Standardized Testing: THEN ... and NOW

Sample Items and Tasks
Items noted as PARCC items are publicly available on the PARCC website as part of their sample items or practice tests. [http://www.parcconline.org/parcc-assessment](http://www.parcconline.org/parcc-assessment)

Items noted as Smarter Balanced items are publicly available on the Smarter Balanced website as part of their sample items. [http://www.smarterbalanced.org/sample-items-and-performance-tasks/](http://www.smarterbalanced.org/sample-items-and-performance-tasks/)

Items from former state assessments are located on public websites for released state items.
Reading

Grade 4
The student uses a reading passage to gather meaning.

Read the sentences from the passage.
As he neared the hollow tree he heard a growing hum. He made a similar noise and he saw one or two bees land on his bear suit.

What does the use of the word similar suggest? Pick two choices.

- Coyote was surprised and made an unusual sound.
- The sound Coyote made was meant to calm the bees.
- Coyote made a sound like a bear growling to tease the bees.
- The sound Coyote made blended in with the sound of the bees.
- The sound Coyote made was very loud to scare away the bees.
Claim 1: Students can read closely and analytically to comprehend a range of increasingly complex literary and informational texts.

Target 3: The student will determine the meaning of a word based on its context in a literary text.

DOK 2

Answer Key: B, D
Writing

Middle School
After NCLB required annual testing in reading and math at grades 3 – 8 and high school, few states continued to test writing on their annual assessments. Those that did often tested only persuasive writing with prompts such as this one.

Going to the movies is a major source of entertainment for many students. Imagine that the only discount movie theater in your area is closing.

Write a persuasive essay in support of keeping the discount movie theater open.

Students are taken through a 20 minute Classroom Activity to introduce the topic of school and community gardens. They read two articles, “Growing Our Own School Lunch” and “Make Your Own Dirt,” and then watch a 3 minute 5 second video, “Community Gardens: Typical Costs.” The entire class engages in a short conversation about the articles and video.

Testing begins with 35 minutes to respond to two short constructed response questions. After a break, students are given 70 minutes to respond to the following prompt.

Some students have suggested that a student gardening program should be started at your school. You are working on the school newsletter, and your assignment is to write an argumentative article for the newsletter on this topic. In your article, you will take a side about whether or not your school should start a student garden. Support your position with information from the sources you have examined. The audience for your article will be the teachers and students at your school.

The Garden:
### 2-point Research (Grades 6-11)
**Evaluate Information/Sources Rubric (Claim 4, Target 3)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>The response gives sufficient evidence of the ability to evaluate the credibility, completeness, relevancy, and/or accuracy of the information and sources. The response includes a thorough explanation of what evidence the article presents that would convince a teacher to allow students to grow plants. Strong support is provided by relevant details from the source.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>The response gives limited evidence of the ability to evaluate the credibility, completeness, relevancy, and/or accuracy of the information and sources. The response includes a partial explanation of what evidence the article presents that would convince a teacher to allow students to grow plants. Limited support is provided by relevant details from the source.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>A response gets no credit if it provides no evidence of the ability to evaluate the credibility, completeness, relevancy, and/or accuracy of the information and sources. The response does not include any relevant details from the article to show what evidence is presented that would convince a teacher to allow students to grow plants. The response may be vague, incorrect, or completely absent.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Sample 2-Point Response:**

The article tells how growing plants has helped the students try new vegetables. The article also shows that the students have learned a lot about what plants need to grow by participating in the garden project. In addition, the article shows that growing plants is fun for kids. The kids enjoy doing things like growing a “heartbeat.” Teachers like for students to have fun learning and to be healthy. Teachers will be likely to allow students to grow plants in science class after reading the article.

**Sample 1-Point Response:**

The article tells how the students have grown to like many vegetables from working in the garden. Also, the teacher can see how much the kids are learning in the garden. These facts will convince a teacher to let students grow plants in science class.

**Sample 0-Point Response:**

The article tells about a garden. The students had fun.
Writing: Grammar and Mechanics

High School
From old state test, following a short article:

**Which of the following is the correct way to punctuate sentence 8?**

A They recognize one another by sight smell, and voice.

B They recognize one another by sight, smell, and, voice.

C They recognize one another by, sight, smell, and voice.

D They recognize one another by sight, smell, and voice.

The following excerpt is from a writer’s first draft of a narrative essay. Read the excerpt. Then rewrite it, revising it to correct errors.

I had no idea what to expect when I walked into the arena. There were people everywhere, most of them clad in brightly colored jersey’s with different players’ names on the back of them. There were some names I could ’nt even pronounce! Me and my friend made our way to the corridor that led to the ice rink. The minute I stepped through the doorway, I could feel a rush of cold air hit my face. I could actually smell the ice! I never thought ice had a smell, but it really does. The next thing I noticed was the size, of the ice rink. There were lines and circles painted all over it, and I knew immediately I wouldn’t understand the rules. We found our seats, and it wasn’t long before the game started. We sat so close to the action that I felt as if I was right in the middle of it, the action was so intense it was hard to follow the puck, keep an eye on the players, and to figure out which team was ahead. When the home team scored a goal. The entire arena erupted with cheering that was so loud, I bet it was heard across town. by the end of the game, I felt so many emotions: delight, disappointment, fear, and excitement. Mostly, though, I felt in awe of the athletes who played this game. They are much more tougher than I ever expected. I suspect others new to hockey will be as impressed as me at this fast, interesting game.
Writing – Hockey

Claim 2: Students can produce effective and well-grounded writing for a range of purposes and audiences.

Target 9. EDIT/CLARIFY: Apply or edit grade-appropriate grammar usage and mechanics to clarify a message and edit narrative, informational, and persuasive/argument texts.

Exemplar Answer:

I had no idea what to expect when I walked into the arena. There were people everywhere, most of them clad in brightly colored jerseys with different players’ names on the back of them. There were some names I couldn’t even pronounce! My friend and I made our way to the corridor that led to the ice rink. The minute I stepped through the doorway, I could feel a rush of cold air hit my face. I could actually smell the ice! I never thought ice had a smell, but it really does. The next thing I noticed was the size of the ice rink. There were lines and circles painted all over it, and I knew immediately I wouldn’t understand the rules. We found our seats, and it wasn’t long before the game started. We sat so close to the action that I felt as if I was right in the middle of it. The action was so intense it was hard to follow the puck, keep an eye on the players, and figure out which team was ahead. When the home team scored a goal, the entire arena erupted with cheering that was so loud, I bet it was heard across town. By the end of the game, I felt so many emotions: delight, disappointment, fear, and excitement. Mostly, though, I felt in awe of the athletes who played this game. They are much tougher than I ever expected. I suspect others new to hockey will be as impressed as I am at this fast, interesting game.
English Language Arts
High School
English Language Arts, High School
Literary Analysis

- Reading comprehension
- Analysis of literary texts and drawing of inferences

From old state test, following excerpt from literary text:

This excerpt suggests that all people must, at some time, choose between good and evil. All of the following contribute to the reader’s perception that Goodman Brown knows that he is about to embrace evil except

A paragraph 3, Goodman Brown says, “. . . of all nights in the year, this one night must I tarry away from thee.”

B paragraph 7, Goodman Brown thinks, “. . . [it was] as if a dream had warned her what work is to be done to-night.”

C paragraph 8, “. . . Goodman Brown felt himself justified in making more haste on his present evil purpose.”

D paragraph 1, “young Goodman Brown came forth at sunset into the street at Salem village . . .”

This excerpt suggests that Hawthorne’s philosophical position includes which one of the following ideas?

A Man is predisposed to do evil.

B Man’s first impulse is to do good.

C Man creates his own reality.

D Man is responsible for his actions.
Excerpt from

Quicksand

by Nella Larsen

Helga Crane felt no regret as the cliff-like towers faded. The sight thrilled her as beauty, grandeur, of any kind always did, but that was all.

The liner drew out from churning slate-colored waters of the river into the waves. The small seething ripples on the surface became little waves. It was evening. In the western sky was a pink and mauve light, which faded gradually into a soft gray-blue obscurity. Leaning against the railing, Helga stared into the approaching night, glad to be at last alone, free of that great superfluity of human beings, yellow, brown, and black, which, as the torrid summer burnt to its close, had so oppressed her. No, she hadn’t belonged there. Of her attempt to emerge from that inherent aloneness which was part of her very being, only dullness had come, dullness and a great aversion.

Almost at once it was time for dinner. Somewhere a bell sounded. She turned and with buoyant steps went down. Already she had begun to feel happier. Just for a moment, outside the dining-salon, she hesitated, assailed with a tiny uneasiness which passed as quickly as it had come. She entered softly, unobtrusively. And, after all, she had had her little fear for nothing. The purser, a man grown old in the service of the Scandinavian-American Line, remembered her as the little dark girl who had crossed with her mother years ago, and so she must sit at his table. Helga liked that. It put her at ease and made her feel important.

Everyone was kind in the delightful days which followed, and her first shyness under the politely curious glances of turquoise eyes of her fellow travelers soon slid from her. The old forgotten Danish of her childhood began to come, awkwardly at first, from her lips, under their agreeable tutelage. Evidently they were interested, curious, and perhaps a little amused about this Negro girl on her way to Denmark alone.

Helga was a good sailor, and mostly the weather was lovely with the serene calm of the lingering September summer, under whose sky the sea was smooth, like a length of watered silk, unruffled by the stir of any wind. But even the two rough days found her on deck, reveling like a released bird in her returned feeling of happiness and freedom, that blessed sense of belonging to herself alone and not to a race. Again, she had put the past behind her with an ease which astonished even herself. Only the figure of Dr. Anderson obtruded itself with surprising vividness to irk her because she could get no meaning from that keen sensation of covetous exasperation that had so surprisingly risen within her on the night of the cabaret party. This question Helga Crane recognized as not entirely new; it was but a revival of the puzzlement experienced when she had fled so abruptly from Naxos more than a year before. With the recollection of that previous flight and subsequent half-questioning a dim disturbing notion came to her. She wasn’t, she couldn’t be, in love with the man. It was a thought too humiliating, and so quickly
dismissed. Nonsense! Sheer nonsense! When one is in love, one strives to please. Never, she decided, had she made an effort to be pleasing to Dr. Anderson. On the contrary, she had always tried, deliberately, to irritate him. She was, she told herself, a sentimental fool.

Nevertheless, the thought of love stayed with her, not prominent, definite; but shadowy, incoherent. And in a remote corner of her consciousness lurked the memory of Dr. Anderson’s serious smile and gravely musical voice.

On the last morning Helga rose at dawn, a dawn outside old Copenhagen. She lay lazily in her long chair watching the feeble sun creeping over the ship’s great green funnels with sickly light; watching the purply gray sky change to opal, to gold, to pale blue. A few other passengers, also early risen, excited by the prospect of renewing old attachments, of glad home-comings after long years, paced nervously back and forth. Now, at the last moment, they were impatient, but apprehensive fear, too, had its place in their rushing emotions. Impatient Helga Crane was not. But she was apprehensive. Gradually, as the ship drew into the lazier waters of the dock, she became prey to sinister fears and memories. A deep pang of misgiving nauseated her at the thought of her aunt’s husband, acquired since Helga’s childhood visit. Painfully, vividly, she remembered the frightened anger of Uncle Peter’s new wife, and looking back at her precipitate departure from America, she was amazed at her own stupidity. She had not even considered the remote possibility that her aunt’s husband might be like Mrs. Nilssen. For the first time in nine days she wished herself back in New York, in America.

The little gulf of water between the ship and the wharf lessened. The engines had long ago ceased their whirring, and now the buzz of conversation, too, died down. There was a sort of silence. Soon the welcoming crowd on the wharf stood under the shadow of the great sea-monster, their faces turned up to the anxious ones of the passengers who hung over the railing. Hats were taken off, handkerchiefs were shaken out and frantically waved. Chatter. Deafening shouts. A little quiet weeping. Sailors and laborers were yelling and rushing about. Cables were thrown. The gangplank was laid.

Silent, unmoving, Helga Crane stood looking intently down into the gesticulating crowd. Was anyone waving to her? She couldn’t tell. She didn’t in the least remember her aunt, save as a hazy pretty lady. She smiled a little at the thought that her aunt, or anyone waiting there in the crowd below, would have no difficulty in singling her out. But—had she been met? When she descended the gangplank she was still uncertain and was trying to decide on a plan of procedure in the event that she had not. A telegram before she went through the customs? Telephone? A taxi?

But, again, she had all her fears and questionings for nothing. A smart woman in olive-green came toward her at once. And, even in the fervent gladness of her relief, Helga took in the carelessly trailing purple scarf and correct black hat that completed the perfection of her aunt’s costume, and had time to feel herself a little shabbily dressed. For it was her aunt; Helga saw that at once, the resemblance to her own mother was unmistakable. There was the same long nose, the same beaming blue eyes, the same straying pale-brown hair so like sparkling beer. And the tall man with the fierce mustache who followed carrying hat and stick must be Herr Dahl, Aunt Katrina’s husband. How gracious he was in his welcome, and how anxious to air his faulty English, now that her aunt had finished kissing her and exclaimed in Danish: “Little Helga! Little Helga! Goodness! But how you have grown!”

Part A
In paragraph 2, what does the phrase inherent aloneness suggest about Helga?
- A. She dislikes the company of others.
- B. She is uncomfortable interacting with others.
- C. She feels that other people are judging her.
- D. She is uncomfortable being alone.

Part B
Which quotation from the text best shows the narrator moving beyond her inherent aloneness?
- A. "No, she hadn't belonged there." (paragraph 2)
- B. "She turned and with buoyant steps went down." (paragraph 3)
- C. "Everyone was kind in the delightful days which followed, and her first shyness under the politely curious glances of turquoise eyes of her fellow travelers soon slid from her." (paragraph 4)
- D. "The old forgotten Danish of her childhood began to come, awkwardly at first, from her lips, under their agreeable tutelage." (paragraph 4)
Quicksand
Grade 11, Literary Analysis

Part A:

Evidence: (RL 1) Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text, including determining where the text leaves matters uncertain.

Answer: B

Part B:

Evidence: (RL 4) Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in the text; analyze the impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone, including words with multiple meanings or language that is particularly fresh, engaging, or beautiful.

Answer: C
Writing
High School

THEN  Persuasive writing: write on a topic and make an argument based on whatever the student already knows or thinks.

The cafeteria supervisor in your school is considering adding new, healthier options to the school lunch menu. Write a letter to the cafeteria supervisor suggesting at least three new additions to the menu. In your letter, explain the benefits of including your options on the menu.

NOW  Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.

This multi-part task poses several additional questions about this text and then also asks students to read and answer a question about an excerpt from another text, The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man.

Item 7:
Now that you have read and answered questions about the passages from Quicksand and The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man write an essay in which you identify and explain a theme that is similar in both passages. In your essay, discuss how each author uses the characters, events, and settings in the passages to develop the theme.

Scoring Rubric: PARCC Grades 6-11 Condensed Scoring Rubric for Prose Constructed Response Item
Mathematics

Grade 3
Nina put point $X$ on a number line, as shown below.

Which fraction best shows where Nina put point $X$?

- $\frac{1}{1}$
- $\frac{1}{2}$
- $\frac{1}{4}$
- $\frac{1}{5}$
Look at point $P$ on the number line.

Look at number lines A – E. Is the point on each number line equal to the number shown by $P$? Choose Yes or No.
Fractions on Number Line

Claim 1: Concepts and Procedures: Students can explain and apply mathematical concepts and interpret and carry out mathematical procedures with precision and fluency.

Target: Develop understanding of fractions as numbers.

DOK 1

Scoring: Machine scored, answers A and D should be checked YES.
The table below shows the charges for renting and racing a go-cart.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Laps</th>
<th>0</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Price (dollars)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Which graph best represents these prices?

- **A**
- **B**
- **C**
- **D**
Cheese (PARCC)
Ratios and Proportional Relationships

Evidence (7.RP.2.d): Recognize and represent proportional relationships between quantities. Tasks require students to interpret \((x,y)\) on the graph of a proportional relationship means in terms of the situation, with special attention to the points \((0,0)\) and \((1, r)\) where \(r\) is the unit rate.

This graph shows the relationship between the pounds of cheese bought at a deli and the total cost, in dollars, for the cheese.

Select each statement about the graph that is true. Select all that apply.

☐ A. The point \((0, 0)\) shows the cost is $0.00 for 0 pounds of cheese.

☐ B. The point \((0.25, 1)\) shows the cost is $0.25 for 1 pound of cheese.

☐ C. The point \((0.5, 2)\) shows that 0.5 pound of cheese costs $2.00.

☐ D. The point \((1, 4)\) shows the cost is $4.00 for 1 pound of cheese.

☐ E. The point \((2, 8)\) shows that 8 pounds of cheese cost $2.00.

(Answer Key: A, C, D)
Modeling is not included in most state math standards. No similar items were found.

**NOW**  
Walker (Smarter Balanced)

The school is 100 meters from Jason's house. The following describes his most recent trip:

- He walked 50 meters toward school in 2 minutes. He realized that he left a book at home.
- He turned around and walked home at the same speed.
- He spent 1 minute looking for his book.
- He walked all the way to school at twice his original speed.

Use the Line tool to finish a graph that accurately represents Jason's trip.
For this item, a full-credit response (1 point) includes:

- all 3 segments correctly plotted
Mathematics

High School
Gloria manages an apartment building. The building has only two sizes of apartments: small and large. The table below shows the rental income per month for each.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Apartment Size</th>
<th>Rental Income per Month</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>small</td>
<td>$ 800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>large</td>
<td>$1200</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a. What is the total rental income for one month when 3 small apartments and 4 large apartments are rented? Show or explain how you got your answer.

For parts (b), (c), and (d), define $x$ and $y$ as follows:

- $x$ = the number of small apartments in the building
- $y$ = the number of large apartments in the building

b. Last month all the apartments in the building were rented. The total rental income for the month was $17,600. Write an equation in terms of $x$ and $y$ that represents this information.

c. The total number of small apartments and large apartments is 18. Write an equation in terms of $x$ and $y$ that represents this information.

d. Using the information in parts (b) and (c), determine the following:
   - the number of small apartments in the building
   - the number of large apartments in the building

Show or explain how you got each of your answers.
The “two-second rule” is used by a driver who wants to maintain a safe following distance at any speed. A driver must count two seconds from when the car in front of him or her passes a fixed point, such as a tree, until the driver passes the same fixed point. Drivers use this rule to determine the minimum distance to follow a car traveling at the same speed. A diagram representing this distance is shown.

As the speed of the cars increases, the minimum following distance also increases. Explain how the “two-second rule” leads to a greater minimum following distance as the speed of the cars increases. As part of your explanation, include the minimum following distances, in feet, for cars traveling at 30 miles per hour and 60 miles per hour.
Two-Second Rule (Smarter Balanced)

Claim 4: Modeling and Data Analysis: Students can analyze complex, real-world scenarios and can construct and use mathematical models to interpret and solve problems.

Target: 4E: Analyze the adequacy of and make improvements to an existing model or develop a mathematical model of a real phenomenon.

DOK: not provided

Scoring Rubric:

Sample Top-Score Response:
The minimum following distance is determined by the formula \( d = rt \), where \( d \) is the minimum following distance, \( r \) is the rate (or speed), and \( t \) is the time. The “two-second rule” says that the time needed between cars traveling at the same speed remains constant at 2 seconds, so as the speed of the cars increases by a certain factor, then the minimum following distance must increase by the same factor. Since the speed of the cars is measured in miles per hour, and the “two-second rule” measures time in seconds, I used the formula shown below to determine the minimum following distance, in feet.

\[
d = r \cdot \left( \frac{5280}{1} \right) \cdot \left( \frac{1}{3600} \right) \cdot 2
\]

For cars traveling at 30 miles per hour, the minimum following distance is 88 feet. For cars traveling at 60 miles per hour, the minimum following distance is 176 feet.

For full credit (2 points):
The response demonstrates a full and complete understanding of analyzing real-world scenarios. The response contains the following evidence:

- The student describes the correct relationship between speed and minimum following distance as proportional (e.g., as the speed increases, the minimum following distance needs to increase by the same factor).

AND

- The student determines the correct minimum following distances at 30 miles per hour and 60 miles per hour.

For partial credit (1 point):
The response demonstrates a partial understanding of communicating reasoning. The response contains the following evidence:

- The student describes the correct relationship between speed and minimum following distance as proportional (e.g., as the speed increases, the minimum following distance needs to increase by the same factor).

OR

- The student determines the correct minimum following distances at 30 miles per hour and 60 miles per hour.

OR

- The student determines an incorrect minimum following distance but provides correct relationship between speed and minimum following distance as proportional.