

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	3
General Scoring Guidelines for Reading	4
Reading Reporting Categories	5
Grade 7 Reading Passage 1	6
Reading Multiple-Choice Items	7
Grade 7 First Open-Ended Item	9
Open-Ended Item-Specific Scoring Guide	10
Open-Ended Item Responses	11
Grade 7 Reading Passage 2	17
Reading Multiple-Choice Items	18
Grade 7 Reading Passage 3	20
Reading Multiple-Choice Items	23
Grade 7 Second Open-Ended Item	25
Open-Ended Item-Specific Scoring Guide	26
Open-Ended Item Responses	27

INTRODUCTION

General Introduction

The Department of Education provides districts and schools with tools to assist in delivering focused instructional programs aligned to the state assessment system. These tools include assessment anchor documents, assessment handbooks, and content-based item and scoring samplers. This 2006–2007 Reading Item and Scoring Sampler is a useful tool for Pennsylvania educators in the preparation of local instructional programs and the statewide PSSA.

What Is Included

This item and scoring sampler contains reading passages with multiple-choice and open-ended items that have been written to focus on and align with the 2007 Assessment Anchor Content Standards (Assessment Anchors). These items are actual examples of those used to assess student performance on the PSSA. These items provide an idea of the types of items that will appear on the operational Spring 2007 PSSA. The passages represent some of the genres approved by PDE for appearance on the PSSA. Each item has been through a rigorous review process to ensure alignment with the Assessment Anchors.

Purpose and Uses

The passages with items in this sampler may be used as examples for creating assessment items at the classroom level, and they may also be copied and used as part of a local instructional program.* Classroom teachers may find it beneficial to have students respond to the open-ended items in this sampler. Educators can then use the sampler as a guide to score the responses either independently or together with colleagues within a school or district.

Item Format and Scoring Guidelines

The multiple-choice items have four answer choices. Each correct response to a multiple-choice item is worth 1 point.

Each open-ended item is designed to take about ten minutes to complete. During an actual testing event, students are given additional time as necessary to complete the test items. The open-ended items in reading are scored with item-specific scoring guidelines on a 0–3 scale. An item-specific scoring guide with examples of responses for each score point is presented with each item.

Also included is the General Scoring Guidelines for Reading used to develop the item-specific guidelines. The General Scoring Guidelines should be used to develop any item-specific scoring guideline created for use within local instructional programs.*

GENERAL SCORING GUIDELINES FOR READING

3 Points

- The response provides a complete answer to the task (e.g., a statement that offers a correct answer as well as text-based support).
- The response provides specific, appropriate, and accurate details (e.g., naming, describing, explaining, or comparing) or examples.

2 Points

- The response provides a partial answer to the task (e.g., indicates some awareness of the task and at least one text-based detail).
- The response attempts to provide sufficient, appropriate details (e.g., naming, describing, explaining, or comparing) or examples; may contain minor inaccuracies.

1 Point

- The response provides an incomplete answer to the task (e.g., indicating either a misunderstanding of the task or no text-based details).
- The response provides insufficient or inappropriate details or examples that have a major effect on accuracy.
- The response consists entirely of relevant copied text.

0 Points

- The response provides insufficient material for scoring.
- The response is inaccurate in all aspects.

Categories within zero reported separately:

- BLK (blank) – No response or written refusal to respond or too brief to determine response
- OT – Off task/topic
- LOE – Response in a language other than English
- IL – Illegible

READING REPORTING CATEGORIES

Reading Scores will be reported in two categories:

- A** – Comprehension and Reading Skills
- B** – Interpretation and Analysis of Fictional and Nonfictional Text

Examples of multiple-choice and open-ended items assessing these categories are included in this booklet.

SAMPLE ITEMS

There are three reading passages in this booklet. Each passage is followed by one set of multiple-choice items. Each item is preceded by the Assessment Anchor and Eligible Content coding. The correct answer for a multiple-choice item is indicated by an asterisk (*).

Two of the passages are followed by an open-ended item. Each item is preceded by the Assessment Anchor and Eligible Content coding. Each open-ended item is displayed with an item-specific scoring guideline and examples of student responses with scores and annotations.

READING

Read the following poem about a pond in a park. Then answer questions 1–8 in your answer booklet.

Water Picture

by May Swenson

In the pond in the park
all things are doubled:
Long buildings hang and
wriggle gently. Chimneys
are bent legs bouncing
on clouds below. A flag
wags like a fishhook
down there in the sky.

The arched stone bridge
is an eye, with underlid
in the water. In its lens
dip crinkled heads with hats
that don't fall off. Dogs go by,
barking on their backs.
A baby, taken to feed the
ducks, dangles upside-down,
a pink balloon for a buoy.

Treetops deploy a haze of
cherry bloom for roots,
where birds coast belly-up
in the glass bowl of a hill;
from its bottom a bunch
of peanut-munching children
is suspended by their
sneakers, waveringly.

READING

A swan, with twin necks
forming the figure three
steers between two dimpled
towers doubled. Fondly
hissing, she kisses herself,
and all the scene is troubled:
water-windows splinter,
tree-limbs tangle, the bridge
folds like a fan.

B.2.1.1

1. Which is the most likely reason the speaker says the dogs are barking “on their backs”?
 - A The speaker is imagining that the dogs are barking.
 - B The dogs are rolling on the grass as they bark.
 - C The speaker is viewing the dogs through a lens.
 - * D The dogs are reflected upside down in the water.

B.2.1.1

2. In the poem, the buildings “wriggle gently” because
 - A they are hanging.
 - * B the water has ripples in it.
 - C they are very tall.
 - D the chimneys are being shaken.

READING

B.2.1.1

3. Read the lines from the poem.

“The arched stone bridge/is an eye,
with underlid/in the water.”

This metaphor means that the

- A poet is looking under the water.
- B stone bridge’s arch is broken.
- C poet sees ripples under the bridge.
- * D stone bridge’s reflection makes a circle.

A.1.4.1

4. What “dangles upside-down” in the poem?

- A a dog
- * B a baby
- C a duck
- D a hat

B.2.1.1

5. In the poem, “water-windows” are windows that

- A keep water out.
- B are the color of water.
- C can hold water.
- * D are reflected in the water.

A.1.2.2

6. As it is used in the last line of the poem, the word folds most likely means

- A opens.
- B embraces.
- C blends.
- * D collapses.

A.1.4.1

7. This poem is mostly about

- A wildlife seen in a park.
- B a swan swimming in a pond.
- * C images seen in a pond.
- D an arched bridge in a park.

READING

OPEN-ENDED ITEM-SPECIFIC SCORING GUIDE

Item #8

This item will be reported under Category B, Comprehension and Reading Skills.

Assessment Anchor:

B.1 Understand components within and between texts.

Specific Eligible Content addressed by this item:

B.1.1.1 Interpret, compare, describe, analyze, and/or evaluate the relationships among the following within fiction and literary nonfiction:

Character:

Interpret, compare, describe, analyze, and/or evaluate character actions, motives, dialogue, emotions/feelings, traits, and relationships among characters within fictional or literary nonfictional text.

Scoring Guide:

Score	In response to this item, the student—
3	demonstrates complete knowledge of understanding character traits by describing the speaker of the poem and by using at least two examples from the poem.
2	demonstrates partial knowledge of understanding character traits by describing the speaker of the poem. (Example: Student describes the speaker and uses one example from the poem to support the response.)
1	demonstrates incomplete knowledge of understanding character traits by describing the speaker of the poem. (Example: Student describes the speaker without using any examples from the poem to support the response.)
0	has given a response that provides insufficient material for scoring or is inaccurate in all respects.
Non-scorable	BLK – No response or written refusal to respond or response too brief to determine response OT – Off task/topic LOE – Response in a language other than English IL – Illegible

Example—Top Scoring Response (3 Points):

Description with Examples
The speaker of the poem is imaginative, seeing things differently from the way things are seen by other people. For example, the long buildings “wriggle gently in the water” and “A flag wags like a fishhook down there in the sky.”

READING

OPEN-ENDED ITEM RESPONSES

B.1.1.1 Response Score: 3

8. Write a word or phrase to describe the speaker of the poem. Use at least two examples from the poem to support your response.

I feel that the speaker of the poem "Water Picture" is a very observative person. I feel this because he or she notices all the small things about the people and nature in the park. For example, how the swan hisses something most people would not have noticed. Another example is how the baby that was taken to feed the ducks held a pink ballon. These are some of the reasons why I think the speaker of the poem, "Water Colors" is very observative.

The student has given a complete answer to the task by using a word or phrase to describe the speaker of the poem ("I feel that the speaker of the poem "Water Picture" is a very observative person") and by using two examples from the poem to support the response ("how the swan hisses something most people would not have noticed" and "how the baby that was taken to feed the ducks held a pink ballon").

READING

B.1.1.1 Response Score: 1

8. Write a word or phrase to describe the speaker of the poem. Use at least two examples from the poem to support your response.

he is excited. And he is trying to think
and concentrate

The student has given an incomplete answer to the task by writing a word to describe the speaker of the poem ("excited") without using any examples from the poem to support the response.

Read the following passage about vacuums. Then answer questions 9–14 in your answer booklet.

Pressure: Vacuums Are All About Nothing

by Bill Nye & Ian Saunders

Air pressure acts in all directions. But what if there's no air at all?

Please consider the following:

When there's a place or a space with no air, we call it a *vacuum*. *Vacuum* comes from an old word that means "empty." Usually, things that we call empty aren't really *empty*. They're filled with air. An empty room may not have any books or chairs or goldfish in it, but it's got wall-to-wall air! And you know that air is made up of molecules and that these molecules go around bumping into things, making pressure. A vacuum, though, is *really* empty. I mean empty of everything—including air molecules. And when there are no air molecules, we get no air pressure.

A good example of a vacuum is a suction cup stuck to a wall. When you push down on the suction cup to attach it to the wall, you force almost all of the air out from under it. That creates a vacuum between the suction cup and the wall. At the same time, the air pressure in the room pushes against the other side of the suction cup. The vacuum under the suction cup has no air molecules and no air pressure, so it doesn't push back. The air molecules in the room hold the cup tightly to the wall.

The vacuum under a suction cup doesn't last very long. Air molecules in the room are constantly pushing against all sides of the suction cup. Since there's a vacuum under the suction cup, there's nothing to push back and keep air molecules from getting through tiny gaps between the wall and the cup. That means that some of the air molecules from the room can slowly sneak through into the space under the suction cup. Eventually enough molecules will sneak in, and the suction cup will fall off.

That's why we sometimes wet a suction cup to make it stick better. The liquid fills in tiny gaps between the cup and the wall. They're small to us, but they're plenty big enough for air molecules to slide through. See, it's harder for air to get through the gaps when they're filled with water, so the vacuum lasts longer.

Soda straws are another way to see a vacuum in action. When you suck up a milkshake, you suck most of the air molecules from the straw into your mouth, making a vacuum in the straw. Then the air pressure in the room pushes down on the top of the milkshake and pushes it up through your straw. Right into your mouth. *Mmmm!*

READING

Of course, when people talk about a vacuum, they usually mean a machine that cleans the floor. But that kind of vacuum works because it has a vacuum inside of it.

See, the motor inside the vacuum cleaner blows almost all of the air *out* of the machine, making a partial vacuum *inside* the machine. Then, air in the room rushes in to fill the empty space the only way it can—through the end of the long hose you move over the carpet. All that air rushing in carries dirt up off the floor. *Va-va-va-voom!*

A.2.4.1

9. Which statement **best** summarizes the main idea of this passage?
- A “All that air rushing in carries dirt up off the floor.”
 - B “The vacuum under a suction cup doesn’t last very long.”
 - * C “And when there are no air molecules, we get no air pressure.”
 - D “Eventually enough molecules will sneak in, and the suction cup will fall off.”

A.2.4.1

10. According to the passage, tiny gaps between a suction cup and a wall will
- A keep the cup stuck tightly to the wall.
 - * B allow air molecules to get under the cup.
 - C force air molecules to push down on the cup.
 - D help create a vacuum between the cup and the wall.

A.2.3.1

11. In the passage, soda straws are used as an example of how vacuums are
- A difficult to make.
 - B created by liquids.
 - * C useful in everyday life.
 - D ruined by air molecules.

READING

A.2.4.1

12. According to the passage, what is a vacuum?

- * A a space that has no air
- B a liquid pressing on air
- C a gap that allows air to pass
- D a collection of air molecules

B.3.3.1

13. Information in this passage is presented through

- A expert opinions.
- * B specific examples.
- C problems and solutions.
- D comparing and contrasting.

A.2.4.1

14. Which would be the **best** new title for this passage?

- * A "How Vacuums Work"
- B "Why Vacuums Are Important"
- C "How to Use a Vacuum Cleaner"
- D "The History of the Vacuum Cleaner"

Read the following passage about an island village. Then answer questions 15–21 in your answer booklet.

Fish, Flowers, and Fruit

by Joyce Sidman

Long ago, in the village of Ngiwal on the island of Palau in the waters of the great Pacific Ocean, lived a girl named Mora. Life was hard in Ngiwal. The soil was bad and wouldn't grow taro, so the villagers had to spend each day trapping and netting and spearing fish. Mora worked alongside the others, but when she had a free moment, she liked to go off exploring.

One day she swam out to a small reef island where no one lived. At the center of its tangled jungle, Mora discovered a most unusual tree. This tree had leaves as green as the ocean and as shiny as the sun, and it was covered all over with round, prickly flowers.

The flowers were so odd that Mora reached out and picked one. To her astonishment, a tiny fish hopped out from the broken stem and wriggled in her hand! She picked another flower. Another tiny fish came wriggling out. Mora looked up at the tall, many-flowered tree and thought of her village, which often had to go without food.

"If there is a fish in each of these flowers," she said to herself, "this tree could feed us all!" She tucked the flower and the fish in the band of her skirt and swam back to Ngiwal as fast as she could.

First she went to her mother and told her about the tree. Her mother shook her head. "Such foolishness," she said.

Then she went to her father. "A happy dream," he sighed.

So she went to find the elder in his wooden bai. She spoke respectfully: "On the small reef island by the village of Ngiwal on the island of Palau in the wide waters of the Pacific, there is a tree with fish in its flowers."

The elder looked her up and down. "An amazing story, Granddaughter! How do I know it is true?"

From her skirt, Mora drew out the strange flower and the tiny fish and placed them in his hand.

"Show me this tree," the elder said. He gathered four villagers, and they paddled to the island in a canoe.

Mora led them to the tree. Sure enough, when the elder stepped up and plucked a flower, a fish came out from the broken stem.

The others gasped, "What wonders!" Soon they were all plucking the odd, prickly flowers and catching the tiny fish that jumped out.

READING

“Still, it is only a handful of minnows,” said one of the villagers, drawing back an ax. “Let us cut a branch and see what happens.” He swung and hacked off a thick limb. Out flopped a big, silvery tuna.

“We will never have to fish again!” the villagers cheered.

The tree on the small reef island near the village of Ngiwal on the island of Palau in the waters of the great Pacific Ocean provided many fish for the villagers. All they needed to do was lop off a branch, and out flowed enough fish to feed them. They grew fat and happy, and the memory of their hardship faded.

One day when Mora swam out to visit the tree, she noticed that it was no longer as green as the ocean nor as shiny as the sun. Most of its leaves were gone, and there were few branches left. Worse yet, when the villagers’ axes bit into the tree, she heard the sound of weeping.

“The spirit of the tree is unhappy,” she said to the villagers gathering fish. “I hear it crying in pain.”

“We hear nothing,” the villagers said. “Besides, if the tree’s spirit were unhappy, why would it continue to give us fish?”

Mora had no answer. But as they paddled away, an old woman appeared beneath the tree. Tears ran down her wrinkled cheeks, and she held out an empty bowl.

“Why are you weeping, Grandmother?” Mora asked.

The old woman looked up. “Ah!” she said sadly. “I weep because my bowl is empty.”

“But here is the tree that gives us fish,” Mora said.

“This tree is dying,” the old woman wept. “Soon, the sharp blades of the axes will kill it, and I will have nothing left to eat.”

“What shall we do?” Mora asked. “Surely this wondrous tree was meant to feed us.”

The woman looked at her with eyes like an old turtle’s. “The flower that is picked cannot bear fruit.” With that, she disappeared.

Mora sat for a long time beneath the tree, thinking about what the old woman had said. She leaned against its rough bark and stared up at the few green limbs that grew strong and straight. She parted the petals of a flower and found a tiny pip of fruit. “The flower that is picked cannot bear fruit,” she murmured to herself. And she knew what she had to do.

The next morning, when the villagers came with their axes, they found Mora beneath the tree. “Step back, Daughter. We are here to gather the day’s fish.”

“Not today,” Mora said firmly. “The tree is ill. It needs a day to heal. Ask the elder; he will believe me.”

The villagers stared at her suspiciously. She was just a young girl, but the elder had once listened to her. Reluctantly, they went away, vowing to be back the next day.

When they returned, Mora stood in their way again. “The tree is not yet healed,” she said. “Tell the elder one more day is necessary.”

“This is foolishness!” the villagers grumbled as they stomped away. But Mora just smiled,

READING

for the prickly flowers were losing their petals.

On the third day, the villagers brought the elder with them.

“Daughter, the village is hungry,” he said. “We must gather fish from the tree.”

“What about our spears and fishing nets, Grandfather?” Mora asked respectfully. “Have we forgotten how to use them?”

The elder frowned, and the villagers muttered. In truth, they had begun to forget how to fish the old ways.

“We are hungry!” someone called. “Stand aside!” The rest raised their axes.

“But look at the tree!” Mora pointed upward. All the strange, prickly flowers had disappeared, and in their place were wrinkled green globes the size of fists. Swiftly, Mora climbed up and shook a branch. One of the globes dropped and split in half, revealing a white, fleshy core.

“What is this fruit?” the elder cried, snatching it up. “We have never seen its like

before. Cooks!” he ordered. “Hurry back to the village and see what can be made of this!”

Much could be made of the strange fruit, they soon discovered. It could be baked, fried, and pickled, and it filled the stomach wonderfully. The elder gave it a name, breadfruit, and declared that, from then on, no ax should touch the tree from whence it came.

The breadfruit tree grew once again as green as the ocean and as glossy as the sun. Mora took to carrying its seeds with her, planting them wherever she went. Soon there were enough trees to feed the whole village of Ngiwal—and indeed the entire island of Palau.

When the villagers yearned for fish, they took up their spears and nets and went out on the wide waters of the Pacific. They remembered the old ways of fishing and passed them on to their sons and daughters. They passed on, too, the story of Mora, the girl who stopped the axes of Ngiwal and turned the flowers of fish into fruit.

READING

B.1.1.1

15. Which word **best** describes Mora?

- A selfish
- B reckless
- C obedient
- * D courageous

A.1.3.1

16. Mora tells the villagers that the tree is ill so that the tree can

- * A bear fruit.
- B make seeds.
- C produce fish.
- D grow flowers.

A.1.1.2

17. Read the following sentence from the passage.

“Reluctantly, they went away, vowing to be back the next day.”

The **best** synonym for the word reluctantly is

- A hastily.
- * B unwillingly.
- C jubilantly.
- D confidently.

A.1.4.1

18. The “wrinkled green globes” on the unusual tree are

- A fish.
- B leaves.
- C flowers.
- * D breadfruit.

READING

B.1.1.1

19. Which sentence **best** states the theme?

- A "Life was hard in Ngiwal."
- B "We are here to gather the day's fish."
- * C "The flower that is picked cannot bear fruit."
- D "When they returned, Mora stood in their way again."

B.2.1.1

20. Read the sentence from the passage.

"This tree had leaves as green as the ocean and as shiny as the sun, and it was covered all over with round, prickly flowers."

The similes in the sentence emphasize the tree's

- A island location.
- B size and shape.
- * C unusual beauty.
- D height and width.

READING

OPEN-ENDED ITEM-SPECIFIC SCORING GUIDE

Item #21

This item will be reported under Category A, Comprehension and Reading Skills.

Assessment Anchor:

A.1 Understand fiction appropriate to grade level.

Specific Eligible Content addressed by this item:

A.1.3.1 Make inferences and/or draw conclusions based on information from the text.

Scoring Guide:

Score	In response to this item the student—
3	demonstrates complete knowledge of understanding inferences by describing what the old woman represents and by using at least two examples from the passage to support the description.
2	demonstrates partial knowledge of understanding inferences by describing what the old woman represents. (Example: Student describes what the old woman represents and uses one example from the passage.)
1	demonstrates incomplete knowledge of understanding inferences by describing what the old woman represents. (Example: Student describes what the old woman represents without using any examples from the passage.)
0	has given a response that provides insufficient material for scoring or is inaccurate in all respects.
Non-scorable	BLK – No response or written refusal to respond or response too brief to determine response OT – Off task/topic LOE – Response in a language other than English IL - Illegible

Example—Top Scoring Response (3 Points):

Conclusion with Examples
The old woman represents the spirit of the tree. Mora tells the villagers that the spirit of the tree is unhappy, because the villagers are cutting branches off the tree. The old woman weeps when the villagers' axes bite into the tree.

READING

OPEN-ENDED ITEM RESPONSES

A.1.3.1 Response Score: 3

21. What does the old woman represent? Use at least two examples from the passage to support your response.

The old woman represents the tree's spirit. When Mora saw a villager swing his axe at the tree, she heard weeping. The old woman appeared beneath the tree and she was the one who was weeping. She held out an empty bowl and said, "I weep because my bowl is empty. Soon, the sharp blades of the axe will kill it, and I will have nothing left to eat." She talks about the tree dying and then there will be none whatsoever left.

The student has given a complete answer to the task by stating what the old woman represents ("the tree's spirit") and by using two examples from the passage to support the response ("When Mora saw a villager swing his axe at the tree, she heard weeping. The old woman appeared beneath the tree and she was the one who was weeping" and "She held out an empty bowl and said, 'I weep because my bowl is empty. Soon, the sharp blades of the axe will kill it, and I will have nothing left to eat'").

READING

A.1.3.1 Response Score: 2

21. What does the old woman represent? Use at least two examples from the passage to support your response.

When the people gathered a lot of fish the old woman appeared with an empty bowl. She said "A flower that is picked cannot bear fruit. I weep because the sharp blades of the ax will kill it and I have nothing left to eat."

The student has given a partial answer to the task by using two examples from the passage to imply what the old woman represents without explicitly stating what the old woman represents ("She said 'A flower that is picked cannot bear fruit.' " and "I weep because the sharp blades of the ax will kill it and I have nothing left to eat.")

READING

A.1.3.1 Response Score: 1

21. What does the old woman represent? Use at least two examples from the passage to support your response.

The old woman represent because if they cut it down they will not have nothing to eat or the would of been starving that why they did not want the cut it down But the old woman disapper.

The student has given an incomplete answer to the task by using an example from the passage to imply what the old woman represents without explicitly stating what the old woman represents ("if they cut it down they will not have nothing to eat or the would of been starving").

READING

A.1.3.1 Response Score: 1

21. What does the old woman represent? Use at least two examples from the passage to support your response.

The old woman represents the tree and the hungry villagers.

The student has given an incomplete answer to the task by stating what the old woman represents (“the tree”) without using any examples from the passage to support the response.

Acknowledgements

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