2025 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: <u>L.PK-12.2</u> - Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling when writing.

Standard: <u>L.PK-12.3</u> - 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 the main characters in two passages demonstrate the same character trait; use information from both passages 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.
- Provide evidence and/or details from the passage(s).
- Use correct grammar, spelling, and punctuation.

Based on the passages, write an essay that explains how Roy in *Hoot* **and** the girls in *Strange Birds* show determination. Be sure to use details from **both** passages 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
<u>5A</u> <u>5B</u>	 Central idea is insightful and fully developed Skillful selection and explanation of evidence and/or details Skillful and/or subtle organization Rich expression of ideas
4	 Full awareness of the task and mode Central idea 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
<u>3</u>	 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 task and mode
<u>2</u>	 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 task and mode
1	 Central idea is not present and/or not developed Insufficient evidence and/or details Minimal organization Poor expression of ideas Minimal awareness of the task and mode
<u>o</u>	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
<u>3A</u>	
<u>3B</u>	 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
<u>3C</u>	length of essay
<u>3D</u>	
<u>2</u>	 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	 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
<u>0</u>	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).

The essay is fully developed and effectively explains how Roy in *Hoo*t and the girls in *Strange Birds* show determination. The central idea is developed by explaining that the characters set out to help their communities and show acts of "braveness, justice, and determination" in their efforts to protect animals. The essay provides detailed examples from both texts, including specific paraphrases, to support an analysis of the characters' determination: "In paragraphs 4-6 in 'Hoot', Roy learns that there is going to be a new pancake house build on top of the endangered owls. They are going to. . . lose their homes. This could endanger them even more. Roy felt bad about this, and wanted to stop this so the owls could live." The essay is skillfully organized and well structured, with a clear and logical progression. The expression of ideas is rich, with the writing repeatedly conveying the characters' determination and the significance of their actions: "These four girls (Lane, Ofelia, Cat, Aster) made an oath to seek justice and demonstrate kindness. They want to stop the bad things that are going to happen." There is full awareness of the task and mode.

Standard English Conventions 3A

The essay shows consistent control of sentence structures relative to the length of the essay. Examples include the following: "When it was his turn to go up and talk about an event, he talked about how the owls were endangered" and "They want to stop the bad things that are going to happen." The sentences are varied and complex, contributing to the overall readability and effectiveness of the writing. Consistent control of standard English conventions is evident.

In "Hoot" by Carl Hiaasen, and "Strange Birds" by Celia C. Perez, we can see how Roy and the girls show determination. Once Roy learned about what was happening, he wanted to stand up to it. When Lane, Ofelia, Cat, and Aster learn about the hats that the Floras were going to make, they wanted to stop them. They wanted to make sure that there wouldn't be any harm to any peacocks, and to protect the peacocks. Both Roy and these four girls wanted to help the community, and showed acts of braveness, justice, and determination.

In "Hoot", Roy learned that there were burrowing owls in his town. They are endangered so he thought that was interesting. In paragraphs 4-6 in "Hoot", Roy learns that there is going to be a new pancake house built on top of the endangered owls. They are going to burrow the entire area there and make the owls lose their homes. This could endanger them even more. Roy felt bad about this, and wanted to stop this so the owls could live. In paragraphs 14-16, Roy's dad reminds him that he has a 'current events' project today. He gives Roy the newspaper that Roy saw the news on and Roy leaves for school. Roy is going to present the owl and pancake house news to his class. He feels bad about the owls and wants something to be done. The pancake house that is soon to be built is called "Mother Paula's". When Roy got to school and went to his class, Mr. Ryan (his teacher) told everyone they had to be ready about the current events project. Roy didn't look at any of the other articles in the newspaper, and only at the Mother Paula's construction. When it was his turn to go up and talk about an event, he talked about how the owls were endangered.

In paragraph 39 of "Hoot", it says "I'il tell you what's going to happen.' Roy looked at Mr. Ryan. 'The machines are going to bury all those burrows, and everything inside." We can see that Roy is telling everyone about what is going to happen to those owls. Some of his classmates are sad about what is going to happen. Roy goes into further detail and tells everyone that adult owls might be able to escape, but if they do they are going to have to leave their babies behind. Or they can stay and try to defend their babies. Roy was determined enough to talk about all of this in front of his entire class, and by the end his throat was very dry. In paragraphs 50-54, we see that Roy is going to confront the pancake house and try to stop them from destroying the endangered owls' homes. He is determined to stop them as he believes that all of this is wrong. In paragraph 54 of "Hoot" it says "Okay, I know we're just talking about a few puny little owls, and I know everybody is crazy about Mother Paula's pancakes, but what's happening out there is just plain wrong. So wrong." This tells us he actually thinks this is wrong and wants to help the cause. In "Strange Birds", it tells us in the pre-view that four girls team up and try to stop a social group called the Floras from using real peacock feathers to decorate their apparel. These four girls (Lane, Ofelia, Cat, Aster) made an oath to seek justice and demonstrate kindness. They want to stop the bad things that are going to happen.

Just having an oath shows that they are determined to make sure the Floras don't use real peacock feathers as it is bad for the peacocks. They want to save peacocks from being hurt or just help anything in general. In paragraph 2-4, we can see what kind of oath they made. "'We, the Ostentation of Others and Outsiders, swear to seek truth and justice, demonstrate kindness, and create community.' . . . 'Oath sworn and space protected,' Lane announced. 'We are officially a troop.' 'An ostentation,' Ofelia corrected." This tells us that these girls want to help the community and spread kindness. They did research and found evidence to use against the Floras whenever they needed to. For example, in paragraph 33 it says "'They organized boycotts and sent out flyers and are really the reason why the Migratory Bird Treaty Act even exists,' Cat said, standing up." This tells us that they know about the treaty. They most likely researched this and that can show their determination to stop the Floras and save the peacocks.

Based on all of the evidence and reasons here, Roy and the girls in Strange Birds all show determination in their stories. After Roy heard about what was happening, he decided he wanted to help stop it. He didn't want the owls to die, especially because they are endangered. He decided to protest against the idea of the construction of Mana Paula's and wanted to save the owls. When he went to school, he shared the his whole idea in front of his class. He didn't hesitate to say anything, he was determined to move on and help the cause. The girls from Strange Birds wanted to stop the Floras. The Floras were making hats out of real peacock feathers, and peacocks are pretty rare already. Using their feathers and potentially endangering them or bypassing a treaty is unjust to these girls.

The central idea is insightful and fully developed. The essay effectively explores how both Roy in *Hoot* and the girls in *Strange Birds* show determination in advocating for the rights of birds. The selection and explanation of evidence are skillful, providing detailed evidence from both texts, as in this example: "Paragraph 50 states, 'So tommorow at lunch,' Roy continued, 'I'm going out there to . . . well, just because I want the Mother Paula's people to know that somebody in Coconut Cove cares about those birds.'" This specific evidence supports the analysis of the characters' determination. Organization is skillful and subtle, with a logical progression of ideas. Each paragraph builds on the previous one, creating a cohesive and compelling essay. The essay clearly conveys the characters' determination and the significance of their actions. There is full awareness of the task and mode.

Standard English Conventions 3B

The essay shows consistent control of a variety of sentence structures. The sentences are varied and, at times, complex, contributing to the overall readability and effectiveness of the essay. There is consistent control of grammar, usage, and mechanics relative to the length and complexity of the essay, though there are instances of awkward phrasing, as in the following example: "Despite knowing the Floras are a popular group among the town, they still take in their power to go against them." There are minor spelling errors (e.g., "cermony" "vunerable"), but they do not interfere with meaning.

Often the rights of animals are overlooked. Both of these passages focus on youth trying to advocate for the rights of birds. Hoot is a passage written by Carl Hiaasen. This is about a young boy named Roy who is advocating for the rights of owls. When he finds out the home of owls might be destroyed he tries convincing his peers to do something about it which when he decides to go to the company's cermony to advocate for those vunerable birds. Strange Birds is written by Celia C. Perez. This passage is about a group of four girls who team up to go against a group that uses real peacock feathers for their hats. In Hoot, Roy shows determination when he tries everything in his power to protest for the rights of those owls, the girls show determination when raising awareness for the rights of peacocks and both parties show determination when persistently adovating against the groups that harm animals.

Roy, in *Hoot*, shows determination because he wants to do everything he can to show that people care about those owls. After Roy brings the issue with the owls up to his fellow peers, they aswell begin to get riled up. Roy wants to show up to the cermony because he believes what they're doing is wrong. Paragraph 50 states, "'So tommorow at lunch,' Roy continued, "I'm going out there to...well, just because I want the Mother Paula's people to know that somebody in Coconut Cove cares about those birds.'" Roy is determined to show that the rights for those owls matter too. He wants to persuade the company into realising that what they're doing is wrong. Another example of Roy being determined is the paragraph just after. The teacher clears "his throat. 'This is a sticky situation, Roy. I know how upset and frustrated you must feel, but I've got to remind you that students aren't supposed to leave school property.' 'Then I'll get a note from my parents,'" Despite some things restricting him for advocating for the rights of those owls he still tries to find a way to protest for them. He does this because he cares. All in all, Roy is rewriting the future by changing the negative things happening now.

The four girls are persistently showing what is happening to the peacocks is wrong. The group of girls want to oppose another group that use the real feathers of a peacock. The girls because of this want to spread as much awareness to stop the abuse and or harm coming on to these birds. One of the girls, Ofelia was very passionate about the cause, "She talked with her hands, and her eyes widened when she explained how the women worked to protect birds. Ofelia could feel herself getting excited too. Here was an unfolding story about truth and justice right in their own backyard. 'Yes,'Ofelia said. . . .'Like that.' 'So, let's figure out a way to convince people that it's wrong to keep using the hat,' Lane said." These girls want to show that what the other group, the Floras,, is doing is cruel. This shows determination because they're determined to show the harm being done to the peacocks. Paragraph 44 states, "'We put a message on them and stick them up everywhere,' Lane said. 'To raise awareness about the feaathered hat and the mistreatment of birds.'" The girls want to spread a message around. They know what is happening to the peacocks is awful and as people and individuals it's there power to fix it. In conclusion, this group of girls takes it into their hands to adovcate for those peacocks because they don't have a voice.

Both parties oppose the groups that are harming innocent creatures. In *Hoot* Roy is going against a larger authority because of their harmful ways. Paragraph 35 states,"'They're going to start bulldozing to make way for the pancake house. It's like a big part or something,' Roy said. 'The lady who plays Mother Paula on TV is going to be there. The mayor, too. That's what the paper said."' People in power are a part of the problem going on. Roy wants stop what they are doing before greater damage occurs to this population of owls. In the passage from *Strange Birds* a quote from the blur states a group of girls "team up to stop a local social group, the Floras, from using hats decorated with real peacock feathers." The group of girls are going against a local group. Meaning a group that is well known and influenctial. Despite knowing the Floras are a popular group among the town, they still take in their power to go against them. They actually care about the well being of these peacocks.

In conclusion, these text refer a young people who take a stand against well know people for their cause. Their desire to help the vunerable birds motivates them to take action and a stance against these groups. For Roy he decides he will take a stance against the company despite the power difference because he knows what he's fighting for is right. The group girls go against another group after learning of the greater harm their group inflicts on peacocks. In both excerpts, young people take a step against wrong doing.

The central idea is clear and well-developed. The essay effectively discusses how Roy in *Hoot* and the girls in *Strange Birds* show determination in their efforts to protect the birds. The selection and explanation of evidence are effective. The essay includes relevant quotations from both texts to support the discussion of the characters' determination. For example, "Then we'll make stickers in the library,' Lane said, looking to Aster, Cat, and Ofelia. 'Everyone in?' . . . All of this evidence shows us that they were very determined to spread awareness about the Floras, spending a lot of their time trying to come up with ideas." The organization is effective and follows a logical structure, with clear transitions between ideas and paragraphs ("First," "Finally"). Each point builds on the previous one, demonstrating a clear expression of ideas. There is full awareness of the task and mode.

Standard English Conventions 3C

The essay demonstrates consistent control of grammar, usage, and mechanics relative to the length and complexity of the essay. There are minor errors in spelling and usage (e.g., "loose" "perserveared", "there"). However, the essay shows consistent control of sentence structures: "While leaving the house, he sees that his mother feels that the owls were doomed, but he wouldn't be giving up hope." Another example demonstrates similar control: "The author writes about Roy being excited to be able to share his thoughts about the owl situation in history class." The sentences are varied and well constructed, contributing to the overall effectiveness of the writing.

In the realistic fiction story, "Hoot" by Carl Hiaasen, Roy finds out that a pancake-house is going to be built over an empty lot home to many burrowing owls, and he really wants to help them. But, he struggles to come up with a plan to help the birds, so he takes the topic to school. While sharing, he comes up with a plan to voice his beliefs on what should happen with the pancake-house and prevent the owls from being hurt. In the realistic fiction story "Strange Birds", by Celia C. Pérez, Lane, Ofelia, Cat, and Aster wanted to team up to stop a socialist group, the Floras, from using real peacock feathers to decorate their hats. In these stories, we can see Roy in "Hoot" and the girls in "Strange Birds" show lots of determination.

First, we can see that Roy from "Hoot" shows lots of determination even when his mother starts to give up hope. The author writes about Roy being excited to be able to share his thoughts about the owl situation in history class. While leaving the house, he sees that his mother feels that the owls were doomed, but he wouldn't be giving up hope. "Roy could tell she felt sorry for him because of the news about the pancake house. She thought that the owls were doomed, but Roy wasn't ready to give up hope." (Hiaasen). This evidence shows that even when the people around Roy were starting to loose hope, he still has hope and was determined to fix the problem.

Secondly, the girls from "Strange Birds" showed determination when trying to spread awareness of the problem. The text states that the girls so determined to stop the Floras from using the peacock feathers that they were going to make lots of stickers for people to see and even have Ofelia go undercover to help all of them deliver a letter to the editor of the Sabal Palms Sun. "Hey, Cat," Ofelia said. "When do the Floras meet?" "Thursdays at two," Cat said. "Why?" "Because I'm going undercover," Ofelia declared." and "Then we'll make stickers in the library," Lane said, looking at Aster, Cat, and Ofelia. "Everyone in?" (Pérez). All of this evidence shows us that they were very determined to spread awareness about the Floras, spending a lot of their time trying to come up with ideas.

Finally, Roy from "Hoot" shows determination when explaining the problem to his classmates at school. The authors states that for a current event discussion at Roy's school, he explains his thoughts about the burrowing owl situation. "So tomorrow at lunch," Roy continued, "I'm going out there to ... well, just because I want the Mother Paula's people to know that somebody in Coconut Cove cares about those birds." (Hiaasen). This shows that Roy really cares about the owls and is determined to save them from the bulldozer that would destroy there home.

To sum it up, the girls from "Strange Birds" and Roy from "Hoot" perserveared through the times where they might have had to be around somebody who didn't believe or having trouble spreading awareness, just to save the animals that they really care about. Its important to remember that by trying to make a difference in a community, or even the world, it's best to stay determined, even when it seems like all hope is lost.

The central idea of the essay is general and moderately developed: "Both Roy and the girls are trying to convince people that the animals are being mistreated, so they come up with plans to do something about it." The essay discusses how Roy in *Hoot* and the girls in *Strange Birds* show determination in saving animals, but the analysis of how they accomplish that is sometimes vague: "Although [the girls] do find ways to communicate their concerns, they still have to figure out even more, but after working together they finally come up with different solutions." The evidence is selected and explained appropriately but would benefit from being more specific. The essay includes relevant quotations and examples from both texts to support the discussion of the characters' determination. The essay follows a logical structure, but the transitions between ideas, such as "I know this because in paragraph 50, it says" and "I know this because in paragraph 36, it says" are formulaic. There is sufficient awareness of the task and mode.

Standard English Conventions 3D

The essay shows consistent control of a variety of sentence structures. The sentences are well constructed, with brief, simple topic sentences in the body paragraphs that contribute to the clarity of the writing. The essay demonstrates consistent control of grammar, usage, and mechanics relative to the length and complexity of the essay, though there are minor errors that do not interfere with the readability of the essay: "The girls form *Strange Things* are determine to show people that peacocks are being mistreated." There are also some misspellings (e.g., "achive", "determine", "haming") in the essay.

Roy in *Hoot* and the girls in *Strange Birds* both show determination when it comes to saving animals. Both Roy and the girls are trying to convince people that the animals are being mistreated, so they come up with plans to do something about it and show people that certain animals are being harm. To achive this Roy from *Hoot* tries to speak in class about the issue, and the girls from *Strange Birds* came up with ways to tell people that using the hats made from peacocks feathers was bad and harmful for the peacocks.

Roy from *Hoot* is determine to show he cares for the owls. I know this because in paragraph 50, it says, "Then I'll get a note from my parents," Roy said." This means that Roy is determined to save the owls, but to do that he needs a note from his parents. This note allows him to leave school because he wants to let people at Mother Paula's know that they are haming the owls by building the pancake house. His actions show how determine he is to let the people at Mother Paula's know that somebody form Coconut Cove cares about all those owls.

The girls form Strange Things are determine to show people that peacocks are being mistreated. I know this because in paragraph 36, it says, "So, let's figure out a way to convince people that it's wrong to keep using the hat," Lane said." By this they show how eager they are to find ways to aware people that real peacock feathers are being used to make the hats. Although they do find ways to communicate their concerns, they still have to figure out even more, but after working together they finally come up with different solutions. And this shows even more how determine the girls are to save the peacocks from being mistreated.

Both Roy and the girls were determine to save the animals. They both had different strategics and ideas but they did it. They communicated what was happening and were determined to do somethings about the animals not being taken into account. Roy did it by speaking the issue to the class and then deciding that he is going to talk to the people at Mother Paula's too. The girls from Strange Birds did it by coming up with ways to tell other people about the issue. Although their ways were different, their determination is the same.

The central idea is present and is somewhat developed in the essay, as in the following example: "In both *Hoot* and *Strange Birds*, all characters show their true determination." The essay discusses the determination of characters in *Hoot* and *Strange Birds*, but the selection and explanation of evidence are limited. The essay includes some quotations from the texts, but the explanations are brief: "This show's the characters' determination to fix their issue. They are willing to do difficult tasks to make such events come true." The organization is limited, with the essay following a basic structure of a single sentence introduction, two body paragraphs, and a conclusion. The transitions between ideas are sparse. The expression of ideas is, at times, repetitive: "Roy shows his determination to save the owls" and "This shows Roy's determination for protecting these owls." The essay partially addresses the task and mode.

Standard English Conventions 2

The essay shows mostly consistent control of sentence structures relative to the length of the writing. The sentences are generally correct, but there is some repetition and awkward phrasing. The essay demonstrates mostly consistent control of grammar, usage, and mechanics relative to its length and complexity. There are minor errors (e.g., "he way" should be "his way"), but they do not significantly interfere with the readability of the essay.

In both Hoot and Strange Birds, all characters show their true determination.

In Hoot, Roy shows his determination to save the owls from dying throughout the story. This is further shown when Carl Hiaasen writes, "Mr. Ryan cleared his throat. 'This is a sticky situation, Roy. I know how upset and frustrated you must feel, but I've got to remind you that students aren't supposed to leave school property.' 'Then I'll get a note from my parents,' Roy said." This shows Roy's determination for protecting these owls. He is willing to go to difficult measures in order to defend them. Being able to put any difficulties down this easily shows how determined he is. Roy's determination doesn't fade when Mr. Ryan imposes a valid point. With Roy's determination, he can put down any challenge in he way.

In the excerpt from Strange Birds, All the characters show immense determination to prevent peacock feathers from being used. This is further show when the author adds, ""Why don't we do both?" Lane said. "Stickers and a letter to the editor. Different audiences." This shows the characters' determination to fix their issue. They are willing to do difficult tasks to make such events come true. Using their determination, they will be able to save the birds. Their determination never fades when difficulties show like when they struggled to find a printer to make stickers. This determination will allow them to complete all their tasks that they must complete.

In both excerpts, the characters show true determination to put down any difficult tasks in their way with valient effort.

The response demonstrates a minimal understanding of the central idea in *Hoot* and *Strange Birds* by identifying examples of determination from both texts: "Roy shows determination by willing to help the birds" and "Aster (one of the girls) shows determination by having a sort of angry but not so angry tone." The ideas are poorly expressed, and the response is minimally organized. The explanation of Roy's determination in *Hoot* is literal. The description of Aster's determination in *Strange Birds* is vague and needs more specific details to convey the character's determination. There is minimal awareness of the task and mode.

Standard English Conventions 1

Sentences show little complexity and no variety in sentence structure. The response contains few errors, but it is too brief to demonstrate more than minimal control of standard English conventions.

In "Hoot", Roy shows determination by willing to help the birds, an example of this is in paragraph 50 when he says, "So tomorrow at lunch, I'm going out there to . . . well, just because I want the Mother Paula's people to know that somebody in Coconut Cove cares about those birds." this shows that he cares and is willing to help the birds. In "Strange Birds", Aster (one of the girls) shows determination by having a sort of angry but not so angry tone that expresses how she feels when she talks to Cat about the Floras and what she should do about if she wants to stop the Floras from using hats decorated with real peacek feathers.

The response may show some evidence that the student has read the text, but it does not address the question. The response lacks clarity when it states, "owls were nice and they were determination to know it." This line is vague and does not provide specific details or evidence to support an explanation of how Roy in *Hoot* and the girls in *Strange Birds* show determination.

Standard English Conventions 0

The response demonstrates no sustained control of Standard English conventions. The sentence contains multiple grammatical errors, including incorrect verb forms and incorrect word choice ("they were determination to know it"). These errors interfere with the clarity and readability of the sentence.

That it can be develop with my essay because the owls were nice and they were determination to know it.