

2025 MCAS Sample Student Work and Scoring Guide

Grade 10 English Language Arts

Question 22: 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-12.1](#) - Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.

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 arguing that a specific action can benefit individuals and communities based on two articles on similar topics; use information from both articles to develop the essay.

This item can be found in the released item sets on the [MCAS Resource Center](#).

Essay Prompt

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

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

Based on “Green Thumb” and “How Far Can Vertical Farming Go?,” write an essay arguing that alternative methods of growing food can benefit both individuals **and** communities. Be sure to use information from **both** articles to develop your essay.

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
5A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Central idea/thesis is insightful and fully developed Skillful selection and explanation of evidence and/or details Skillful and/or subtle organization Rich expression of ideas Full awareness of the task and mode
5B	
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Central idea/thesis is clear and well-developed Effective selection and explanation of evidence and/or details Effective organization Clear expression of ideas Full awareness of the task and mode
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Central idea/thesis is general and moderately developed Appropriate selection and explanation of evidence and/or details Moderate organization Adequate expression of ideas Sufficient awareness of the task and mode
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Central idea/thesis may be present and is somewhat developed Limited selection and explanation of evidence and/or details Limited organization Basic expression of ideas Partial awareness of the task and mode
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Central idea/thesis is not developed Insufficient evidence and/or details Minimal organization Poor expression of ideas Minimal awareness of the task and mode
0	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
3A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consistent control of a variety of sentence structures relative to length of essay Consistent control of grammar, usage, and mechanics relative to complexity and/or length of essay
3B	
3C	
3D	
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mostly consistent control of sentence structures relative to length of essay Mostly consistent control of grammar, usage, and mechanics relative to complexity and/or length of essay
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Little control and/or no variety in sentence structure and/or Little control of grammar, usage, and mechanics relative to complexity and/or insufficient length
0	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 essay is fully developed and organized with insightful evidence. The introduction acknowledges the counterclaim and then argues that “alternative methods of growing food can benefit both individuals and communities throughout the world.” The first body paragraph explains the positive impacts of urban farming with relevant supporting information from “Green Thumb”: The “vast production of crops in multiple areas” provides a benefit to the communities around them. This body paragraph also states that the “idea of people cultivating their own crops and food” can “have an immense impact on how people view their food.” The second body paragraph describes vertical farming as a modernized method that reduces the use of fertilizers and allows crops to grow in less conventional places. Supporting evidence from “How Far Can Vertical Farming Go?” is skillfully selected and explained. The conclusion acknowledges that drawbacks to alternative farming methods do exist but asserts the benefits to both communities and individuals. The essay is skillfully organized with a balanced explanation of the benefits to individuals and communities. There is a rich expression of ideas and a full awareness of the task and mode.

Standard English Conventions 3A

Consistent control of a variety of sentence structures is demonstrated throughout the essay. Minor errors in sentence construction are present but do not interfere with meaning: “Individuals and communities can grow closer to the food they produce as they connect more with what they are eating and are able to understand how their food is produced with the genuine want to eat what they make for themselves as well as benefit others in the community who are looking for a nutrition meal.” Overall, the length and the complexity of sentences demonstrate consistent control of standard English conventions.

The growing of crops to serve at the table for dinner has been around since the beginning of time. The traditional harvesting and planting of foods has brought forth many smiles across people's faces. Though the traditional way has always worked, it is seen to also have its cons regarding production time and reliability of true nutrition in the crops. The people were then unsure how to produce worthy crops in limited amounts of time. As a result of the negative aspects in relation to the traditional way of farming, new and alternative ways of growing crops have been created and implemented into society today. Despite the fact that the different methods of farming have also created difficult challenges, it is promoted that alternative methods of growing food can benefit both individuals and communities throughout the world.

The use of urban farms in the states has been proven beneficial to both individuals and communities. Urban farms, as described in the article by Kendrick Foster, "*Green Thumb*", are small areas, which "range from small community farms to rooftop gardens on top of Fenway Park to hydroponic operations growing underneath the LED lights of a shipping container" (Foster 3). The wide variety of urban farms in any place can help create a vast production of crops in multiple areas, which can then benefit the communities around them. In addition, "urban farms help to inspire the local community to grow their own food, which does the most to improve food access and nutrition" (Foster 7). The idea of people cultivating their own crops and food is said to have an immense impact on how people view their food, as they are then aware of how nutritious their food actually is. It is also said that urban farming "affects communities quantitatively, improving their access to healthy, nutritious food, but its impact is also qualitative - it's hard to calculate the value of bringing communities closer to their food sources and closer to Mother Nature..." (Foster 11). Individuals and communities can grow closer to the food they produce as they connect more with what they are eating and are able to understand how their food is produced with the genuine want to eat what they make for themselves as well as benefit others in the community who are looking for a nutrition meal.

The use of vertical farming also played an important role on the new methods of growing food and how it can benefit both individuals and communities. As explained in the article, "*How Far Can Vertical Farming Go?*" by William Park, popular farming methods are introduced. Vertical farming, which is the idea of growing food stacked up on one another, is becoming exclusively popular amongst the farming industry. They "use hydroponic or aeroponic systems, where water or water vapor infused with nutrients is circulated directly around the roots of the plant" (Park 9). The advancements made in vertical farming refrain from the use of water and fertilizers being used, making this a high-tech and modernized method for growing food. Individuals are able to benefit by "how we experience our food, like encouraging our plants to create taste compounds, vitamins, or antioxidants...", which is then achieved by stressing crops of resources needed (Park 22). People can create the flavor profile they enjoy by experimenting with their own crops they grow by using vertical farming themselves. As for communities, "the technology can also allow crops to grow in locations where conventional farming is not possible" (Park 12). In the event where a community is unable to grow crops traditionally due to the type of land they live on, vertical farming is possible for their needs for nutrition foods. Vertical farming is available to communities and individuals to further their food-growing experience.

While it is seen that new types of farming are available in the present-day today, there are negative aspects that can follow. It is seen from using vertical farming that "while the technology shows much promise, the costs in both money and energy are still high", limiting what is available for crops (Park 5). With the cost at an increase, it may be hard to cultivate many products at once. However, the high-technology is able to create higher production rate, meaning that despite the cost, new products can be grown at a much quicker pace than traditional farming. As for urban farming, in cities that would like to use it, they "must consider its own local conditions before making generalized policies" (Foster 5). Urban farming can be restricted due to the places it would like to be implemented, which can be a disadvantage. However, with the technology used today, it would be a lot easier to clear space in order to instate urban farming into communities for nutritional value purposes. The alternative methods of growing food today may have its setbacks, but overall, they have the ability to benefit both individuals and communities.

Idea Development—Score Point 5B

The essay is fully developed and skillfully organized to support the argument that vertical farming can benefit individuals and communities. The introduction addresses some of the constraints of traditional farming and argues that “vertical farming provides incredible benefits to many people, from single families to entire neighborhoods.” The first body paragraph explains that the health of consumers will be improved because the food produced by vertical farms “contain fewer pesticides” and has “more vitamins and nutrients.” The paragraph also states that because of their small size, vertical farms have the “potential to improve the health of the consumer” by being “closer to the consumer.” The second body paragraph transitions to an explanation of the benefits of farming with less space, including “cheaper and more accessible” produce. Ideas are richly expressed, such as in the last sentence of the second body paragraph: “Healthy food at a low cost seems like a dream, but vertical farming can make it a reality.” The third body paragraph focuses on benefits to the community, such as “giving people a way to make money to buy healthy food.” The conclusion reiterates the benefits of vertical farming: “Vertical farming is the future of farming, and it all starts with one seed.” Throughout the essay, evidence from the articles is skillfully integrated and explained in support of the argument. There is a full awareness of the task and mode.

Standard English Conventions 3B

Grammar, usage, and mechanics are consistently controlled across varied sentence structures. The essay is relatively free of errors, and its length and complexity provide the opportunity to demonstrate consistent control of standard English conventions.

Traditional farms are a thing of the past. From pesticide use to transportation to the high costs of fresh produce, it is clear that a new form of farming is needed. Vertical farming is a form of farming that has been used since the 1990s, but it has recently become more popular with new innovations in farming technology. Vertical farming presents a solution to many of the problems that traditional farming has: it is often closer to markets, less harsh on the environment, and provides communities with access to fresher, healthier food. The method of vertical farming provides incredible benefits to many people, from single families to entire neighborhoods.

Large-scale farming operations often use harmful pesticides to eliminate insects and other pests. This increases crop yield, but these chemicals can find their way into soil or onto the crops themselves. The crops produced in vertical farming are often healthier than those in large-scale operations as they require fewer pesticides. The article "How Far Can Vertical Farming Go?" by William Park confirms this, with the author writing, "The closed-off, controlled environment of vertical farms can help to stop pests getting in—in turn possibly reducing the need for pesticides" (Park 11). With fewer pests and pesticides, vertical farms greatly benefit those who buy their produce as the food is healthier. Park also writes that "Experimenting further with crops in vertical farms could also create other possibilities for how we experience our food, like encouraging the plants to create more taste compounds, vitamins or antioxidants" (22). This means that the food produced by vertical farms could not only contain fewer pesticides but also have more vitamins and nutrients. Vertical farms have major potential to improve the health of the consumer, and at a small square footage these farms can be closer to the consumer.

Since large-scale farm operations require a great deal of land, they cannot be close to urban areas. However, vertical farms take up very little space, and can even utilize office spaces as areas for produce. The Pasona Urban Farm in Japan experimented with growing produce in an office, which "allowed office workers to harvest their own food at work" (Park 14), according to "How Far Can Vertical Farming Go?". This short distance between the source and the consumer provides numerous benefits for both individuals and entire communities. A shorter distance between a farm and the store in which the produce is sold means that the crops can be less expensive due to a lack of shipping cost. Kendrick Foster, the author of the article "Green Thumb", writes about the benefits of vertical farming: "Many of the community gardens and nonprofits across Boston sell their produce at farm stands and farmers' markets in their local communities, improving food access" (6). If produce is sold closer to where it was grown, the price of the food itself goes down because of fewer shipping costs. Additionally, the produce is fresher and likely treated with fewer chemicals to maintain freshness. These benefits can improve the health of communities, especially low-income areas. If produce is cheaper and more accessible, more families can eat healthier. Healthy food at a low cost seems like a dream, but vertical farming can make it a reality.

Vertical farming can provide affordable healthy food to low-income communities, but it can also provide an important benefit: jobs. These farms require year-long maintenance, and they can provide a stable source of income to many families. Moreover, urban vertical farms establish a connection between the people and their food. In "Green Thumb", the author writes, "Urban farms help to inspire the local community to grow their own food, which does the most to improve food access and nutrition" (Foster 7). People can cultivate food for themselves and their community without having to travel to far-off rural areas. Vertical farms do two jobs, then: giving people a way to make the money to buy healthy food, and providing the healthy food. This sort of farming could help lift entire neighborhoods into a healthier, more stable lifestyle.

The benefits of vertical farming are clear. Individuals can have easier access to healthy, inexpensive food. Vertical farming brings communities closer to the source of their food and provides jobs to members of those communities. With this in mind, it is clear that large-scale farming is not the best way to cultivate food. Vertical farming is the future of farming, and it all starts with one seed.

Idea Development—Score Point 4

The essay includes a clear and well-developed central idea. The introduction argues that “alternative methods of growing food” can benefit individuals and communities through shorter production times, more accessibility, and cheaper costs. The first body paragraph states that the method of “shortened time production” enables more food to be produced for the community. The explanation is supported through an effective selection of evidence. The second body paragraph addresses the benefits of having “more places to grow” produce. The third body paragraph explains the overall benefit of potential cost savings through vertical farming. The conclusion reiterates the ideas mentioned earlier in the essay. Overall, the essay is effectively organized and includes an effective selection and explanation of evidence. There is a full awareness of the task and mode.

Standard English Conventions 3C

Consistent control of conventions is demonstrated in the use of varied sentence forms: “Many alternative methods of growing food absolutely can benefit both individuals and our communities by shorter time production, more accessibility, and cheaper costs.” Minor spelling errors (such as “accessability” and “varities”) do not detract from meaning. The essay is sufficiently long and complex enough to demonstrate consistent control of standard English conventions.

In the articles, *Green Thumb* by Kendrick Foster and *How Far Can Vertical Farming Go* by William Park, there are many alternative methods explained drastically between both of the articles and stories. Many alternative methods of growing food absolutely can benefit both individuals and our communities by shorter time production, more accessibility, and cheaper costs.

One alternative growing method that can be used upon our communities and benefit us, is shortened time production. Although, it can be used in a varieties of ways, many people may find it helpful for more vegetables and fruits to be available in certain times, even with the vegetables and fruits being seasonal; many farmers can produce more food for the community if they had a shortened time production method that could give them more money over time. "This means leafy salads, smaller vegetables and fruits such as tomatoes and strawberries—high value crops which grow quickly"(Park 5). The author states that with the plants being grown faster, will not only limit what's commercially available but help the communities growth in the smaller vegetables that everyone eats and uses in every day life.

Another alternative can be more accessibility, no that doesn't exactly mean having more growing fruits and vegetables, but having more places to grow these vegetables that are now dominating this world within our every day food supplies. "We say, whether you've got a little bit of dirt in the backyard, if you've got a porch, if you've got a windowsill, we want you growing food" (Foster 7). The authors' stating within this quote that anyone and everyone can grow crops as long as they have the necessary sunlight and water usage that a plant will need to ultimately survive and produce the vegetables themselves, which then brings them to having cheaper costs and understanding of how growing crops can be a learning experience for many of these home owners that want to give farming a shot. "Tomatoes hung down from meeting-room light fittings, a rice paddy filled a large conference space, and mushrooms grew in drawers hidden discreetly under benches" (Park 2). This quote shows that many of the vegetables and fruits we eat today in our daily meals can be bascially grown anywhere we intend them to be as long as the necessary living requirements meet that criteria, and the person has a basic understanding of how to care for a plant.

The last reasoning for alternative methods of growing plants and how they can benefit us and our communities is cheaper costs, with the cheaper costs of vertical farming and everything, it can be a major understanding of how cheaper costs and help the world around us. With vertical farming, can be a cheaper revenue to grow these crops. "Most vertical farms currently concentrate on low-biomass crops—things like herbs, salads and small fruits and vegetables which weigh less per portion—because there is a greater yield for the amount of heat, light and water that needs to be supplied"(Park 15). The author is actively stating that there can be less usage of supplies which brings the cost of raising and growing crops lesser than what it is if you buy all these materials.

In conclusion, with the many alternatives being brought into this world; there can be a wide understanding that crops don't necessarily have to be expensive and overly priced just to grow your own garden. They also don't have to have such a long process of growth that brings them into this society.

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Idea Development—Score Point 3

The essay includes a general and moderately developed central idea. The brief introduction addresses the benefits of alternative methods for growing food by stating that communities become “closer to the food that they eat” and individuals are provided with improved “access to higher quality food.” The first body paragraph states the benefits of alternative farming to communities. The second body paragraph explains the benefits to individuals. Evidence from both articles, quoted or paraphrased, is generally explained throughout the body paragraphs. Supporting details are appropriate, and ideas are adequately expressed. There is sufficient awareness of the task and mode.

Standard English Conventions 3D

The essay contains few errors, and its sentences are varied: “Overall, urban farming improves individual and communal health by reducing environmental impact, bringing communities closer to the food they eat, making neighborhoods more beautiful, and improving access to higher quality food.” The length and complexity of the essay are sufficient to demonstrate consistent control of standard English conventions.

Alternative methods for growing food benefits communities by bringing them closer to the food that they eat and benefits individuals by improving access to higher quality food. Both *Green Thumb* by Kendrick Foster and *How Far Can Vertical Farming Go?* by William Park highlight these benefits.

Urban farming/alternative farming brings communities together. In *Green Thumb*, Foster argues this point. He explains that urban farms inspire people to grow food, and this common movement brings community together. On top of this, he states that “increased urban farming will improve food security, aid in environmental justice, and help beautify neighborhoods, all while increasing community happiness” (Foster 5). All of these are ways that urban farming brings people within communities closer together. William Park also presents ways that urban farming benefits the community in *How Far Can Vertical Farming Go?*. He states that vertical farms reduce the water, fertilizers, and pesticides needed to grow food. This reduces the impact farming has on the environment.

Urban farming also improves individual health by bringing more people access to higher quality food. William Park argues this in *How Far Can Vertical Farming Go?*. He states that “Shorter supply chains could improve both food security and the quality of food, since the faster food reaches us, the less its nutrients deteriorate and the less unseen toxins, such as mycotoxins, develop” (Park 13). Vertical farms also provide the opportunity for crops to be engineered to be tastier and healthier. In *Green Thumb*, Foster highlights this point, stating that urban farming improves access to healthy and nutritious food.

Overall, urban farming improves individual and communal health by reducing environmental impact, bringing communities closer to the food they eat, making neighborhoods more beautiful, and improving access to higher quality food. *Green Thumb* and *How Far Can Vertical Farming Go?* demonstrate this.

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Idea Development—Score Point 2

The central idea is somewhat developed in a single paragraph. The paragraph contains limited details supporting the argument that “alternative methods of growing food can benefit both individuals and communities.” One quotation is selected from each article to support the central idea. The explanations of the quoted evidence are brief. There is a basic expression of ideas and a partial awareness of the task and mode.

Standard English Conventions 2

The writing demonstrates mostly consistent control of sentences, grammar, usage, and mechanics. There are some errors in capitalization and spelling (“infintly” and “nutritous”), but the meaning is mostly clear in the response. Sentences are mostly varied. Overall, the length and complexity of the writing does not allow demonstration of consistent control.

Alternative methods of growing food can benefit both individuals and communities. This is shown in *Green Thumb* by giving some of the benefits that could occur for Urban farming. "Urban farms can serve as a piece of the answer to this puzzle; increased urban farming will improve food security, aid in enviornmental justice, and help beautify neighbourhoods, all while increasing community happiness." (Paragraph 5) This quote explains that due to the infintly increasing populaton, these reasons will make the community happier as a whole with alternative methods. In *How Far can Vertical farming Go*, In Paragraph 22, it says "Experimenting further with crops in vertical farms could also create other possibilities for how we experience food, like encouraging the plants to create more taste compounds, vitamins or antioxidants" Meaning that this could make crops taste better and be more nutritious, making them more enjoyable and healthier for individuals.

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Idea Development—Score Point 1

The central idea is not developed in the response. The argument that alternative methods of growing food can benefit both individuals and communities is poorly expressed. Details are insufficient to support the argument. There is a minimal awareness of the task.

Standard English Conventions 1

There are errors in capitalization, spelling, punctuation, and sentence structures throughout the brief response. The number of errors demonstrates minimal control of standard English conventions for this grade level.

Based on Green Thumb and How Far can Vertical Farming go I Believe Vertical farming is not only good for the community and food security but also nessacary as a way to get your crops and food from. Verticle farming brings along many pros such as With Vertical farming the time it takes to grow and produce crops is very less time then the traditional farming methods. Aswel as too the time it takes to grow and produce crops with verticle farming it also provdies easy access to grow crops anywhere: Schools, Porches, and many more. So not only does verticle farming good for society in many way it also provides many pros to it aswell.

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Idea Development—Score Point 0

The response shows some indication that the student has read the article(s) but does not address the prompt.

Standard English Conventions 0

The response lacks capitalization and punctuation and is too brief to demonstrate any control of standard English conventions.

you need a green house for one and one you can do on your porch

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