drawing conclusions, Inferring, Performing a "think and search", Finding the main idea and supporting details)

- Which detail/statement is **most** important to the title/ to the poem?
- What is the **most** important detail about _____?
- Which word **best** describes (a character) in the story?
- Which rule is **most** important to follow?
- What is the **most likely** reason for using _____?
- What is the **most** important thing to learn about _____?
- Which statement about chicken eggs is **most** important to the main idea of the passage?

- What is the **most** important detail about salt water in this article?
- Which word **best** describes Harold in this story?
- Which rule of balloon volleyball is **most** important to win the game?
- Which is the **most** likely reason for using a balloon in this game?
- According to the article, what is the **most** important thing to learn about robots?
- Which detail is **most** important to the meaning of the poem?
- Which sentence from the story gives the **most** important information?

Evaluate whether events, actions, characters, and/or settings are realistic (**You might notice the following skills are addressed:** Drawing a conclusion, Inferring)

- Which event could not really happen?
- Which sentence tells something that could not really happen?
- Which idea from the poem could not really happen?
- Which sentence tells something that could not really happen?
- Which idea from the poem could not really happen?

Differentiate between statements of fact and opinion (**You might notice the following skills are addressed:** Finding which is a fact and opinion)

- Which sentence includes an opinion?
- Which (statement/sentence about the story) is an opinion?
- Which sentence from the story includes an opinion?
- Which statement about the story is an opinion?
- According to the information in the story, which sentence is an opinion?

Analyze information on the basis of new or prior knowledge and/or personal experience (You might notice the following skills are addressed: Determining sequence and Drawing a conclusion)

- Which item is not in the article but would be helpful for Step One?

Note: the testing specifications in this document were compiled from the NYSED's *Guide to the 2011 Grades 3-8 Testing Program in English Language Arts and Mathematics*, which can be found in its entirety at: <http://www.p12.nysed.gov/osa/ei/ela-math-guide-11.pdf>