



Exemplar Grade 8 Reading Test Questions



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Introduction

This booklet explains ACT[®] Aspire[®] Grade 8 Reading test questions by presenting, with their answer keys, sample questions aligned to each reporting category on the test. A key includes the question's depth-of-knowledge (DOK) level,¹ an explanation of the task posed by each question, a thorough explanation of correct responses, ideas for improvement, and more. The exemplar test questions included here are representative of the range of content and types of questions found on the ACT Aspire Grade 8 Reading test. Educators can use this resource in several ways:

- Become familiar with ACT Aspire question types.
- See what typical questions in each ACT Aspire reporting category look like.
- Help reinforce or adjust teaching and learning objectives.
- Learn how ACT Aspire improvement idea statements can help students identify key skills they have not yet mastered.

Each ACT Aspire Reading assessment contains several passages, including literary narratives (prose fiction, memoirs, personal essays) and informational texts (social science, natural science). Within and across grade levels, the passages span a range of complexity levels in order to provide students, teachers, and parents with information about how well students understand texts of increasing difficulty. Students answer a series of selected-response (multiple-choice), technology-enhanced, and constructed-response questions that assess their abilities to recognize meaning in, reason logically about, and make connections between and among texts. ACT Aspire Reading questions operate at various DOK levels, or cognitive complexities, and reflect a range of difficulty appropriate for the grade level.

All levels of ACT Aspire Reading assessments include constructed-response tasks that measure the higher-order cognitive processes necessary for reading and understanding increasingly complex texts. Constructed-response tasks are scored according to rubrics that allow students to receive varying amounts of credit for responses that are correct or partially correct, enabling differentiation between multiple skill levels.

The types of constructed-response tasks in ACT Aspire Reading assessments include the following examples:

- Formulate a conclusion by making connections within a passage, and provide support using specific details from the text.

¹ Norman L. Webb, "Depth-of-Knowledge Levels for Four Content Areas," last modified March 28, 2002, <http://facstaff.wcer.wisc.edu/normw/All%20content%20areas%20%20DOK%20levels%2032802.doc>.

- Formulate a conclusion by making connections between a pair of passages, and provide support using specific details from both texts.
- Identify cause-and-effect relationships within a passage, and provide support using specific details from the text.
- Identify similarities and differences between the key ideas of paired passages, and provide support using specific details from both texts.

Reporting Categories

ACT Aspire Reading tests assess skills in the following reporting categories, which are the same as the categories listed in the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) Reading strand and those found in the ACT College and Career Readiness Standards in Reading.

Key Ideas and Details

These questions require students to read texts closely; to determine central ideas and themes and summarize information and ideas accurately; and to understand sequential, comparative, and cause-effect relationships.

Craft and Structure

These questions require students to determine word and phrase meanings and analyze an author's word choice rhetorically; to analyze text structure; and to understand purpose and point of view.

Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

These questions require students to understand how arguments are constructed and to make connections to prior knowledge and between and among texts.

Improvement Ideas

ACT Aspire includes simple improvement ideas at the reporting category (skill) level on student and parent reports. These improvement ideas are provided for the lowest performing skill for each subject tested. The skills are always ordered from highest performing to lowest performing based on the percentage of points correct. If the percentages for two or more skills are tied, the skill with the lower number of total points is displayed first.

Keep in mind that the order of skills listed on reports may not always be exemplary of where to focus learning. For example, the skills in which a student performed within the ACT Readiness Range may not always be listed first, and the skills in which a student did not perform within the ACT Readiness Range may not always be listed last. Also, keep in mind the total number of points possible in each skill when interpreting the percentage correct.

There are two levels of improvement idea statements (low and high) for ACT Aspire summative reporting. Low statements are given on the report if the student's lowest skill score is below the ACT Readiness Range for that particular skill. High statements are given on the report if the student's lowest skill score is at or above the ACT Readiness Range for that particular skill.

Answer Key

This section presents a reading passage and the sequence number, grade, question type, DOK level, alignment to the ACT Aspire reporting categories, and correct response for each question. Each question is accompanied by an explanation of the question and the correct response as well as improvement idea statements for ACT Aspire Reading.

Passage: “City in a Garden”

City in a Garden

SOCIAL SCIENCE: “City in a Garden” is an original work of nonfiction.

Chicago and New York have long had a friendly rivalry. Which style of pizza is tastier, deep-dish or flat? However, when the Millennium Reserve on Chicago’s South Side is completed, no one will argue about which city’s park is largest. The 15,000 acres of trails, open spaces, and forests within the Reserve will surpass New York’s 843-acre Central Park in size by far.

The Millennium Reserve project, the most extensive renovation effort ever carried out by a US city, began in 2011. Including the parks and trails, the Reserve is revitalizing over 210 square miles of mostly postindustrial land in the city’s Calumet region. It extends southeast from downtown Chicago to the Indiana border and southwest to the suburb of Park Forest. The project is part of the America’s Great Outdoors Initiative. That federal program was launched a year earlier to help communities “conserve outdoor spaces and to reconnect Americans to the outdoors.”

Many separate projects will contribute to the Millennium Reserve. They all focus on the same set of broad goals. These include restoring damaged ecosystems, providing cultural and recreational opportunities, and promoting jobs. Some efforts aim to create green areas and open space from unused land and land polluted from previous industrial use. Other plans seek to develop and promote cultural sites. One of these is Pullman National Monument, built in 1880 for employees of the Pullman Palace Car Company as the nation’s first model community.

Another project, Great Rivers Chicago, focuses on the city’s three rivers. The Calumet, Chicago, and Des Plaines rivers have over one hundred miles of riverfront. More than one million people live in thirty-seven towns within the Reserve’s borders. As many as 172,000 people live within a quarter-mile of these waterways. Yet until recently, few would have thought of them as appealing places for a hike or a picnic.

There was a good reason for that. In the late 1800s, the nation was growing rapidly. It demanded iron for railroads and steel for skyscrapers and bridges. For a century, Chicago’s Calumet region was home to iron and steel mills and other heavy manufacturing. The industries dominating the region during that time harmed the local environment in favor of large-scale production. In the 1970s and 1980s, most of that industry collapsed, affording a widespread opportunity for transformation. Through the innovative and collaborative Millennium Reserve projects, communities are cleaning up remnants of the area’s industrial past, finding new ways to enjoy the restored landscape, and encouraging new economic growth within it.

The region is now poised for renewal, and the Millennium Reserve hopes to do just that. Dozens of public, private, and community partners are participating. US Secretary of the Interior Sally Jewell called the Reserve a “model for a 21st-century approach to conservation and outdoor recreation.” If successful, the project will bring Chicago much closer to living up to its motto: *Urbs in Horto*—City in a Garden.

Question 1

City in a Garden

SOCIAL SCIENCE: This passage is an original work of nonfiction.

Chicago and New York have long had a friendly rivalry. Which style of pizza is tastier, deep-dish or flat? However, when the Millennium Reserve on Chicago's South Side is completed, no one will argue about which city's park is largest. The 15,000 acres of trails, open spaces, and forests within the Reserve will surpass New York's 843-acre Central Park in size by far.

The Millennium Reserve project, the most extensive renovation effort ever carried out by a US city, began in 2011. Including the parks and trails, the Reserve is revitalizing over 210 square miles of mostly postindustrial land in the city's Calumet region. It extends southeast from downtown Chicago to the Indiana border and southwest to the suburb of Park Forest. The project is part of the America's Great Outdoors Initiative. That federal program was launched a year earlier to help communities "conserve outdoor spaces and to reconnect Americans to the outdoors."

Many separate projects will contribute to the Millennium Reserve. They all focus on the same set of broad goals. These include restoring damaged ecosystems, providing cultural and recreational opportunities, and promoting jobs. Some efforts aim to create green areas and open space from unused

With which of the following statements would the author most likely agree?

- A. An environmental project is best handled by individuals in the community.
- B. A federal program can have a positive effect on a conservation project.
- C. Outdoor recreation areas are easily created in large urban communities.
- D. The involvement of federal funds unnecessarily delays a project's completion.

| Sequence | Grade | Question type | DOK level | Reporting category | Correct response |
|----------|-------|-------------------|-----------|---------------------|------------------|
| 1 | 8 | Selected response | 3 | Craft and Structure | B |

This selected-response question requires students to analyze the point of view of a passage (aligns with the Common Core State Standards College and Career Readiness anchor standard [CCRA] R.6). To answer the question, students must read the entire passage carefully, determine the perspective of its author, and identify a statement from the options presented with which the author would most likely agree.

Correct Response

Only answer option B accurately presents a statement with which the author would most likely agree ("A federal program can have a positive effect on a conservation project"). The other answer options offer information inconsistent with the point of view presented in the passage or describe points of view that are not presented in the passage.

Improvement Idea Statements

| Reporting category | Grade | Low statement (scored below ACT Readiness Range) | High statement (scored at or above ACT Readiness Range) |
|---------------------|-------|--|--|
| Craft and Structure | 8 | As you read, consider the purpose of texts and parts of texts. Also analyze how texts are organized, how authors use point of view, and how authors use words and phrases. | Read increasingly complex texts from a variety of genres. Analyze how parts of texts relate to the whole, how authors use point of view, and how word choices impact meaning and tone. |

Question 2

City in a Garden

SOCIAL SCIENCE: This passage is an original work of nonfiction.

Chicago and New York have long had a friendly rivalry. Which style of pizza is tastier, deep-dish or flat? However, when the Millennium Reserve on Chicago's South Side is completed, no one will argue about which city's park is largest. The 15,000 acres of trails, open spaces, and forests within the Reserve will surpass New York's 843-acre Central Park in size by far.

The Millennium Reserve project, the most extensive renovation effort ever carried out by a US city, began in 2011. Including the parks and trails, the Reserve is revitalizing over 210 square miles of mostly postindustrial land in the city's Calumet region. It extends southeast from downtown Chicago to the Indiana border and southwest to the suburb of Park Forest. The project is part of the America's Great Outdoors Initiative. That federal program was launched a year earlier to help communities "conserve outdoor spaces and to reconnect Americans to the outdoors."

Many separate projects will contribute to the Millennium Reserve. They all focus on the same set of broad goals. These include restoring damaged ecosystems, providing cultural and recreational opportunities, and promoting jobs. Some efforts aim to create green areas and open space from unused

Based on information in the passage, the Millennium Reserve is part of which larger project?

- A. City in a Garden
- B. Great Rivers Chicago
- C. Pullman National Monument
- D. The America's Great Outdoors Initiative

| Sequence | Grade | Question type | DOK level | Reporting category | Correct response |
|----------|-------|-------------------|-----------|-----------------------|------------------|
| 2 | 8 | Selected response | 1 | Key Ideas and Details | D |

This selected-response question requires students to identify a detail stated in the passage (aligns with CCRA R.1). To answer the question, students must read the entire passage carefully, identifying key details related to the main subject of the text.

Correct Response

Only answer option D accurately identifies the specified detail from the passage ("The America's Great Outdoors Initiative"). All other answer options present details found within the passage, but none accurately identify the larger project to which the Millennium Reserve belongs.

Improvement Idea Statements

| Reporting category | Grade | Low statement (scored below ACT Readiness Range) | High statement (scored at or above ACT Readiness Range) |
|-----------------------|-------|--|--|
| Key Ideas and Details | 8 | Read a variety of grade-level texts, focusing on informational texts. Work on reading closely, determining main ideas/themes, and identifying sequences and relationships (comparative, cause/effect). | Read increasingly complex texts from a variety of genres. Work on making and supporting reasonable inferences and on identifying and inferring main ideas, themes, sequences, and relationships. |

Question 3

City in a Garden

SOCIAL SCIENCE: This passage is an original work of nonfiction.

Chicago and New York have long had a friendly rivalry. Which style of pizza is tastier, deep-dish or flat? However, when the Millennium Reserve on Chicago's South Side is completed, no one will argue about which city's park is largest. The 15,000 acres of trails, open spaces, and forests within the Reserve will surpass New York's 843-acre Central Park in size by far.

The Millennium Reserve project, the most extensive renovation effort ever carried out by a US city, began in 2011. Including the parks and trails, the Reserve is revitalizing over 210 square miles of mostly postindustrial land in the city's Calumet region. It extends southeast from downtown Chicago to the Indiana border and southwest to the suburb of Park Forest. The project is part of the America's Great Outdoors Initiative. That federal program was launched a year earlier to help communities "conserve outdoor spaces and to reconnect Americans to the outdoors."

Many separate projects will contribute to the Millennium Reserve. They all focus on the same set of broad goals. These include restoring damaged ecosystems, providing cultural and recreational opportunities, and promoting jobs. Some efforts aim to create green areas and open space from unused

Think about the passage "City in a Garden" as you read the following selection.

A River Reborn

Shipbuilding distinguished Glasgow's River Clyde waterfront for centuries. Scotland's largest city produced such legendary ocean liners as the Lusitania and the Queen Mary, as well as warships for World Wars I and II. However, in the 1960s, the industry fell into decline. Deserted shipyards lined the waterfront.

In 2003, government officials and private citizens collaborated to revitalize thirteen miles of the Clyde waterfront. They envisioned economic, social, and environmental regeneration of the then-blighted area. They transformed it into a cultural and economic magnet. They supported job retraining to help

This question has 4 parts. You must enter your answer for each part in the box provided. Read all parts before answering.

Part A

Explain how the Millennium Reserve project, as it is described in "City in a Garden," and the River Clyde waterfront project, as it is described in "A River Reborn," have similar goals.

450

Part B

Give one detail from the passage "City in a Garden" to support your answer to Part A.

450

Part C

Give one detail from the selection "A River Reborn" to support your answer to Part A.

450

Part D

Give one detail from either the passage or selection to support your answer to Part A.

450

| Sequence | Grade | Question type | DOK level | Reporting category | Correct response |
|----------|-------|----------------------|-----------|------------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 8 | 8 | Constructed response | 3 | Integration of Knowledge and Ideas | See sample student responses. |

This constructed-response task requires students to make connections between information and ideas in two texts (aligns with CCRA R.9). Specifically, this task requires students to determine how the Millennium Reserve project, as it is described in “City in a Garden,” and the River Clyde waterfront project, as it is described in “A River Reborn,” have similar goals. Students must read both the passage and the selection carefully, compare the information provided in the two texts, and provide examples of how the projects described in both have similar goals. Students must then construct a written response identifying this similarity, citing evidence from both texts to support their answer.

Improvement Idea Statements

| Reporting category | Grade | Low statement (scored below ACT Readiness Range) | High statement (scored at or above ACT Readiness Range) |
|------------------------------------|-------|---|--|
| Integration of Knowledge and Ideas | 8 | As you read, analyze how authors present their arguments. Also read multiple texts with similar topics or similar themes and analyze connections between and among these texts. | Read increasingly complex texts from a variety of genres. Analyze how authors present arguments, focusing on strengths and weaknesses. Also, look for connections between and among related texts. |

Scoring Framework

| Claim | Evidence |
|--|--|
| An interpretive statement that explains how the Millennium Reserve project, as it is described in “City in a Garden,” and the River Clyde waterfront project, as it is described in “A River Reborn,” have similar goals (1 point) | A detail from the passage that supports the claim (1 point) |
| | A detail from the selection that supports the claim (1 point) |
| | A detail from the passage or selection that supports the claim (1 point) |

Sample Student Response—Score Point 4

Part A

Explain how the Millennium Reserve project, as it is described in the passage “City in a Garden,” and the River Clyde waterfront project, as it is described in the selection “A River Reborn,” have similar goals.

Both will clean up areas that have been damaged by industry.

Part B

Give one detail from the passage “**City in a Garden**” to support your answer to Part A.

“They all focus on the same set of broad goals. These include restoring damaged ecosystems, providing cultural and recreational opportunities, and promoting jobs.”

Part C

Give one detail from the selection “**A River Reborn**” to support your answer to Part A.

“In 2003, government officials and private citizens collaborated to revitalize thirteen miles of the Clyde waterfront. They envisioned economic, social and environmental regeneration of the then-blighted area” of shipyards fallen into disrepair.

Part D

Give one detail from **either** the passage or the selection to support your answer to Part A.

Museums, parks, and retail stores make people want to visit Glasgow because the waterfront looks so much better now that it’s cleaned up.

Scoring Rationale

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- 4 This response earns Score Point 4.
- An acceptable claim is offered in Part A.
 - An acceptable piece of evidence from the passage “City in a Garden” is offered in Part B.
 - An acceptable piece of evidence from the selection “A River Reborn” is offered in Part C.
 - An acceptable piece of evidence from the selection “A River Reborn” is offered in Part D.
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Sample Student Response—Score Point 3

Part A

Explain how the Millennium Reserve project, as it is described in the passage “City in a Garden,” and the River Clyde waterfront project, as it is described in the selection “A River Reborn,” have similar goals.

By cleaning up ugly, formerly industrial areas, people in both Chicago and Glasgow are reclaiming beautiful natural spaces that everyone there can enjoy.

Part B

Give one detail from the passage “**City in a Garden**” to support your answer to Part A.

Chicagoans will create clean, usable areas along the banks of three rivers where there were old (and unused) steel and iron mills.

Part C

Give one detail from the selection “**A River Reborn**” to support your answer to Part A.

People in Glasgow have made nice areas for shops, parks, and museums on thirteen miles of waterfront.

Part D

Give one detail from **either** the passage or the selection to support your answer to Part A.

Glasgow used to have shipyards, but they have since fallen into disrepair.

Scoring Rationale

-
- 3** This response earns Score Point 3.
- An acceptable claim is offered in Part A.
 - An acceptable piece of evidence from the passage “City in a Garden” is offered in Part B.
 - An acceptable piece of evidence from the selection “A River Reborn” is offered in Part C.
 - This response does not earn credit for Part D because it does not address the goal to clean up the shipyards and revitalize the waterfront.
 - Please note that a student may also receive Score Point 3 if evidence is offered in Parts B, C, and D without a claim as long as a claim is implied (see Scoring Guideline v.)
 - Please note that a student may also receive Score Point 3 if an acceptable claim is offered in Part A and acceptable evidence from the passage “City in a Garden” is offered in two additional parts.
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Sample Student Response—Score Point 2

Part A

Explain how the Millennium Reserve project, as it is described in the passage “City in a Garden,” and the River Clyde waterfront project, as it is described in the selection “A River Reborn,” have similar goals.

People in both places are cleaning up old industrial or shipbuilding areas and encouraging economic growth.

Part B

Give one detail from the passage “**City in a Garden**” to support your answer to Part A.

“Many separate projects will contribute to the Millennium Reserve.” “These include restoring damaged ecosystems, providing cultural and recreational opportunities, and promoting jobs.”

Part C

Give one detail from the selection “**A River Reborn**” to support your answer to Part A.

Legendary ocean liners were built in Glasgow long ago.

Part D

Give one detail from **either** the passage or the selection to support your answer to Part A.

Chicago’s Millennium Reserve will be much, much larger than New York City’s Central Park.

Scoring Rationale

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- 2** This response earns Score Point 2.
- An acceptable claim is offered in Part A.
 - An acceptable piece of evidence from the passage “City in a Garden” is offered in Part B.
 - This response does not receive credit for Part C because it does not address the goal of cleaning up and renewing the Glasgow shipyard area.
 - This response does not receive credit for Part D because the comparison between Chicago and New York City is irrelevant in this context; it does not address the goal to clean up or renew the area.
 - Please note that a student may also receive Score Point 2 if evidence is offered without a claim as long as a claim is implied (see Scoring Guideline v.)
 - Please note that a student may also receive Score Point 2 if an acceptable claim is offered in Part A and acceptable evidence from the selection “A River Reborn” is offered in Part C or evidence from the passage or selection is offered in part D.
-

Sample Student Response—Score Point 1**Part A**

Explain how the Millennium Reserve project, as it is described in the passage “City in a Garden,” and the River Clyde waterfront project, as it is described in the selection “A River Reborn,” have similar goals.

Part B

Give one detail from the passage “**City in a Garden**” to support your answer to Part A.

Iron and steel mills once lined the banks of three rivers.

Part C

Give one detail from the selection “**A River Reborn**” to support your answer to Part A.

“In 2003, government officials and private citizens collaborated to revitalize thirteen miles of the Clyde waterfront.”

Part D

Give one detail from **either** the passage or the selection to support your answer to Part A.

“The Calumet, Chicago, and Des Plaines rivers have over one hundred miles of riverfront.”

Scoring Rationale

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- 1 This response earns Score Point 1.
- An acceptable piece of evidence from the selection “A River Reborn” is offered in Part C. (See Scoring Guideline v.)
 - This response does not earn credit for A because no claim is given.
 - This response does not earn credit for Part B because it does not address the goal to clean up and renew the river area.
 - This response does not earn credit for Part D because it does not address the goal to clean up and renew the riverfront.
 - Please note that a response may earn Score Point 1 if a claim is offered in Part A.
 - Please note that a response may earn Score Point 1 if evidence from the passage “City in a Garden” is offered in Parts B or D.
-

Sample Student Response—Score Point 0

Part A

Explain how the Millennium Reserve project, as it is described in the passage “City in a Garden,” and the River Clyde waterfront project, as it is described in the selection “A River Reborn,” have similar goals.

The Millennium Reserve project and the River Clyde project are similar.

Part B

Give one detail from the passage “**City in a Garden**” to support your answer to Part A.

“The 15,000 acres of trails, open spaces, and forests within the Reserve will surpass New York’s 843-acre Central Park in size by far.”

Part C

Give one detail from the selection “**A River Reborn**” to support your answer to Part A.

Abandoned ships filled the waters near Glasgow.

Part D

Give one detail from **either** the passage or the selection to support your answer to Part A.

The Millennium Reserve “extends southeast from downtown Chicago to the Indiana border and southwest to the suburb of Park Forest.”

Scoring Rationale

- 0** This response earns Score Point 0.
- This response does not earn credit for Part A because it does not state what makes these projects similar; i.e., it does not address the goals of these projects.
 - This response does not earn credit for Part B because it does not address the goals of the project, i.e., the cleanup and renewal efforts.
 - This response does not earn credit for Part C because it does not address the goals of the project, i.e., the cleanup and renewal efforts.
 - This response does not earn credit for Part D because it does not address the goals of the project, i.e., the cleanup and renewal efforts.
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Scoring Guidelines

- i. A credible claim is an interpretive statement based on evidence from the text.
 - ii. Creditable evidence may be verbatim, paraphrased, or a logical inference based on information from the text.
 - iii. Credit may be given to an otherwise insufficient claim if the student offers accurate and appropriate evidence.
 - iv. Credible evidence must indicate a logical connection to the claim.
 - v. Some students may offer evidence that implies a claim. In this case, a point is awarded for each textual detail but not for the implied claim. The maximum score for a response that offers two or more pieces of evidence but no claim is Score Point 3.
 - vi. The maximum score for a response that offers more than one claim but no evidence is Score Point 1.
 - vii. If a response gives the same answer or support twice using different words, it does not earn additional credit.
 - viii. Responses do not have to be in complete sentences or paragraphs. Even a one- or two-word response can receive a point.
 - ix. Extraneous material in a response, as long as it doesn't contradict the appropriate response, is not taken into consideration when assigning a score.
 - x. When a response offers an incorrect claim, evidence is not credible, even if this evidence is listed among the acceptable responses.
 - xi. Each part of the response must be entered in the correct box. Each part can receive a maximum of 1 point, even if multiple pieces of evidence are offered in the same box.
-