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ABSTRACT

This booklet presents the Reading Framework for the 1992, 1994, and 1998 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). Developed through a national consensus process as part of an effort to move assessment forward, the framework presented in the booklet is more consistent with contemporary knowledge about reading and more relevant to the needs of education decisionmakers than earlier assessments have been. After an overview and introduction, the first chapter of the booklet discusses the development of the Reading Framework. The second chapter discusses the design of the Reading Framework, including: a goal for reading literacy education, constructing, extending, and examining meaning; and constructing the assessment. The third chapter addresses special studies (on oral reading, portfolios, and metacognition) and background information. Contains 10 references. Appendixes list members of the Steering and Planning committees, and present 9 sample items. (RS)

CS

Reading Framework for the National Assessment of Educational Progress: 1992–1998

NAEP Reading Consensus Project

National Assessment Governing Board
U.S. Department of Education

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NAEP Reading Consensus Project

Developed under contract number RS 89175001 by the Council of Chief State School Officers for the National Assessment Governing Board

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Reading Assessment Framework for the National Assessment of Educational Progress: 1992–1998.

Developed for the National Assessment Governing Board under contract number RS 89175001 by the Council of Chief State School Officers

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Overview

This document presents the Reading Framework for the 1992, 1994, and 1998 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), adopted by the National Assessment Governing Board (NAGB). The Framework contains the rationale for the aspects of reading assessed and criteria for development of the assessment. The NAEP in Reading uses a variety of assessment approaches, both conventional and innovative. Developed through a national consensus process as part of an effort to move assessment forward, the new NAEP in Reading is more consistent with contemporary knowledge about reading and more relevant to the needs of education decisionmakers than earlier assessments. The new reading assessment has the following characteristics:

- It examines students' abilities to construct, extend, and examine the meaning of what they read through the use of items that elicit a variety of responses to both multiple-choice and open-ended tasks.
- It assesses student performance in different reading situations—reading for literary experience, reading to be informed, and reading to perform a task—by using authentic, "real-life" texts. Students in grades 8 and 12 are permitted to choose from different short stories.
- It includes special studies to examine other aspects of reading, including the reading fluency of students and their reading habits and practices.

Introduction

Reading is the most important, fundamental ability taught in the nation's schools. It is vital to society and to the people within it. It is the door to knowledge and a capability that can liberate people both intellectually and personally.

For more than 20 years, the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) has been reporting the reading achievement of students in the United States. Known in recent years as "The Nation's Report Card," NAEP reports provide descriptive information about student strengths and weaknesses in reading and a number of other subjects. They provide data that compare groups of students by race and ethnicity, gender, type of community, and region, as well as data that chart trends in achievement over time. Relationships between student achievement and school-related experiences such as homework and instruction, are also reported.

Beginning in 1990, a significant change occurred in how and for whom NAEP results are reported. On a trial basis, the 1990 NAEP Mathematics assessment collected information to provide "state report cards" that allow state-to-nation and state-to-state comparisons. In 1992, the NAEP reading assessment included state-level reporting, on a trial basis, of fourth-grade results. For 1994, reading was assessed again at the national level, and at the state level in grade four. In 1998, NAEP plans to assess reading in grades four and eight at the state level.

The decision to undertake state-by-state reporting of assessment data had its beginnings in 1984, when a majority of chief state school officers supported the development of an assessment system that would provide state-level information. In the following year, that group supported the expansion of NAEP as the most feasible vehicle for such an assessment system. In 1986, two states, Wyoming and Georgia, contracted with NAEP to conduct in-state assessments concurrently with the national assessment and to provide them with state-to-nation comparison data. In 1986 and 1987, several groups of southern states contracted with NAEP to conduct state-level assessments in mathematics. This effort was coordinated by the Southern Regional Education Board.

During this period, the governors of various other states expressed a desire to obtain information from NAEP on the educational achievement of students in their states. In 1987, a national study group, chaired by Lamar Alexander, then Governor of Tennessee, made a series of recommendations about the future of NAEP. One of the most significant was that the assessment be expanded to provide state-by-state reporting.

In 1988, Congress passed the Hawkins-Stafford Amendments (P.L. 100–297) which added that new dimension to NAEP—a voluntary trial state assessment in 1990 and 1992. The first such trial was conducted in spring of 1990, with 40 states and territories participating in a mathematics assessment at grade eight. In 1992, the trial continued with mathematics at grades four and eight and reading at grade four. In 1994, NAEP state-level assessments were given in reading at grade four. NAEP plans a state-level reading assessment in both grades four and eight in 1998.

The decision to undertake state-by-state reporting is not without its critics—especially among reading educators. Some fear that state-by-state comparisons will be used to draw inappropriate inferences or to make unsupported cause-and-effect relationships. Others are concerned that the assessment design will not reflect appropriate educational goals. Still others fear that the various NAEP assessments will foster, and ultimately outline, a national curriculum. Reading educators, in particular, were apprehensive that the reading assessment would be insensitive to many theoretical and instructional developments in the field, and that it might oversimplify the complex set of behaviors that are integral to reading.

The first report card related to America's national education goals was released in the fall of 1991. But it contained many gaps, especially at the state level. Reading information was limited to what could be inferred from SAT scores. There is clearly a need for an assessment that will allow states to determine the success with which they have met the goals established by the President and the nation's governors. The NAEP in Reading fills a critical gap in this area.

Chapter One

Development of the Reading Framework

The Reading Framework for the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) contains the rationale for the aspects of reading to be assessed and criteria for development of the assessment. The national consensus process used to develop this Framework was guided by the following:

- A general pattern of consensus development, which was set forth by law and which has evolved over time, that calls for "active participation of teachers, curriculum specialists, subject matter specialists, local school administrators, parents, and members of the general public" (Public Law 100–297, Part C, 1988).
- The decision that the reading assessment would pilot state-by-state comparisons, which increased the importance of the consensus process.
- Recognition that experts, educators, and interest groups in reading often hold diverse and conflicting views that have not been completely clarified, much less settled, by research in the field.

The process of developing the Framework was carried out in late 1989 and early 1990 under the direction of the National Assessment Governing Board (NAGB). Created by Congress under P.L. 100–297, NAGB is responsible for formulating policy for NAEP. The Board is specifically charged with selecting subject areas to be assessed, developing assessment objectives and test specifications by use of a national consensus approach, identifying appropriate achievement goals for each age and grade, and other NAEP policy responsibilities.

To prepare the new Reading Framework, NAGB awarded a contract to the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO). The consensus process involved a Steering Committee, a Planning Committee, and the project staff at the Council of Chief State School Officers. The following describes the composition of each of these groups and outlines the roles each played.

- The Steering Committee consisted of members representing 16 national organizations (see appendix A). This group met initially in October 1989 to provide guidance for the consensus process and two additional times to respond to the progress of the work on the Framework and to offer additional guidance. Drafts of each version of the developing Framework were sent to members of this committee for review and reaction.
- The Planning Committee of 15 members consisted of experts in reading, including several university professors, the dean of a college of education, a classroom teacher, a school administrator, state-level specialists in reading and assessment, and a representative of the business community (see appendix A). This committee was established to identify the goals for the assessment and to prepare the Framework. It met with the Steering Committee early in the project and three subsequent times as it developed the plan for the new Reading Assessment. A subgroup of this committee met in January 1990 to develop the specifications for the assessment.
- The project staff at the Council of Chief State School Officers included a director, a project coordinator, and a project associate (see appendix A). In addition to meeting with the Steering Committee and the Planning Committee, this group maintained regular contact with staff and members of the National Assessment Governing Board.

As the Framework was being developed, the project staff continually sought guidance and reaction from a wide range of people in the fields of reading and assessment, from school teachers and administrators, and from state coordinators of reading and reading assessment. After thorough discussion and some amendment, the recommended Framework was adopted by the Governing Board in March 1990.

Steering Committee Guidelines

At its first meeting, the Steering Committee established guidelines to be followed in developing the Framework:

1. Focus on outcomes or be performance oriented, rather than reflect a specific instructional or theoretical approach. The Framework should not focus on the specific reading skills that lead to outcomes but on the outcomes themselves.
2. Address the increasing literacy needed for employability, personal development, and citizenship.
3. Expand the range of assessment tools to include such techniques as open-ended questions and other new approaches and formats appropriate to the objectives.
4. Account for contemporary research on reading and literacy but not imply a departure from the primary focus on outcomes.
5. Provide information to policymakers and educators that will assist them in making decisions about the improvement of educational performance.
6. Include general statements about what is reasonable reading performance for 4th, 8th, and 12th graders.

Considerations and Principles

The development of this Framework for the National Assessment of Educational Progress in Reading was guided by several considerations and principles—some resulting from the nature and purpose of the assessment, others reflecting the thinking and values of the Planning Committee and the Steering Committee.

The Nature of Assessment

The NAEP in Reading is an assessment conducted on a representative sample basis, not a test of individual performance. It is designed to inform policymakers and the public about achievement in the United States in broad terms. Thus, it is not designed to diagnose the causes of problems in individual students, schools, or districts. Furthermore, although analysis

of NAEP data can direct and inform research, the assessment is not designed primarily as a research instrument.

NAEP data in reading can be used to inform participating states of some of the strengths and weaknesses of their students' performance. The data can also be used to inform individual states and the country as a whole of some of the links among reading-related activities in schools, student and teacher background characteristics, and performance in certain aspects of reading.

Reading Literacy

The term "reading literacy" is not intended to imply only basic or functional literacy. Rather the term connotes a broader sense of reading, including knowing when to read, how to read, and how to reflect on what has been read. Contemporary research indicates that reading is a complex process that involves an interaction among the reader, the text, and the context in which something is read. Because reading is not considered to be a simple, unidimensional skill, reading achievement cannot be represented adequately by a single score. Whereas some aspects of reading, such as how well a reader summarizes a passage, can be measured directly; other aspects, such as how a reader utilizes reading strategies, can be measured only indirectly.

Assessment and Instruction

Assessment by itself should not drive instruction. Educators, in response to societal expectations, should set goals or standards that assessments can measure and serve. However, teachers often do use assessment tasks to set priorities for what they teach. With this in mind, the Planning Committee determined that the NAEP in Reading must contain passages and tasks so similar to those which students encounter in classrooms and in their own reading that, should teachers choose to do so, they could use the kinds of passages and tasks found on the assessment to set priorities in their classrooms without distorting instruction.

New Methodologies

A consensus of societal goals and values, the best available reading theory and research, and the wisdom gained from classroom experience—but, not primarily traditional psychometric theory—should drive the design of the assessment. The Framework must not promote assessment items that in terms of correlating with reading ability, have only statistical utility, but do not correspond to sound concepts of reading or resemble desirable classroom activities. Although the aspects of reading that can be measured in a project of national scope are limited by available resources, development time, and methodology, every effort must be exerted to make the best use of available methodology and resources. Capabilities in assessment must be driven forward, so that important aspects of reading that now elude measurement can be addressed in the near future. Toward these ends, new types of items and new methods of analysis were used for the NAEP in Reading, along with well-constructed multiple-choice items.

The Basis of the Framework

Because the 1992, 1994, and 1998 reading assessments include reporting of state-level results, concerns about the strength of the assessment design and about how the results will be reported have increased. Aware of these concerns, the Planning Committee attempted to develop a Framework that provides for an assessment that reflects both professional consensus and the best technical design possible in a large-scale reading assessment. The committee was aware that the Framework should represent a broad concept of reading that reflects the views of contemporary research, yet recognizes those aspects of reading currently emphasized in local school districts. It also should recognize that a variety of approaches and programs can produce successful readers. Therefore, in preparing this Framework, the committee considered a variety of perspectives, emphases, and opinions among professionals in universities and in state and local school districts. They began their work by identifying the most important goal of reading literacy education.

Chapter Two

The Design of the Reading Framework

A Goal for Reading Literacy Education

If the term "reading literacy" is used to describe a broad sense of reading, including knowing when to read, how to read, and how to reflect on what has been read, then an obvious goal of reading literacy education is to develop—in this broad sense—good readers. Substantial research and classroom experience have provided a great deal of information about good readers. In general, good readers have positive attitudes about reading and positive self-perceptions of themselves as readers. They choose to read a variety of materials, recognizing that reading serves many purposes in their lives. They read often and have developed their own criteria for what makes a text enjoyable or useful. They function successfully in schools, homes, and workplaces. They attain personal satisfaction that can come only from reading.

Some characteristics of good readers that distinguish them from less proficient readers follow. Good readers

a. Possess positive habits and attitudes about reading;

b. Read with enough fluency so that they can focus on the meaning of what they read;

c. Use what they already know to understand what they read;

d. Form an understanding of what they read and extend, elaborate, and critically judge its meaning;

e. Use a variety of effective strategies to aid their understanding and to plan, manage, and check the progress of their reading;

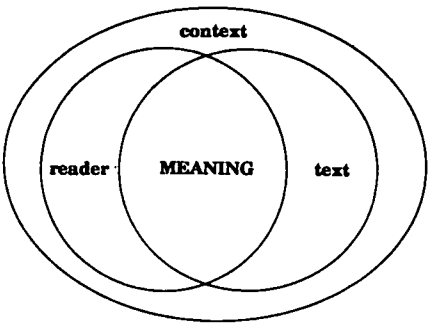
f. Can read a wide variety of texts and can read for different purposes.

The Planning Committee proposed that these characteristics of good readers provide the reference points for decisions about

which aspects of reading would be assessed in NAEP. This orientation toward good readers reflects a focus on performance rather than a focus on instructional approaches in reading. In line with this orientation, the Planning Committee determined that the major focus of the new NAEP in Reading be an assessment of student performance that uses three types of reading situations and involves several ways that students can construct, extend, and examine the meaning of what they are reading. In addition, the assessment gathers information about other important aspects of how students read, including fluency, use of different strategies to aid understanding, and the kinds of reading they engage in both in and out of the classroom. The next sections focus on these features of the assessment.

Types of Reading Situations

Reading for meaning involves a dynamic, complex interaction among three elements: the reader, the text, and the context. The context of a reading situation includes the purposes for reading that the reader might use in building a meaning of the text. The graphic below illustrates the reader-text-context interaction.



Good readers bring to this interaction their prior knowledge about the topic of the text and their purposes for reading it, as well as their skill in reading, which includes their knowledge about the reading process and about the structure of texts. Different types of texts have different organizations and features that have an effect on how a reader reads them. Readers are oriented to a given text very differently, depending on the text itself and on their purposes for reading. Some readers are comfortable and successful when reading stories but are uncomfortable and unsuccessful when reading directions for assembling a bicycle. Some readers may have learned how to read and learn from textbooks but are less able to approach and

appreciate a poem. Because students can be more or less proficient in reading different types of texts and in adopting different purposes for reading, it seems evident that the assessment of their performance must involve different types of text and different purposes for reading.

The NAEP reflects these considerations by assessing three general types of text and reading situations:

- Literature—reading for literary experience,
- Information—reading to be informed, and
- Documents—reading to perform a task.

The following discussion examines important characteristics of each of these situations.

Reading for literary experience usually involves the reading of novels, short stories, poems, plays, and essays. In these reading situations, readers explore the human condition and consider interplays among events, emotions, and possibilities. In reading for literary experience, readers are guided by what and how an author might write in a specific genre and by their expectations of how the text will be organized. The readers' orientation when reading for literary experience usually involves looking for how the author explores or uncovers experiences and engaging in vicarious experiences through the text.

Reading to be informed usually involves the reading of articles in magazines and newspapers, chapters in textbooks, entries in encyclopedias and catalogues, and entire books on particular topics. The type of prose found in such texts has its own features. To understand it, readers need to be aware of those features. For example, depending upon what they are reading, readers need to know the rules of literary criticism, or historical sequences of cause and effect, or scientific taxonomies. In addition, readers read to be informed for different purposes; for example, to find specific pieces of information when preparing a research project, or to get some general information when glancing through a magazine article. These purposes call for different orientations to text from those in reading for literary experience because readers are specifically focused on acquiring information.

Reading to perform a task usually involves the reading of documents such as bus or train schedules; directions for games, repairs, classroom, and laboratory procedures; tax or insurance

forms; recipes; voter registration materials; maps; referenda; consumer warranties; and office memos. When they read to perform tasks, readers must use their expectations of the purposes of the documents and the structure of documents to guide how they select, understand, and apply such information. The readers' orientation in these tasks involves looking for specific information in order to do something. Readers need to be able to apply the information, not simply understand it as is usually the case in reading to be informed. Furthermore, readers engaging in this type of reading are not likely to savor the style or thought in these texts, as they might in reading for literary experience.

Scales

The reading situations described above form the basis for the development of scales by which the NAEP in Reading are reported. Performance on the literary, informational, and task-performing components are reported on separate scales.

The proportion of items related to each of the reading situations changes from grade to grade to reflect the changing demands made of students as they mature. The proportions of items at each grade level are shown below.

Grade	Literary Experience	To Be Informed	To Perform A Task
4	55%	45%	(No Scale)
8	40%	40%	20%
12	35%	45%	20%

At the fourth-grade level, reading to perform a task will not be reported as a scale but rather as descriptive results. This decision was the result of three considerations: (1) To construct a scale in reading to perform a task, approximately one-fifth (20 percent) of the total items in the fourth-grade assessment would need to be devoted to those items. (2) Reading to perform a task, while important, probably does not reflect one-fifth of the type of independent reading fourth graders usually do. (3) By decreasing the number of items for reading to perform a task, more assessment time can be devoted to having students respond through extended writing to open-ended questions about longer, authentic texts.

The proportions of items in the 8th- and 12th-grade assessments are meant to reflect the reading that 8th and 12th graders are doing. Although literature is still very important for these students, they read extensively for information in content areas such as social studies and science, for information related to hobbies and interests, and for job-related purposes.

These scales support the need for teachers of science, civics, health, business, and technology—as well as literature—to understand the importance of skilled reading in their content areas and to promote the types of reading necessary to perform well in their classrooms.

Constructing, Extending, and Examining Meaning

Readers respond to a given text in a variety of ways as they use background knowledge and information from the text to construct an initial understanding, develop an interpretation to extend the text's meaning, and examine the meaning so as to respond personally and critically to the text. These various interactions between readers and texts do not form a sequential hierarchy or a set of subskills. Rather, they should be in the repertoire of readers who are at every developmental level in reading. An understanding of these interactions was crucial in the development of the assessment.

Forming an Initial Understanding

Forming an initial understanding requires readers to provide an initial impression or global understanding of what they have read. It involves considering the text as a whole or in a broad perspective. In the assessment, the first question following the passage taps this aspect of reading. Questions on initial understanding might include the following:

- Write a paragraph telling what the story/poem is about.
- Which of the following is the best statement of the theme of this story?
- Write a paragraph telling what this article generally tells you.
- What is this supposed to help you do?
- What would you tell someone about the main character?

Developing an Interpretation

Developing an interpretation requires readers to extend their initial impressions to develop a more complete understanding of what they have read. It involves linking information across parts of a text as well as focusing on specific information. Questions that ask readers to develop their interpretation might include the following:

- How did the plot begin to develop?
- What caused the character to do this? Use examples from the story to support your answer.
- What caused this event?
- What type of person is this character? Use information from the text to support your answer.
- In what ways are these ideas important to the topic or theme?
- What will be the result of this step in the directions?
- What does this character think about _____?

Personal Reflection and Response

Personal reflection and response requires readers to connect knowledge from the text with their own personal background knowledge. The focus here is on how the text relates to personal knowledge. Questions that ask readers to reflect and respond from a personal point of view might include the following:

- How did this character change your ideas of _____?
- Do you think that _____ (a grandmother and a 5-year-old) would interpret this passage the same way? Explain.
- How is this story like or different from your own personal experience? Explain.
- What current event does this remind you of? Explain.
- Does this description fit what you know about _____? Why?
- What does this passage/story say to you?

- Why do you think _____ (bullfrogs eat dragonflies?) Is there anything else you think they might eat? What parts of the passage, information from other books, or your own knowledge helped you answer this?

Demonstrating a Critical Stance

Demonstrating a critical stance requires readers to stand apart from the text and consider it objectively. It involves a range of tasks, including critical evaluation, comparing and contrasting, and understanding the impact of such features as irony, humor, and organization. Questions asking readers to demonstrate a critical stance might include the following:

- Compare this article/story to that one.
- How useful would this be for _____? Why?
- Do you agree with the author's opinion of this event?
- Does the author use (irony, personification, humor) effectively? Explain.
- What could be added to improve the author's argument? Why?
- Is this information needed?
- What other information would you need to find out that you don't know now?

The assessment also contains some questions that require readers to make connections across parts of a text or between texts. For example, students might be asked to compare a poem and a story with the same theme or to relate information from a first-person account to a textbook description of an event.

The following table illustrates the interactions among the aspects of reading assessed in the 1992–94 NAEP.

The NAEP in Reading: Aspects of Reading Literacy

Constructing, Extending, and Examining Meaning

	Initial Understanding	Developing Interpretation
	Requires the reader to provide an initial impression or unreflected understanding of what was read.	Requires the reader to go beyond the initial impression to develop a more complete understanding of what was read.
Reading for Literary Experience	What is the story/plot about?	How did the plot develop?
	How would you describe the main character?	How did this character change from the beginning to the end of the story?
Reading for Information	What does this article tell you about _____?	What caused this event?
	What does the author think about this topic?	In what ways are these ideas important to the topic or theme?
Reading to Perform a Task	What is this supposed to help you do?	What will be the result of this step in the directions?
	What time can you get a non-stop flight to X? (Search)	What must you do before this step?

Some questions require making linkages across parts of a text, or between texts using either personal reflection, critical stance, or both.

Fluency—Special study of how well students read orally.

The NAEP in Reading: Aspects of Reading Literacy

Constructing, Extending, and Examining Meaning

	Personal Reflection and Response	Demonstrating a Critical Stance
	Requires the reader to connect knowledge from the text with his/her own personal background knowledge. The focus here is on how the text relates to personal knowledge.	Requires the reader to stand apart from the text and consider it.
Reading for Literary Experience	How did this character change your idea of _____?	Rewrite this story with _____ as a setting or _____ as a character.
	Is this story similar to or different from your own experiences?	How does this author's use of ____ (irony, personification, humor) contribute to _____?
Reading for Information	What current event does this remind you of?	How useful would this article be for _____? Explain.
	Does this description fit what you know about _____? Why?	What could be added to improve the author's argument?
Reading to Perform a Task	In order to _____, what information would you need to find that you don't know right now?	Why is this information needed?
	Describe a situation where you could leave out step X.	What would happen if you omitted this?

Strategic Behaviors and Knowledge about Reading—When you have difficulty understanding what you are reading, what do you do?

Reading Habits and Practices—Have you read a book for enjoyment in the last week? Do you have a library card for your public library?

Constructing the Assessment

Designing Items

To effectively and efficiently explore the abilities of students to construct, examine, and extend meaning in a text, a combination of open-ended and multiple-choice items is used in the assessment. The type of items—multiple-choice or open-ended—is determined by the nature of the task.

The Board supported the inclusion of many open-ended items for a number of reasons. The first has to do with the nature of reading. As they read, readers are involved in a number of processes, including integrating information from the text with their own background knowledge, reorganizing ideas, and analyzing and critically considering the text. In an assessment of reading, it is important to have items that can most directly and accurately reflect how readers use these processes. Open-ended items that require extended responses provide a means of examining whether students can generate their own organized and carefully thought out responses to what they have read. Multiple-choice items do not permit this kind of assessment. Furthermore, open-ended items more closely resemble the real-world reading tasks that students must be able to perform to be successful in and out of school. Finally, open-ended items are the trend in state and international assessment programs. It is important that NAEP participate in such developments.

Multiple-choice items are used where the nature of the task calls for a single, clear answer to a question. Multiple-choice questions emphasize critical thinking and reasoning rather than factual recall.

Open-ended items are scored using primary-trait scoring, with scoring rubrics created for each question. Primary trait scoring rates how well a reader accomplishes a task according to a few major criteria. The rubrics guide the scoring by giving specific criteria for assigning a number score to levels of success in answering the question. (See appendix B for passages and rubrics.)

To ensure that only important questions (those that will reveal how readers construct an understanding or extend and examine the meaning of the text) are used, the assessment passages were analyzed, using an approach such as mapping essential text elements, before the questions were developed. The

analysis of passages using such a method helped the test developers to determine if a given passage has a coherent, orderly structure and is rich enough in meaning to provide several items useful for examining student performance.

The first question following a selection taps the student's initial understanding of the passage. Questions requiring a more developed understanding or further examination of the meaning of the passage then follow. Some questions require readers to integrate or compare information across more than one passage.

Selecting Passages

Passages selected for the assessment were drawn from authentic texts actually found and used by students in real, everyday reading. Whole stories, articles, or sections of textbooks were used, rather than excerpts or abridgements. Passages written solely for a test or to provide drill in a specific skill were not considered appropriate for this assessment.

Does the use of authentic passages give some students an unfair advantage because of their familiarity with the texts? Two safeguards protect against this. First, passages are not drawn from classroom basal readers; but are taken from books and magazines students are unlikely to have read. For example, some passages might be taken from magazines published in 1990 or earlier. The second safeguard is the nature of the items. They require students to engage in careful inspection and consideration of the passages so that even in the unlikely event that a student has read a given passage, she or he would need to reread and reconsider it to respond to the items.

The difficulty of items is a function of the difficulty of the passages and of the amount of background knowledge a reader must use from outside the text itself to answer them. Because of their limitations, conventional readability estimates were not the only or even the main criteria for determining the difficulty level of a passage. Rather, the difficulty of text was judged by its length, the complexity of its arguments, the abstractness of its concepts, unusual points of view, and shifting time frames—factors that are not addressed by traditional readability measures. As the difficulty of the passages increases, so does the difficulty of the questions, since the questions focus on important points in the text.

Texts range in difficulty from those that specific grade-level teachers agree could be read by the least proficient students in a class (for example, about grade two in a fourth-grade class) to those texts that can be read by only the most proficient readers in the class (possibly grade-eight level in a fourth-grade class).

In general, the assessment consists of items that most students at the given grade levels can do. This means not only that students possess the requisite abilities, but also that they are likely to have actually encountered the particular type of text or task.

Chapter Three

Special Studies and Background Information

Special Studies

Reading is a complex process that is being understood better as it is studied over time. Time constraints and the large numbers of students involved in the NAEP in Reading limit what is included in the assessment. The assessment does not represent completely all aspects of the reading process that are supported by current reading theory and research. The Planning Committee, however, believed in the importance of addressing as many facets of reading as possible and in acknowledging new and promising approaches to reading assessment. For these reasons, the committees proposed conducting special studies. These studies focus on three important aspects of reading: fluency, reading habits and practices, and metacognition. Two of these—an oral reading and response study and a gathering of portfolio-like samples of classroom reading activities—are combined into the Integrated Reading Performance Record (IRPR). The third is a study of the metacognitive strategies students use to comprehend what they read. The IRPR was part of the 1992 assessment, using a sample of fourth-grade students in the National Assessment.

Oral Reading and Response Study

A part of the Integrated Reading Performance Record, the Oral Reading and Response Study addresses concerns that fourth graders may not have the ability to recognize or figure out words as they read. Because the study focuses on actual reading performance, it also explores the potential of NAEP to be based more on student performance.

The importance of reading fluency goes beyond individual word recognition or accurate oral reading. Reading fluency involves the efficient, automatic recognition of words that permits readers to attend to understanding and thinking about what they are reading. Even the most tentative beginning readers can, at many levels, understand some of what they read.

Fluent readers, however, possess facility with written language that makes it possible for them to devote sufficient attention to understanding the text's meaning rather than only identifying the written words. The fluency with which readers can use all of the cues in a text, including syntax, semantics, and phonics, contributes to the effectiveness with which they understand what they read. In this sense, fluency is one means to some important ends.

In the assessment, fluency is determined by an analysis of students' oral reading of a passage from the assessment. The oral reading of a passage was chosen as the vehicle for assessing fluency because passage reading is observable and, as opposed to the reading of isolated words, allows students to use strategically their full range of text-processing skills.

Students are asked to read orally and respond to a passage they have read silently and answered questions about as a part of the regular assessment. An analysis is made of their oral reading fluency by looking for evidence of their use of phonics, sight vocabulary, semantics, and language structure. The relation of fluency to comprehension is also examined. The students' oral responses are related to their written responses to the passage. Because individual readers are asked to respond orally to the same questions they responded to in writing on the main assessment, examination of whether responses are similar in both modes is possible. It permits a consideration of the degree to which performance on the open-ended written questions might be confounded with students' writing abilities.

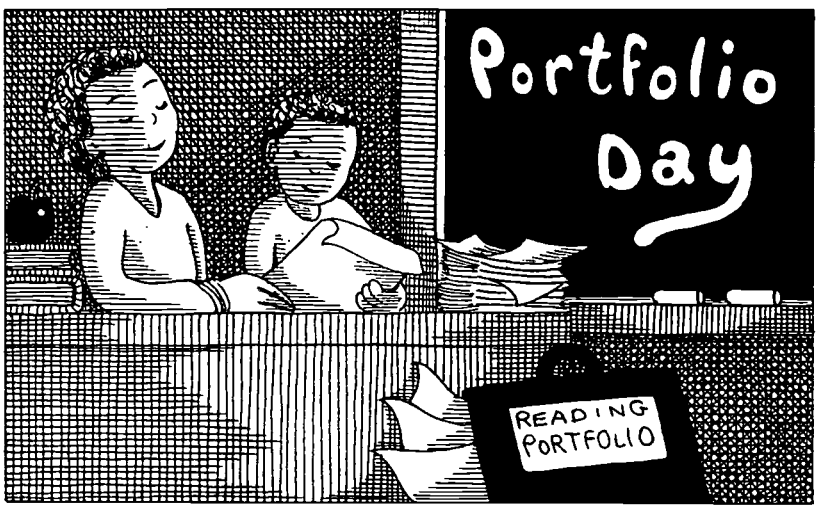
The purpose of this oral reading study is to pilot and refine the methodology and determine the usefulness of the results. A decision can then be made about whether to include examination of oral fluency on future assessments and possibly to extend it to other grade levels.

Portfolio Study

Portfolio assessment has engaged the interest of practitioners and policymakers as a means of documenting literacy performance in the day-to-day context of classroom life. Some portfolio components are included in the Integrated Reading Performance Record. The set of components is modest and does not represent a complete portfolio. However, given the high level of interest in this approach to literacy assessment and the potential value of

such an approach, it is deemed important to gather some data that might inform future assessment efforts.

The two main purposes of the portfolio study are to gather and analyze examples of classroom work in reading and to interview students about their reading activities both in and out of school. Components of the study include samples of students' daily work such as worksheets, written summaries, flow charts, or answers to open-ended questions. These samples are chosen by teachers, with student participation, and are analyzed to indicate the types of activities teachers are actually using in classrooms and how well students demonstrate in their daily work the types and aspects of reading examined in the assessment. In addition, interviews with students about their reading of self-selected books provide some information about student reading habits and practices.



The portfolio component study can become an important part of NAEP because it opens a window on the classroom. Such a study is valuable because it (1) provides information on students' self-selected reading outside of school and how their responses to whole books compare with responses to passages on the actual assessment; (2) offers some information about what is actually happening in classrooms during reading instruction; (3) permits examination of the types of reading responses students make on a daily basis; (4) begins to involve teachers directly in the assessment, rather than just in the usual question-and-answer section of a background questionnaire; and (5) permits large-scale exploration of an approach to assessment that is gaining support in states and districts throughout the country.

Metacognition Study

The term metacognition is used to describe the knowledge and strategies that good readers use to monitor their comprehension, such as predicting, skimming, and re-reading. Research has shown that good readers are strategic. That is, they know about and select strategies and approaches to their reading, and they use these strategies and approaches to help them understand and check their success in accomplishing their purposes for reading. In addition, research has provided a number of insights into what good readers specifically do before, during, and after reading.

Before reading, good readers consider what the text is going to be about, what they already know about the topic and the text genre, how fast or slowly they need to read, and what specifically they are looking for as they read. While reading, good readers ask themselves many questions: Does the meaning they are developing make sense? What might come next? Are they using the right speed? Are they using the right background information? What might they do to understand better? After reading, good readers decide if they have successfully read the text, whether they should go back and examine specific parts of the text, or whether they should reread for different purposes using a different strategy. Throughout the reading process, good readers' decisions about which strategies to apply are guided by an understanding of the purposes and structures of different types of text and by a knowledge of how to construct and examine meaning.

How students use strategies for monitoring their understanding and knowledge about reading is being considered in a separate but related study. The main purpose of the study is to determine efficient and reliable means of assessing students' awareness and use of reading strategies. The study will examine the usefulness of different formats, such as written or oral responses and multiple-choice or open-ended items. It also weighs the effectiveness of certain specific questions such as:

- How did you read the passage above? (Fast, slowly, skimmed it, carefully?) Explain why.
- What especially helped you understand this part of the passage?
- What would help you answer/do this?
- What do you think will come next?
- Was there a place where you stopped to reread? Underline it in the passage.

The study, planned for a future assessment, will provide information about students' awareness and use of reading strategies that can be reported along with the results of the main Reading Assessment.

Information for Educational Policymakers

Information useful to education policymakers is obtained from student questionnaires that are part of the NAEP in Reading and from questionnaires to which teachers and principals respond. The data gathered from these questionnaires, as well as those gathered in the Portfolio Study, give additional information about reading instruction in American schools and about the reading habits and practices of students. Some of this information focuses especially on topics that policymakers can address, such as access to a library at school or availability of a variety of reading materials in classrooms.

In summary, the NAEP in Reading represents a collaborative effort among educational agencies, educators, and those interested in education to provide relevant and valid information about how well American students read and about factors affecting their performance. To this end, the Framework includes the best approaches possible at this time for gathering information on

reading performance and activities related to becoming good readers. In addition, the assessment is designed to endorse high standards for student achievement and set forth realistic goals for effective reading literacy in the 21st century. The assessment seeks to advance both reading and its assessment, while pointing the way for continued progress in the future.

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Appendix A

Steering and Planning Committees

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Appendix B

Sample Items

Amanda Clement: The Umpire in a Skirt

by Marilyn Kratz

It was a hot Sunday afternoon in Hawarden, a small town in western Iowa.

Amanda Clement was sixteen years old. She sat quietly in the grandstand with her mother, but she imagined herself right out there on the baseball diamond with the players. Back home in Hudson, South Dakota, her brother Hank and his friends often asked her to umpire games. Sometimes she was even allowed to play first base.

Today, Mandy, as she was called, could only sit and watch Hank pitch for Renville against Hawarden. The year was 1904, and girls were not supposed to participate in sports. But when the umpire for the preliminary game between two local teams didn't arrive, Hank asked Mandy to make the calls.

Mrs. Clement didn't want her daughter to umpire a public event, but at last Hank and Mandy persuaded her to give her consent. Mandy eagerly took her position behind the pitcher's mound. Because only one umpire was used in those days, she had to call plays on the four bases as well as strikes and balls.

Mandy was five feet ten inches tall and looked very impressive as she accurately called the plays. She did so well that the players for the big game asked her to umpire for them—with pay!

Mrs. Clement was shocked at that idea. But Mandy finally persuaded her mother to allow her to do it. Amanda Clement became the first paid woman baseball umpire on record.

Mandy's fame spread quickly. Before long, she was umpiring games in North and South Dakota, Iowa, Minnesota, and Nebraska. Flyers, sent out to announce upcoming games, called Mandy the "World Champion Woman Umpire." Her uniform was

a long blue skirt, a black necktie, and a white blouse with UMPS stenciled across the front. Mandy kept her long dark hair tucked inside a peaked cap. She commanded respect and attention—players never said, "Kill the umpire!" They argued more politely, asking, "Beg your pardon, Miss Umpire, but wasn't that one a bit high?"

Mandy is recognized in the Baseball Hall of Fame in Cooperstown, New York; the Women's Sports Hall of Fame; and the Women's Sports Foundation in San Francisco, California. In 1912 she held the world record for a woman throwing a baseball: 279 feet.

Mandy's earnings for her work as an umpire came in especially handy. She put herself through college and became a teacher and coach, organizing teams and encouraging athletes wherever she lived. Mandy died in 1971. People who knew her remember her for her work as an umpire, teacher, and coach, and because she loved helping people as much as she loved sports.

Amanda Clement: The Umpire in a Skirt
Sample Questions—Grade 4

1. This passage is mostly about how Mandy

*a. had an unusual career in baseball

b. convinced her mother to like baseball

c. put herself through college

d. wore the first umpire's uniform

2. What obstacle did Mandy overcome in her baseball career?

a. The players did not respect her.

b. Baseball was not popular in Iowa.

*c. Girls did not typically take part in sports.

d. She did not have very much experience at baseball.

3. Write a paragraph explaining how Mandy got her first chance to be an umpire at a public game.

4. Which statement is supported by information in the passage?

a. Players never argued with Mandy during a game.

b. Mrs. Clement liked to watch Mandy play baseball.

*c. Mandy was athletic and loved baseball.

d. Mandy started the Women's Sports Hall of Fame.

*denotes correct answer

5. If she were alive today, what question would you like to ask Mandy about her career? Explain why the answer to your question would be important to know.

6. Tell two ways in which Mandy's experience would be similar or different if she were a young girl wanting to take part in sports today.

7. Which event came first in Mandy's career?

a. Mandy was paid to umpire a game.

b. Mandy was recognized in the Baseball Hall of Fame.

c. Mandy became a teacher and coach.

*d. Mandy umpired games for her brother and his friends.

8. Give three examples showing that Mandy was not a quitter.

9. The information in the passage is presented mainly by

a. comparing Mandy to other umpires

*b. discussing important events in Mandy's life

c. describing the game of baseball

d. providing details about life in the early 1900s

10. What was Hank's role in Mandy's early career?

Scoring Criteria for Amanda Clement: Umpire in a Skirt—Grade 4

3. Write a paragraph explaining how Mandy got her first chance to be an umpire at a public game.

Acceptable answers indicate that the umpire for a preliminary game between two local teams did not show up for the game and/or Mandy's brother suggested that she do the job.

5. If she were alive today, what question would you like to ask Mandy about her career? Explain why the answer to your question would be important to know.

Unsatisfactory—These responses demonstrate little or no understanding by providing isolated bits of information or by posing a question that is unrelated to Mandy's experience as a woman in a career traditionally dominated by males. In some cases, students refer to a line from the text and recast it in the form of a question.

Partial—These responses demonstrate some understanding of the information in the article by posing at least one question that is either not explained or is explained using circular reasoning.

Essential—These responses demonstrate some understanding of the information in the article. They contain at least one question that is specifically related to Mandy's career with an explanation that is relevant to furthering the student's own understanding of how it might feel to be an athlete who is highly successful or the first person to do something.

Extensive—These responses contain one question that is explained in relation to the student's personal view of the passage and that indicate that the student considered the more abstract aspects of the passage. These responses contain questions that are about issues or reactions and that grow out of careful consideration of the potential problems Mandy faced and the historical context in which she lived.

6. Tell two ways in which Mandy's experience would be similar or different if she were a young girl wanting to take part in sports today.

Acceptable responses mention areas of similarity or differences in relating Mandy's experience as an umpire to today's sports environment (e.g., less stigma attached to girls participating in sports now; there is more than one umpire at a baseball game today).

8. Give three examples showing that Mandy was not a quitter.

Acceptable answers mention three events from the passage that reflect positively on Amanda and that demonstrate some determination in her character.

10. What was Hank's role in Mandy's early career?

Acceptable responses discuss the fact that Hank let Mandy play ball and umpire or that he recommended her for the umpire position.

Note: These scoring criteria are a summary of the more extensive guides used in the NAEP scoring. The full guides include examples of student responses for each score point.

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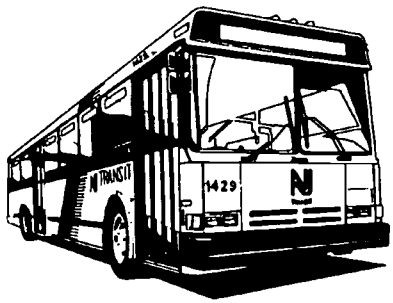

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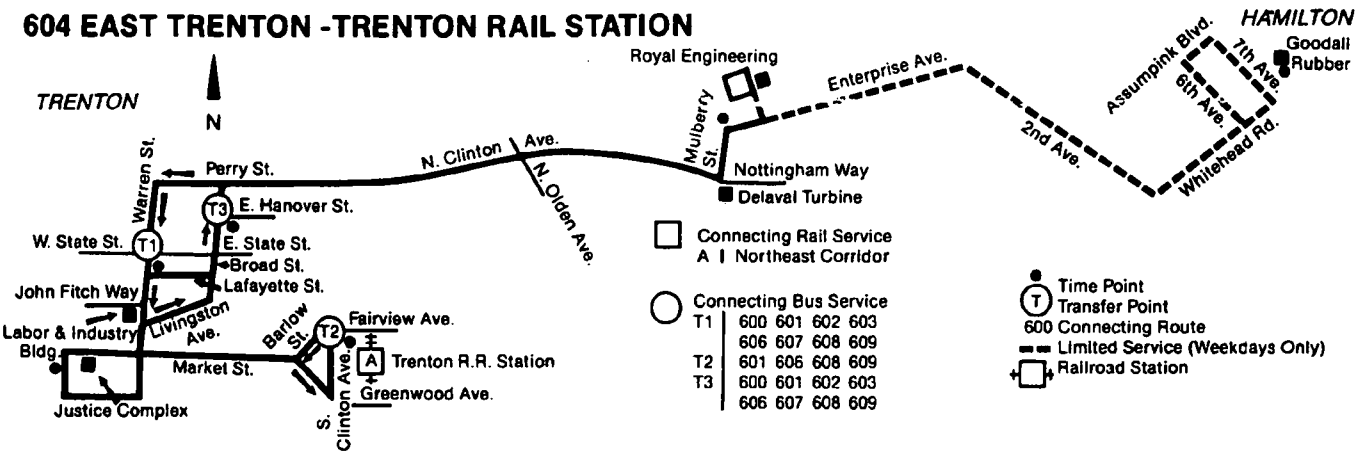

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	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.
W	-	5.55	6.08	6.12	6.17
W	-	6.25	6.38	6.42	6.47
W	6.55	7.00	7.13	7.17	7.22
W	-	7.25	7.38	7.42	7.47
W	-	7.55	8.08	8.12	8.17
W	-	8.25	8.38	8.42	8.47
W	-	9.25	9.38	9.42	9.47
W	-	10.25	10.38	10.42	10.47
W	-	11,25	11.38	11.42	11.47
W	-	P.M.	P.M.	P.M.	P.M.
W	-	12.25	12.38	12.42	12.47
W	-	1.25	1.38	1.42	1.47
W	-	2.25	2.38	2.42	2.47
W	-	3.25	3.38	3.42	3.47
	P.M.	-	-	-	-
W	3.50	3.55	4.08	4.12	4.17
W	-	4.25	4.38	4.42	4.47
W	-	4.55	5.08	5.12	5.17
W	-	5.25	5.38	5.42	5.47
W	-	5.55	6.08	6.12	6.17

1082

NO SERVICE will be operated on Sundays or the following Holidays: New Year's Day, Memorial Day, Independence Day, Labor Day, Thanksgiving Day and Christmas Day.

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Including the following Holidays

Martin Luther King Jr. Day
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	EAST TRENTON Mulberry & Enterprise	TRENTON State & Warren	TRENTON R.R. Station
	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.
W	6.25	6.38	6.45
W	7.25	7.38	7.45
W	8.25	8.38	8.45
W	9.25	9.38	9.45
W	10.25	10.38	10.45
W	11.25	11.38	11.45
	P.M.	P.M.	P.M.
W	12.25	12.38	12.45
W	1.25	1.38	1.45
W	2.25	2.38	2.45
W	3.25	3.38	3.45
W	4.25	4.38	4.45
W	5.25	5.38	5.45
W	6.25	6.38	6.45

1083

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	TRENTON R.R. Station	TRENTON Justice Complex	TRENTON Hanover & Broad	EAST TRENTON Mulberry & Enterprise	HAMILTON Goodall Rubber
	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.
W	6.25	6.30	6.35	6.48	6.53
W	7.00	7.05	7.10	7.23	-
W	7.30	7.35	7.40	7.53	-
W	8.00	8.05	8.10	8.23	-
W	8.30	8.35	8.40	-	-
W	9.00	9.05	9.10	9.23	-
W	10.00	10.05	10.10	10.23	-
W	11.00	11.05	11.10	11.23	-
	P.M.	P.M.	P.M.	P.M.	P.M.
W	12.00	12.05	12.10	12.23	-
W	1.00	1.05	1.10	1.23	-
W	2.00	2.05	2.10	2.23	-
W	3.00	3.05	3.10	3.23	-
W	4.00	4.05	4.10	4.23	-
W	4.30	4.35	4.40	4.53	-
W	5.00	5.05	5.10	5.23	-
W	5.30	5.35	5.40	5.53	-
W	6.00	6.05	6.10	6.23	-
W	6.30	6.35	6.40	6.53	-

1082

NO SERVICE will be operated on Sundays or the following Holidays: New Year's Day, Memorial Day, Independence Day, Labor Day, Thanksgiving Day and Christmas Day.

Saturdays
including the following Holidays

Martin Luther King Jr. Day
Presidents' Day
Good Friday
Columbus Day
Election Day

	TRENTON R.R. Station	TRENTON Hanover & Broad	EAST TRENTON Mulberry & Enterprise
	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.
W	7.00	7.08	7.21
W	8.00	8.08	8.21
W	9.00	9.08	9.21
W	10.00	10.08	10.21
W	11.00	11.08	11.21
	P.M.	P.M.	P.M.
W	12.00	12.08	12.21
W	1.00	1.08	1.21
W	2.00	2.08	2.21
W	3.00	3.08	3.21
W	4.00	4.08	4.21
W	5.00	5.08	5.21
W	6.00	6.08	6.21

1083

Notice to Wheelchair Passengers

Passengers requiring the use of wheelchair lift are encouraged to telephone 24 hours in advance to notify NJ TRANSIT of the trip they wish to take. Please call 1 (800) 582-5946 between 6:00 a.m. and 10:00 p.m. Only those trips identified with a "W" can be requested.

NJ TRANSIT
Customer Services

If you have a compliment or complaint regarding our service or employees, please call Customer Services Monday thru Friday 8:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.
In New Jersey 1 (800) 772-3606
Out of State 1 (201) 935-2500

How to use this schedule

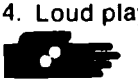
1. Select day of week desired.
2. Locate direction of travel desired.
3. Locate time check point or alternate destination nearest you.
4. Locate time desired under check point.
5. Check meaning of footnotes, IF APPLICABLE.
6. Check bus destination sign before boarding.

Transit Information

(6 a.m. to 12 Midnight Daily)
Telephone Numbers for Bus, Train & Fare Information
Northern New Jersey 1 (800) 772-2222
Southern New Jersey 1 (800) 582-5946
Out of State 1 (201) 460-8444
*Hearing Impaired 1 (800) 772-2287
* (TTD/TTY - Daily, 6:00 a.m. to Midnight)

Prohibited on the bus

1. Smoking of any kind
2. Eating food and drinking beverages
3. Littering
4. Loud playing of radios



Exact Fare Line

Passengers are required to have exact fare in coins no larger than a quarter when boarding buses on this line. Drivers do not carry money and cannot make change.

T0604-S-14M770-11/89

Bus Schedule
Sample Questions—Grade 8

Before answering any of the questions, take a few minutes to familiarize yourself with the bus schedule.

As you answer the questions about the bus schedule, make notes in the margins of the bus schedule about ways that it might be improved to make it easier to use.

1. The schedule is organized from top to bottom according to

*a. time of departure

b. geographic location of the stop

c. length of the bus ride

d. alphabetical order of the destination

2. Explain the most likely reason for scheduling only one bus each way between the Goodall Rubber plant and the railroad station.

3. What is the meaning of the W in the left margin of each line of the schedule?

a. Weekday service only

*b. Wheelchair lift

c. West side of the railroad station

d. Wednesday service only

4. On Friday, the ride from the railroad station to the intersection of Hanover and Broad takes 10 minutes. On Saturday, it takes 8 minutes. Why do the schedules differ?

*notes correct answer

5. Lois wants to use the wheelchair lift. What telephone number should she call to arrange this?

a. 1–201–935–2500

b. 1–800–772–3606

c. 1–800–772–2287

*d. 1–800–582–5946

6. How long does it take to ride from the intersection of Hanover and Broad to the intersection of Mulberry and Enterprise?

a. 5 minutes

b. 8 minutes

*c. 13 minutes

d. 23 minutes

7. Monthly bus passes are not valid on which routes?

8. If you need to transfer to connecting bus service 602, you can make the connection at which of the following transfer points?

a. The Justice Complex

*b. The intersection of W. State Street and Warren Street

c. The railroad station

d. The intersection of Fairview Avenue and Barlow Street

9. As described in the explanation of how to use the schedule, which of the following schedule entries is an example of a "check point"?

a. Presidents' Day

*b. Hanover and Broad

c. Northern New Jersey

d. W 6.25

10. Give two reasons why a person might want to buy a monthly bus pass.

11. In which of the following situations would you use this bus schedule?

a. You live and work in Pennsylvania.

b. You are traveling to a party in Trenton on Sunday.

*c. You live in Trenton and work at the Justice Complex.

d. You want information about railroad schedules to New York City.

12. Now that you have looked carefully at the bus schedule, use your notes and make suggestions to help New Jersey Transit improve this schedule.

Scoring Criteria for Bus Schedule—Grade 8

2. Explain the most likely reason for scheduling only one bus each way between the Goodall Rubber plant and the railroad station.

Acceptable answers indicate that students recognize the Goodall Rubber plant is a work stop and that the bus provides workers with transportation to their jobs.

4. On Friday, the ride from the railroad station to the intersection of Hanover and Broad takes 10 minutes. On Saturday, it takes 8 minutes. Why do the schedules differ?

Acceptable responses suggest a plausible reason that is based on accurate information from the bus schedule.

7. Monthly bus passes are not valid on which routes?

Acceptable answers indicate all four of the routes identified in the bus schedule as not valid with monthly passes.

10. Give two reasons why a person might want to buy a monthly pass.

Acceptable responses provide two reasons as indicated in the bus schedule (e.g., to avoid needing transfers or exact change, or to permit unlimited travel in the zone range).

12. Now that you have looked carefully at the bus schedule, use your notes and make suggestions to help New Jersey Transit improve this schedule.

Unsatisfactory—These responses demonstrate little or no ability to critically evaluate the bus schedule. They contain suggestions that are circular, inappropriate, or merely expressions of a personal opinion about the quality of the schedule.

Partial—These responses demonstrate some ability to critically evaluate the bus schedule by making one suggestion that clearly would improve the bus schedule. Some of these responses describe a problem with the schedule in which a suggestion for improving it was implied.

Essential—These responses provide at least two suggestions for the bus schedule that would clearly be improvements. The suggestions provided in these responses tend to be very specific and relate to certain parts of the schedule.

Extensive—These responses provide at least three suggestions for the bus schedule that would clearly be improvements. At least one of these suggestions demonstrates a connection across parts of the schedule and represents a more global consideration of the schedule than Essential level responses display.

Note: These scoring criteria are a summary of the more extensive guides used in the NAEP scoring. The full guides include examples of student responses for each score point.

The death of the hired man

by Robert Frost

Mary sat musing on the lamp-flame at the table
Waiting for Warren. When she heard his step,
She ran on tip-toe down the darkened passage
To meet him in the doorway with the news
And put him on his guard. "Silas is back."
She pushed him outward with her through the door
And shut it after her. "Be kind," she said.
She took the market things from Warren's arms
And set them on the porch, then drew him down
To sit beside her on the wooden steps.
"When was I ever anything but kind to him?
But I'll not have the fellow back," he said.
"I told him so last haying, didn't I?
'If he left then,' I said, 'that ended it.'
What good is he? Who else will harbor him
At his age for the little he can do?
What help he is there's no depending on.
Off he goes always when I need him most.
'He thinks he ought to earn a little pay,
Enough at least to buy tobacco with,
So he won't have to beg and be beholden.'
'All right,' I say, 'I can't afford to pay
Any fixed wages, though I wish I could.'
'Someone else can.' 'Then someone else will have to.'
I shouldn't mind his bettering himself
If that was what it was. You can be certain,
When he begins like that, there's someone at him
Trying to coax him off with pocket-money—
In haying time, when any help is scarce.
inter he comes back to us. I'm done."

"Sh! not so loud: he'll hear you," Mary said.

"I want him to: he'll have to soon or late."

"He's worn out. He's asleep beside the stove.
When I came up from Rowe's I found him here,
Huddled against the barn-door fast asleep,
A miserable sight, and frightening, too—
You needn't smile—I didn't recognize him—
I wasn't looking for him—and he's changed.
Wait till you see."

"Where did you say he'd been?"

"He didn't say. I dragged him to the house,
And gave him tea and tried to make him smoke.
I tried to make him talk about his travels.
Nothing would do: he just kept nodding off."

"What did he say? Did he say anything?"

"But little."

"Anything? Mary, confess
He said he'd come to ditch the meadow for me."

"Warren!"

"But did he? I just want to know."

"Of course he did. What would you have him say?
Surely you wouldn't grudge the poor old man
Some humble way to save his self-respect.
He added, if you really care to know,
He meant to clear the upper pasture, too.
That sounds like something you have heard before?
Warren, I wish you could have heard the way
He jumbled everything. I stopped to look
Two or three times—he made me feel so queer—
To see if he was talking in his sleep.

He ran on Harold Wilson—you remember—
The boy you had in haying four years since.
He's finished school, and teaching in his college.
Silas declares you'll have to get him back.
He says they two will make a team for work:
Between them they will lay this farm as smooth!
The way he mixed that in with other things.
He thinks young Wilson a likely lad, though daft
On education—you know how they fought
All through July under the blazing sun,
Silas up on the cart to build the load,
Harold along beside to pitch it on."

"Yes, I took care to keep well out of earshot."

"Well, those days trouble Silas like a dream.
You wouldn't think they would. How some things linger!
Harold's young college boy's assurance piqued him.
After so many years he still keeps finding
Good arguments he sees he might have used.
I sympathize. I know just how it feels
To think of the right thing to say too late.
Harold's associated in his mind with Latin.
He asked me what I thought of Harold's saying
He studied Latin like the violin
Because he liked it—that an argument!
He said he couldn't make the boy believe
He could find water with a hazel prong—
Which showed how much good school had ever done him.
He wanted to go over that. But most of all
He thinks if he could have another chance
To teach him how to build a load of hay—"

"I know, that's Silas' one accomplishment.
He bundles every forkful in its place,
And tags and numbers it for future reference,
So he can find and easily dislodge it

In the unloading. Silas does that well.
He takes it out in bunches like big birds' nests.
You never see him standing on the hay
He's trying to lift, straining to lift himself."

"He thinks if he could teach him that, he'd be
Some good perhaps to someone in the world.
He hates to see a boy the fool of books.
Poor Silas, so concerned for other folk,
And nothing to look backward to with pride,
And nothing to look forward to with hope,
So now and never any different."

Part of a moon was falling down the west,
Dragging the whole sky with it to the hills.
Its light poured softly in her lap. She saw
And spread her apron to it. She put out her hand
Among the harp-like morning-glory strings,
Taut with the dew from garden bed to eaves,
As if she played unheard the tenderness
That wrought on him beside her in the night.
"Warren," she said, "he has come home to die:
You needn't be afraid he'll leave you this time."

"Home," he mocked gently.

"Yes, what else but home?
It all depends on what you mean by home.
Of course he's nothing to us, any more
Than was the hound that came a stranger to us
Out of the woods, worn out upon the trail."

"Home is the place where, when you have to go there,
They have to take you in."

"I should have called it
Something you somehow haven't to deserve."

Warren leaned out and took a step or two,
Picked up a little stick, and brought it back
And broke it in his hand and tossed it by.
"Silas has better claim on us, you think,
Than on his brother? Thirteen little miles
As the road winds would bring him to his door.
Silas has walked that far no doubt today.
Why didn't he go there? His brother's rich,
A somebody—director in the bank."

"He never told us that."

"We know it though."

"I think his brother ought to help, of course.
I'll see to that if there is need. He ought of right
To take him in, and might be willing to—
He may be better than appearances.
But have some pity on Silas. Do you think
if he'd had any pride in claiming kin
Or anything he looked for from his brother,
He'd keep so still about him all this time?"

"I wonder what's between them."

"I can tell you.
Silas is what he is—we wouldn't mind him—
But just the kind that kinsfolk can't abide.
He never did a thing so very bad.
He don't know why he isn't quite as good
As anyone. He won't be made ashamed
To please his brother, worthless though he is."

"I can't think Si ever hurt anyone."

"No, but he hurt my heart the way he lay
And rolled his old head on that sharp-edged chair-back.
He wouldn't let me put him on the lounge.
must go in and see what you can do.

I made the bed up for him there tonight.
You'll be surprised at him—how much he's broken.
His working days are done; I'm sure of it."

"I'd not be in a hurry to say that."

"I haven't been. Go, look, see for yourself.
But, Warren, please remember how it is:
He's come to help you ditch the meadow.
He has a plan. You mustn't laugh at him.
He may not speak of it, and then he may.
I'll sit and see if that small sailing cloud
Will hit or miss the moon."

It hit the moon.
Then there were three there, making a dim row,
The moon, the little silver cloud, and she.

Warren returned—too soon, it seemed to her,
Slipped to her side, caught up her hand and waited.

"Warren," she questioned.

"Dead," was all he answered.

The death of the hired man
Sample Questions—Grade 12

1. Mary does not criticize Silas' offer to help on the farm the way Warren does because

*a. she knows Silas is only attempting to save his self-respect
b. she believes that Warren really needs his help with haying
c. she wants Silas to please his brother
d. she does not want Silas to think she is rude

2. What are two types of relationships that Robert Frost explores in the poem?

3. Mary meets Warren at the door and tells him that Silas is back so that

a. they can go to the market for some tobacco
b. Warren can count on Silas' help to ditch the meadow
c. they can call Silas' brother to pick up Silas
*d. Warren will be careful about what he said

4. Warren defined "home" as "the place where, when you have to go there, They have to take you in." Explain why you agree or disagree with Warren.

5. Why does Mary listen to Warren complain about Silas?

6. What is really bothering Warren about Silas' return?

a. He does not have the money to pay Silas' salary.
b. He does not like to get in arguments with Silas.
*c. He believes Silas will leave again.
d. Silas does not work hard enough to suit him.

*denotes correct answer

7. What kind of relationship did Silas have with his brother?

8. How did Silas view formal education?

a. He said it was necessary in order to be self-assured.
b. He valued it as a way to learn farming.
*c. He thought it was impractical and a waste of time.
d. He felt it caused people to argue too much.

9. From your experience, do you think that most people would do what Mary did for Silas? Explain why or why not.

10. How does Robert Frost use the relationship between Mary and Warren to help explain the character of Mary? Support your answer with evidence from the poem.

11. What does Warren mean when he says, "I'm done"?

12. What does Mary mean when she says that home is "Something you somehow haven't to deserve"?

a. You have to work hard to be part of a family.
b. It is a place where people merely tolerate you.
c. You do not have to be related to someone to be accepted.
*d. It is something you do not have to earn.

Scoring Criteria for The death of the hired man

2. What are two types of relationships that Robert Frost explores in the poem?

Acceptable responses mention any two relationships that are described explicitly or implicitly in the poem (e.g., husband and wife, worker and boss, young and old, etc.)

4. Warren defined "home" as "the place where, when you have to go there, They have to take you in." Explain why you agree or disagree with Warren.

Acceptable answers provide an opinion and an explanation of why that opinion is held; or an explanation from which an opinion can be readily inferred. The explanation must be non-circular and reflect an understanding of Warren's statement.

5. Why does Mary listen to Warren complain about Silas?

Acceptable responses provide an answer which refers to Mary's character and indicate her motivation to help Silas, or her respect for Warren.

7. What kind of relationship did Silas have with his brother?

Acceptable responses appropriately describe the relationship as being distant, broken, or some other description that reflects understanding of the lack of a close or supportive relationship between the two brothers.

9. From your experience, do you think that most people would do what Mary did for Silas? Explain why or why not.

Acceptable answers provide an opinion that was supported by something from the student's experience. The answer also had to correctly state or imply that Mary tried to understand Silas' ...ior or to see things from his perspective.

10. How does Robert Frost use the relationship between Mary and Warren to help explain the character of Mary? Support your answer with evidence from the poem.

Unsatisfactory—These responses provide inappropriate or inaccurate information about Mary's character and/or the relationship. They demonstrate little or no understanding of Warren and Mary's relationship within the poem and no ability to objectively consider the poet's use of the relationship in the poem.

Partial—These responses demonstrate some understanding of the character of Mary or the relationship between Mary and Warren. However, they are unable to provide evidence from the poem to establish a connection between the relationship and the poet's portrayal of Mary's character.

Essential—These responses demonstrate understanding of both Mary's character and the relationship between Warren and Mary. In addition, they are able to make some connection between this relationship and the poet's portrayal of Mary's character by using evidence from the poem. This connection, however, is usually limited to describing how Mary's character is exposed during the interactions between Warren and Mary.

Extensive—These responses move beyond simply describing Mary's character within the relationship to focusing on how the poet intentionally used their relationship in several parts of the poem to portray Mary in a particular light. Responses at this level demonstrate a clear critical stance by being explicit about their consideration of the poet's techniques and purposes as well as providing appropriate evidence from the poem.

11. What does Warren mean when he says, "I'm done"?

Acceptable answers indicate that Warren meant that he was finishing helping or tolerating Silas; or that he was not going to let Silas return to the farm.

Note: These scoring criteria are a summary of the more extensive guides used in the NAEP scoring. The full guides include examples of student responses for each score point.

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