

# 2023 MCAS Sample Student Work and Scoring Guide

## Grade 7 English Language Arts

### Question 12: Essay

**Reporting Categories:** Language and Writing

**Standard:** [L.PK-12.1](#) - Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking.

**Standard:** [L.PK-12.2](#) - Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling when writing.

**Standard:** [L.PK-12.3](#) - Apply knowledge of language to understand how language functions in different contexts, to make effective choices for meaning or style, and to comprehend more fully when reading or listening.

**Standard:** [W.PK-12.2](#) - Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.

**Standard:** [W.PK-12.4](#) - Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

**Item Description:** Write an essay explaining the significance of an object to a group of people; use information from the passages to support your explanation.

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### Essay Prompt

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For this question, you will write an essay based on the passage(s). Your writing should:

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

Based on “Here There Be Jaguars” and “Creature Close-Up,” write an essay that explains how cameras are a useful tool for people hoping to protect wildlife. Be sure to use information from **both** articles to develop your essay.

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*Continue to the following page to see the scoring guides for this question. Sample student responses begin on page 3. The annotations that appear above each sample response describe elements of the response that contributed to its score for Idea Development and Standard English Conventions.*

### Scoring Guide for Idea Development

Select a score point in the table below to view the sample student response.

Score*	Description
<a href="#">5A</a>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Central idea is insightful and fully developed</li> <li>Skillful selection and explanation of evidence and/or details</li> <li>Skillful and/or subtle organization</li> <li>Rich expression of ideas</li> <li>Full awareness of the task and mode</li> </ul>
<a href="#">5B</a>	
<a href="#">4</a>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Central idea is clear and well-developed</li> <li>Effective selection and explanation of evidence and/or details</li> <li>Effective organization</li> <li>Clear expression of ideas</li> <li>Full awareness of the task and mode</li> </ul>
<a href="#">3</a>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Central idea is general and moderately developed</li> <li>Appropriate selection and explanation of evidence and/or details</li> <li>Moderate organization</li> <li>Adequate expression of ideas</li> <li>Sufficient awareness of the task and mode</li> </ul>
<a href="#">2</a>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Central idea may be present and is somewhat developed</li> <li>Limited selection and explanation of evidence and/or details</li> <li>Limited organization</li> <li>Basic expression of ideas</li> <li>Partial awareness of the task and mode</li> </ul>
<a href="#">1</a>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Central idea is not developed</li> <li>Insufficient evidence and/or details</li> <li>Minimal organization</li> <li>Poor expression of ideas</li> <li>Minimal awareness of the task and mode</li> </ul>
<a href="#">0</a>	The response shows evidence the student has read the text, but does not address the question or incorrectly responds to the question.

### Scoring Guide for Standard English Conventions

Select a score point in the table below to view the sample student response.

Score*	Description
<a href="#">3A</a>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consistent control of a variety of sentence structures relative to length of essay</li> <li>Consistent control of grammar, usage, and mechanics relative to complexity and/or length of essay</li> </ul>
<a href="#">3B</a>	
<a href="#">3C</a>	
<a href="#">3D</a>	
<a href="#">2</a>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mostly consistent control of sentence structures relative to length of essay</li> <li>Mostly consistent control of grammar, usage, and mechanics relative to complexity and/or length of essay</li> </ul>
<a href="#">1</a>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Little control and/or no variety in sentence structure and/or</li> <li>Little control of grammar, usage, and mechanics relative to complexity and/or insufficient length</li> </ul>
<a href="#">0</a>	Sentences are formed incorrectly with no control of grammar, usage, and mechanics and/or insufficient length.

\*In both Scoring Guides, letters are used to distinguish between sample student responses that earned the same score (e.g., 5A and 5B).

**Idea Development—Score Point 5A**

The central idea that cameras can be an important way to provide both public exposure for threatened wildlife and useful data for researchers is fully developed throughout the essay. The introduction expresses full awareness of the task and is well supported by a skillful balance of explanation and evidence. Thoughtful organization, both overall and within body paragraphs, makes it easy to understand the information presented. The essay insightfully weaves in relevant details from both passages on the camera's ability to safely and noninvasively document wildlife behavior, capture threatened species in environments otherwise too hazardous, remote, or dark to observe, and collect data over sustained periods, "revealing things about nature and animals that humans have never encountered before." A variety of transitions, such as "Without wanting the risk"; "Ultimately, the rough and dangerous lands"; and "Cameras can also capture videos and photos at night" deftly connect ideas and contribute to a rich expression of ideas.

**Standard English Conventions—Score Point 3A**

Consistent control is evident across a wide variety of complex sentence structures and mechanics. Parentheses and punctuation are correct when citing text evidence. Grammar and usage exhibit consistent control. The essay's length and complexity provide opportunity to demonstrate control of grade-level standard English conventions

Do you know if there is a way to capture pictures of animals without harming them? In the passages *Here There Be Jaguars* by David C. Louis and *Creature Close-Up* by Maggie Mead, they explain how cameras are useful for people hoping to protect wildlife. Cameras are a great way to look at wildlife without having the risk of getting hurt or hurting other animals. Cameras can also capture things at night that humans would have never been able to see with a naked eye. Cameras also collect data which is helpful for researchers to use. Researchers innovative thinking comes into play in the wild life kingdom.

Without wanting the risk of getting hurt, animal examiners use cameras in place of tags. Researchers like Miguel Gomez also know the risks of the mountains of Sonora, Mexico. Sonora has spiky plants with thorns all over them. Louis states, "The mountains of Sonora, Mexico, are rough and rugged lands. Traveling here is not for the faint of heart" (Louis, 1). Ultimately, the rough and dangerous lands are no risk that anyone wants to take. Cameras are the best solution in this situation. Without wanting to invade the property of the animal kingdom, cameras allow this. Louis illustrates, "One key advantage to using camera traps to study wildlife is the traps are non-invasive" (Louis 10). Ideally, cameras are a great way to capture pictures and videos without invading the animal's property and threatening them. With the endangered animals, Joel Sartore, an animal photographer wishes his photos will draw people's attention so that the endangered animals will hopefully go back to normal. "Sartore hopes his striking portraits will draw people's attention to the animals' struggles" (Mead, 4). Basically, the cameras are a way of letting people see and watch animals in nature without hurting them in any way. In conclusion, the cameras are an efficient way to learn about the animals without hurting them.

Cameras can also capture videos and photos at night that humans would have never been able to see by themselves. The cameras are put in secret areas where they know animals are going to pass. This allows the researchers to collect photos and videos about the jaguars and other animals without having to go up there and look at the animals with his own eyes. "The camera traps are mounted in areas where jaguars and other wildlife are known to travel and visit" (Louis, 5). Ultimately, the cameras were able to capture documents that Gomez would have never been able to catch. Since at night a lot of animals pass by, cameras are improved so that they can take pictures and videos in the dark. Louis states, "Cameras can capture images in complete darkness without a flash" (Louis, 9). Ideally, cameras are made so they can do anything that the researchers wouldn't be able to do. Since some animals get scared when people get close to them, cameras are a good way to examine

and explore the animals without having to get close to them. Louis illustrates, "It's simple to place them in remote, hard-to-reach areas where the shyest of animals live" (Louis, 11). Finally, the cameras can let people explore animals that have never been seen by humans because of their shyness. Conclusively, cameras can see and capture things that humans would have a hard time seeing.

Cameras can also collect data and information about other animals. Scientists also can leave the cameras out in nature for months or even years without having to touch it. The cameras would eventually collect data throughout the year and the scientists will be able to review them. "Scientists can leave the cameras for months at a time, capturing the curious changes to wildlife behavior" (Louis, 11). Cameras are good at collecting data and with the data, scientists and researchers are able to view animals. Sartore who travels around the world to take photos of animals encountered dogs that had killed a koala. Mead states, "He took photos of koalas that had been killed by pet dogs in Australia" (Mead, 9). This shows that the cameras can capture photos that people from other parts of the world have not seen. Cameras also are revealing secrets about the animal world that humans are just starting to understand. Louis illustrates, "These cameras--along with other tools--are revealing a secret world that we are just beginning to understand" (Louis, 18). Ultimately, cameras are revealing things about nature and animals that humans have never encountered before. This is showing that cameras are like another pair of eyes. In conclusion, cameras are revealing to humans things that we would have never seen.

Cameras collect information and data about nature and animals. Cameras are impressive and can snap photos and videos in the dark. Without hurting animals and nature, cameras can collect pictures and information without having to tag the animal. In conclusion, cameras are an efficient way to collect pictures and data of animals, without hurting them.

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**Idea Development—Score Point 5B**

The central idea that cameras are a useful tool for people hoping to protect wildlife is fully developed in the essay and supported with specific details from both passages. Information is logically organized, and full awareness of the task is consistently maintained. With a balance of text evidence and analysis, body paragraphs explain how cameras, without causing harm or discomfort to animals, provide a greater understanding of wildlife. The essay emphasizes how cameras allow for “amazing discoveries” and bring greater visibility to the dangers these species face. A variety of transitions are employed, such as “To begin, cameras are a helpful tool”; “By using information such as when and where a photo is captured”; and “In addition, cameras are also a useful tool”, demonstrating the skillful organization of the essay.

**Standard English Conventions—Score Point 3B**

Consistent control is evident across a wide variety of grammar, punctuation skills, and sentence structures. The essay is developed and, given its length, shows sustained control of standard English conventions throughout. Spelling errors, such as “disturbe,” are minor, given the overall complexity of the writing.

Everyone knows that species are dying out. But not everyone knows that protecting animals can come down to just one simple act. In the articles, "*Here There Be Jaguars*" by David C. Louis, there are people trying to watch the habits of jaguars to try to understand them better, and maybe help them along a bit, and in the article, "*Creature Close-Up*", by Maggie Mead, Joel Sartore is trying to make people realize that some animals are not going to be here forever if people don't stop endangering them. Sartore is trying to make people understand more about animals. In the articles, cameras are a useful tool for people that are trying to protect wildlife.

To begin, cameras are a helpful tool for people trying to protect wildlife, because the cameras help capture animals in photos that help people understand more about them. First, in the article, "*Here There Be Jaguars*", Gomez is trying to understand the habits of the animals better, "These data can help scientists like Gomez better understand the habits of mysterious animals. By using information such as when and where the photo was captured, Gomez can piece together the story." (8) This proves that cameras are a helpful tool, because Gomez will now be able to understand the habits of Jaguars and many more animals. Also, in the other article, "*Creature Close-Up*", Sartore wanted people to understand that people need to have better control and need to realize that their actions can hurt animals, "Sartore documented some of the ways human activity was harming animals. He took photos of koalas that had been killed by pet dogs in Australia. After an oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico, he snapped pictures of pelicans coated in oil." (9) This evidence proves that cameras are a useful tool, because without the camera, Sartore wouldn't have been able to get the message across that animals are dying and suffering because of humans.

In addition, cameras are also a useful tool for people trying to protect wildlife, because people using the cameras have an easy time making the animals feel comfortable and do not harm them. To start, in the article, "*Here There Be Jaguars*", The article is talking about how the cameras don't harm the animals or make the animals uncomfortable, "One key advantage to using camera traps to study wildlife is that the traps are non-invasive. This means they don't disturb or hurt the animals." (10) This proves that cameras are a useful tool because they are not hurting the animals, which is very good, because the animals are not being scared of or being hurt by the camera traps. Also, in the article, "*Creature Close-Up*", Sartore works to make sure the animal is comfortable, "Sartore works with animal handlers to make sure each animal is always comfortable being photographed." (12) This shows that cameras are a useful tool because making sure that the animals feel comfortable and are not nervous is important and good because the animals are feeling safe and not scared.

Lastly, the cameras are a useful tool because they help draw people's attention to what is being shown. In the article, "*Here There Be Jaguars*", People have found amazing discoveries from cameras, "Around the world, camera traps have led to some remarkable discoveries. In 2012, camera traps captured pics of the Amur leopard in China, where it hadn't been seen in decades." (12) This proves that the cameras are a useful tool because they are helping people see all of the amazing discoveries, and they are bringing people's attention to the discoveries. In addition, in the article, "*Creature Close-Up*", Sartore believes that amazing photography will bring the attention of countless people to the poor animals, "Sartore hopes his striking portraits will draw people's attention to the animals' struggles." (4) This evidence shows that cameras are useful tools because the camera will bring people's attention to the poor animals, and make people understand what the animals are going through, and how to help the animals.

In Summary, cameras are a very useful tool used by people who are trying to protecting wildlife. First, the cameras capture the animals and make people understand more about animals. Also, the cameras are able to be placed in spots to make sure the animals feel comfortable and safe. Lastly, the cameras can help bring everyone's attention to the poor animals. Hopefully, now people can look at all of the photos of animals and people will want to help them, and not hurt them.

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**Idea Development—Score Point 4**

The essay presents a clear and well-developed central idea, explaining how cameras are a useful tool to bring awareness “to the public with emotional and harsh images of the animals’ reality, help scientists better understand the habits of mysterious animals and lead to discoveries, or use data to protect certain animals and their habitats.” Transitions are functional and organization is effective, if somewhat formulaic; examples include “First,” “Also,” and “Last but not least.” Explanations are effective, but there is less elaboration in some parts of the essay, as shown in this example: “His camera helps him by taking all the photos he needs to get his message across.” Consistent focus shows full awareness of the task.

**Standard English Conventions—Score Point 3C**

The essay contains a variety of simple and complex sentences that show consistent control of grammar, usage, and mechanics. Errors, such as the mispunctuated citation in the second body paragraph, are relatively minor and infrequent. Given its length and complexity, the essay demonstrates consistent control of standard English conventions for this grade level.

The camera has allowed various photographers to capture photos of wildlife, whether striking and encouraging change, or for research and studying of animals such as the jaguar. Cameras and photographers work together to create a positive change for the animals, such as shedding light to the public with emotional and harsh images of the animals' reality, help scientists better understand the habits of mysterious animals and lead to discoveries, or use data to protect certain animals and their habitats.

First, the main character of *Creature Close-Up* by Maggie Mead, Joel Sartore, is on a mission to photograph 12,000 animal species in facilities around the world, with his project being named the Photo Ark. In paragraph 4, it says that "Sartore hopes his striking portraits will draw people's attention to the animals' struggles." He photographs examples of human activity harming animals and his goal is to inspire people to protect nature with those images. His camera helps him by taking all the photos he needs to get his message across.

Also, cameras can help scientists study the habits of a cat like the jaguar. They're secretive and solitary animals, but luckily, there are various camera traps set up to collect data. *Here There Be Jaguars* states that "the collected photos add up to a massive database of images. These data can help scientists like Gomez better understand the habits of mysterious animals. By using information such as when and where the photos were captured, Gomez can piece together the story of the reserve's cats", (paragraph 8). This proves that cameras help with a scientist's research, because even though the scientists themselves cannot get up and close with the jaguar, they can use technology to gather valuable data. In paragraph 12 of the same article, additionally, the author includes examples of camera traps capturing pics of leopards, wolverines, and more.

Last but not least, researchers can use data from their photos to track animals and protect them. Gomez and biologists like him can design a network of camera traps to track a jaguar and use the GIS mapping tool to find out what types of habitats jaguars prefer, and what they should avoid. Paragraph 14 of *Here There Be Jaguars* proves all of that, and in paragraph 16, it says that "Corridors allow jaguars and other wildlife to move from habitat patch to habitat patch in search of resources like food, water, and mates. Corridors let animals adapt to changing landscapes and void dangerous barriers like cities, farmlands, or roads."

There are many different ways that cameras help wildlife, whether it being used to track mysterious animals and gather data for scientists, or capturing pictures to inspire people for change. The camera is a valuable tool for wildlife, though they may not know it yet.

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**Idea Development—Score Point 3**

The central idea is moderately developed throughout the essay, with each body paragraph explaining a different aspect of how cameras can be a useful tool for people hoping to protect wildlife. The essay asserts that photography spreads public awareness “of animals being affected badly from human activity” and that camera traps provide biologists information that enables them to help threatened wildlife. In addition, the essay describes how cameras allow biologists to map out endangered species’ habitats and “know what areas to protect if somebody wants to build something that can destroy the animals home”. Organization of body paragraphs is formulaic, and transitions are functional, contributing to an adequate expression of ideas.

**Standard English Conventions—Score Point 3D**

The essay is somewhat lacking in complexity at times, with similar sentence structures repeated in each body paragraph, but overall, control of a variety of mechanics is evident. Errors are present, such as the sentence fragments in the introduction and conclusion and the quotation in the first body paragraph that is punctuated incorrectly. These errors are minor, though, and infrequent throughout the essay. The length of the essay is sufficient to demonstrate consistent command of standard English conventions for the grade level.

Based on the articles, "Here There be Jaguars" and "Creature Close-Up". Cameras are a useful tool for people hoping to protect wildlife. Because, they can spread awareness, help biologists have more information about wildlife in a specific area, and from taking photos, biologists can use the photos to create maps of the habitat.

To start, the photos can spread awareness when put out to the public. In the article "Creature Close-Up". By Maggie Mead, at paragraph 9. It says "He took photos of koalas that had been killed by pet dogs in Australia. After an oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico, he snapped pictures of pelicans coated in oil". This quote shows that if the pictures of animals being affected badly from human activity are public, it can motivate people to want to help protect wildlife.

Secondly, the article "Here There Be jaguars". By David C. Louis, says in paragraph 18. "Camera traps are providing critical information to biologists who have dedicated their lives to studying the jaguar and other wildlife... Only with this understand will we be able to protect the jaguar and its wild kingdom." This piece of text clearly explains how the camera traps are giving biologists information that will help them be able to protect wildlife.

Finally, using the cameras will help biologists make a map of the habitat after animals homes are changed from the affect of humanity. The evidence is also from the article "Here There Be Jaguars", By David C. Louis. In paragraph 15, "Biologists like Gomez can use this powerful dataset to create maps of potential jaguar habitat. These maps highlight the most critical areas to protect." This quote explains how the photos of animals habitat will help biologists make a map of their habitat and know what areas to protect if somebody wants to build something that can destroy the animals home.

Therefore, from evidence shown in "Here There Be Jaguars" and "Creature Close-Up". Trap cameras are a very useful tool to help protect wildlife. Because, they can spread awareness to the media, help biologists have more information about wildlife in a specific area, and also help biologists make a map of an animals habitat when threatened.

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**Idea Development—Score Point 2**

The central idea is somewhat developed, explaining how cameras can be a useful tool to gain scientific understanding of jaguars and other threatened animals, and how photography can draw attention to wildlife in need of protection. While there is some understanding of the task, the essay’s explanation is limited and does little to expound upon the text evidence presented, as in the following sentence: “This helps scientists understand more about jaguars and how they can help them.” The absence of further development contributes to a somewhat basic expression of ideas.

**Standard English Conventions—Score Point 2**

The response exhibits mostly consistent control of grammar, usage, and mechanics. While errors are minor, sentence structures are simple and repetitive, such as “Cameras are a useful tool”; “Cameras are helpful”; “Cameras are also helpful because”; and “Cameras can make a big difference in the lives of many species.” Given the length of the response, with the body paragraph consisting largely of quoted material from the passages, the response is too brief to demonstrate consistent control.

Cameras are a useful tool in both the articles, "Here There Be Jaguars" and "Creature Close-Up." Cameras are helpful for people trying to protect wildlife because they can help capture animal behavior without human interaction. Cameras are also helpful because they can draw attention to wildlife that needs to be protected.

One way cameras can be beneficial to protecting wildlife is by teaching humans what animals are like by taking photos. For example, in paragraph 14 of "Here There Be Jaguars" the author says, "The photos tell biologists what types of habitats jaguars prefer and what habitats they might avoid." This helps scientists understand more about jaguars and how they can help them. In paragraph 2 of "Creature Close Up" the author says Sartore wants to photograph all 12,000 animal species in zoos, aquariums, and other facilities around the world." By taking pictures of wildlife Sartore can bring attention to all different types of animals and make a big difference in the lives of many different species.

Cameras can make a big difference in the lives of many species. Many people will see these pictures and want to make a difference in the animals lives.

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**Idea Development—Score Point 1**

The central idea of the response is not developed. Details relating to how cameras are a useful tool are minimal, as noted in this example: “[W]hen someone wants to build a road or something than Miguel Gomez can tell the person where not to build it to protect wildlife there.” Little explanation is provided, contributing to a poor expression of ideas, and organization is minimal.

**Standard English Conventions—Score Point 1**

Little control of grammar, usage, and mechanics is demonstrated. Run-on sentences, as well as punctuation and spelling errors (“kof”), are notable throughout the brief response. Little complexity is attempted and the response does not display consistent control of standard English conventions.

Cameras can be useful tools for people hoping to protect wildlife like in "Creature Close-Up", Joel Sartore used a camera to take pictures kof different animals and document them to help and get people to help to. In the passage called "Here There Be Jaguars", Miguel Gomez used cameras for taking pictures of where the animals like to be and he will chart that down on a very detailed map called the GIS and when someone wants to build a road or something than Miguel Gomez can tell the person where not to build it to protect the wildlife there.

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**Idea Development—Score Point 0**

The response may indicate that the student has read the passage, but the task is not addressed. The response does not discuss how cameras can be a useful tool for protecting wildlife.

**Standard English Conventions—Score Point 0**

The lengthy run-on sentence contains errors in spelling, grammar, and punctuation. Overall, the response is also of insufficient length to show any level of control.

Cameras are useful to peole because you can have good time and takes picures with family, friend but when your with a animal its differet you have to have good reflexes

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