

2025 MCAS Sample Student Work and Scoring Guide

Grade 3 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 that explains how an individual overcomes challenges; use information from the passage to support the explanation.

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

Based on “The Wind in His Mustache,” write an essay that explains how George overcomes the challenges he experiences on his journey. Be sure to use information from the passage 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
4A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Central idea is clear and fully developed Effective selection and explanation of evidence and/or details Effective organization Clear expression of ideas Full awareness of the purpose for writing
4B	
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Central idea is general and moderately developed Appropriate selection and explanation of evidence and/or details Moderate organization Adequate expression of ideas Sufficient awareness of the purpose for writing
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Central idea 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 purpose for writing
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Central idea is not present and/or not developed Insufficient evidence and/or details Minimal or no organization Poor expression of ideas Minimal awareness of the purpose for writing
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	
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., 3A and 3B).

Idea Development—Score Point 4A

The essay is a fully developed and effectively organized explanation of how George overcomes the challenges he experiences on his journey. The essay follows a formulaic structure of paraphrasing, citing evidence, and explaining three challenges that George encounters. For example, in the second paragraph, a challenge is identified and supported by paraphrasing the passage: "First, George figures out a way to stop himself when going down hill without brakes." The explanation is supported with a relevant quotation: "As it says in paragraph 26, 'He coasted downhill dragging the brush to slow himself down, raising a cloud of dust that could be seen for miles.'" Ideas are clearly expressed, as in "Everything broke but George kept going until he got help." Appropriate transitions, such as "first," "second," and "third" are incorporated throughout the essay. The essay demonstrates a full awareness of the purpose for writing.

Standard English Conventions 3A

The essay contains a variety of sentence structures. While there are minor grammatical issues, such as missing commas in the sentence "Second when George's bicycle broke he didn't panic and just went with it," and errors in spelling, they do not detract from understanding of the essay. Based on length and complexity, the writing demonstrates consistent control of standard English conventions for this grade level.

George overcomes the challenges he experiences on his journey in many ways.

First George figures out a way to stop himself when going down hill without brakes. George used his imagination and intelligence to find a way to stop himself when going down a hill without brakes. As it says in paragraph 26, "He coasted downhill dragging the brush to slow himself down, raising a cloud of dust that could be seen for miles." George was able to keep going and try a new idea.

Second when George's bicycle broke he didn't panic and just went with it. Everything broke but George kept going until he got help. As it says in paragraph 35, "The handlebars broke, then the fork, then the chain. He had them all repaired or replaced on the way. A boulder destroyed his front rim. Bits and pieces were falling off everywhere he went." George kept going and no matter what happened he solved his problem.

Third George knew he didn't have a map and just went with it. George didn't have directions, and didn't care, and had a little idea. As it says in paragraph 13, "George didn't bring a map. 'We can always ask for directions,' he said. Besides, we know where we're going-east!" George didn't care if his idea was little he just stuck with it, and it was better than nothing.

As you can see, George overcomes the challenges he experiences on his journey in many ways.

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Idea Development—Score Point 4B

The essay is a fully developed explanation of how George overcomes the challenges he experiences on his journey. The block of writing is internally organized with a logical progression of ideas. Relevant quotations from the passage provide effective support for the explanation of the challenges George faced and how he was able to overcome them, as evidenced in: “George didn’t bring a map. “We can always ask for directions,” he said. “Besides, we know where we’re going—east!”” There is a clear expression of ideas throughout the essay: “In other words, he had a problem of kids popping the wheels so he kept them with him.” Transitional words and phrases such as “To begin,” “For example,” and “Lastly” are used to move from one idea to the next. The essay demonstrates a full awareness of the purpose for writing.

Standard English Conventions 3B

The essay demonstrates consistent control of sentence structures, as in these examples: “To begin, George goes on journey to New York without a map but than knows he just has to go east.” and “This shows how when he didn’t have a map he still knew where to go.” Quotations are well integrated throughout the essay and there are few errors in grammar, usage, and mechanics. Based on length and complexity, the writing demonstrates consistent control of standard English conventions.

In the passage, "The Wind In His Mustache" by Teresa Bateman, George over comes challenges he has on his journey from Oakland, California to New York City, New York. To begin, George goes on journey to New York without a map but than knows he just has to go east. "George didn't bring a map. 'We can always ask for directions,' he said. 'Besides, we know where we're going—east!'" This shows how when he didn't have a map he still knew where to go. The way to New York City-east! Secondly, kids ran up to see his bicycle but they popped his wheels, he didn't like that they did that so he never left his bicycle without supervision. For example, "Children flocked to see him. Bicycles were new and amazing. Once he returned to his bike to find both tires flat. The kids had poked pins in them to see what would happen. He never let his wheel out of his sight after that." In other words, he had a problem of kids popping the wheels so he kept them with him. Lastly, many parts of his bicycle broke off and he had to get them fixed but he kept riding to New York. In the story it says, "The handlebars broke, then the fork, then the chain. He had them all repaired or replaced on the way. A boulder destroyed his front rim. Bits and pieces were falling off everywhere he went." and "Still, he was happy. He loved pedaling along—the wind in his mustache and the world flying past. Ah, the romance!" This matters because, he could have quit but he kept peddling along to New York City! In summary, the passage, "The Wind In His Mustache" by Teresa Bateman, the main character, George overcomes many challenges.

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Idea Development—Score Point 3

The essay is moderately developed. Paraphrased information such as “Inflated tires and broken parts of his bike were a [constant] problem for George” is included to support a general explanation of the central idea of how George overcomes the challenges he experiences on his journey. Appropriate information from the passage is used to explain how the challenges were overcome: “Thankfully some railroad folks threw him down a rope so he could climb up and go back onto his long journey.” The essay is moderately organized, using phrases such as “one problem,” “there was also,” and “another big problem” to connect ideas. The essay shows an adequate expression of ideas and a sufficient awareness of the purpose for writing.

Standard English Conventions 3C

The essay contains a variety of simple and complex sentence structures: “So every few miles he had to stop to inflate his tires. George also had to replace and repair so many parts of his bike that by the end of his trip, it almost wasn’t even the same bike.” Minor spelling errors and missing punctuation do not interfere with the overall understanding of the essay. Based on its length and complexity, the essay demonstrates consistent control of standard English conventions for this grade level.

George Loher was very motivated on his trip from California to New York and he had to face a lot of problems.

One problem George faced was when he hit a stake and fell down an embankment. Thankfully some railroad folks threw him down a rope so he could climb up and go back onto his long journey.

There was also that time kids poked pins in his tires to see what would happen. Inflated tires and broken parts of his bike were a constant problem for George. So every few miles he had to stop to inflate his tires. George also had to replace and repair so many parts of his bike that by the end of his trip, it almost wasn't even the same bike.

Another big problem George faced and one of the first ones was when Thomas Cornell gave up and left him in Sacramento, California. But George didn't care and kept on going. He never gave up like Thomas did and he managed to make it to New York.

George faced a lot of problems on his trip from California to New York but he still made it!

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Idea Development—Score Point 2

The essay is a somewhat developed explanation of how George overcomes the challenges he experiences on his journey. George's challenges are identified, but there is limited evidence to support the explanation of how the challenges are resolved; for example, "Luckily he was saved by some railroad people." Organization is limited and relies only on transitional words, such as "first," "second," and "another." The expression of ideas is basic, and there is a partial awareness of the purpose for writing.

Standard English Conventions 2

The essay demonstrates mostly consistent control of grammar, usage, and mechanics. There is frequent repetition of the phrase "He also" and some simplistic sentences, such as "He also kept having to replace parts but he kept on going." Minor spelling and punctuation errors do not detract from overall understanding. Given its length and complexity, the writing demonstrates a mostly consistent control of standard English conventions for this grade level.

The first challenge he faced hitting a stake, which threw him into an embankment. Luckily he was saved by some railroad people.

The second was that he had bring his bike up and down hills so to solve this he used branches at top of the next hill to slow his descent on his bike so he had made improvised brakes!

Another is that his tires were always popping so he had to fill them every few miles, but he still overcame them.

He also kept having to replace parts but he kept on going.

He also didn't always know where he was going so he often asked for help.

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Idea Development—Score Point 1

The response lists some of the problems that George experienced but does not develop the central idea of how he overcomes the challenges on his journey. The challenges of “lost air in tires” and “did not have a map” are mentioned, but no information is provided to explain them. Ideas are poorly expressed, and there is a minimal awareness of the purpose for writing.

Standard English Conventions 1

The response shows little variety in sentence structures. The writing lacks the complexity and length to demonstrate more than minimal control of standard English conventions for this grade level.

George overcame lots of problems. A problem he overcame was he lost air in his tires lots of times. Another problem he overcame was he did not have a map for this trip so he did not know how to get around on his very long ride. Another one is he did not know when he got into different states so he could not tell when he was near his destination. He overcame lots of problems on this trip.

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Idea Development—Score Point 0

The response does not address how George overcomes the challenges he experiences on his journey. The reference to bicycles indicates that the student looked at the passage or may have only responded to the graphic.

Standard English Conventions 0

The response consists of a single sentence that lacks capitalization and punctuation. The response is of insufficient length and complexity to demonstrate control of standard English conventions for this grade level.

the story is about bicycles

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