

2026 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 that explains how events in a passage impact the characters; use evidence from the passage 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. The essay should be about four to five paragraphs in length. Be sure to:

- Include a central idea.
- Use evidence from the passage to support the central idea.
- Use correct grammar, spelling, and punctuation.

Based on *The Road to Wherever*, write an essay that explains how the experience repairing the Ranchero impacts the lives of the characters. Use evidence from the excerpt to develop your essay.

Continue to the following page to see the scoring guides for this question. Sample student responses begin on page 4. 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 • Full awareness of the task and mode
<u>4</u>	• 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
<u>1</u>	• Central idea is not developed • Insufficient evidence and/or details • Minimal organization • Poor expression of ideas • Minimal awareness of the task and mode
<u>0</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
3A 3B 3C 3D	• 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
2	• 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
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 5A

The essay is fully developed and effectively explains how the experience of repairing the Ranchero impacts the characters. The central idea is insightful and is developed throughout the essay to show that the experience “affected everyone in different ways whether it was learning new things, getting the car repaired, or even just having a good time with each other.” This idea is supported by specific examples from the passage, such as “We do this because it brings meaning to our lives” and “his mom told him this was a gift at first but he didn’t agree with her until after he got to see new things.” These insights are consistent throughout the essay, adding to the rich expression of ideas. Organization is skillful, with ideas that flow well and body paragraphs that analyze each character in the story. The essay demonstrates full awareness of task and mode.

Standard English Conventions 3A

The essay demonstrates consistent control of grammar, usage, and mechanics given its length and complexity. Minor spelling errors (“spen,” “extreamly”) and punctuation errors do not interfere with meaning. Overall, the language and varied sentence structures of the essay demonstrate consistent control of standard English conventions.

How big could doing one act of kindness be to someone and how could it affect you and them? "The road to wherever" by John Ed Bradley is a story in which June Ball a boy who is on a fun road trip with his cousins Larry and Cornell, to fix old and damaged vehicles for no price. They stumble upon Nico, who has a broken car belonging to his grandfather. They asked if they could repair it, delighted Nico said yes and handed over the keys. And so June and his cousins worked together and fixed up the car. Repairing the Ranchero affected everyone in different ways whether it was learning new things, getting the car repaired or even just having a good time with each other.

Repairing the car affected June in a good way because he got to learn new things and see new things he had never seen before. In "The road to wherever" while June is whacking weeds he says, "I'm not saying it's the most fun I ever had, but I really do enjoy myself" (Bradley Ed John, The Road to Wherever, 52). Another time where June has the same feeling is where he states, "Mama said Larry and Cornell were giving me a gift. I didn't believe her until now" (Bradley Ed John, The Road to Wherever, 3). June says that he was not having that much of a great time but he was still happy working with his cousins, he also says his mom told him this was a gift at first but he didn't agree with her until after he got to see new things like a sunup. This shows the readers that repairing the Ranchero was a fun new experience for June and he enjoyed it because he got to be with his Cousins and saw new things. Just like June Nico is also happy after the repairs with the Ranchero because he has a positive impact.

When June and his cousins fixed the Ranchero it affected Nico in a positive way because the Ranchero was valuable to him. In the text after Larry tells him that the repair will be free of charge Nico states, "That is... well, it's unbelievable. Thank you, thank you so much" (Bradley Ed John, The Road to Wherever, 35). Another time that Nico shows gratitude is when June writes, "Nico's standing over by the delivery door. He's clapping his hands so hard you know they've got to sting" (Bradley Ed John, The Road to Wherever, 59). June says that Nico was so happy while finding out that Nico and his cousins would repair his grandfather's Ranchero for no cost that he might have started crying, this helps the reader see how big of a deal this was for Nico so this would really impact Nico's life in a positive way because he now has memory of his grandfather. Even after they fixed the Ranchero Nico was clapping so much it looked as if it would have hurt, this also helps the reader infer that this will greatly impact his life. Just like June and Nico the June's cousins were also impacted after repairing the Ranchero in a positive way.

While fixing the Ranchero the June's cousins Larry and Cornell impacted their lives in a good way because they get to do what makes them feel good and it brings them goodness in their lives. In the text when Nico asks why they repair old cars Larry says, "We do this because it brings meaning to our lives" (Bradley Ed John, The Road to Wherever, 34). Then again after the repair the Ranchero Larry questions June by saying, "Feels good, doesn't it?" (Bradley Ed John, The Road to Wherever, 62). These quotes tell us that Larry and Cornell after repairing the Ranchero it impacted their lives in a sweet way because they like how it feels to help others because they know it brings good to them and the person they helped. They also show the reader that sometimes, having a good time is worth more than getting paid because it will make you happier which if you were getting paid it would just be a drab job.

In conclusion, repairing the Ranchero impacted the lives of the characters in a good way because they had a good time, it held memories, and because it feels good to help others. For June, he got to spend time with his cousins which he later finds out that he enjoys doing these type of things with them, which before he did not agree with. Nico got to get his grandfather's old car restored which made him extremely happy because it restored his memories. June's cousins Larry and Cornell had a good time because they had fun bring joy to Nico, while repairing the Ranchero. So, because June and his cousins repaired the Ranchero it impacted everyone's life in a good way because everyone got something out of it.

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Idea Development 5B

The central idea is fully developed and effectively explains how repairing the Ranchero impacted the lives of the characters “by making Larry and Cornell proud of June’s abilities, Nico grateful and hopeful for the world, and June confident in his capabilities.” Relevant details from the passage are skillfully selected and explained, highlighting the impact on each character: “After teaching June how to use a weed whacker, . . . Cornell is proud of his younger cousin’s capabilities and is happy that he was able to teach June something useful.” The essay demonstrates skillful organization, with each body paragraph devoted to a different character and showing a rich expression of ideas: “Clearly, Nico has found hope in his life – hope that there is still caring and kindness in the world.” The essay demonstrates full awareness of task and mode.

Standard English Conventions 3B

The essay demonstrates consistent control of standard English conventions. Grammar, usage, and mechanics are controlled across a variety of simple and complex sentence structures: “Larry and Cornell are good, hardworking people that you can’t find many of these days, and Nico is glad that he found them.” Minor errors in spelling and word choice do not impede understanding.

The Road to Wherever by John Ed Bradley is about a boy named June who is traveling the country working with his older cousins, Larry and Cornell, on repairing cars. This passage from the novel is about repairing a car owned by someone named Nico. In this excerpt from *The Road to Wherever*, the experience repairing the Ranchero impacted the lives of the characters by making Larry and Cornell proud of June's abilities, Nico grateful and hopeful for the world, and June confident in his capabilities.

Fixing the Ranchero impacted Larry and Cornell, June's older cousins', life. They realized June's abilities and are proud of him. Now, they can have fun working with him more often. After teaching June how to use a weed whacker, the author writes, "Cornell looks over at Larry and says, 'We got ourselves a weed whacking genius'" (Bradley). Cornell is proud of his younger cousin's capabilities and is happy that he was able to teach June something useful. Also, after they repair the Ranchero, the cousins are celebrating with Nico. The excerpt says, "All three of them are smiling and nodding at me, showing that I earned it" (Bradley). This shows that June's cousins are proud of him because they are excited that they taught him important skills that helped him contribute to fixing the car. So, Larry and Cornell were impacted by this project in that they are proud of June.

Another way that fixing the Ranchero impacted the characters' lives is that now, Nico feels grateful and hopeful for the world. In paragraph 35, Nico says, "That is...well, it's unbelievable. Thank you, thank you so much" (Bradley). This quote shows that Nico is grateful that Larry and Cornell don't charge very much. He is happy that he has found such nice people to help him with a project that matters so much to him. Nico also says, "I didn't know there were people like the three of you still left in this mean old world" (Bradley). Clearly, Nico has found hope in his life - hope that there is still caring and kindness in the world. Larry and Cornell are good, hardworking people that you can't find many of these days, and Nico is glad that he found them. So, Nico's life was impacted by repairing the Ranchero because he has found happiness and hope.

Lastly, June is more confident with his abilities since he was able to help with the Ranchero project. June narrates as he's weed whacking, "I'm not saying it's the most fun I ever had, but I really do enjoy myself. Everybody seems to have a natural talent at something, and mine might be whacking weeds. Weeds don't stand a chance with June Ball going at them" (Bradley). At the beginning, June wasn't sure if he could help, but now he's found a hidden talent. He is also happy that, as mentioned earlier, he made his brothers proud. Additionally, June feels more confident when he and his cousins are racing back to the diner. The passage says, "Cornell reaches out and grabs at my jersey. I feel a tug, but I can see the end zone all of a sudden and there's no stopping me. The little cowbell on the door handle jingles to signal my victory" (Bradley). Earlier in the story, June might've stopped to let Cornell win, but now, he is confident that he can win the race, so he keeps going. His confidence paid off, and he gets to the diner first, hereby winning the race. This shows that helping with the Ranchero made June more confident in himself.

In conclusion, repairing the Ranchero changed the lives of four characters. Larry and Cornell were able to teach June how to fix a car, and they are proud of his abilities. Nico is grateful that the cousins were so nice, and he now has more hope that some people are as kind as they are. Finally, June is more confident in himself, which is very evident at the end of the passage. This project was a positive experience for all the characters, and shows that hands on activities can help people change for the better.

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Idea Development 4

The central idea of the essay is clear and well developed, effectively analyzing how repairing the Ranchero impacts “all of the characters’ lives in meaningful ways.” The selection and explanation of evidence are effective and support the analysis throughout each body paragraph: “This also impacts Nico by showing him that there are still people that care in the world, because as he said, he didn’t know ‘people like the three of you’ still around to help out.” Organization is effective and allows for a clear expression of ideas, as the essay discusses the impacts on June, the cousins Larry and Cornell, and finally Nico. There is full awareness of the task and mode.

Standard English Conventions 3C

The essay demonstrates consistent control of grammar, usage, and mechanics as well as a variety of sentence structures: “This is significant because June finds that he is good at whacking weeds, making him feel proud of himself and therefore impacting his life by boosting his self-esteem.” Minor errors in spelling and punctuation do not interfere with meaning or disrupt the flow of ideas. Overall, the essay demonstrates consistent control of standard English conventions.

“Even the dust in the air twinkles with light, and everything looks new and warm and golden.” This quote is from paragraph 3 of *The Road To Wherever* describes the journey to a man named Nico’s house. A boy, June, and his adult cousins Larry and Cornell, are going to fix Nico’s old ’57 Ranchero truck. This impacts the all of the characters’ lives in meaningful ways.

June’s life is impacted by fixing the Ranchero because it is his first time fixing a vehicle with his cousins. Cornell lets June use the Weedwhacker so they can get to the truck, in paragraph 52, where it says, “I’m not saying its’s the most fun I’ve ever had, but I really do enjoy myself. Everybody seems to have a natural talent at someting, and mine might be whacking weeds.” This is signifigant because June finds that he is good at whacking weeds, making him feel proud of himself and therefore impacting his life by boosting his self-esteem.

Another character whose life was impacted by the fixing of the Ranchero were the cousins, Larry and Cornell. In paragraph 34, it says, ‘ Larry says... “We do this because it brings meaning to our live.” He smiles at Nico now. “Can’t tell you how good it makes us feel every time we save another one.” This shows that fixing old vehicles is their passion, and every time they ‘save’ a car, it impacts their lives, making them feel happier.

Nico’s life is also affected by the fixing of the ’57 Ranchero. It was his late grandfather’s and Nico is emotionally attached to the truck in this way. In paragraph 35 it says, “Nico covers his face with his hands. He might be crying. ‘That is... well, it’s unbelievable. Thank you, thank you so much. I didn’t know there were people like the three of you still left in this mean old world.’ ” This is important because it shows Nico getting emotional, meaning he really cares about this Ranchero, and the fixing impacts his life by restoring a memory of his grandpa. This also imapcts Nico by showing him that there are still people that care in the world, because as he said, he didn’t know “people like the three of you” still around to help out.

The fixing of the ’57 Ranchero impacted the charcters’ lives in many ways, making June feel more proud of himself, Larry and Cornell feel happier, and Nico feel grateful. This experience was certainly a worthy one, and their lives definitely would not be the same without it.

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Idea Development 3

The central idea of the essay is general and moderately developed. The essay describes how the experience of repairing the Ranchero “changed these characters for the better” with Nico becoming “happier than ever,” Larry and Cornell both becoming “closer to June,” and June becoming “more confident.” Details from the passage are appropriate but general: “This leads up to when they finally fix the Ranchero and Larry and Cornell give all the credit to June on paragraph 61.” Similarly, explanation and analysis of the evidence are appropriate though somewhat vague: “This changes the dynamic from the beginning to the end of the story.” Organization is moderate, and there is adequate expression of ideas. Overall, the essay shows sufficient awareness of task and mode.

Standard English Conventions 3D

The essay demonstrates consistent control of standard English conventions relative to its length and complexity. It contains minor errors in grammar and mechanics (“sigificant,” “begning”); however, they do not impede understanding of the ideas presented. Sentence structure is sufficiently complex and varied to demonstrate consistent control.

The experience of repairing the 57' Ranchero changed these characters for the better. This impacted the lives of the characters in a very significant way. Nico got his special car repaired making him happier than ever, Cornell and Larry they grow closer and closer to June. June became more confident.

June became more confident throughout the story. At first on paragraph 3 he didn't believe that his cousins Larry and Cornell will be giving him a gift. They then show him a flock of birds in the sky. On paragraph 6 it says that June likes birds, and calls that the gift. But I disagree. The real gift was confidence. Once they finished fixing the Ranchero on paragraph 61 they gave all the credit to June. This significantly boosted his confidence. Making him different than he was in the beginning of the story.

Larry and Cornell also changed throughout the story. On paragraph 2 we see that Larry is very protective of his little cousin June and cares about him a lot. Cornell also complements him on his knowledge about weedwackers on paragraph 53. This leads up to when they finally fix the Ranchero and Larry and Cornell give all the credit to June on paragraph 61. This changes the dynamic from the beginning to the end of the story. Both Cornell and Larry get closer and closer their little cousin than they were in the beginning of the story.

In the beginning of the story we see that Nico is very sentimentally connected to his Ranchero. On paragraph 35 we see that he got very emotional when they said that the labor cost would be free. We can infer that once the Ranchero stopped working Nico was probably very disappointed. But near the end of the story we see Nico clapping so hard it stings on paragraph 59. Showing that he is elated that his car is fixed. Showing how Nico has changed from the beginning to the end of the story.

The Ranchero being fixed didn't just effect Nico. It effected all of the characters. June gained confidence because, of his cousin's humbleness. Larry and Cornell got closer to their little cousin June. Then Nico was proud and elated that his sentimental car was fixed for him. In conclusion the experience fixing the Ranchero has changed all the characters for the better.

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Idea Development 2

The essay contains a central idea: “it impacts all three characters lives because it gives them an adventerous experience to enjoy in the moment and look back on in the later years.” However, this idea is only somewhat developed throughout the essay. Evidence from the passage is limited, with the explanation focusing largely on June: “When June has finished he turns off the machine and realizes he actually did a good job and he even enjoyed it.” Larry and Cornell are mentioned, but the impact of the experience on them is not as clear. Organization is limited, with a single block paragraph and minimal transitions between ideas. The essay demonstrates partial awareness of the task and mode.

Standard English Conventions 2

Though there are relatively few errors present in the brief essay, the length and complexity are insufficient to demonstrate consistent control of standard English conventions. There are some minor errors in spelling and word choice (“wheedwacker,” “learnt”), but these errors do not impede understanding. Some variety in sentence structure demonstrates mostly consistent control relative to the overall length of the essay.

In The Road to Wherever when June decides to join Larry and Cornell on their trip to repair the Ranchero, it impacts all three characters lives because it gives them an adventerous experience to enjoy in the moment and look back on in the later years. While Cornell and Larry began their work on the Ranchero, June helped out by bringing them their materials and just watched them at first, but then Cornell stops in his work and hands June the wheedwacker and a pair of goggles, June is nervous at first becasue he has never done this before but Cornell reassures him, so he gets to work. When June has finished he turns off the machine and realizes he actually did a good job and he even enjoyed it. He was very proud of himself and so were the others. After they finish the job the owner tells them their breakfast is ready and all three of them begin to race over. This experience impacts all three characters because at the end they all worked together to accomplish their job and June even learnt a couple new things along the way. Overall Cornell, Larry, and June all had a fun time and created a stronger sense of collaboration and community within eachother on their trip.

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Idea Development 1

The response contains a central idea: “It impacted the life of the characters because it made all the characters closer with each other and they got to know each others life more.” However, this idea is not developed. Details from the passage are insufficient, and ideas are poorly expressed: “they all learned more about mechanic stuff....” The response demonstrates minimal organization and a minimal awareness of the task and mode.

Standard English Conventions 1

The response does not contain enough of the student’s own writing to demonstrate more than little control of standard English conventions. The response contains two sentences that have relatively few errors in grammar and mechanics; however, it is too brief to demonstrate consistent control.

It impacted the life of the characters because it made all the characters closer with each other and they got to know each others life more. Also they all learned more about mechanic stuff and they all had fun working with each other because on paragraph 52 it states " Im not saying its the most fun i ever had but i really do enjoy myself. Everybody seems to have a natural talent at something".

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Idea Development 0

Though the student attempts to address the prompt, the response provides no evidence of understanding the passage or task. The single phrase “The charecters have been there for a long time” does not correctly answer the question about the impact of the experience of repairing the Ranchero.

Standard English Conventions 0

The response shows no control of grammar, usage, or mechanics. The single sentence contains a spelling error (“charecters”) and lacks punctuation. The brevity of the response provides insufficient evidence to demonstrate control of standard English conventions.

The charecters have been there for a long time

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