



MASSACHUSETTS DEPARTMENT OF
ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY
EDUCATION

*Release of Spring 2021
MCAS Test Items*

from the

*Grade 8 English Language Arts
Paper-Based Test*

June 2021

**Massachusetts Department of
Elementary and Secondary Education**



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Overview of Grade 8 English Language Arts Test

The spring 2021 grade 8 English Language Arts (ELA) test was a next-generation assessment that was administered in two primary formats: a computer-based version and a paper-based version. The vast majority of students took the computer-based test. The paper-based test was offered as an accommodation for students with disabilities who are unable to use a computer, as well as for English learners who are new to the country and are unfamiliar with technology.

Most of the operational items on the grade 8 ELA test were the same, regardless of whether a student took the computer-based version or the paper-based version. In places where a technology-enhanced item was used on the computer-based test, an adapted version of the item was created for use on the paper test. These adapted paper items were multiple-choice or multiple-select items that tested the same ELA content and assessed the same standard as the technology-enhanced item.

This document displays released items from the paper-based test, along with associated reading passages.

Released items from the computer-based test are available on the MCAS Resource Center website at

mcas.pearsonsupport.com/released-items.

Test Sessions and Content Overview

The grade 8 ELA test was made up of two separate test sessions. Each session included reading passages, followed by selected-response questions or essay questions. On the paper-based test, the selected-response questions were multiple-choice items and multiple-select items, in which students select the correct answer(s) from among several answer options.

In 2021, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Department reduced testing time for students in grades 3–8 through a session sampling approach, in which each student took only a portion of each MCAS assessment. Instead of taking two sessions in each subject, individual students took one session each.

Standards and Reporting Categories

The grade 8 ELA test was based on grades 6–12 learning standards in three content strands of the *Massachusetts Curriculum Framework for English Language Arts and Literacy* (2017), listed below.

- Reading
- Writing
- Language

The *Massachusetts Curriculum Framework for English Language Arts and Literacy* is available on the Department website at www.doe.mass.edu/frameworks/current.html.

ELA test results are reported under three MCAS reporting categories, which are identical to the three framework content strands listed above.

The tables at the conclusion of this document provide the following information about each released and unreleased operational item: reporting category, standard(s) covered, item type, and item description. The correct answers for released selected-response questions are also displayed in the released item table.

Reference Materials

During both ELA test sessions, the use of bilingual word-to-word dictionaries was allowed for current and former English learner students only. No other reference materials were allowed during any ELA test session.

Grade 8 English Language Arts

This session contains 12 questions.

Directions

Read each passage and question carefully. Then answer each question as well as you can. You must record all answers in this Test & Answer Booklet.

For most questions, you will mark your answers by filling in the circles in your Test & Answer Booklet. Make sure you darken the circles completely. Do not make any marks outside of the circles. If you need to change an answer, be sure to erase your first answer completely.

Some questions will ask you to write a response. Write your response in the space provided. Only responses written within the provided space will be scored.

Read the article about Wangari Maathai and the excerpt from the lecture she delivered in 2004. Then answer the questions that follow.

This article, "The Green Belt Movement: The Story of Wangari Maathai," describes the mission and work of the Green Belt Movement. Started by Wangari Maathai, this independent (non-governmental) organization has been planting trees throughout Kenya, a country in eastern Africa, since 1977.

The Green Belt Movement: The Story of Wangari Maathai

by Mia MacDonald

- 1 Wangari Maathai has always had an affinity for trees. As a child, she learned from her grandmother that a large fig tree near her family home in central Kenya was sacred and not to be disturbed. She gathered water for her mother at springs protected by the roots of trees. In the mid-1970s, Maathai, in an effort to meet the basic needs of rural women, began to plant trees with them. Her non-governmental Green Belt Movement has planted 30 million trees across Kenya, many of which still stand. In 2004 her work was internationally recognized with the Nobel Peace Prize.
- 2 "As trees grow, they give you hope and self-confidence," Maathai said recently. "You feel good, like you have transformed the landscape." So it should come as no surprise that within an hour of learning she had won the peace prize for her contribution to sustainable development, democracy, and peace, Maathai planted a tree. It was a nandi flame tree native to her home region of Nyeri, Kenya, where Maathai was when she heard the news. Never one to stand on ceremony, she knelt on the earth and dug her hands into the red soil, warm from the sun, and settled the tree into the ground. It was, she told the journalists and onlookers gathered, "the best way to celebrate."
- 3 I was with Maathai that day. Rubbing the dirt from her hands, she took the occasion to turn her message to the world: "Honor this moment by planting trees," she said as the media jammed her cell phone. "I'm sure millions of trees would be planted if every friend of the environment, and especially of me, did."

Putting the pieces together

- 4 It was in the mid-1970s that Maathai became aware of Kenya's ecological decline: watersheds drying up, streams disappearing, and the desert

expanding south from the Sahara. On visits to Nyeri she found streams she had known as a child gone—dried up. Vast forests had been cleared for farms or plantations of fast-growing exotic trees that drained the ecosystem of water and degraded the soil.

- 5 Maathai began making connections others hadn't. "Listening to the women talk about water, about energy, about nutrition, it all boiled down to the environment," she told me recently. "I came to understand the linkage between environmental degradation and the felt needs of the communities."
- 6 She hit on the idea of using trees to replenish the soil, provide fuel wood, protect watersheds and promote better nutrition (through growing fruit trees). "If you understand and you are disturbed, then you are moved to action," she says. "That's exactly what happened to me."
- 7 Maathai set up a tree nursery in Karura Forest on the outskirts of Nairobi, later shifting it to her backyard. But the idea did not catch fire. In her book, *The Green Belt Movement: Sharing the Approach and the Experience*, Maathai recounts bringing seedlings to the annual agricultural show in Nairobi in 1975. A number of people expressed interest in tree planting. Not one, though, followed up.
- 8 Disappointed, but not deterred, the National Council of Women of Kenya urged her to pursue the idea and in 1977, the Green Belt Movement was born. Planting trees seemed "reasonable, doable," she says. But government foresters initially resisted. They didn't believe uneducated rural women could plant and tend trees.
- 9 "People who are very educated find it very hard to be simple-minded," Maathai says, laughing. Women, too, didn't think they could do it. But Maathai showed them how, building on skills they already had.
- 10 The women, at first a few small groups, gathered seeds for trees in forests. Then they planted them in whatever they had at hand, including old tin cans or broken cups. . . . The women watered the seedlings and gave them adequate sun. Then, when they were about a foot tall, they planted them on private land (theirs or others').

The trees grow—and branch out

- 11 When the tree was judged by Maathai or, in time, by her small field staff, to have survived, women were paid. It was a nominal amount, today less than 10 U.S. cents a tree. But in poor communities where

unemployment was and still is rife, women's options to earn money are few. Income from tree planting is important; it provides women a measure of independence and even power in households and communities.

- 12 In 1981, the Green Belt Movement got its first significant funding when the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) provided "seed money" that transformed the effort from a few tree nurseries to a large number with thousands of seedlings. The UNIFEM support also "helped us mobilize thousands of women" whom Maathai calls "foresters without diplomas." In 1986, Maathai took her idea region-wide; with funding from the UN Environment Program, the Green Belt Movement launched the Pan African Green Belt Network. The Network offers training and hands-on experience to grassroots environment and development groups. A number of them, in Ethiopia, Tanzania, Uganda, Rwanda and other African countries, have integrated the Green Belt Movement's approach.
- 13 Over the years, the Green Belt Movement has incorporated other community activities into tree-planting efforts. Among these are cultivation of more nutritious, indigenous foods; low-tech but effective ways to harvest and store rainwater; training in entrepreneurship; and providing information on reproductive health and HIV/AIDS prevention.

Anything but garden variety

- 14 Maathai, the first African woman and first environmentalist to be honored with the peace prize, has always hewn to a singular path. The third child of a sharecropper father and subsistence farmer mother, Maathai began attending school at age seven. Her eldest brother, Nderitu, in school himself, suggested it. Although it was unusual for rural girls in British-ruled Kenya to study, her parents agreed.
- 15 Maathai excelled and found herself drawn to the sciences. After graduating near the top of her class from . . . high school, she was awarded a U.S. government scholarship designed to enable young Kenyans to be post-independence leaders.
- 16 Maathai studied in Kansas and Pennsylvania, earning bachelor's and master's degrees. In 1963, she watched Kenya gain independence on television, and she returned home in 1966. Then in her early 20s, Maathai joined the University of Nairobi as a researcher and then lecturer in veterinary anatomy. What followed was a series of firsts. In 1971, she became the first woman in east and central Africa to earn a Ph.D.; her

doctorate is in biological sciences. A few years later she was appointed the university's first woman department chair. She got married and had three children, now in their 30s. Her daughter, Wanjira, works with the Green Belt Movement.

- 17 In the early 1990s, the Green Belt Movement launched a civic and environmental education program. In her Nobel Prize acceptance speech in December, she said the purpose of the program was to help people "make the connections between their own personal actions and the problems they witness in their environment and society." With this knowledge they wake up—like looking in a new mirror—and can move beyond fear or inertia to action.
- 18 Maathai and the Green Belt Movement led high-profile campaigns to save Kenya's forests and green spaces. In 1991, for instance, the movement saved Nairobi's Uhuru Park from an enormous high-rise to be built by the ruling party. The dictatorship was still strong, and not amused. For their boldness, Maathai and Green Belt colleagues were subjected to stints in jail and harassment, including death threats. Many nights, Maathai stayed in safe houses. . . .
- 19 And yet, she was not put off. "It is as clear as day. You cannot protect the environment if you do not have democratic governance [or] democratic space," she says.
- 20 In 1992, partly as a result of Maathai's activism, Kenya legalized opposition political parties. In subsequent years, the regime, while still corrupt and cantankerous, showed signs of cracking. After a series of violent confrontations with Maathai and the Green Belt Movement over Karura Forest in 1999, the regime abandoned its illegal development plans. The forest stands today, vast and green, on the edge of Nairobi's throbbing streets.

Toward democracy and peace

- 21 Still, Maathai spent International Women's Day in 2001 in jail. President Moi, opening a women's seminar that same month, asserted that women's "little minds" slowed their progress. But Maathai has had the last laugh. She was elected to Parliament in 2002, then appointed deputy minister of environment and natural resources. In many ways, her world, and Kenya's, has turned upside down. The day Maathai and other members of the new government were inaugurated, Maathai recognized her police escorts. They had once been her jailors.

- 22 The night she was leaving for Oslo for the peace prize ceremonies, Maathai hit Nairobi's notorious rush hour traffic jam. The police were called to clear the traffic so she could reach a send-off celebration in time. Lillian Muchungi, a long-time Green Belt Movement staff member who had been arrested with Maathai, was disbelieving: "Now they are clearing the way for her. But how they used to fight us. Oh!"
- 23 Maathai told me she views the peace prize as recognition of a "long, long struggle"—an honor unlike any she had thought to receive. Kenya's press deemed Maathai a model Kenyan who had made the country immensely proud. Ordinary Kenyans, both women and men, cheered. Many say Maathai is Kenya's best hope of ending decades of stagnation, corruption, and environmental decline (calls for her to be made environment minister have not subsided).
- 24 "She's an African iron core lady, a strong lady, brain-wise," said Bernard Mungai, a Nairobi driver, in a typical reaction to the Nobel news. "She's ready for everything. Women [like Maathai] will help Kenya catch up." One self-help columnist urged young Kenyans to plant trees; "You never know," she said, "where it might lead."

"The Green Belt Movement: The Story of Wangari Maathai" by Mia MacDonald, from *YES! Media* (March 25, 2005). Copyright © 2005 by YES! Media. Reprinted by permission of YES! Media.

In this excerpt from her Nobel Peace Prize lecture in 2004, Wangari Maathai explains the work of the Green Belt Movement, the organization that she founded in 1977.

from “Wangari Maathai’s Nobel Lecture”

Oslo, Norway, 2004



- 1 So, together, we have planted over 30 million trees that provide fuel, food, shelter, and income to support their children’s education and household needs. The activity also creates employment and improves soils and watersheds. Through their involvement, women gain some degree of power over their lives, especially their social and economic position and relevance in the family. This work continues.
- 2 Initially, the work was difficult because historically our people have been persuaded to believe that because they are poor, they lack not only capital, but also knowledge and skills to address their challenges. Instead they are conditioned to believe that solutions to their problems must come from “outside.” Further, women did not realize that meeting their needs depended on their environment being healthy and well managed. They were also unaware that a degraded environment leads

to a scramble for scarce resources and may culminate in poverty and even conflict. They were also unaware of the injustices of international economic arrangements.

- 3 In order to assist communities to understand these linkages, we developed a citizen education program, during which people identify their problems, the causes and possible solutions. They then make connections between their own personal actions and the problems they witness in the environment and in society. They learn that our world is confronted with a litany of woes: corruption, violence against women and children, disruption and breakdown of families, and disintegration of cultures and communities. . . .
- 4 Although initially the Green Belt Movement's tree planting activities did not address issues of democracy and peace, it soon became clear that responsible governance of the environment was impossible without democratic space. Therefore, the tree became a symbol for the democratic struggle in Kenya. Citizens were mobilized to challenge widespread abuses of power, corruption and environmental mismanagement. In Nairobi's Uhuru Park, at Freedom Corner, and in many parts of the country, trees of peace were planted to demand the release of prisoners of conscience and a peaceful transition to democracy.
- 5 Through the Green Belt Movement, thousands of ordinary citizens were mobilized and empowered to take action and effect change. They learned to overcome fear and a sense of helplessness and moved to defend democratic rights.
- 6 In time, the tree also became a symbol for peace and conflict resolution, especially during ethnic conflicts in Kenya when the Green Belt Movement used peace trees to reconcile disputing communities. During the ongoing re-writing of the Kenyan constitution, similar trees of peace were planted in many parts of the country to promote a culture of peace. Using trees as a symbol of peace is in keeping with a widespread African tradition. For example, the elders of the Kikuyu carried a staff from the *thigi* tree that, when placed between two disputing sides, caused them to stop fighting and seek reconciliation. Many communities in Africa have these traditions.
- 7 Such practices are part of an extensive cultural heritage, which contributes both to the conservation of habitats and to cultures of peace. With the destruction of these cultures and the introduction of new values, local biodiversity is no longer valued or protected and as a result, it is quickly degraded and disappears. For this reason, the Green

Belt Movement explores the concept of cultural biodiversity, especially with respect to indigenous seeds and medicinal plants.

- 8 As we progressively understood the causes of environmental degradation, we saw the need for good governance. Indeed, the state of any country's environment is a reflection of the kind of governance in place, and without good governance there can be no peace. Many countries, which have poor governance systems, are also likely to have conflicts and poor laws protecting the environment.
- 9 In 2002, the courage, resilience, patience and commitment of members of the Green Belt Movement, other civil society organizations, and the Kenyan public culminated in the peaceful transition to a democratic government and laid the foundation for a more stable society.
- 10 Excellencies, friends, ladies and gentlemen:
- 11 It is 30 years since we started this work. Activities that devastate the environment and societies continue unabated. Today we are faced with a challenge that calls for a shift in our thinking, so that humanity stops threatening its life-support system. We are called to assist the Earth to heal her wounds and in the process heal our own—indeed, to embrace the whole creation in all its diversity, beauty and wonder. This will happen if we see the need to revive our sense of belonging to a larger family of life, with which we have shared our evolutionary process.
- 12 In the course of history, there comes a time when humanity is called to shift to a new level of consciousness, to reach a higher moral ground. A time when we have to shed our fear and give hope to each other.
- 13 That time is now.
- 14 The Norwegian Nobel Committee has challenged the world to broaden the understanding of peace: there can be no peace without equitable development; and there can be no development without sustainable management of the environment in a democratic and peaceful space. This shift is an idea whose time has come.
- 15 I call on leaders, especially from Africa, to expand democratic space and build fair and just societies that allow the creativity and energy of their citizens to flourish. . . .
- 16 Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen:

- 17 As I conclude I reflect on my childhood experience when I would visit a stream next to our home to fetch water for my mother. I would drink water straight from the stream. Playing among the arrowroot leaves I tried in vain to pick up the strands of frogs' eggs, believing they were beads. But every time I put my little fingers under them they would break. Later, I saw thousands of tadpoles: black, energetic and wriggling through the clear water against the background of the brown earth. This is the world I inherited from my parents.
- 18 Today, over 50 years later, the stream has dried up, women walk long distances for water, which is not always clean, and children will never know what they have lost. The challenge is to restore the home of the tadpoles and give back to our children a world of beauty and wonder.
- 19 Thank you very much.

"Wangari Maathai's Nobel Lecture" by Wangari Maathai, from the Nobel Foundation website. Copyright © 2004 by The Nobel Foundation. Reprinted by permission of The Nobel Foundation. Photograph copyright © AFP/Getty Images.

- 1** Based on the article, what does the heading **Putting the pieces together** emphasize about Maathai's founding of the Green Belt Movement?
- Ⓐ Leading the movement required thoughtful analysis and collaboration.
 - Ⓑ The movement was based on a risky and complicated plan of action.
 - Ⓒ The movement arose from intense discussions with officials.
 - Ⓓ Starting the movement meant fixing an existing program.
- 2** Based on paragraphs 18–20 of the article, what is one reason that Maathai's movement was successful?
- Ⓐ She recognized the frustration of people on both sides of a conflict.
 - Ⓑ She followed established rules despite the impatience of the public.
 - Ⓒ She continued to create awareness despite efforts by others to intimidate her.
 - Ⓓ She addressed the concerns of others through her trust in the democratic process.
- 3** In paragraph 9 of the lecture, what does the word *culminated* mean?
- Ⓐ shared
 - Ⓑ located
 - Ⓒ resulted
 - Ⓓ interfered

English Language Arts

- 4 Read the sentence from paragraph 11 of the lecture in the box.

We are called to assist the Earth to heal her wounds and in the process heal our own. . . .

Based on the lecture, what does the metaphor in the sentence emphasize about Maathai's beliefs?

- Ⓐ Maathai believed that people's ignorance was the biggest threat to the planet.
 - Ⓑ Maathai believed that people should be free to enjoy nature without disruption.
 - Ⓒ Maathai believed that repairing environmental damage could improve people's quality of life.
 - Ⓓ Maathai believed that holding the right people responsible for habitat destruction was a priority.
- 5 How do paragraphs 17 and 18 of the lecture **mainly** help develop the central idea?
- Ⓐ by describing the vitality and appeal of outdoor spaces that previously existed in Kenya
 - Ⓑ by encouraging research on the diversity and uniqueness of living things in Kenya
 - Ⓒ by suggesting new ways to save wilderness areas in Kenya
 - Ⓓ by providing biological details about ecosystems in Kenya

6 Which sentence **best** states a difference between the article and the lecture?

- Ⓐ The article examines current opinions about the Green Belt Movement, while the lecture is an overview of Maathai's life.
- Ⓑ The article makes general statements about Maathai, while the lecture lists specific projects initiated by the Green Belt Movement.
- Ⓒ The article discusses details about the Green Belt Movement in order of importance, while the lecture divides information about Maathai by topic.
- Ⓓ The article describes how Maathai became influential, while the lecture provides a participant's perspective on the significance of the Green Belt Movement.

7 Read the sentences from the article and the lecture in the box.

- As a child, she learned from her grandmother that a large fig tree near her family home in central Kenya was sacred and not to be disturbed. She gathered water for her mother at springs protected by the roots of trees. (paragraph 1 of "The Green Belt Movement")
- Using trees as a symbol of peace is in keeping with a widespread African tradition. (paragraph 6 of "Wangari Maathai's Nobel Lecture")

What do the sentences **most likely** suggest about Maathai?

- Ⓐ She believed that trees could help connect different cultures.
- Ⓑ She expected people who planted trees to be aware of their own origins.
- Ⓒ She understood that honoring trees was a valuable priority in her culture.
- Ⓓ She predicted that institutions that respected trees would become more powerful.

English Language Arts

- 8 Read the sentences from the article and the lecture in the box.

- Vast forests had been cleared for farms or plantations of fast-growing exotic trees that drained the ecosystem of water and degraded the soil. (paragraph 4 of “The Green Belt Movement”)
- With the destruction of these cultures and the introduction of new values, local biodiversity is no longer valued or protected and as a result, it is quickly degraded and disappears. (paragraph 7 of “Wangari Maathai’s Nobel Lecture”)

Based on the sentences, what does the word *degrade* **most likely** mean?

- Ⓐ to give up
 - Ⓑ to identify
 - Ⓒ to complete
 - Ⓓ to break down
- 9 Which of the following claims do the authors of the article and the lecture **both** make about the Green Belt Movement?
- Ⓐ It has finished restoring the environment in several countries.
 - Ⓑ It has accomplished goals beyond helping the environment.
 - Ⓒ It needs more recognition from countries around the world.
 - Ⓓ It needs more qualified people to continue to be efficient.

10 Part A

Based on the lecture, what did Maathai **most likely** think was one of the central achievements of the Green Belt Movement?

- Ⓐ It motivated people to gain a deeper understanding of African history.
- Ⓑ It caused people in Africa to adopt the lifestyles of their grandparents.
- Ⓒ It encouraged people to seek prominent jobs in the Kenyan government.
- Ⓓ It enabled people in Kenya to believe they could make an impact in their country.

Part B

Which detail from the article **best** supports the answer to Part A?

- Ⓐ "In 1981, the Green Belt Movement got its first significant funding when the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) provided 'seed money' that transformed the effort from a few tree nurseries to a large number with thousands of seedlings." (paragraph 12)
- Ⓑ "In 1971, she became the first woman in east and central Africa to earn a Ph.D.; her doctorate is in biological sciences." (paragraph 16)
- Ⓒ "For their boldness, Maathai and Green Belt colleagues were subjected to stints in jail and harassment, including death threats." (paragraph 18)
- Ⓓ "One self-help columnist urged young Kenyans to plant trees; 'You never know,' she said, 'where it might lead.'" (paragraph 24)

- 11** Select the word or phrase that **best** completes each of the following sentences.

In “The Green Belt Movement,” paragraphs 23 and 24 express a tone of

- Ⓐ curiosity.
- Ⓑ arrogance.
- Ⓒ pessimism.
- Ⓓ appreciation.

“Wangari Maathai’s Nobel Lecture” ends with

- Ⓐ a tolerant and forgiving tone.
- Ⓑ a severe and demanding tone.
- Ⓒ an inspirational and urgent tone.
- Ⓓ an explanatory and informative tone.

English Language Arts

For this question, you will write an essay based on the passage(s). Write your essay in the space provided on the next two pages. Your writing should:

- Present and develop a central idea.
- Provide evidence and/or details from the passage(s).
- Use correct grammar, spelling, and punctuation.

- 12** Based on “The Green Belt Movement” and “Wangari Maathai’s Nobel Lecture,” write a letter to your local government in which you argue that an organization like the Green Belt Movement should be started in your area. Be sure to use details from **both** the article and the lecture to develop your letter.

Write your answer on the next two pages.

You have a total of two pages on which to write your response.

12

Lined area for writing response.

Grade 8 English Language Arts
Spring 2021 Released Operational Items

PBT Item No.	Page No.	Reporting Category	Standard	Item Type*	Item Description	Correct Answer (SR)**
1	12	<i>Reading</i>	RI.8.5	SR	Determine how a text feature is important to a passage.	A
2	12	<i>Reading</i>	RI.8.3	SR	Use information from a passage to determine why an event happened.	C
3	12	<i>Language</i>	L.8.4	SR	Determine the meaning of a word in context.	C
4	13	<i>Reading</i>	RI.8.4	SR	Explain what an individual's use of a metaphor reveals about her point of view.	C
5	13	<i>Reading</i>	RI.8.5	SR	Determine how particular paragraphs help develop the central idea of a passage.	A
6	14	<i>Reading</i>	RI.8.9	SR	Identify a difference in how two passages present information on a similar topic.	D
7	14	<i>Reading</i>	RI.8.3	SR	Explain what specific sentences reveal about an individual.	C
8	15	<i>Language</i>	L.8.4	SR	Determine the meaning of a word in context.	D
9	15	<i>Reading</i>	RI.8.8	SR	Identify a shared claim in two passages.	B
10	16	<i>Reading</i>	RI.8.1	SR	Make an inference about an individual in a passage; select evidence from provided details to support analysis.	D;D
11	17	<i>Reading</i>	RI.8.4	SR	Identify different tones in two passages on a similar topic.	D;C
12	18	<i>Language, Writing</i>	L.8.1, L.8.2, L.8.3, W.8.1, W.8.4	ES	Write an argument in the form of a letter in support of an idea presented in two passages; support argument with details from the passages.	

* ELA item types are: selected-response (SR) and essay (ES).

** Answers are provided here for selected-response items only. Sample responses and scoring guidelines for essay items will be posted to the Department's website later this year.

Grade 8 English Language Arts
Spring 2021 Unreleased Operational Items

PBT Item No.	Reporting Category	Standard	Item Type*	Item Description
13	<i>Reading</i>	RL.8.4	SR	Interpret what quotations from a passage suggest about a character.
14	<i>Reading</i>	RL.8.5	SR	Identify the reason behind a character's questions.
15	<i>Language</i>	L.8.4	SR	Determine the meaning of a word in context.
16	<i>Reading</i>	RL.8.3	SR	Identify what a specific paragraph in a passage reveals about a character.
17	<i>Reading</i>	RL.8.5	SR	Determine the connection between two paragraphs in a passage.
18	<i>Reading</i>	RL.8.3	SR	Make an inference about a character based on his actions.
19	<i>Reading</i>	RL.8.6	SR	Determine how a character's point of view is revealed.
20	<i>Language</i>	L.8.2	SR	Determine the purpose of italics in context.
21	<i>Reading</i>	RL.8.9	SR	Identify a similar topic across two passages.
22	<i>Reading</i>	RL.8.3	SR	Compare the reactions of characters to similar situations across two passages; select evidence from provided details to support analysis.
23	<i>Reading</i>	RL.8.2	SR	Determine whether main ideas are present in one or two passages.
24	<i>Language, Writing</i>	L.8.1, L.8.2, L.8.3, W.8.2, W.8.4	ES	Write an essay that compares the challenges that characters in two passages face; support analysis with details from the passages.
25	<i>Reading</i>	RL.8.4	SR	Determine the technique used to describe the setting in a folktale.
26	<i>Language</i>	L.8.4	SR	Identify a word that would best replace a word in context.
27	<i>Reading</i>	RL.8.1	SR	Make an inference about a character based on a paragraph.
28	<i>Reading</i>	RL.8.3	SR	Analyze the similarity between the actions of two characters.
29	<i>Language</i>	L.8.4	SR	Determine the meaning of a word in context.
30	<i>Reading</i>	RL.8.3	SR	Determine what a specific paragraph reveals about a character.
31	<i>Reading</i>	RL.8.5	SR	Determine the theme of a folktale.
32	<i>Reading</i>	RL.8.2	SR	Determine the theme of a folktale.

* ELA item types are: selected-response (SR) and essay (ES).