



MASSACHUSETTS

Department of Elementary  
and Secondary Education

*Release of Spring 2025*

*MCAS Test Items*

*from the*

*Grade 8 English Language Arts  
Paper-Based Test*

**June 2025**

**Massachusetts Department of  
Elementary and Secondary Education**



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and Secondary Education

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# Overview of Grade 8 English Language Arts Test

The spring 2025 grade 8 English Language Arts (ELA) test was administered in two formats: a computer-based version and a paper-based version. Most students took the computer-based test. The paper-based test was offered as an accommodation for eligible students who were unable to use a computer. More information can be found on the MCAS Test Administration Resources page at [www.doe.mass.edu/mcas/admin.html](http://www.doe.mass.edu/mcas/admin.html).

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.onlinehelp.cognia.org/released-items](http://mcas.onlinehelp.cognia.org/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.

## 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](http://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 authorized bilingual word-to-word dictionaries and glossaries was allowed for students who are currently or were ever reported as English learners. No other reference materials were allowed during any ELA test session.

# Grade 8 English Language Arts

This session contains 19 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.

# English Language Arts

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**Read the articles about enjoying different weather conditions and then answer the questions that follow.**

This article describes ways people enjoy winter weather in cities around the world.

## Finding Joy in Urban Winters

by Melody Warnick



- 1 Cities excel in balmy weather. Summer is the season of desultory<sup>1</sup> bike rides, of food truck festivals and concerts in the park, of long walks and dinners on the patio at the café. Then the temperature plummets, those delightful urban artifacts are buried under soul-crushing mounds of snow, and you . . . start wondering why you don't live in Arizona.
- 2 For cities in America's Snow Belt, the fallout of harsh winters can be severe. While more than 2.2 million people moved to Sun Belt states between 2014 and 2015—bright, warm places like Texas, California, and Florida—only a tenth of that number moved to the Midwest and Northeast. For those who already live there, the annual onslaught of subzero temps often spurs a desire to flee . . . or at least burrow for months.
- 3 But a contingent of hardy souls wants to change the way North America's coldest cities experience winter, and they're looking to a part of the world renowned for both happiness and monster winters: Scandinavia. In fact, the Danish concept of *hygge* may hold the key to cities' winter well-being.

<sup>1</sup>desultory—not having a specific plan or purpose

## English Language Arts

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- 4 “Coziness” is perhaps the word’s best translation, although togetherness, enjoyment, relaxation, and comfort capture angles of it too. Meik Wiking, the CEO of Denmark’s Happiness Research Institute and the author of *The Little Book of Hygge: The Danish Way to Live Well*, sums it up this way: “The true essence of *hygge* is the pursuit of everyday happiness.”
- 5 Copenhagen is clearly ground zero for *hygge*. Through a magical alchemy of urban design, business development, and cultural conviction, residents revel in simple pleasures, particularly when the weather turns foul. In Copenhagen, you defy the cold. You meet friends for breakfast at Grød, Copenhagen’s porridge-only café, for fortification both physical and spiritual. You wander the city’s light-studded cobblestone streets. You show up for one of the 500 concerts that are part of Vinterjazz, a nationwide jazz festival held each February. A love of *hygge* ensures that Danes find ways to enjoy a city that sees just seven hours of daylight in midwinter. . . .
- 6 Meanwhile, Edmonton, in Alberta, Canada, crafted a first-of-its-kind WinterCity Strategy by asking residents, “What would make you fall in love with winter?” The resulting design and placemaking guidelines, focused on creating a high quality of life in the winter, unintentionally capture elements of *hygge*, too.
- 7 These four ideals of *hygge* provide a starting point for changing winter in the city from a Spartan endurance race to an extended season of joy.
- 8 **Hygge principle: Warmth.** Unlike some American cities, where snow seems like a shocker year after year, Scandinavian cities acknowledge and build for their cold climate, with higher energy standards for walls and doors, vestibules that prevent drafts, coat racks for winter gear, and public plazas that block wind and capitalize on southern sun. Then there’s the ritual of the sauna.<sup>2</sup> . . .
- 9 Creating similar experiences in snowbound cities might require reviving the tradition of public or private bathhouses<sup>3</sup> in North America (though a few cities, including Seattle, already have one). More simply, warming houses can become urban waystations for both physical heat and social contact. In Winnipeg, the Manitoba Association of Architects sponsors an annual competition to design warming huts; winners are built along a local ice skating trail. A similar competition in Toronto invites artists to convert lifeguard towers along the beachfront into wacky winter stations.

<sup>2</sup>sauna—a small room or building that emits heat

<sup>3</sup>bathhouses—buildings containing baths for general use

## English Language Arts

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In Edmonton, restaurant patios have been known to stay open year-round, thanks to heat lamps, wood-burning fireplaces, and microwave-warmed seat cushions.



The “Ice Lantern” was one of the 2017 winners of the warming hut design competition in Winnipeg.

- 10 **Hygge principle: Light and color.** With far fewer hours of sunlight, wintertime contentment relies on literal or metaphorical brightness—hence the typical Danish scenes of candle-bedecked dinner tables and windows laced with twinkle lights, or Copenhagen’s streets with their famous Crayola-colored buildings.
- 11 The urban version? Outdoor lighting. On city streets, creative lighting design creates visual interest, adding a sense of comfort and coziness that encourages urban exploration. Installations or festivals like those in Richmond, Portland, and Pittsburgh illuminate the most tedious part of the season.
- 12 As with most things winter, Canada has an edge here. In Montreal, an annual festival called Luminotherapie introduced LED-light-enhanced seesaws at a playground; as the seesaw tilted up and down, the board’s glow intensified, then faded. In February 2017, Calgary’s downtown district [launched] its inaugural three-day winter light festival, called GLOW. Among the extensive lineup of light-centric installation art is an interactive shower that rains light from all directions, while a loop of summer sounds—wind, birds, an ice cream shop—plays gently in the background. After 90 seconds, you emerge from your light shower refreshed and—in *hygge* fashion—joyful.

## English Language Arts

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- 13 **Hygge principle: Access to nature.** While *hygge*'s overarching style seems to be an indoorsy, "cocoa by the fire" feel, Pia Edberg, author of *The Cozy Life: Rediscover the Joy of the Simple Things Through the Danish Concept of Hygge*, points out that experiencing nature is elemental to *hygge*. "As the old saying goes: 'There's no such thing as bad weather, only bad clothes.'"
- 14 In cold-weather cities, easy access to the outdoors staves off lethargy<sup>4</sup> and activates spaces. "The sad truth is that the Danish winter is long and dark, and we really need incentive to get outside," says Wiking. "In my neighborhood in Copenhagen, one of the greatest attractions in the wintertime is the ice skating rink, which is packed with kids of all ages and has beautiful lights to create a very *hyggelig* atmosphere."
- 15 Boston recently installed an undulating<sup>5</sup> ice skating trail at City Hall Plaza. In Edmonton, a group of citizens is working to install ski racks at light-rail stations so residents can cross-country ski part of their winter commute. And while some cities have taken to banning sledding on municipal property out of fear of liability, others, like St. Paul, Minnesota, and Madison, Wisconsin, map sledding hills on their city websites.



Sledders climb up a hill in London.

- 16 **Hygge principle: Gathering places.** Perhaps the most important antidote to winter's isolation is *hygge*'s emphasis on communal gathering and social connection. In Copenhagen, privately owned third places—restaurants, bars, cafés, bookstores—are as central to the wintery social life as public squares are in the summertime.

<sup>4</sup>lethargy—lack of energy

<sup>5</sup>undulating—having a wavelike form



## English Language Arts

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- 17 But must outdoor public spaces effectively shut down in the cold months? *Hyggelig* cities give residents a reason to emerge from the blankets. As part of its WinterCity goals, Edmonton sponsors a full slate of winter festivals and activities, including Silver Skate, with its ice castles and fire sculptures, and Flying Canoe Volant, whose main event is a wild downhill canoe race. Fargo launched Frostival . . . with outdoor tournaments for volleyball, softball, kickball, and golf. The event tagline: “Making Cold Cool.”
- 18 There’s a new level of collaboration among cold cities, as well. In early 2017, Edmonton [hosted] Winter Cities Shakeup, a conference for leaders and placemakers from snowy cities to compare notes.
- 19 “It’s a whole emphasis on everyday life,” says Susan Holdsworth, Edmonton’s WinterCity coordinator. “We know festivals are great, but we want to make sure the everyday life experience in winter is also great. It’s not just great once you get to Silver Skate or Flying Canoe. It’s great when you’re on your way to work or at your lunch hour.”

“Finding Joy in Urban Winters” by Melody Warnick, from the *Bloomberg* website (January 4, 2017). Copyright © 2023. Reprinted by permission of Bloomberg L.P.

This article describes the benefits of physical activity in various weather conditions.

### Bad Weather Is Good for You

*by Annabel Streets*

- 1 In dozens of early letters, the artist Georgia O’Keeffe raved about walking in extreme wind. “I love it,” she wrote, again and again. A few other walkers have enthused about mud, snow, rain, darkness and cold. And yet, as the days draw in and the temperature falls, most of us hang up our walking boots.
- 2 Big mistake! In the last few years researchers have begun untangling some of the little-known benefits of walking in wintry conditions. It turns out that the conditions most deterring us from taking a stroll are, in fact, excellent reasons to step outdoors.
- 3 Cities are often at their most walkable in the winter, when wind disperses pollution, and rain washes the air of dirt and germs. A 2021 study found that the best days to avoid catching highly contagious strains . . . were windy days, when germs and bacteria were instantly blown away. Cities empty quickly in the rain—meaning we can pick up our pace and stride along streets usually thronging with people.
- 4 Pavements devoid of pedestrians are also perfect for practicing backwards walking—the latest trend to sweep Japan. A 2020 study published in *Brain Communications* found that reverse walking engages an entirely different set of lower body muscles. Walking backwards also improves our balance and stability. Normally we lean slightly forward when we walk but, in reverse, our spine is nudged into alignment and our core has to work harder to keep us stable. Another study found that 10 minutes of backwards walking four times a week reduced lower back pain after a mere three weeks. At the same time, we strengthen our knee joints and quadriceps—which means an improved gait and fewer aches and pains. A wide, flat, empty pavement is the ideal place to practice reverse walking.
- 5 If you’re in the country, a downpour is the perfect time to walk—but for quite different reasons. The pounding of raindrops causes plants, trees and soil to release sweet-smelling compounds which then mingle and combine in the air we breathe. The Scottish writer, Nan Shepherd, loved walking after rainfall, noting that birch trees released a perfume. . . . Studies suggest that inhaling these compounds improves our mood, while the abundance of negative air ions—created as water and air

## English Language Arts

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molecules collide making a molecule with an extra charge—can improve respiratory health and immunity. When Austrian scientists ran a series of experiments in the Alps, they were stunned to find that participants walking in heavily ionized air had higher levels of a vital antibody located in the . . . lining of the mouth, nose and gut. The researchers speculated that this bounteous<sup>1</sup> antibody accounted for the participants' strengthened immunity and amplified lung capacity.

- 6 So put on your wellies<sup>2</sup> and a waterproof coat and take advantage of the purer air and the complex array of scents that accompany a downpour. Seek out mountains or forests, where negative air ions linger for longer. In misty woodlands, negative air ions are twice as abundant as on open land, so get up early and make the most of autumn's final morning mists.
- 7 If it's a muddy forest, even better. Believe it or not, mud is a boon for your health. So rather than taking lengthy detours to avoid a stretch of quagmire,<sup>3</sup> just walk right through it breathing deeply as you go. Mud—be it farmyard or forest floor—is rich in mood-enhancing microbes. Australian researchers found that mice exposed to soil had more diverse microbiomes, a finding mirrored by a Finnish study in which the gut and skin of children playing in plastic-and-concrete playgrounds were compared to those of children whose playground had been rebuilt using a tract of forest floor. In as little as four weeks, the . . . muddy children show[ed] greater immunity and fewer coughs and colds for months afterwards. Mud can be slippery, so use walking poles for stability. As you prod at the earth, you'll also be releasing beneficial bacteria from the soil.
- 8 Cold weather is another excellent reason to walk, thanks to the way brown fat works. Brown fat (sometimes known as brown adipose tissue) gobbles up dangerous artery-clogging white fat. Brown fat is a more effective fat burner than anything else. . . . And it's activated by cold. Studies have found that Nordic construction workers and those who go bare-legged in winter have impressively rich layers of brown fat. You can shiver through a[n] . . . ice bath or you can go for a nippy walk with your coat undone at the collar and your scarf unwrapped. Exercise and caffeine also spur production of brown fat. . . .

<sup>1</sup>bounteous—abundant or plentiful

<sup>2</sup>wellies—rain boots

<sup>3</sup>quagmire—a soft, boggy area of land

## English Language Arts

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- 9 There's one more excuse I hear at this time of year: it's too dark. Again, science has discovered plenty of reasons for an evening stroll. Not only does an after-supper walk control blood sugar levels (vital for diabetics) and help shunt food smoothly through the gut (meaning more efficient digestion and less constipation), but the dim evening light prompts our body to start making sleep-inducing melatonin.
- 10 A wet night is better still. According to Dr. Kate McLean, an expert in urban scents and smells, damp nights enable us to uncover the world anew through our nose: "In darkness we alter our primary way of encountering the world, and when the air is damp it traps odor-causing molecules, transforming a dark, damp walk into a source of inspiration and imagination."
- 11 So instead of binge-watching a box set,<sup>4</sup> pull on your boots (making sure they're watertight with good grip) and walk. One day, your body and brain will thank you.

<sup>4</sup>box set—a collection of movies or television shows

"Bad Weather Is Good for You: Take a Walk in the Wind and the Rain" by Annabel Streets, from *The Guardian* (October 29, 2022). Copyright © 2022 by Guardian News and Media Limited. Reprinted by permission of Guardian News and Media Limited.

## English Language Arts

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- 1** Based on “Finding Joy in Urban Winters,” what does the metaphor “buried under soul-crushing mounds of snow” from paragraph 1 **best** help the reader understand?
- Ⓐ the changes in weather depending on the season
  - Ⓑ the powerful impact certain weather can have on people
  - Ⓒ the number of people affected by various weather patterns
  - Ⓓ the struggle larger cities have managing difficult weather conditions
- 2** How does paragraph 2 of “Finding Joy in Urban Winters” **mainly** contribute to the development of ideas in the article?
- Ⓐ by explaining the history of winter in certain areas
  - Ⓑ by presenting an issue with winter that will be examined
  - Ⓒ by describing the pros and cons of winter in various locations
  - Ⓓ by introducing a set of solutions to help make winter more bearable
- 3** Read the sentence from paragraph 5 of “Finding Joy in Urban Winters” in the box.

You meet friends for breakfast at Grød, Copenhagen’s porridge-only café, for fortification both physical and spiritual.

What is the purpose of the commas in the sentence?

- Ⓐ to set off an explanation
- Ⓑ to separate items in a list
- Ⓒ to introduce a new concept
- Ⓓ to provide an example of an idea

## English Language Arts

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- 4 What is the **main** purpose of the author’s use of second-person point of view in paragraph 5 of “Finding Joy in Urban Winters”?
- Ⓐ to suggest that the reader’s image of Copenhagen in winter is incorrect
  - Ⓑ to explain why businesses in Copenhagen profit from social events in winter
  - Ⓒ to enhance the reader’s understanding of a typical winter day in Copenhagen
  - Ⓓ to show that anyone is welcome to participate in winter activities in Copenhagen
- 5 What is the meaning of the word *antidote* as it is used in paragraph 16 of “Finding Joy in Urban Winters”?
- Ⓐ a subtle contradiction
  - Ⓑ a remedy to a problem
  - Ⓒ an opposing statement
  - Ⓓ an opinion seen as critical
- 6 Which sentence from “Finding Joy in Urban Winters” **best** supports the author’s primary argument in the article?
- Ⓐ “Summer is the season of desultory bike rides, of food truck festivals and concerts in the park, of long walks and dinners on the patio at the café.” (paragraph 1)
  - Ⓑ “In fact, the Danish concept of *hygge* may hold the key to cities’ winter well-being.” (paragraph 3)
  - Ⓒ “Copenhagen is clearly ground zero for *hygge*.” (paragraph 5)
  - Ⓓ “More simply, warming houses can become urban waystations for both physical heat and social contact.” (paragraph 9)

## English Language Arts

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- 7 Which detail from “Bad Weather Is Good for You” **best** supports the idea introduced in the title of the article?
- Ⓐ “And yet, as the days draw in and the temperature falls, most of us hang up our walking boots.” (paragraph 1)
  - Ⓑ “It turns out that the conditions most deterring us from taking a stroll are, in fact, excellent reasons to step outdoors.” (paragraph 2)
  - Ⓒ “Walking backwards also improves our balance and stability.” (paragraph 4)
  - Ⓓ “In misty woodlands, negative air ions are twice as abundant as on open land, so get up early and make the most of autumn’s final morning mists.” (paragraph 6)
- 8 In which quotation from “Bad Weather Is Good for You” does the author acknowledge a drawback to exercising in bad weather?
- Ⓐ “Cities empty quickly in the rain—meaning we can pick up our pace and stride along streets usually thronging with people.” (paragraph 3)
  - Ⓑ “A wide, flat, empty pavement is the ideal place to practice reverse walking.” (paragraph 4)
  - Ⓒ “Mud can be slippery, so use walking poles for stability.” (paragraph 7)
  - Ⓓ “So instead of binge-watching a box set, pull on your boots (making sure they’re watertight with good grip) and walk.” (paragraph 11)

## English Language Arts

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- 9 Which statement provides the **best** comparison of the authors' purposes in the articles?
- Ⓐ In "Finding Joy in Urban Winters," the author describes a preference for winter weather, while in "Bad Weather Is Good for You," the author suggests that spring conditions are ideal.
  - Ⓑ In "Finding Joy in Urban Winters," the author compares traditional summer and winter activities, while in "Bad Weather Is Good for You," the author promotes a favorite winter activity.
  - Ⓒ In "Finding Joy in Urban Winters," the author convinces readers to accept the choices they make, while in "Bad Weather Is Good for You," the author shows readers how to make better choices on a daily basis.
  - Ⓓ In "Finding Joy in Urban Winters," the author informs readers about cities that have implemented specific ideas, while in "Bad Weather Is Good for You," the author encourages readers to implement specific behaviors.



### 10 Part A

Which *hygge* principle from “Finding Joy in Urban Winters” is **most clearly** developed in “Bad Weather Is Good for You”?

- Ⓐ warmth
- Ⓑ light and color
- Ⓒ access to nature
- Ⓓ gathering places

### Part B

Which quotation from “Bad Weather Is Good for You” **best** supports the answer to Part A?

- Ⓐ “A 2021 study found that the best days to avoid catching highly contagious strains . . . were windy days. . . .” (paragraph 3)
- Ⓑ “A 2020 study published in *Brain Communications* found that reverse walking engages an entirely different set of lower body muscles.” (paragraph 4)
- Ⓒ “. . . we strengthen our knee joints and quadriceps—which means an improved gait and fewer aches and pains.” (paragraph 4)
- Ⓓ “The pounding of raindrops causes plants, trees and soil to release sweet-smelling compounds which then mingle and combine in the air we breathe.” (paragraph 5)

## English Language Arts

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- 11 Read the details from the articles. Determine whether each detail **best** helps to develop a formal tone or an informal tone.

Then the temperature plummets . . . and you . . . start wondering why you don't live in Arizona. (paragraph 1 of "Finding Joy in Urban Winters")

- Ⓐ formal tone
- Ⓑ informal tone

For cities in America's Snow Belt, the fallout of harsh winters can be severe. (paragraph 2 of "Finding Joy in Urban Winters")

- Ⓐ formal tone
- Ⓑ informal tone

. . . snow seems like a shocker year after year. . . . (paragraph 8 of "Finding Joy in Urban Winters")

- Ⓐ formal tone
- Ⓑ informal tone

. . . participants walking in heavily ionized air had higher levels of a vital antibody. . . . (paragraph 5 of "Bad Weather Is Good for You")

- Ⓐ formal tone
- Ⓑ informal tone

. . . you can go for a nippy walk with your coat undone at the collar and your scarf unwrapped. (paragraph 8 of "Bad Weather Is Good for You")

- Ⓐ formal tone
- Ⓑ informal tone

## English Language Arts

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**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 “Finding Joy in Urban Winters” and “Bad Weather Is Good for You,” write an essay that argues for the importance of remaining active in all types of weather. Be sure to use information from **both** articles to develop your essay.

**Write your answer on the next two pages.**



A large rectangular box containing 25 horizontal lines for writing.

**Alexander Hamilton was a key figure in 18th-century America. Aaron Burr was an influential New York politician who ran for president against Thomas Jefferson in the election of 1800. Both Burr and Jefferson were members of the Democratic-Republican Party. Read the excerpts from a biography and a musical about Hamilton, and then answer the questions that follow.**

This excerpt from a biography of Alexander Hamilton focuses on his role during the presidential election of 1800. Hamilton was an aide to George Washington during the Revolutionary War (1775–1783), a delegate at the Constitutional Convention (1787), Secretary of the Treasury under President Washington, and a member of the Federalist Party.

### *from Alexander Hamilton: The Making of America*

by Teri Kanefield

- 1 After Washington left office, the Democratic-Republicans<sup>1</sup> found ways to systematically weaken the central government and empower the states. When Virginia and Kentucky adopted resolutions stating that the Constitution was merely a contract between the states and that states were free to ignore federal laws they believed were unconstitutional, Hamilton felt the union was on the verge of unraveling. He didn't think it would take much to bring about its complete collapse. "Every moment's reflection," he wrote to a friend, "increases my chagrin and disgust."
- 2 Hamilton's behavior during the 1800 election struck many of his friends as completely unhinged.<sup>2</sup> John Adams, a Federalist,<sup>3</sup> was running for a second term. His chief opponents were Thomas Jefferson and Aaron Burr. Hamilton became passionately convinced that Adams must not win reelection, despite the fact that he had served as vice president for both of Washington's presidential terms and was at least nominally a Federalist.
- 3 Adams and Hamilton had never liked each other. Adams resented Hamilton for occupying the position of Washington's closest adviser, a position he felt should have been his, as vice president. . . . For Hamilton, though, it was a matter of Adams's fitness to lead. He genuinely believed that Adams was not up to governing the country. He issued a publication entitled "Letter from Alexander Hamilton, Concerning

<sup>1</sup>Democratic-Republicans—a political party founded by Thomas Jefferson in 1792 that favored a limited federal government

<sup>2</sup>unhinged—behaving in an uncontrolled or unreasonable way

<sup>3</sup>Federalist—a member of a political party that supported a strong federal government

## English Language Arts

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the Public Conduct and Character of John Adams” and let loose a series of attacks. Hamilton campaigned for another Federalist, Charles Cotesworth Pinckney, which weakened the Federalist Party and split the Federalist vote.

- 4 Because the Democratic-Republicans were unified and better organized, the top two finishers, Burr and Jefferson, were both Democratic-Republicans. When the voting by the Electoral College was tallied, Burr and Jefferson were tied. The outgoing House of Representatives had the job of breaking the tie, but they couldn’t do it. After dozens of rounds of voting, neither Jefferson nor Burr had a majority. The problem was that each state’s House delegation had only one vote, and Maryland and Vermont were deadlocked and thus could not vote. Most Federalists preferred Burr to Jefferson, and Congress was leaning toward Burr. If Hamilton had remained silent, Burr would likely have become the third president of the United States. But Hamilton wasn’t about to remain silent. He and Jefferson had long been political opponents and even enemies. . . . [B]ut Hamilton knew Jefferson to be an honest man of principle. Burr, in Hamilton’s opinion, had no redeeming qualities.
- 5 The House of Representatives went through more rounds of voting, and each time neither candidate received the necessary majority. Meanwhile, Hamilton was doing all he could to throw the election to Jefferson. He insisted that Jefferson “is by far not so dangerous a man and he has pretensions to character,” not a ringing endorsement, perhaps, but Burr, he said, was worse: a man without any principles at all.
- 6 On the thirty-sixth vote, enough congressmen in deadlocked states switched their votes to Jefferson so that he finally won by a narrow margin. Burr lost—and held Hamilton responsible. Jefferson became president and Burr vice president.
- 7 After Adams left office, the Federalists never again won the presidency. Hamilton has been called a fool for playing a part in smashing his own party. Hamilton justified his refusal to endorse either Adams or Burr by saying that the public good was more important than loyalty to a party. Yes, he had helped build the Federalist Party, but he had also helped create the United States, and the country was dearer to him than his party.

*Alexander Hamilton: The Making of America* by Teri Kanefield. Copyright © 2017 by Teri Kanefield. Reprinted by permission of Abrams.

## English Language Arts

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This excerpt, from the hip-hop musical *Hamilton*, depicts the political alliances during the presidential election of 1800.

**The Election of 1800**  
*from Hamilton: The Revolution*  
by Lin-Manuel Miranda and Jeremy McCarter

### Cast of Characters

**COMPANY:** All onstage actors

**ENSEMBLE:** Actors other than the primary characters in a scene

**JEFFERSON:** Thomas Jefferson, vice president of the United States who ran for president in the election of 1800

**MADISON:** James Madison, a member of the Virginia General Assembly who supported Thomas Jefferson in the election of 1800

**BURR:** Aaron Burr, a member of the New York State Legislature who ran against Thomas Jefferson in the presidential election of 1800

**HAMILTON:** Alexander Hamilton, former secretary of the treasury who was a key figure in the election of 1800

**VOTERS:** Sometimes referred to as FEMALE VOTER, ANOTHER MALE VOTER, ANOTHER FEMALE VOTER, TWO MEN, WOMEN, EVEN MORE VOTERS. Part of the company that gives voice to the opinions of the voting public.

**COMPANY:** The election of eighteen hundred.

***Jefferson & Madison enter.***

**JEFFERSON:** Can we get back to politics?

**MADISON:** Please?

5 **JEFFERSON:** Yo. Ev'ry action has an equal,  
opposite reaction. . . . So now I'm facing—

**JEFFERSON, MADISON:** Aaron Burr!



## English Language Arts

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- JEFFERSON:** With his own faction.<sup>1</sup>
- 10 **MADISON:** He's very attractive in the North.  
New Yorkers like his chances.
- JEFFERSON:** He's not very forthcoming on  
any particular stances.
- MADISON:** Ask him a question: It glances off,  
he obfuscates,<sup>2</sup> he dances.
- 15 **JEFFERSON:** And they say I'm a francophile:<sup>3</sup>  
At least they know I know where France is!
- MADISON:** Thomas, that's the problem, see,  
they see Burr as a less extreme you.
- JEFFERSON:** Ha!
- 20 **MADISON:** You need to change course,  
a key endorsement might redeem you.
- JEFFERSON:** Who did you have in mind?
- MADISON:** Don't laugh.
- JEFFERSON:** Who is it?
- 25 **MADISON:** You used to work on the same  
staff.
- JEFFERSON:** Whaaaat.
- MADISON:** It might be nice. It might be nice.  
To get Hamilton on your side.
- 30 **JEFFERSON, MADISON:** It might be nice.  
It might be nice.  
To get Hamilton on your side.
- Burr campaigns in earnest.***
- 35 **BURR:** Talk less!  
**ENSEMBLE:** Burr!

<sup>1</sup>faction—a group within a larger group that opposes some ideas of the larger group

<sup>2</sup>obfuscates—gives confusing or unclear responses

<sup>3</sup>francophile—a person who greatly admires France or the French

## English Language Arts

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**BURR:** Smile more!

**ENSEMBLE:** Burr!

**BURR:** Don't let 'em know what you're  
against or what you're for!

40 **ENSEMBLE:** Burr!

**BURR:** Shake hands with him!

**ENSEMBLE:** Burr!

**BURR:** Charm her!

**ENSEMBLE:** Burr!

45 **BURR:** It's eighteen hundred, ladies,  
tell your husbands: Vote for—Burr!

**ENSEMBLE:** Burr!

**MALE VOTER:** I don't like Adams.

50 **FEMALE VOTER:** Well, he's gonna lose,  
that's just defeatist.

**ANOTHER MALE VOTER:** And Jefferson—

**TWO MEN:** In love with France!

**ANOTHER FEMALE VOTER:** Yea, he's  
so elitist!

55 **TWO WOMEN:** I like that Aaron Burr!

**A WOMAN:** I can't believe we're here  
with him!

**A MAN:** He seems approachable? . . .

60 **ENSEMBLE:** Dear Mr. Hamilton: Your  
fellow Fed'ralists would like to know how  
you'll be voting.

**HAMILTON:** It's quiet uptown.

65 **ENSEMBLE:** Dear Mr. Hamilton: John Adams  
doesn't stand a chance so who are  
you promoting?

**HAMILTON:** It's quiet uptown.

**MEN and WOMEN:** Jefferson or Burr?  
We know it's lose-lose. Jefferson or Burr?

## English Language Arts

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But if you had to choose.

70 **EVEN MORE VOTERS:** Dear Mr. Hamilton:

**MEN:** Jefferson or Burr?

**WOMEN:** Jefferson or Burr?

**EVEN MORE VOTERS:** John Adams doesn't stand a chance so who are you promoting?

75 **MEN and WOMEN:** We know it's lose-lose.

**MEN:** Jefferson or Burr?

**WOMEN:** Jefferson or Burr?

**EVEN MORE VOTERS, MEN, and WOMEN:**

But if you had to choose.

80 ***Burr appears.***

**HAMILTON:** Well, if it isn't Aaron Burr. Sir!

**BURR:** Alexander!

**HAMILTON:** You've created quite a stir, sir!

**BURR:** I'm going door to door!

85 **HAMILTON:** You're openly campaigning?

**BURR:** Sure!

**HAMILTON:** That's new.

**BURR:** Honestly, it's kind of draining.

**HAMILTON:** Burr—

90 **BURR:** Sir!

**HAMILTON:** Is there anything you wouldn't do?

**BURR:** No. I'm chasing what I want. And you know what?

95 **HAMILTON:** What?

**BURR:** I learned that from you.

**ENSEMBLE:** If you had to choose  
If you had to choose

**MADISON:** It's a tie!

## English Language Arts

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100 **ENSEMBLE:** If you had to choose  
If you had to choose  
**JEFFERSON:** It's up to the delegates!  
**ENSEMBLE:** If you had to choose  
If you had to choose

105 **JEFFERSON, MADISON:** It's up to Hamilton!  
**VOTERS:** If you had to choose,  
If you had to choose,  
**VOTERS:** If you had to  
**MADISON, ENSEMBLE:** Jefferson or Burr?  
110 **ENSEMBLE:** Jefferson or Burr?  
**VOTERS, MADISON, ENSEMBLE:** Choose,  
choose, choose!

### *Hamilton steps forward.*

**HAMILTON:** Yo.

115 **ENSEMBLE:** Oh!  
**HAMILTON:** The people are asking to hear  
my voice.  
**ENSEMBLE:** Oh!

**HAMILTON:** For the country is facing a  
120 difficult choice.  
**ENSEMBLE:** Oh!  
**HAMILTON:** And if you were to ask me  
who I'd promote—  
**ENSEMBLE:** Oh!

125 **HAMILTON:** Jefferson has my vote.  
**JEFFERSON, MADISON, ENSEMBLE:** Oh!  
**HAMILTON:** I have never agreed with  
Jefferson once.  
**JEFFERSON, MADISON, ENSEMBLE:** Oh!

130 **HAMILTON:** We have fought on like  
seventy-five diff'rent fronts.

## English Language Arts

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- JEFFERSON, MADISON, ENSEMBLE:** Oh!
- HAMILTON:** But when all is said and all is done. Jefferson has beliefs. Burr has none.
- 135 **ENSEMBLE:** Ooooooooooooooh.
- Madison & Jefferson exchange a glance, as the company hurries away. . . .*
- MADISON:** Hamilton's on your side. . . .
- JEFFERSON:** And?
- 140 **MADISON:** You won in a landslide.
- Burr enters.*
- BURR:** Congrats on a race well-run.  
I did give you a fight.
- JEFFERSON:** Uh-huh.
- 145 **BURR:** I look forward to our partnership.
- JEFFERSON:** Our partnership?
- BURR:** As your vice president.
- JEFFERSON:** Ha. Yeah, right.  
You hear this guy? Man openly campaigns  
150 against me, talkin' 'bout, "I look forward to  
our partnership."
- MADISON:** It's crazy that the guy who comes  
in second becomes vice president.
- JEFFERSON:** Yeah, you know what? We can  
155 change that. You know why?
- MADISON:** Why?
- JEFFERSON:** Cuz I'm the President. Burr,  
when you see Hamilton, thank him for  
the endorsement.
- 160 *Jefferson exits with Madison.  
Burr is alone.*

"The Election of 1800" from *Hamilton: The Revolution* by Lin-Manuel Miranda and Jeremy McCarter. Copyright © 2016 by Lin-Manuel Miranda. Reprinted by permission of Grand Central Publishing.

## English Language Arts

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**13** Read the details from *Alexander Hamilton: The Making of America* in the box.

- “Every moment’s reflection,” he wrote to a friend, “increases my chagrin and disgust.” (paragraph 1)
- Hamilton’s behavior during the 1800 election struck many of his friends as completely unhinged. (paragraph 2)
- . . . the country was dearer to him than his party. (paragraph 7)

Based on the excerpt, what do the details **most clearly** emphasize about Alexander Hamilton?

- Ⓐ His desire for power motivated his political aspirations.
- Ⓑ The political events of the time stirred strong emotions in him.
- Ⓒ The uncertainty of the election provoked his need for competition.
- Ⓓ His reaction to the election was inspired by the comments of his critics.

**14** Based on “The Election of 1800,” what does the word *redeem* **most likely** mean as it is used in line 21?

- Ⓐ save
- Ⓑ cover
- Ⓒ settle
- Ⓓ hinder

## English Language Arts

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- 15 What is the **main** effect of the Ensemble’s repetition of “Burr!” in lines 35–47 of “The Election of 1800”?
- Ⓐ It mocks Burr’s insincere campaigning attempts.
  - Ⓑ It indicates that Burr’s campaign is filled with promises.
  - Ⓒ It suggests that public interest is building around Burr’s campaign.
  - Ⓓ It promotes the idea that Burr’s approach to campaigning is unconventional.

- 16 Read the sentence from paragraph 4 of *Alexander Hamilton: The Making of America* in the box.

He and Jefferson had long been political opponents and even enemies.

Which quotation from “The Election of 1800” **most clearly** supports a claim similar to the claim made in the sentence?

- Ⓐ “**JEFFERSON:** Yo. Ev’ry action has an equal, / opposite reaction. . . . So now I’m facing—” (lines 5 and 6)
- Ⓑ “**JEFFERSON:** Who is it? / **MADISON:** You used to work on the same / staff.” (lines 24–26)
- Ⓒ “**HAMILTON:** And if you were to ask me / who I’d promote— / **ENSEMBLE:** Oh! / **HAMILTON:** Jefferson has my vote.” (lines 122–125)
- Ⓓ “**HAMILTON:** I have never agreed with / Jefferson once. / **JEFFERSON, MADISON, ENSEMBLE:** Oh! / **HAMILTON:** We have fought on like / seventy-five diff’rent fronts.” (lines 127–131)

## English Language Arts

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- 17 Read the details from the excerpts in the box.

- If Hamilton had remained silent, Burr would likely have become the third president of the United States. (paragraph 4 of *Alexander Hamilton: The Making of America*)
- **MADISON:** Hamilton’s on your side. . . . / **JEFFERSON:** And? / **MADISON:** You won in a landslide. (lines 138–140 of “The Election of 1800”)

Based on both excerpts, which central idea about the presidential election of 1800 is **most clearly** supported by the details?

- Ⓐ Hamilton changed how the election was run.
  - Ⓑ Hamilton influenced the outcome of the election.
  - Ⓒ Hamilton used unfair strategies to delay the election.
  - Ⓓ Hamilton saved the country from a disastrous election result.
- 18 How do the excerpts **mainly** differ in how they present the presidential election of 1800?
- Ⓐ *Alexander Hamilton: The Making of America* describes events from the past, but “The Election of 1800” presents modern events.
  - Ⓑ *Alexander Hamilton: The Making of America* contains historical facts and analysis, but “The Election of 1800” brings the story alive.
  - Ⓒ *Alexander Hamilton: The Making of America* reveals that Hamilton won the election, but “The Election of 1800” asks the audience to determine the results.
  - Ⓓ *Alexander Hamilton: The Making of America* provides a realistic retelling of what Hamilton did, but “The Election of 1800” analyzes the problems and rewards of elections.



## English Language Arts

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### 19 Part A

Read lines 113–117 from “The Election of 1800” in the box.

***Hamilton steps forward.*** / **HAMILTON:** Yo. / **ENSEMBLE:** Oh! /  
**HAMILTON:** The people are asking to hear / my voice.

Based on the excerpt, which character trait of Hamilton is **best** developed by the lines?

- Ⓐ his indecision, because he changes the subject when the election is discussed
- Ⓑ his competitiveness, because he feels winning is more important than principle
- Ⓒ his confidence, because he frames his recommendation as an important announcement
- Ⓓ his reluctance, because he does not want to anger the public if he chooses the wrong candidate

### Part B

Which detail from *Alexander Hamilton: The Making of America* **best** suggests the same character trait as in the answer to Part A?

- Ⓐ “For Hamilton, though, it was a matter of Adams’s fitness to lead.” (paragraph 3)
- Ⓑ “Hamilton campaigned for another Federalist. . . .” (paragraph 3)
- Ⓒ “But Hamilton wasn’t about to remain silent.” (paragraph 4)
- Ⓓ “Hamilton justified his refusal to endorse either Adams or Burr. . . .” (paragraph 7)

**Grade 8 English Language Arts**  
**Spring 2025 Released Operational Items**

<b>PBT Item No.</b>	<b>Page No.</b>	<b>Reporting Category</b>	<b>Standard</b>	<b>Item Type*</b>	<b>Item Description</b>	<b>Correct Answer (SR)**</b>
1	11	<i>Reading</i>	RI.8.4	SR	Determine how a metaphorical expression in a specific paragraph contributes to the reader's understanding of an article.	B
2	11	<i>Reading</i>	RI.8.5	SR	Determine how a specific paragraph contributes to the development of ideas in an article.	B
3	11	<i>Language</i>	L.8.2	SR	Determine the purpose of commas in a specific sentence of an article.	A
4	12	<i>Reading</i>	RI.8.6	SR	Determine the purpose of an author's use of second-person point of view in a specific paragraph of an article.	C
5	12	<i>Language</i>	L.8.4	SR	Determine the meaning of a word as it is used in a specific paragraph of an article.	B
6	12	<i>Reading</i>	RI.8.8	SR	Identify a sentence from an article that supports an author's primary argument in the article.	B
7	13	<i>Reading</i>	RI.8.8	SR	Identify a detail from an article that supports an idea introduced in the title of the article.	B
8	13	<i>Reading</i>	RI.8.6	SR	Identify a quotation from an article that acknowledges an opposing point of view.	C
9	14	<i>Reading</i>	RI.8.6	SR	Compare the authors' purposes in two articles on similar topics.	D
10	15	<i>Reading</i>	RI.8.1	SR	Determine which concept from an article is developed in another article on a similar topic and identify a quotation from the second article that supports the concept.	C;D
11	16	<i>Reading</i>	RI.8.4	SR	Determine whether details from two articles develop formal or informal tones.	B;A;B;A;B
12	17	<i>Language, Writing</i>	L.8.1, L.8.2, L.8.3, W.8.1, W.8.4	ES	Write an essay that argues for a specific action based on two articles on similar topics; use information from both articles to develop the essay.	
13	28	<i>Reading</i>	RI.8.4	SR	Determine what details from an excerpt emphasize about an individual.	B
14	28	<i>Language</i>	L.8.4	SR	Determine the meaning of a word as it is used in a specific line of an excerpt from a musical.	A
15	29	<i>Reading</i>	RL.8.4	SR	Determine the effect of a repeated word in specific lines of an excerpt from a musical.	C
16	29	<i>Reading</i>	RI.8.8	SR	Identify a quotation from an excerpt that supports a claim made in another excerpt on a similar topic.	D
17	30	<i>Reading</i>	RI.8.2	SR	Determine which central idea about a historical event is supported by specific details from two excerpts on similar topics.	B
18	30	<i>Reading</i>	RI.8.7	SR	Determine how two excerpts on similar topics differ in how they present a historical event.	B

<b>PBT Item No.</b>	<b>Page No.</b>	<b>Reporting Category</b>	<b>Standard</b>	<b>Item Type*</b>	<b>Item Description</b>	<b>Correct Answer (SR)**</b>
19	31	<i>Reading</i>	RL.8.3	SR	Determine which character trait of an individual is developed by specific lines in an excerpt from a musical and identify a detail from an excerpt of a biography on a similar topic that suggests the same character trait.	C;C

\* 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 any constructed-response and essay items will be posted to the Department's website later this year.

**Grade 8 English Language Arts**  
**Spring 2025 Unreleased Operational Items**

<b>PBT Item No.</b>	<b>Reporting Category</b>	<b>Standard</b>	<b>Item Type*</b>	<b>Item Description</b>
20	<i>Language</i>	L.8.4	SR	Determine which word would replace another word in a sentence from an excerpt.
21	<i>Reading</i>	RL.8.3	SR	Analyze what specific paragraphs in an excerpt reveal about a character.
22	<i>Reading</i>	RL.8.4	SR	Determine the purpose of a specific sentence in an excerpt.
23	<i>Reading</i>	RL.8.3	SR	Determine what is suggested by a reference in an excerpt to a specific object.
24	<i>Language</i>	L.8.2	SR	Determine the purpose of a dash in a specific sentence of an excerpt.
25	<i>Reading</i>	RL.8.5	SR	Determine the purpose of a specific paragraph in an excerpt.
26	<i>Reading</i>	RL.8.4	SR	Determine what a specific phrase in an excerpt emphasizes about an object.
27	<i>Reading</i>	RL.8.3	SR	Identify details from an excerpt that show characters experiencing specific emotions.
28	<i>Reading</i>	RL.8.4	SR	Determine what a specific phrase in an excerpt suggests about a character.
29	<i>Reading</i>	RL.8.3	SR	Determine the reason for a character's reaction to another character in specific paragraphs of an excerpt.
30	<i>Reading</i>	RL.8.1	SR	Determine the reason for a character's actions and identify a detail from the excerpt that supports the reason.
31	<i>Language, Writing</i>	L.8.1, L.8.2, L.8.3, W.8.2, W.8.4	ES	Write an essay that analyzes how an author creates a specific feeling throughout an excerpt; use details from the excerpt to develop the essay.

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