Minnesota Comprehensive Assessments (MCA)

DRAFT

Reading Test Specifications

for MCA-III, Grades 3–8 and 10

and

MCA-Modified, Grades 5–8 and 10

Based on the Minnesota K-12 Academic Standards in Language Arts (2010 version)

Minnesota Department of Education

January 31, 2014

MINNESOTA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

DRAFT

Reading Test Specifications

for MCA-III, Grades 3–8 and 10

and MCA-Modified, Grades 5–8

Updated versions of this document will be published until the
2013 operational administration of the test.

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MCA READING TEST SPECIFICATIONS

Introduction

Reading test specifications for grades 3–8 and 10 of the Minnesota Comprehensive Assessments Series III (MCA-III) and grades 5–8 and 10 of the MCA-Modified are presented in this document. The reader is encouraged to read the introductory information carefully because many important concepts are presented, including the purposes of the MCA-III and MCA-Modified in Reading, a description of the cognitive levels and other information about the format of the test specifications.

Purpose of the Minnesota Comprehensive Assessments

The purpose of Minnesota assessments is to evaluate Minnesota students' achievement measured against the Minnesota Academic Standards. Assessment results can be used to inform curriculum decisions at the district and school level, inform instruction at the classroom level and demonstrate student academic progress from year to year.

MCA-III

The passage of the No Child Left Behind Act (2000)[1] requires that students be assessed in grades 3–8 and high school. The Minnesota K–12 Academic Standards in Language Arts were adopted in 2003; the Minnesota Comprehensive Assessments-Series II assessed these standards. The 2006 Minnesota Legislature approved the 2006 Omnibus Education Policy Act (see Minn. Stat. § 120B.023, subd. 2b). This legislation requires the revision of the state's academic standards in language arts in the 2009–2010 school year. The legislation also requires that beginning in the 2012–2013 school year, state reading tests given in grades 3–8 align with the revised 2010 academic standards in language arts. The revision to the standards is significant enough that a new series of the MCA assessments is necessary. Thus, the Reading MCA-III is aligned with the 2010 Minnesota K–12 Academic Standards in Language Arts.

MCA-Modified

The Reading MCA-Modified (MCA-M) is an alternate assessment based on modified achievement standards. It is designed for a small group of students whose disability has precluded them from achieving grade-level proficiency but who do not qualify to take Minnesota's other alternate assessment, the Minnesota Test of Academic Skills (MTAS). The MCA-Modified differs from the MCA-III in a few key ways:

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[1] At the time of publication, the federal government was reviewing ESEA for changes and reauthorization. Information in this document is up-to-date based on time of publication. If changes are made to ESEA that affect this document, then this document will be revised accordingly in a timely manner.

- The MCA-Modified may only be administered to a student who currently receives special education services, though participation in the administration is not limited to any particular disability category.

- The student must have an Individualized Education Program (IEP). The IEP team is responsible for determining, on an annual basis, how a student with a disability will participate in statewide testing. This decision-making process must start with a consideration of the general education assessment.

- Students must meet all eligibility requirements for the MCA-Modified before it is selected by the IEP team. Eligibility requirements for the MCA-Modified are:

  1. The student demonstrates persistently low performance as defined by performance at the lowest achievement level on the MCA (Does Not Meet the Standards) for the past two years.
     OR
     The student meets or exceeds the standards on the MTAS and the IEP team determines that the student is most appropriately assessed with the MCA-Modified.

  2. The student has access to instruction on grade-level content standards.

  3. The student has an IEP based on grade-level content standards in the content area(s) being assessed by MCA-Modified.

  4. The IEP team determines that the student is highly unlikely to achieve proficiency on the grade-level content standards within the year the test is administered, even with specially designed instruction.

     a. Objective and valid data from multiple measures should be collected over time to confirm that the student is not likely to achieve proficiency on grade-level content standards within the year. Examples of objective and valid measures include state assessments, district-wide assessments, curriculum-based measures and other repeated measures of progress over time.

     b. Appropriate accommodations, such as assistive technology, are provided as needed on evaluations of classroom performance, and the student's accommodation needs are carefully considered before the IEP team makes a determination that the student is not likely to achieve proficiency on grade-level content standards.

Purpose and Overview of the MCA-III and MCA-Modified Test Specifications

The primary purpose of test specifications is to help test developers build a test that is consistent over time. The DRAFT Reading Test Specifications for MCA-III, Grades 3–8 and 10, and MCA-Modified, Grades 5–8 and 10 are also meant to serve as a source of information about the test design for teachers and the general public.

Test specifications do not indicate what should be taught; the Minnesota academic standards do. Test specifications do not indicate how students should be taught; the classroom teacher does. Test specifications indicate the content to be assessed on the test and in what proportions. In addition, test specifications provide types of items to be included, number of items and distribution of cognitive levels. Test specifications also clarify, define and/or limit how test items will be written.

As with any test, the MCA-III and MCA-Modified assess a sampling of student knowledge and do not test all content included in the 2010 Minnesota K–12 Academic Standards in Language Arts. Some content cannot be assessed with a standardized test. This does not mean that these skills should not be taught or assessed. Teachers need to instruct and assess their students on all academic standards. Content that is not assessed on the MCA-III is indicated in this document with the phrase “Assessed at classroom level only.” In addition, not all assessable benchmarks will be included on every assessment, and some benchmarks are embedded within the assessment of other benchmarks.

Panels consisting of members of the Minnesota Academic Standards Committee and classroom teachers were convened to develop the Reading MCA-III Test Specifications. Many of the classroom teachers were recommended to the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) by various education organizations, school districts and other stakeholder groups. For the MCA-Modified, recommendations proposed in focus groups conducted with special educators are incorporated in these specifications.

Literature and Informational Text Substrands

The Reading standards are organized under two substrands: Literature and Informational Text. The description below of the types of texts commonly found within these substrands is taken from the *Minnesota Academic Standards, English Language Arts K-12, 2010*, available on the Minnesota Department of Education website.

Students apply the Reading standards to a range of text types, with texts selected from a broad range of cultures and periods. Text types are identified for the K-5 and 6-12 grade clusters. Passages with items aligned to the Literature and Informational Text substrands may include, but are not limited to, the following text types:

Literature

Stories

- Grades K-5: Includes children's adventure stories, folktales, legends, fables, fantasy, realistic fiction, and myth
- Grades 6-12: Includes the subgenres of adventure stories, historical fiction, mysteries, myths, science fiction, realistic fiction, allegories, parodies, satire, and graphic novels

Dramas

- Grades K-5: Includes staged dialogue and brief familiar scenes
- Grades 6-12: Includes one-act and multi-act plays, both in written form and on film

Poetry

- Grades K-5: Includes nursery rhymes and the subgenres of the narrative poem, limerick, and free verse poem
- Grades 6-12: Includes the subgenres of narrative poems, lyrical poems, free verse poems, sonnets, odes, ballads, and epics

Informational Text

Literary Nonfiction and Historical, Scientific, and Technical Texts

- Grades K-5: Includes biographies and autobiographies; books about history, social studies, science, and the arts; technical texts, including directions, forms, and information displayed in graphs, charts, or maps; and digital sources on a range of topics

Literary Nonfiction

- Grades 6-12: Includes, in addition to types presented in grades K-5, the subgenres of exposition, argument, and functional text in the form of personal essays, speeches, opinion pieces, essays about art or literature, biographies, memoirs, journalism, and historical, scientific, technical, or economic accounts (including digital sources) written for a broad audience

Passage Selection

There are broad issues addressed during the development of passages. Each of the following issues is considered for all of the passages developed for the Reading MCA-III and Reading MCA-Modified.

1. The reading level of each passage should be at the grade level for which the passage is intended. Selections for a given grade should represent a range, with

reading levels appropriate for the skill levels representative of a given grade. Lexiles are used to determine the readability of each passage. See the Lexile Levels section that begins on page 6. Passage length should vary within grade levels. The tables on page 10 specify the target number of words per test.

2. Text sets may be included in the MCA-IIIs. Passages, or, "selections," as they are referred to in the test, may represent either the Literature substrand or the Informational Text substrand, or both. Text sets may include pairings that present one or more of the following features for comparison: authors, genres, themes, topics, literary elements, opinions, etc. Items for text sets can be listed in any order in relation to the presentation of selection #1 and selection #2. The simplest arrangement would be:

    a. Items related to selection #1.

    b. Items related to selection #2.

    c. Items related to both selections #1 and #2.

3. After the initial passage selection, reading passages are reviewed for content characteristics, potential bias and any issues that may be of concern. Concerns expressed during the reviews must be resolved satisfactorily before item development commences.

    a. Review for Content: Minnesota educators with experience and expertise in language arts and reading instruction at the appropriate grade levels review reading passages for use on the assessments. During the passage review process, the appropriateness of reading levels for the test is determined by the professional judgment of the Minnesota educators. Each criterion for content is considered during the review.

    b. Review for Potential Bias: Reading passages are also reviewed by groups of Minnesota citizens generally representative of Minnesota's regions and culturally diverse population. Passages are reviewed for the following kinds of bias: gender, racial/ethnic, linguistic, religious, geographic, socio-economic and issues related to individuals with disabilities.

    c. Review of the Data: Minnesota educators with experience and expertise in language arts and reading instruction at the appropriate grade levels review the field test data for each item that has been tested by each grade level. Each item will be reviewed in terms of its passing rate, bias and psychometric data.

Lexile Levels

Reading MCA-III and MCA-Modified assessments use the Lexile readability indices. The Lexile Framework for Reading has been developed by MetaMetrics, Inc. The scientific formula used to calculate the Lexile level of a text uses the word frequency and the sentence length from that text. To be consistent with Common Core State Standards' philosophy about approaching text complexity, Reading MCA-III and MCA-Modified assessments will utilize qualitative dimensions of text complexity, quantitative dimensions of text complexity, and reader and task considerations. These three elements were taken into account when developing the target ranges in Tables 1 and Table 6 below. The middle Lexile passage range represents the text complexity aligned to college-and-career-ready expectations (as specified in Appendix A of Common Core State Standards).

Table 1. Reading MCA-III and MCA-Modified Lexile Readability Ranges by Grade

Grade	Bottom Lexile Range	Middle Lexile Range	Top Lexile Range
3	300-445	450–790	795-860
4	450-765	770–980	985-1040
5	450-765	770–980	985-1040
6	770-950	955–1155	1160-1225
7	770-950	955–1155	1160-1225
8	770-950	955–1155	1160-1225
10	955-1075	1080–1305	1310-1400

Cognitive Complexity

Cognitive complexity refers to the type and level of thinking and reasoning required of the student on a particular item. MCA-III and MCA-Modified levels of cognitive complexity are based on Norman L. Webb's Depth of Knowledge (DOK) levels[2].

A Level 1 (recall) item requires students to receive or recall facts or to use simple skills or abilities. A basic comprehension of literal text is expected. Items require only a shallow understanding of the text and often consist of verbatim recall from text, slight paraphrasing of specific details from the text, or simple understanding of a single word or phrase. Items at this level may include words such as recall, recognize, locate, and identify.

A Level 2 (skill/concept) item requires the engagement of mental processing beyond mere recalling or reproducing a response. Level 2 moves beyond the literal or verbatim association with the text. This cognitive level demands both comprehension and subsequent processing or

[2] Webb, N. L. *Alignment of science and mathematics standards and assessments in four states* (Research Monograph No. 18). Madison: University of Wisconsin – Madison, National Institute for Science Education, 1999.

synthesizing of a text or portions of a text. Some ability to detect inferences is required. Important concepts are covered, but not in a complex manner. Literal main ideas are stressed. A Level 2 assessment item may require students to apply skills and concepts that are covered in Level 1; however, items require closer understanding of text, possibly through the item's paraphrasing of both the question and the answer. Items at this level may include words such as summarize, interpret, infer, classify, organize, collect, display, compare, and determine whether fact or opinion.

A Level 3 (strategic thinking) item requires deep knowledge. Students are expected to reason by: understanding a plan, a sequence of steps, or a text structure; recognizing more than one possible answer; and, engaging in complex thinking, using evidence to arrive at and defend conclusions. Students are required to go beyond the text; however, they are still required to demonstrate understanding of the ideas in the text. Students may be expected to explain, generalize, or connect ideas. Students must be able to support their thinking. Items may involve abstract theme identification, inference across an entire passage, or students' application of prior knowledge. Items may also involve making connections between texts. Items at this level may include words such as interpret, analyze, verify, justify, and cite evidence.

A Level 4 (extended thinking) item engages extended thinking and therefore requires investigation and/or research. Level 4 tasks are best assessed in the classroom, where the constraints of standardized testing are not a factor.

Item Specifications

Item specifications are provided for each assessed benchmark. The purpose of item specifications is to further define the intent of given benchmarks by establishing specific limitations and/or requirements for those benchmarks.

There are broad item-development issues addressed during the development of test items in both paper and online formats. Each of the following issues is considered for all of the items developed for the Reading MCA-III and Reading MCA-Modified.

1. Each item will be written to measure primarily one benchmark; however, other benchmarks may also be reflected in the item content.
2. Items will be appropriate for students in terms of grade-level difficulty, life experiences and reading level.
3. At a given grade, items will range in difficulty from easy to challenging for the intended population.
4. Items will not disadvantage or disrespect any segment of the population with regard to age, gender, race, ethnicity, language, religion, socioeconomic status, disability or geographic region.

5. Each item will be written clearly and unambiguously to elicit the desired response.

6. Items may assess benchmarks using the Literature or the Informational Text substrands, unless specifically restricted within the item specifications.

7. In order for vocabulary items to be assessed, appropriate contextual frameworks must be present. Items will not require students to define the meaning of a word solely on the basis of prefix, suffix or root word. With sufficient contextual framework, items may assess words or phrases no more than two grade-levels above the tested grade.[3] (Note: Minnesota teachers help determine appropriate grade placement of vocabulary items.)

8. Graphics and/or graphic organizers may be included in passages and in items.

9. Items will be written according to the MDE Guidelines for Test Construction.

10. Advisory Panels will review items as specified in the MDE Vendor Guide to Advisory Panels.

11. Items will be written using principles of Universal Design (see the linguistic modification report from the U.S. Department of Education LEP Partnership[4]). These principles include the following:

    a. Use active voice rather than passive voice.
    b. Avoid negation.
    c. Reduce written context and be as universal as possible.
    d. To the extent possible, write sentences that are simple and in standard word order.

The MCA-III and the MCA-Modified assess the same grade-level standards and skills. Although the same content is assessed in the MCA-Modified, items are less cognitively demanding, in other words, less difficult. To meet the goal of providing a test that is accessible yet challenging for the population of students whose disability has prevented them from attaining grade-level proficiency, several design modifications have been made. In addition to the issues outlined above, the following guidelines should be used for the MCA-Modified.

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[3] For the purpose of the assessment, vocabulary items are based on Language Arts Standard 4, under the category *Vocabulary Acquisition and Use.*

[4] Abedi, J. & Sato, E. (2008). *Linguistic modification. Part I: Language factors in the assessment of English language learners: The theory and principles underlying the linguistic modification approach; Part II: A guide to linguistic modification: Increasing English language learner access to academic content*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education: LEP Partnership. View report online (http://www.ncela.gwu.edu/files/uploads/11/abedi_sato.pdf).

1. Items will be written using advanced language simplification principles.
    a. Use high-frequency, familiar vocabulary and short word lengths.
    b. Use short, syntactically non-complex sentences in subject-verb-object order.
    c. Use simple, common verb tenses/moods (infinitive, present indicative, past, simple future); present tense is preferred. Use past participles as adjectives.
    d. Limit use of pronouns; ensure that referents are clear.
    e. Avoid idioms and colloquialisms.
    f. Avoid unnecessary words with multiple meanings.
    g. Avoid long noun and prepositional phrases.
2. Page and item layout will focus on a simplified design.
    a. Increase white space in pages and screens.
    b. Use a single-column format.
    c. Stack sentences in stimuli.
    d. Increase size of graphics.
    e. Use simple graphics.
    f. Use uncomplicated art to support item context and meaning.
    g. Limit scrolling in computer-delivered items and two-page layouts in paper forms.
3. The number of operational items within a form is reduced from that used by MCA-III while maintaining the proportion of content coverage across strands, substrands and standards.
4. All items are three-option, multiple-choice questions.
5. Key words are presented in boldface in some items to help students identify the main task to be completed in the item.

Test Design by Grade Level

When building a reading test of passages and items that meet the constraints described above, developers also refer to specific targets for test length and for numbers of passages and items in various categories. These test design targets help to ensure that tests are parallel across multiple forms and equivalent from one year to the next. Test design features for the MCA-III and MCA-Modified are indicated below.

Word Counts

Each grade level is assigned a minimum to maximum word count range to control reading loads on operational tests. See tables 2 and 3.

Table 2. Reading MCA-III Target Word Count Ranges

Grade	Minimum	Maximum
3	2000	2400
4	2200	2700
5	2700	3100
6	3200	3600
7	3800	4200
8	3800	4200
10	4400	4800

Table 3. Reading MCA-Modified Target Word Count Ranges

Grade	Minimum	Maximum
5	1700	2700
6	2200	3200
7	2400	4000
8	2600	4200
10	2600	4200

Passage Length and Number of Passages

The majority of passages in the MCA-III will be of medium length, and the MCA-Modified will consist mainly of short passages. Table 4 shows the target number of short, medium and long passages in an operational test. Table 5 shows the word counts by grade in passages categorized as short, medium and long.

Table 4. Reading MCA-III and MCA-Modified Target Number of Passages by Passage Length

Test and Grades	Short Passages	Medium Passages	Long Passages
Grades 3–8	0–2 passages	3–7 passages	0–2 passages
Grade 10	0–2 passages	4–8 passages	0–2 passages
MCA-Modified, Grades 5–8, 10	0–3 passages	2–4 passages	0–1 passages

Table 5. Reading MCA- III and MCA-Modified Word Counts in Short, Medium and Long Passage Lengths

Grade	Short Passage	Medium Passage	Long Passage
3	<300	300–600	>600
4	<350	350–700	>700
5	<400	400–800	>800
6	<450	450–900	>900
7	<500	500–1000	>1000
8	<575	575–1000	>1000
10	<600	600–1050	>1050

Target Lexile Ranges for Passages

The target number of passages per Lexile range on an operational test are shown in Table 6. When a poem is selected for an operational test, it shall count toward the middle passage range total. For the MCA-Modified, there are a greater number of passages at the bottom Lexile ranges. It is possible that a passage may be included on an assessment that is below the bottom range of the target Lexile range for a given grade.

Table 6. Reading MCA-III and MCA-Modified Target Number of Passages by Lexile Range

Test and Grade	Bottom Lexile Range	Middle Lexile Range	Top Lexile Range
Grades 3–8	0–2 passages	3–7 passages	0–2 passages
Grade 10	0–2 passages	4–8 passages	0–2 passages
MCA-Modified, Grades 5–8, 10	2–5 passages	0–2 passages	0–2 passages

Target Item Counts by Substrand

Tables 7 and 8 show the target numbers of passages and items for MCA-III and MCA-Modified on an operational test and the minimum and maximum target item counts for the Literature and Informational Text substrands.

Table 7. Reading MCA-III Passage and Item Count Targets by Literature and Informational Text Substrands

Grades	Number of Passages	Number of Items	Number and Percent of Items for Literature Min-Max	Number and Percent of Items for Informational Text Min-Max
3–5	5 to 7	48	21–27 45-55%	21–27 45-55%
6–8	5 to 7	54	21–27 40-50%	27–33 50-60%
10	5 to 8	63	19–25 30-40%	38–44 60-70%

Table 8. Reading MCA-Modified Passage and Item Count Targets by Literature and Informational Text Substrands

Grades	Number of Passages	Number of Items	Number and Percent of Items for Literature Min-Max	Number and Percent of Items for Informational Text Min-Max
5–8	5	35	14–23 40-65%	14–23 40-65%
10	5	35	10–14 30-40%	21–25 60-70%

Target Item Counts by Skill Domain

The 2010 Minnesota K–12 Academic Standards in Language Arts include 10 standards organized under four skill domains. The skill domains are Key Ideas and Details (standards 1-3), Craft and Structure (standards 4-6), Integration of Knowledge and Ideas (standards 7-9), and Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity (standard 10). Standards 7, 9 and 10 are best assessed using classroom measures and are not assessed in the MCA-III and MCA-Modified. Tables 9 and 10 show the target item counts for the three skill domains represented in the MCA-III and MCA-Modified.

Table 9. Reading MCA-III Item Count Targets by Skill Domain

Grades	Key Ideas and Details 50-75%	Craft and Structure 25-50%	Integration of Knowledge and Ideas 0-5%
3–5	24–36	12–24	0–2
6–8	27–41	14–27	0–3
10	30–45	15–30	0–3

One item is the target minimum for standard 8 on the operational test. Two items is the target minimum each for standards 1 through 6 on the operational test.

Table 10. Reading MCA-Modified Item Count Targets by Skill Domain

Grades	Key Ideas and Details 30-60%	Craft and Structure 20-45%	Integration of Knowledge and Ideas 0-15%
5	10–21	7–16	0–5
6–8	14–23	10–19	0–5
10	14–23	11–19	0–5

Target Item Counts by Depth of Knowledge Levels

The MCA-III and MCA-Modified are constructed with minimum target percentages for items at DOK levels 1, 2 and 3. Tables 11 and 12 show the target percentages and item counts by DOK levels for the MCA-III and MCA-Modified.

Table 11. Reading MCA-III Minimum Item Count Targets by DOK Level

Test	Grades	DOK Level 1 10% minimum	DOK Level 2 30% minimum	DOK Level 3 10% minimum
MCA-III	3–5	5	14	5
MCA-III	6–8	5	16	5
MCA-III	10	6	18	6

Table 12. Reading MCA-Modified Item Count Targets by DOK Level

Test	Grades	DOK Level 1 20% minimum	DOK Level 2 30% minimum	DOK Level 3 5% minimum
MCA-Modified	5–8, 10	7	11	2

Target Item Counts by Item Type

A variety of item types will be used on the Reading MCA-III, including multiple-choice (MC) items and technology-enhanced (TE) items. Technology-enhanced items may consist of, but are not limited to, the following types of responses: hot-spot (students select multiple correct responses) and drag-and-drop (students formulate, rather than select, a response using drag-and-drop response options).

Table 13 shows the target minimum and maximum numbers of multiple-choice items and technology-enhanced items in the online MCA-III. The paper MCA-III and the online MCA-Modified contain only multiple-choice items.

Table 13. Reading MCA-III Online Item Type Targets

Grades	Total Items	Multiple-Choice Items Min–Max	Technology Enhanced Items Min–Max
3–5	48	42–46	2–6
6–8	54	48–52	2–6
10	60	54–58	2–6

Guide to the Organization of the Reading Test Specifications

Skill Domain: 1 to 3 related standards comprise a skill category.

Standard: The description of knowledge or skills detailed in the benchmarks under the standard.

Standard Specifications: Clarifications, definitions or restrictions of items assessing this standard.

Benchmark Code:
First digit: Grade
Second digit: Indicates substrand (Literature or Informational Text)
Third digit: Standard number
Fourth digit: Benchmark number

Benchmark: The specific knowledge or skills students should acquire by the end of the grade level

Grade 6

Key Ideas and Details

Grade 6 Standard 1

Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.

Standard Specifications

- Textual evidence may be explicitly stated or implied.
- Students may be required to cite specific textual evidence literally or to identify such evidence generally.
- Items include, but are not limited to, making inferences, generalizations, and predictions; drawing conclusions; recognizing cause/effect relationships; comparing and contrasting; identifying relevant details; distinguishing between fact and opinion.
- Writing and speaking will be assessed at the classroom level only.

6.4.1.1 Literature

Cite textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

Item Specifications

- Items may require interpretation of symbolism.

6.5.1.1 Informational Text

Cite textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

Item Specifications

- Items may require interpretation of symbolism.

Item Specifications: Clarifications, definitions or restrictions of items assessing this benchmark

An Explanation of Terms Related to the Reading Strand Grade-Level Tables

Strand: This is the content area under assessment. The title of the strand for the MCA-III Reading assessment is **Reading**.

Skill Domain: This is a general categorization of skills related to reading as presented in the Minnesota Academic Standards. Three of the four skill domains are assessed on the Reading MCA III and Modified tests. They are Key Ideas and Details, Craft and Structure, and Integration of Knowledge and Ideas. The fourth domain, Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity, is assessed at the classroom level only.

Substrand: This is a subcategory in the Minnesota Academic Standards. The reading strand has two substrands: Literature and Informational Text. In the benchmark code for grades 3-5, the Literature substrand is identified by the number 1 and the Informational Text substrand is identified by the number 2. In grades 6-10, the Literature substrand is identified by the number 4 and the Informational Text substrand is identified by the number 5. The substrand is represented by the second number in the benchmark code, after the number indicating grade level.

Standard: Standards describe the expectations in reading that all students must satisfy to meet state requirements for credit. Seven of the ten Reading standards are assessed on the Reading MCA II and Modified tests. The other three standards are assessed at the classroom level only.

Benchmark: The purpose of benchmarks is to provide details about "the academic knowledge and skills that schools must offer and students must achieve to satisfactorily complete" the standards (Minn. Stat. § 120B.023 (2006)). Benchmarks are intended to "inform and guide parents, teachers, school districts and other interested persons and for use in developing tests consistent with the benchmarks" (Minn. Stat. § 120B.023 (2006)). Each standard is divided into two benchmarks.

Benchmark Code: Test developers use this code to identify the general category, standard and benchmark to which a test item is aligned.

Standard/Item Specifications: These statements provide more specific clarifications, definitions or restrictions for the benchmark as it is assessed on the MCA.

MCA-III and MCA-Modified Standards and Benchmarks

Grade 3

Key Ideas and Details

Grade 3 Standard 1

Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.

Standard Specifications

- Textual evidence may be either explicitly stated or implied.
- Students may be required to cite specific textual evidence literally or to identify such evidence generally.
- Items include, but are not limited to, making inferences, generalizations, and predictions; drawing conclusions; recognizing cause/effect relationships; comparing and contrasting; identifying relevant details; distinguishing between fact and opinion.
- Writing and speaking will be assessed at the classroom level only.

3.1.1.1 Literature

Ask and answer questions to demonstrate understanding of a text, referring explicitly to the text as the basis for the answers.

3.2.1.1 Informational Text

Ask and answer questions to demonstrate understanding of a text, referring explicitly to the text as the basis for the answers.

Grade 3 Standard 2

Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas.

Standard Specifications

- Items may encompass either parts of a text (e.g., determine the central or main idea of one or more paragraphs, a section, a verse, etc.) or an entire text.
- Items may assess central idea, theme, central message or main idea. Any of these terms may be used when referencing an entire text or an extended section of a text.
- Items may also assess identification of topic and/or subject.
- Items may use the term *author's message* when assessing the central or main idea the author intended to convey to the reading audience. (Items may also use

this term in conjunction with and/or when assessing author's point-of-view. See Standard 6).
- *Key supporting details* are considered relevant, or specific, details.
- Items may require summarizing or paraphrasing.
- Items may require distinguishing fact from opinion.
- Item may require recognizing similarities and differences in ideas or themes.

3.1.2.2 Literature

Recount stories, including fables, folktales, and myths from diverse cultures; determine the central message, lesson, or moral and explain how it is conveyed through key details in the text.

Item Specification

- *Recount* means retell.

3.2.2.2 Informational Text

Determine the main idea of a text; recount the key details and explain how they support the main idea.

Item Specification

- *Recount* means retell.

Grade 3 Standard 3

Analyze how and why individuals, events, and ideas develop and interact over the course of a text.

Standard Specifications

- For the purpose of assessment, in addition to their literal meaning, the terms *events* and *ideas* may include a consideration of literary elements and concepts—how they develop, interact, and/or shape a character (or an individual) or plot (or someone's story) over the course of a text.
- For the purpose of assessment, the term *individuals* may include inanimate or nonhuman subjects (characteristics, relationships, etc.).

3.1.3.3 Literature

Describe characters in a story (e.g., their traits, motivations, or feelings) and explain how their actions contribute to the sequence of events.

Item Specifications

- Items may address characterization in a poem as well as a story.
- Items may address basic and/or complex characterization.
- When assessing characterization, items may include evaluation of:
    - character traits (emotions, motivations, attitudes, intentions)

    - methods of characterization (behavior/actions, dialogue/speech, thoughts)
    - characters' influence or effect on story/plot development (sequence of events, setting—time and place—and /or theme)
    - comparison/contrast of characters
    - conflict within, between, and/or among characters
    - impact of setting on characters
    - prediction of characters' likely action in the future
- Items may require the identification of main ideas or supporting ideas that aid in development of character, setting, or events—plot.
- Items may assess literary elements as stand-alone features (e.g., students may be required to identify the events that comprise the main plot, or students may be required to identify the setting of a story).
- Items may assess literary elements in relationship to one another (e.g., students may be required to understand how setting impacts conflict, or how the sequence of events shapes the resolution, how setting and plot work together to create mood etc.).
- In the case of first person point-of-view where the narrator is a character in the passage, items may assess literary point-of-view.

3.2.3.3 Informational Text

Describe the relationship between a series of historical events, scientific ideas or concepts, or steps in technical procedures in a text, using language that pertains to time, sequence, and cause/effect.

Item Specifications

- Items do not exclusively assess historical, scientific, or technical texts.
- The term *concepts* refers to big ideas (e.g., perceptions, thoughts, theories, or models).
- *Technical procedures* in a text may refer to, but are not limited to, a how-to text, a list of procedures, directions, etc.
- Items include, but are not limited to, understanding sequence of events and their effect on individuals; cause and effect; impact of setting on individuals (e.g., inventors) and process (e.g., the weather's impact on commercial fishing); and prediction.
- Items may include analysis of the motivation of individuals—real people—and/or interpretation of their actions based on events.
- In the case of literary nonfiction presented as a narrative, such as a memoir, introduction of real people or characters and/or events and their development may be assessed via plot technique (i.e., exposition, rising action), etc.
- If an author uses literary style in informative text, items may assess literary elements such as mentioned above in item specifications for benchmark 3.1.3.3.

Craft and Structure

Grade 3 Standard 4

Interpret words and phrases as they are used in a text, including determining technical, connotative, and figurative meanings, and analyze how specific word choices shape meaning or tone.

Standard Specifications

- Items are not developed from a predetermined list of words and phrases. Items arise from words and phrases appearing in context and are appropriate to the assessment of reading comprehension.
- *Tone* refers to the author's attitude towards her/his subject. Author's tone—as derived from specific words, phrases, figures of speech/figurative language—may be assessed under this benchmark.
- Use context as a clue to the meaning of a word or phrase. Context may appear in close proximity to the word or phrase in question (i.e., in the same sentence, paragraph, or surrounding paragraph) or it may be represented cumulatively throughout the text.
- Determine the meaning of words formed with a known affix added to a known word (e.g., agreeable/disagreeable, comfortable/uncomfortable, care/careless, heat/preheat).
- Use a known root word as a clue to the meaning of an unknown word with the same root (e.g., company/companion).
- Use glossary/dictionary entries, both print and digital, to determine/clarify the meanings of words and phrases.
- Distinguish the literal and nonliteral meanings of words and phrases in context (e.g., take steps).
- Identify real-life connections between words and their use (e.g., describe people who are friendly or helpful).
- Distinguish shades of meaning among related words that describe states of mind or degrees of certainty (e.g., knew, believed, suspected, heard, wondered).
- Accurately use grade-appropriate, general academic and domain-specific (including technical) words and phrases, including those that signal spatial and temporal relationships (e.g., After dinner that night we went looking for them).
- Items may include, but are not limited to, identification of synonyms, antonyms, multiple-meaning words and phrases, figures of speech/figurative language such as simile, metaphor, and personification.

3.1.4.4 Literature

Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, distinguishing literal from nonliteral language, including figurative language such as similes.

3.2.4.4 Informational Text

Determine the meaning of general academic and domain-specific words and phrases in a text relevant to a grade 3 topic or subject area.

Grade 3 Standard 5

Analyze the structure of texts, including how specific sentences, paragraphs, and larger portions of the text (e.g., a section, chapter, scene, or stanza) relate to each other and the whole.

Standard Specifications

- Analysis may require a consideration of a text in its entirety.
- Items may compare or contrast components of a single text or components of more than one text (e.g., how one paragraph differs from another in function or purpose).
- Items may assess how the structure of the text contributes to the development of theme, setting, plot, topic, concept, and/or idea.
- Author's and/or narrator's tone—as it is made evident from structuring of text—may be assessed under this standard.
- Creation of mood—the emotional atmosphere—as it is made evident from structuring of text, may be assessed under this standard.
- Items may assess recognition of the significance of text features such as photographs, illustrations, examples, captions, headings, graphics, charts, and tables.
- Items may assess author's presentation of sequence of events or sequence of ideas.
- Considerations of text structure may also include the devices used to create lines of poetry (e.g., verse, rhythm, meter, rhyme, syllabication, alliteration, assonance, consonance).

3.1.5.5 Literature

Refer to parts of stories, dramas, and poems when writing or speaking about a text, using terms such as *chapter*, *scene*, and *stanza*; describe how each successive part builds on earlier sections.

Item Specifications

- Items may assess distinguishing features of fiction, drama, or poetry.
- Writing and speaking will be assessed at the classroom level only.

3.2.5.5 Informational Text

Use text features and search tools (e.g., key words, sidebars, hyperlinks) to locate information relevant to a given topic efficiently.

Item Specifications

- *Use* means *refer to* or *recognize the impact of*.

- Items may address author's method of organization for nonfiction text; problem/solution; cause/effect; compare/contrast; chronological order; classification; description.
- The author's sequencing of events may be a consideration in the author's development of ideas.
- Because informational text can include literary nonfiction, considerations of text structure may also require evaluation of some literary techniques (e.g., the function of lines of poetry, either created by the author or quoted from another source to convey an idea or further illustrate a point).

Grade 3 Standard 6

Assess how point-of-view or purpose shapes the content and style of a text.

Standard Specifications

- *Point-of-view* items assessed under this standard may include either the method of narration (i.e., literary point-of-view) or the author's perspective (i.e., author's point-of-view.) (Literary point-of-view items may also be assessed under benchmark 3.3.)
- The terms *point-of-view* and *narration*, solely as they relate to the vantage point from which the author presents action of a story, are interchangeable.
- The terms *author's point-of-view* and *author's perspective*, solely as they relate to the author's purpose, may be used.
- Items may use the term *author's message* in conjunction with and/or when assessing author's point-of-view or author's perspective. (Items may also use this term when assessing the central or main idea the author intended to convey to the reading audience. See Standard 2).
- Author's choices, as they relate to author's purpose, include stylistic techniques that shape the author's message. These choices and techniques are therefore assessed under this standard. Considerations of the author's style include, but are not limited to, development of voice, word choice, syntax, use of different types of language (e.g., literal, figurative, poetic devices, imagery), etc.
- Author's and/or narrator's tone—as derived from author's style—may be assessed under this standard.
- Creation of mood—the emotional atmosphere—as it is made evident from author's style, may be assessed under this standard.

3.1.6.6 Literature

Distinguish their own point-of-view from that of the narrator or those of the characters.

Item Specifications

- The term *their own* refers to the students taking the assessment.
- Items may assess a character's point-of-view/perspective.

3.2.6.6 Informational Text

Distinguish their own point-of-view from that of the author of a text.

Item Specifications

- The term *their own* refers to the students taking the assessment.
- When assessing the point-of-view of the author, items may use the terms *author's point-of-view* and *author's perspective*. These terms are interchangeable solely as they relate to the author's purpose.
- When assessing literary nonfiction, items may address literary point-of-view (i.e., the method of narration).
- The terms *author's point-of-view* and *author's perspective*, solely as they relate to the author's purpose, may be used. (In literary nonfiction, the author and the narrator may be—but are not necessarily—one and the same.)

Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

Grade 3 Standard 7

Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse media and formats, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words.

3.1.7.7 Literature

Assessed at classroom level only.

3.2.7.7 Informational Text

.Assessed at classroom level only.

Grade 3 Standard 8

Delineate and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text, including the validity of the reasoning as well as the relevance and sufficiency of the evidence.

Standard Specifications

- *Validity of reasoning* refers to logicality or probability (i.e., whether something makes sense for example, an article discussing dinosaurs that gives an obviously incorrect historical time-frame for their existence).
- *Relevance and sufficiency of evidence* refers to the author's credibility (i.e., whether her/his claims are supported by appropriate sources, for example, an article on a life-changing experience featuring quotations from an interview with the featured person).

3.1.8.8 Literature

Not applicable to literature.

3.2.8.8 Informational Text

Describe the logical connection between particular sentences and paragraphs in a text (e.g., comparison, cause/effect, first/second/third in a sequence).

Item Specifications

- Items may assess adequacy, accuracy and appropriateness of author's evidence and credibility of sources.
- Items may assess the identification of author's use of fact versus opinion or the appropriateness of author's defense of facts or opinions.
- Items may examine cause-and-effect relationships.

Grade 3 Standard 9

Analyze how two or more texts address similar themes or topics in order to build knowledge or to compare the approaches the authors take.

3.1.9.9 Literature

Assessed at classroom level only.

3.2.9.9 Informational Text

Assessed at classroom level only.

Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity

Grade 3 Standard 10

Read and comprehend complex literary and informational texts independently and proficiently.

3.1.10.10 Literature

Assessed at classroom level only.

3.2.10.10 Informational Text

Assessed at classroom level only.

Grade 4

Key Ideas and Details

Grade 4 Standard 1

Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.

Standard Specifications

- Textual evidence may be explicitly stated or implied.
- Students may be required to cite specific textual evidence literally or to identify such evidence generally.
- Items include, but are not limited to, making inferences, generalizations, and predictions; drawing conclusions; recognizing cause/effect relationships; comparing and contrasting; identifying relevant details; distinguishing between fact and opinion.
- Writing and speaking will be assessed at the classroom level only.

4.1.1.1 Literature

Refer to details and examples in a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text.

4.2.1.1 Informational Text

Refer to details and examples in a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text.

Grade 4 Standard 2

Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas.

Standard Specifications

- Items may encompass either parts of a text (e.g., determine the central or main idea of one or more paragraphs, a section, a verse, etc.) or an entire text.
- Items may assess central idea, theme, central message or main idea. Any of these terms may be used when referencing an entire text or an extended section of a text.
- Items may also assess identification of topic and/or subject.
- Items may use the term *author's message* when assessing the central or main idea the author intended to convey to the reading audience. (Items may also use

this term in conjunction with and/or when assessing author's point-of-view. See Standard 6).

- *Key supporting details* are considered relevant, or specific, details.
- Items may require summarizing or paraphrasing.
- Items may require distinguishing fact from opinion.
- Item may require recognizing similarities and differences in ideas or themes.

4.1.2.2 Literature

Determine a theme of a story, drama, or poem from details in the text; summarize the text.

4.2.2.2 Informational Text

Determine the main idea of a text and explain how it is supported by key details; summarize the text.

Grade 4 Standard 3

Analyze how and why individuals, events, and ideas develop and interact over the course of a text.

Standard Specifications

- For the purpose of assessment, in addition to their literal meaning, the terms *events* and *ideas* may include a consideration of literary elements and concepts—how they develop, interact, and/or shape a character (or an individual) or plot (or someone's story) over the course of a text.
- For the purpose of assessment, the term *individuals* may include inanimate or nonhuman subjects (characteristics, relationships, etc.).

4.1.3.3 Literature

Describe in depth a character, setting, or event in a story or drama, drawing on specific details in the text (e.g., a character's thoughts, words, or actions).

Item Specifications

- Items may address characterization in a poem as well as a story or drama.
- In addition to drawing on specific details, items may require the identification of main ideas or supporting ideas that aid in development of character, setting, or events—plot.
- Items may address basic and/or complex characterization.
- When assessing characterization, items may include evaluation of:
    - character traits (emotions, motivations, attitudes, intentions)
    - methods of characterization (behavior/actions, dialogue/speech, thoughts)
    - characters' influence or effect on story/plot development (sequence of events, setting—time and place—and /or theme)
    - comparison/contrast of characters

    - conflict within, between, and/or among characters
    - impact of setting on characters
    - prediction of characters' likely action in the future
- Items may require the identification of main ideas or supporting ideas that aid in development of character, setting, or events—plot.
- Items may assess literary elements as stand-alone features (e.g., students may be required to identify the events that comprise the main plot, or students may be required to identify the setting of a story).
- Items may assess literary elements in relationship to one another (e.g., students may be required to understand how setting impacts conflict, or how the sequence of events shapes the resolution, how setting and plot work together to create mood etc.).
- In the case of first person point-of-view where the narrator is a character in the passage, items may assess literary point-of-view.

4.2.3.3 Informational Text

Explain events, procedures, ideas, or concepts in a historical, scientific, or technical text, including what happened and why, based on specific information in the text.

Item Specifications

- Items do not exclusively assess historical, scientific, or technical texts.
- The term *concepts* refers to big ideas (e.g., perceptions, thoughts, theories, or models).
- Technical text may refer to, but is not limited to, a how-to text, a list of procedures or directions, etc.
- Items include, but are not limited to, understanding sequence of events and their effect on individuals; cause and effect; impact of setting on individuals (e.g., inventors) and process (e.g., the weather's impact on commercial fishing); and prediction.
- Items may include analysis of the motivation of individuals—real people—and/or interpretation of their actions based on events.
- In the case of literary nonfiction presented as a narrative, such as a memoir, introduction of real people or characters and/or events and their development may be assessed via plot technique (i.e., exposition, rising action, etc.).
- If an author uses literary style in informative text, items may assess literary elements such as mentioned above in item specifications for benchmark 4.1.3.3.

Craft and Structure

Grade 4 Standard 4

Interpret words and phrases as they are used in a text, including determining technical, connotative, and figurative meanings, and analyze how specific word choices shape meaning or tone.

Standard Specifications

- Items are not developed from a predetermined list of words and phrases. Items arise from words and phrases appearing in context and are appropriate to the assessment of reading comprehension.
- *Tone* refers to the author's attitude towards her/his subject. Author's tone—as derived from specific words, phrases, figures of speech/figurative language—may be assessed under this benchmark.
- Use context (e.g., definitions, examples, or restatements in text) as a clue to the meaning of a word or phrase. Context may appear in close proximity to the word or phrase in question— i.e., in the same sentence, paragraph, or surrounding paragraphs— or it may be represented cumulatively throughout the text.
- Use common, grade-appropriate Greek and Latin affixes and roots as clues to the meaning of a word (e.g., telegraph, photograph, autograph).
- Consult reference materials (e.g., dictionary, glossary, or thesaurus entries), both print and digital, to determine or clarify the precise meaning of key words and phrases.
- Explain the meaning of simple similes and metaphors (e.g., as pretty as a picture) in context.
- Recognize and explain the meaning of common idioms, adages, and proverbs.
- Demonstrate understanding of words by relating them to their opposites (antonyms) and to words with similar but not identical meanings (synonyms).
- Accurately use grade-appropriate general academic and domain-specific words and phrases, including those that signal precise actions, emotions, or states of being (e.g., *quizzed*, *whined*, *stammered*) and that are basic to a particular topic (e.g., *wildlife*, *conservation*, and *endangered* when discussing animal preservation).
- Items may include, but are not limited to, identification of synonyms, antonyms, multiple-meaning words and phrases, figures of speech/figurative language such as simile, metaphor, and personification.

4.1.4.4 Literature

Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including those that allude to significant characters found in mythology (e.g., *Herculean*).

Item Specification

- Items are not limited to meaning of words as they relate to significant characters from mythology: items that address content, words, and terms from mythology are the exception, rather than the rule.

4.2.4.4 Informational Text

Determine the meaning of general academic and domain-specific words or phrases in a text relevant to a grade-4 topic or subject area.

Grade 4 Standard 5

Analyze the structure of texts, including how specific sentences, paragraphs, and larger portions of the text (e.g., a section, chapter, scene, or stanza) relate to each other and the whole.

Standard Specifications

- Analysis may require a consideration of a text in its entirety.
- Items may compare or contrast components of a single text or components of more than one text (e.g., how one paragraph differs from another in function or purpose).
- Items may assess how the structure of the text contributes to the development of theme, setting, plot, topic, concept, and/or idea.
- Author's and/or narrator's tone—as it is made evident from structuring of text—may be assessed under this standard.
- Creation of mood—the emotional atmosphere—as it is made evident from structuring of text, may be assessed under this standard.
- Items may assess recognition of the significance of text features such as photographs, illustrations, examples, captions, headings, graphics, charts, and tables.
- Items may assess author's presentation of sequence of events or sequence of ideas.
- Considerations of text structure may also include the devices used to create lines of poetry (e.g., verse, rhythm, meter, rhyme, syllabication, alliteration, assonance, consonance).

4.1.5.5 Literature

Explain major differences between poems, drama, and prose, and refer to the structural elements of poems (e.g., verse, rhythm, meter) and drama (e.g., casts of characters, settings, descriptions, dialogue, stage directions) when writing or speaking about a text.

Item Specifications

- Items may assess distinguishing features of fiction, drama, or poetry.
- At a minimum, items may require an explanation of the use of a single structural element within one single text.

- Items may require an explanation of similarities as well as differences (i.e., comparisons as well as contrasts) of structural elements.
- Writing and speaking will be assessed at the classroom level only.

4.2.5.5 Informational Text

Describe the overall structure (e.g., chronology, comparison, cause/effect, problem/solution) of events, ideas, concepts, or information in a text or part of a text.

Item Specifications

- Items may address author's method of organization for nonfiction text; problem/solution; cause/effect; compare/contrast; chronological order; classification; description.
- The author's sequencing of events may be a consideration in the author's development of ideas.
- Because informational text can include literary nonfiction, considerations of text structure may also require evaluation of some literary techniques (e.g., the function of lines of poetry, either created by the author or quoted from another source to convey an idea or further illustrate a point).

Grade 4 Standard 6

Assess how point-of-view or purpose shapes the content and style of a text.

Standard Specifications

- *Point-of-view* items assessed under this standard may include either the method of narration (i.e., literary point-of-view) or the author's perspective (i.e., author's point-of-view.) (Literary point-of-view items may also be assessed under benchmark 4.3).
- The terms *point-of-view* and *narration*, solely as they relate to the vantage point from which the author presents action of a story, are interchangeable.
- The terms *author's point-of-view* and *author's perspective*, solely as they relate to the author's purpose, may be used.
- Items may use the term *author's message* in conjunction with and/or when assessing author's point-of-view or author's perspective. (Items may also use this term when assessing the central or main idea the author intended to convey to the reading audience. See Standard 2).
- Author's choices, as they relate to author's purpose, include stylistic techniques that shape the author's message. These choices and techniques are therefore assessed under this standard. Considerations of the author's style include, but are not limited to, development of voice, word choice, syntax, use of different types of language (e.g., literal, figurative, poetic devices, imagery), etc.
- Author's and/or narrator's tone—as derived from author's style—may be assessed under this standard.

- Creation of mood—the emotional atmosphere—as it is made evident from author's style, may be assessed under this standard.

4.1.6.6 Literature

Compare and contrast the point-of-view from which different stories are narrated, including the difference between first- and third-person narrations.

Item Specification

- Items may assess a character's point-of-view/perspective.

4.2.6.6 Informational Text

Compare and contrast a firsthand and secondhand account, including those by or about Minnesota American Indians, of [sic] the same event or topic; describe the differences in focus and the information provided.

Item Specifications

- May also include references to primary and secondary sources (rather than just firsthand and secondhand accounts).
- The terms *author's point-of-view* and *author's perspective*, solely as they relate to the author's purpose, are interchangeable. (In literary nonfiction, the author and the narrator may be—but are not necessarily—one and the same.)

Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

Grade 4 Standard 7

Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse media and formats, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words.

4.1.7.7 Literature

Assessed at classroom level only.

4.2.7.7 Informational Text

Assessed at classroom level only.

Grade 4 Standard 8

Delineate and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text, including the validity of the reasoning as well as the relevance and sufficiency of the evidence.

Standard Specifications

- *Validity of reasoning* refers to logicality or probability (i.e., whether something makes sense, for example, an article discussing dinosaurs that gives an obviously incorrect historical time frame for their existence).

- *Relevance and sufficiency of evidence* refers to the author's credibility (i.e., whether her/his claims are supported by appropriate sources, such as, an article on a life-changing experience featuring quotations from an interview with the featured person).

4.1.8.8 Literature

Not applicable to literature.

4.2.8.8 Informational Text

Explain how an author uses reasons and evidence to support particular points in a text.

Item Specifications

- Items may assess adequacy, accuracy and appropriateness of author's evidence and credibility of sources.
- Items may assess the identification of author's use of fact versus opinion or the appropriateness of author's defense of facts or opinions.
- Items may examine cause-and-effect relationships.

Grade 4 Standard 9

Analyze how two or more texts address similar themes or topics in order to build knowledge or to compare the approaches the authors take.

4.1.9.9 Literature

Assessed at classroom level only.

4.2.9.9 Informational Text

Assessed at classroom level only.

Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity

Grade 4 Standard 10

Read and comprehend complex literary and informational texts independently and proficiently.

4.1.10.10 Literature

Assessed at classroom level only.

4.2.10.10 Informational Text

Assessed at classroom level only.

Grade 5

Key Ideas and Details

Grade 5 Standard 1

Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.

Standard Specifications

- Textual evidence may be explicitly stated or implied.
- Students may be required to cite specific textual evidence literally or to identify such evidence generally.
- Items include, but are not limited to, making inferences, generalizations, and predictions; drawing conclusions; recognizing cause/effect relationships; comparing and contrasting; identifying relevant details; distinguishing between fact and opinion.
- Writing and speaking will be assessed at the classroom level only.

5.1.1.1 Literature

Quote accurately from a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text.

Item Specification

- For the purpose of assessment, the term *quote accurately from a text* should be interpreted as citing textual evidence when drawing inferences.

5.2.1.1 Informational Text

Quote accurately from a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text.

Item Specification

- For the purpose of assessment, the term *quote accurately from a text* should be interpreted as citing textual evidence when drawing inferences.

Grade 5 Standard 2

Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas.

Standard Specifications

- Items may encompass either parts of a text (e.g., determine the central or main idea of one or more paragraphs, a section, a verse, etc.) or an entire text.

- Items may assess central idea, theme, central message or main idea. Any of these terms may be used when referencing an entire text or an extended section of a text.
- Items may also assess identification of topic and/or subject.
- Items may use the term *author's message* when assessing the central or main idea the author intended to convey to the reading audience. (Items may also use this term in conjunction with and/or when assessing author's point-of-view. See Standard 6).
- *Key supporting details* are considered relevant, or specific, details.
- Items may require summarizing or paraphrasing.
- Items may require distinguishing fact from opinion.
- Item may require recognizing similarities and differences in ideas or themes.

5.1.2.2 Literature

Determine a theme of a story, drama, or poem from details in the text, including how characters in a story or drama respond to challenges or how the speaker in a poem reflects upon a topic; summarize the text.

5.2.2.2 Informational Text

Determine two or more main ideas of a text and explain how they are supported by key details; summarize the text.

Grade 5 Standard 3

Analyze how and why individuals, events, and ideas develop and interact over the course of a text.

Standard Specifications

- For the purpose of assessment, in addition to their literal meaning, the terms *events* and *ideas* may include a consideration of literary elements and concepts—how they develop, interact, and/or shape a character (or an individual) or plot (or someone's story) over the course of a text.
- For the purpose of assessment, the term *individuals* may include inanimate or nonhuman subjects (characteristics, relationships, etc.).

5.1.3.3 Literature

Compare and contrast two or more characters, settings, or events in a story or drama, drawing on specific details in the text (e.g., how characters interact).

Item Specifications

- Items are not limited to comparison and contrast of two or more literary elements; items may require evaluation of a single literary element.
- Items may address characterization in a poem as well as a story or drama.

- In addition to drawing on specific details, items may require the identification of main ideas or supporting ideas that aid in development of character, setting, or events—plot.
- Items may address basic and/or complex characterization.
- When assessing characterization, items may include evaluation of:
    - character traits (emotions, motivations, attitudes, intentions)
    - methods of characterization (behavior/actions, dialogue/speech, thoughts)
    - characters' influence or effect on story/plot development (sequence of events, setting—time and place—and /or theme)
    - comparison/contrast of characters
    - conflict within, between, and/or among characters
    - impact of setting on characters
    - prediction of characters' likely action in the future
- Items may assess literary elements as stand-alone features (e.g., students may be required to identify the events that comprise the main plot, or students may be required to identify the setting of a story).
- Items may assess literary elements in relationship to one another (e.g., students may be required to understand how setting impacts conflict, or how the sequence of events shapes the resolution, how setting and plot work together to create mood etc.).
- In the case of first person point-of-view where the narrator is a character in the passage, items may assess literary point-of-view.

5.2.3.3 Informational Text

Explain the relationships or interactions between two or more individuals, events, ideas, or concepts in a historical, scientific, or technical text based on specific information in the text.

Item Specifications

- Items are not required to assess relationships or interactions between two or more individuals, events, ideas, or concepts but may assess the action or impact of a single individual, event, idea, or concept.
- Items do not exclusively assess historical, scientific, or technical texts.
- The term *concepts* refers to big ideas (e.g., perceptions, thoughts, theories, or models).
- *Technical procedures* in a text may refer to, but are not limited to, a how-to text, a list of procedures, directions, etc.
- Items include, but are not limited to, understanding sequence of events and their effect on individuals; cause and effect; impact of setting on individuals (e.g., inventors) and process (e.g., the weather's impact on commercial fishing); and prediction.
- Items may include analysis of the motivation of individuals—real people—and/or interpretation of their actions based on events.

- In the case of literary nonfiction presented as a narrative, such as a memoir, introduction of real people or characters and/or events and their development may be assessed via plot technique (i.e., exposition, rising action), etc.
- If an author uses literary style in informative text, items may assess literary elements such as mentioned above in item specifications for benchmark 5.1.3.3.

Craft and Structure

Grade 5 Standard 4

Interpret words and phrases as they are used in a text, including determining technical, connotative, and figurative meanings, and analyze how specific word choices shape meaning or tone.

Standard Specifications

- Items are not developed from a predetermined list of words and phrases. Items arise from words and phrases appearing in context and are appropriate to the assessment of reading comprehension.
- *Tone* refers to the author's attitude towards her/his subject. Author's tone—as derived from specific words, phrases, figures of speech/figurative language—may be assessed under this benchmark.
- Use context (e.g., cause/effect relationships and comparisons in text) as a clue to the meaning of a word or phrase. Context may appear in close proximity to the word or phrase in question (i.e., in the same sentence, paragraph, or surrounding paragraphs, or it may be represented cumulatively throughout the text).
- Use common, grade-appropriate Greek and Latin affixes and roots as clues to the meaning of a word (e.g., photograph, photosynthesis).
- Consult reference materials (e.g., dictionary, glossary, or thesaurus entries), both print and digital, to determine or clarify the precise meaning of key words and phrases.
- Interpret figurative language, including similes and metaphors, in context.
- Recognize and explain the meaning of common idioms, adages, and proverbs.
- Use the relationship between particular words (e.g., synonyms, antonyms, homographs) to better understand each of the words.
- Accurately use grade-appropriate general academic and domain-specific words and phrases, including those that signal contrast, addition, and other logical relationships (e.g., however, although, nevertheless, similarly, moreover, in addition).
- Items may include, but are not limited to, identification of synonyms, antonyms, multiple-meaning words and phrases, figures of speech/figurative language such as simile, metaphor, and personification.

5.1.4.4 Literature

Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative language such as metaphors and similes.

5.2.4.4 Informational Text

Determine the meaning of general academic and domain-specific words and phrases in a text relevant to a grade-5 topic or subject area.

Grade 5 Standard 5

Analyze the structure of texts, including how specific sentences, paragraphs, and larger portions of the text (e.g., a section, chapter, scene, or stanza) relate to each other and the whole.

Standard Specifications

- Analysis may require a consideration of a text in its entirety.
- Items may compare or contrast components of a single text or components of more than one text (e.g., how one paragraph differs from another in function or purpose).
- Items may assess how the structure of the text contributes to the development of theme, setting, plot, topic, concept, and/or idea.
- Author's and/or narrator's tone—as it is made evident from structuring of text—may be assessed under this standard.
- Creation of mood—the emotional atmosphere—as it is made evident from structuring of text, may be assessed under this standard.
- Items may assess recognition of the significance of text features such as photographs, illustrations, examples, captions, headings, graphics, charts, and tables.
- Items may assess author's presentation of sequence of events or sequence of ideas.
- Considerations of text structure may also include the devices used to create lines of poetry (e.g., verse, rhythm, meter, rhyme, syllabication, alliteration, assonance, consonance).

5.1.5.5 Literature

Explain how a series of chapters, scenes, or stanzas fits together to provide the overall structure of a particular story, drama, or poem.

Item Specifications

- Items may assess distinguishing features of fiction, drama, or poetry.

5.2.5.5 Informational Text

Compare and contrast the overall structure (e.g., chronology, comparison, cause/effect, problem/solution) of events, ideas, concepts, or information in two or more texts.

Item Specifications

- Items may address author's method of organization for nonfiction text; problem/solution; cause/effect; compare/contrast; chronological order; classification; description.
- The author's sequencing of events may be a consideration in the author's development of ideas.
- Because informational text can include literary nonfiction, considerations of text structure may also require evaluation of some literary techniques (e.g., the function of lines of poetry, either created by the author or quoted from another source to convey an idea or further illustrate a point).

Grade 5 Standard 6

Assess how point-of-view or purpose shapes the content and style of a text.

Standard Specifications

- *Point-of-view* items assessed under this standard may include either the method of narration (i.e., literary point-of-view) or the author's perspective (i.e., author's point-of-view.) (Literary point-of-view items may also be assessed under benchmark 5.1.3.3).
- The terms *point-of-view* and *narration*, solely as they relate to the vantage point from which the author presents action of a story, are interchangeable
- The terms *author's point-of-view* and author's *perspective*, solely as they relate to the author's purpose, may be used.
- Items may use the term *author's message* in conjunction with and/or when assessing author's point-of-view or author's perspective. (Items may also use this term when assessing the central or main idea the author intended to convey to the reading audience. See Standard 2).
- Author's choices, as they relate to author's purpose, include stylistic techniques that shape the author's message. These choices and techniques are therefore assessed under this standard. Considerations of the author's style include, but are not limited to, development of voice, word choice, syntax, use of different types of language (e.g., literal, figurative, poetic devices, imagery), etc.
- Author's and/or narrator's tone—as derived from author's style—may be assessed under this standard.
- Creation of mood—the emotional atmosphere—as it is made evident from author's style, may be assessed under this standard.

5.1.6.6 Literature

Describe how a narrator's or speaker's point-of-view influences how events are described.

Item Specifications

- Items may assess the recognition of and/or the distinction between first-person, third-person literary points-of-view.
- Items may assess a character's point-of-view/perspective.

5.2.6.6 Informational Text

Analyze multiple accounts by various cultures of the same event or topic, noting important similarities and differences in the point-of-view they represent.

Item Specifications

- Note: While the benchmark specifies the inclusion of various cultures, the understanding is that literature assessed in all grades, for any benchmark, may include perspective from many ethnicities.
- Items may assess people's perspective of a single, particular event, or they may assess reactions to one or more events that have common elements.
- Items may assess two accounts of a single culture's reaction to an event or to a type of event.
- The term *point-of-view* may indicate the perspective, or viewpoint, of one person or of many people.
- The terms *author's point-of-view* and *author's perspective*, solely as they relate to the author's purpose, are interchangeable. (In literary nonfiction, the author and the narrator may be—but are not necessarily—one and the same.)

Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

Grade 5 Standard 7

Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse media and formats, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words.

5.1.7.7 Literature

Assessed at classroom level only.

5.2.7.7 Informational Text

Assessed at classroom level only.

Grade 5 Standard 8

Delineate and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text, including the validity of the reasoning as well as the relevance and sufficiency of the evidence.

Standard Specifications

- *Validity of reasoning* refers to logicality or probability (i.e., whether something makes sense such as, an article discussing dinosaurs that gives an obviously incorrect historical time frame for their existence).
- *Relevance and sufficiency of evidence* refers to the author's credibility (i.e., whether her/his claims are supported by appropriate sources, such as an article

on a life-changing experience featuring quotations from an interview with the featured person).

Literature 5.1.8.8

Not applicable to literature.

5.2.8.8 Informational Text

Explain how an author uses reasons and evidence to support particular points in a text, identifying which reasons and evidence support which point(s).

Item Specifications

- Items may assess adequacy, accuracy and appropriateness of author's evidence, and credibility of sources
- Items may assess basic fallacies of logic, such as lack of logicality, stereotyping and generalizing.
- Items may assess the identification of author's use of fact versus opinion or the appropriateness of author's defense of facts or opinions.
- Items may examine cause-and-effect relationships.

Grade 5 Standard 9

Analyze how two or more texts address similar themes or topics in order to build knowledge or to compare the approaches the authors take.

5.1.9.9 Literature

Assessed at classroom level only.

5.2.9.9 Informational Text

Assessed at classroom level only.

Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity

Grade 5 Standard 10

Read and comprehend complex literary and informational texts independently and proficiently.

5.1.10.10 Literature

Assessed at classroom level only.

5.2.10.10 Informational Text

Assessed at classroom level only.

Grade 6

Key Ideas and Details

Grade 6 Standard 1

Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.

Standard Specifications

- Textual evidence may be explicitly stated or implied.
- Students may be required to cite specific textual evidence literally or to identify such evidence generally.
- Items include, but are not limited to, making inferences, generalizations, and predictions; drawing conclusions; recognizing cause/effect relationships; comparing and contrasting; identifying relevant details; distinguishing between fact and opinion.
- Writing and speaking will be assessed at the classroom level only.

6.4.1.1 Literature

Cite textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

Item Specifications

- Items may require interpretation of symbolism.

6.5.1.1 Informational Text

Cite textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

Item Specifications

- Items may require interpretation of symbolism.

Grade 6 Standard 2

Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas.

Standard Specifications

- Items may encompass either parts of a text (e.g., determine the central or main idea of one or more paragraphs, a section, a verse, etc.) or an entire text.

- Items may assess central idea, theme, central message or main idea. Any of these terms may be used when referencing an entire text or an extended section of a text.
- Items may also assess identification of topic and/or subject.
- Items may use the term *author's message* when assessing the central or main idea the author intended to convey to the reading audience. (Items may also use this term in conjunction with and/or when assessing author's point-of-view (see Standard 6).
- The terms *central concept* or *central issue* may also be used.
- *Key supporting details* are considered relevant, or specific, details.
- Items may require summarizing or paraphrasing.
- Items may require distinguishing fact from opinion.
- Item may require recognizing similarities and differences in ideas or themes.

6.4.2.2 Literature

Determine a theme or central idea of a text and how it is conveyed through particular details; provide a summary of the text distinct from personal opinions or judgments.

6.5.2.2 Informational Text

Determine a central idea of a text and how it is conveyed through particular details; provide a summary of the text distinct from personal opinions or judgments.

Grade 6 Standard 3

Analyze how and why individuals, events, and ideas develop and interact over the course of a text.

Standard Specification:

- For the purpose of assessment, in addition to their literal meaning, the terms *events* and *ideas* may include a consideration of literary elements and concepts—how they develop, interact, and/or shape a character (or an individual) or plot (or someone's story) over the course of a text.
- For the purpose of assessment, the term *individuals* may include inanimate or nonhuman subjects (characteristics, relationships, etc.).

6.4.3.3 Literature

Describe how a particular story's or drama's plot unfolds in a series of episodes as well as how the characters respond or change as the plot moves toward a resolution.

Item Specifications

- Items are not limited to a discussion of how plot impacts character.
- Items may address characterization in a poem as well as a story or drama.
- Items may address basic and/or complex characterization.

- When assessing characterization, items may include evaluation of:
    - character traits (emotions, motivations, attitudes, intentions)
    - methods of characterization (behavior/actions, dialogue/speech, thoughts)
    - characters' influence or effect on story/plot development (sequence of events, setting—time and place—and/or theme)
    - comparison/contrast of characters
    - conflict within, between, and/or among characters, including recognition of specific types of conflict (e.g., person vs. person, person vs. society, person vs. self, person vs. nature.)
    - impact of setting on characters
    - prediction of characters' likely action in the future
- Items may require the identification of main ideas or supporting ideas that aid in development of character, setting, or events—plot.
- Items may assess literary elements as stand-alone features (e.g., students may be required to identify the events that comprise the main plot, or students may be required to identify the setting of a story).
- Items may assess literary elements in relationship to one another (e.g., students may be required to understand how setting impacts conflict, how the sequence of events shapes the resolution, or how setting and plot work together to create mood, etc.).
- In the case of first person point-of-view where the narrator is a character in the passage, items may assess literary point-of-view.

6.5.3.3 Informational Text

Analyze in detail how a key individual, event, or idea is introduced, illustrated, and elaborated in a text (e.g., through examples or anecdotes).

Item Specifications

- Items include, but are not limited to, understanding sequence of events and their effect on individuals; cause and effect; impact of setting on individuals (e.g., inventors) and process (e.g., the weather's impact on commercial fishing); and prediction.
- Items may include analysis of the motivation of individuals—real people—and/or interpretation of their actions based on events.
- Items may address the author's method of organization for nonfiction text or an individual's method of evaluating a problem or concept (e.g., problem/solution; cause/effect; compare/contrast; chronological order; description).
- In the case of literary nonfiction presented as a narrative, such as a memoir, introduction of real people or characters and/or events and their development may be assessed via plot technique (i.e., exposition, rising action), etc.
- If an author uses literary style in informative text, items may assess literary elements such as mentioned above in item specifications for benchmark 6.4.3.3.

Craft and Structure

Grade 6 Standard 4

Interpret words and phrases as they are used in a text, including determining technical, connotative, and figurative meanings, and analyze how specific word choices shape meaning or tone.

Standard Specifications

- Items are not developed from a predetermined list of words and phrases. Items arise from words and phrases appearing in context and are appropriate to the assessment of reading comprehension.
- *Tone* refers to the author's attitude towards her/his subject. Author's tone—as derived from specific words, phrases, figures of speech/figurative language—may be assessed under this benchmark.
- Use context (e.g., the overall meaning of a sentence or paragraph; a word's position or function in a sentence) as a clue to the meaning of a word or phrase. Context may appear in close proximity to the word or phrase in question (i.e., in the same sentence, paragraph, or surrounding paragraphs) or it may be represented cumulatively throughout the text.
- Use common, grade-appropriate Greek or Latin affixes and roots as clues to the meaning of a word (e.g., audience, auditory, audible).
- Consult reference materials (e.g., dictionary, glossary, or thesaurus), both print and digital, to determine or clarify the precise meaning of a word or its part of speech.
- Verify the preliminary determination of the meaning of a word or phrase (e.g., by checking the inferred meaning in context or in a dictionary).
- Interpret figures of speech (e.g., personification) in context.
- Use the relationship between particular words (e.g., cause/effect, part/whole, item/category) to better understand each of the words.
- Distinguish among the connotations (associations) of words with similar denotations (definitions) (e.g., stingy, scrimping, economical, unwasteful, thrifty).
- Accurately use grade-appropriate general academic and domain-specific words and phrases.
- Items may include, but are not limited to, identification of: imagery, synonyms, antonyms, multiple-meaning words and phrases, figures of speech/figurative language such as analogy, simile, metaphor, personification, hyperbole, irony, pun and paradox; analysis of: symbolism and samples and examples to arrive at meaning.

6.4.4.4 Literature

Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the impact of a specific word choice on meaning and tone.

6.5.4.4 Informational Text

Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative, connotative, and technical meanings.

Grade 6 Standard 5

Analyze the structure of texts, including how specific sentences, paragraphs, and larger portions of the text (e.g., a section, chapter, scene, or stanza) relate to each other and the whole.

Standard Specifications

- Analysis may require a consideration of a text in its entirety.
- Items may compare or contrast components of a single text or components of more than one text (e.g., how one paragraph differs from another in function or purpose).
- Items may assess how the structure of the text contributes to the development of theme, setting, plot, topic, concept, and/or idea.
- Author's and/or narrator's tone—as it is made evident from structuring of text—may be assessed under this standard.
- Creation of mood—as it is made evident from structuring of text—may be assessed under this standard.
- Items may assess recognition of the impact or efficacy of text features such as photographs, illustrations, captions, examples, headings, graphics, charts, and tables.
- Items may assess author's presentation of sequence of events or sequence of ideas.
- Considerations of text structure may also include the devices used to create lines of poetry (e.g., verse, rhythm, meter, rhyme, syllabication, alliteration, assonance, consonance).

6.4.5.5 Literature

Analyze how a particular sentence, chapter, scene, or stanza fits into the overall structure of a text and contributes to the development of the theme, setting, or plot.

Item Specifications

- Items may assess distinguishing features of fiction, drama, or poetry.

6.5.5.5 Informational Text

Analyze how a particular sentence, paragraph, chapter, or section fits into the overall structure of a text and contributes to the development of the ideas.

Item Specifications

- Items may address author's method of organization for nonfiction text; problem/solution; cause/effect; compare/contrast; chronological order; classification; description.

- The author's sequencing of events may be a consideration in the author's development of ideas.
- Because informational text can include literary nonfiction, considerations of text structure may also require evaluation of some literary techniques (e.g., the function of lines of poetry, either created by the author or quoted from another source to convey an idea or further illustrate a point).

Grade 6 Standard 6

Assess how point-of-view or purpose shapes the content and style of a text.

Standard Specifications

- *Point-of-view* items assessed under this standard may include either the method of narration (i.e., literary point-of-view) or the author's perspective (i.e., author's point-of-view.) (Literary point-of-view items may also be assessed under benchmark 6.3).
- The terms *point-of-view* and *narration*, solely as they relate to the vantage point from which the author presents action of a story, are interchangeable.
- The terms *author's point-of-view* and *author's perspective*, solely as they relate to the author's purpose, may be used.
- Items may use the term *author's message* in conjunction with and/or when assessing author's point-of-view or author's perspective. (Items may also use this term when assessing the central or main idea the author intended to convey to the reading audience. See Standard 2).
- Items may assess the recognition of and/or the distinction among first-person, third-person limited, and third-person omniscient literary points-of-view.
- Author's choices, as they relate to author's purpose, include stylistic techniques that shape the author's message. These choices and techniques are therefore assessed under this standard. Considerations of the author's style include, but are not limited to, development of voice, word choice, syntax, use of different types of language (e.g., literal, figurative, satirical, poetic devices, imagery), etc.
- Author's and/or narrator's tone—as derived from author's style—may be assessed under this standard.
- Creation of mood—as derived from author's style—may be assessed under this standard.

6.4.6.6 Literature

Explain how an author develops the point-of-view of the narrator or speaker in a text, including those by or about Minnesota American Indians.

Item Specifications

- Items may assess a character's point-of-view/perspective.

6.5.6.6 Informational Text

Determine an author's point-of-view or purpose in a text and explain how it is conveyed in the text.

Item Specifications

- The terms *author's point-of-view* and *author's perspective*, solely as they relate to the author's purpose, are interchangeable. (In literary nonfiction, the author and the narrator may be—but are not necessarily—one and the same.)
- Items may assess the appropriateness and/or credibility of author's sources.

Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

Grade 6 Standard 7

Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse formats and media, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words.

6.1.7.7 Literature

Assessed at classroom level only.

6.2.7.7 Informational Text

Assessed at classroom level only.

Grade 6 Standard 8

Delineate and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text, including the validity of the reasoning as well as the relevance and sufficiency of the evidence.

Standard Specifications

- *Validity of reasoning* refers to logicality or probability (i.e., whether something makes sense such as an article discussing dinosaurs that gives an obviously incorrect historical time frame for their existence).
- *Relevance and sufficiency of evidence* refers to the author's credibility (i.e., whether her/his claims are supported by appropriate sources such as, an article on a life-changing experience featuring quotations from an interview with the featured person).

6.4.8.8 Literature

Not applicable to literature.

6.5.8.8 Informational Text

Trace and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text, distinguishing claims that are supported by reasons and evidence from claims that are not.

Item Specifications

- Items may assess the author's appropriate or inappropriate use of methods of argumentation (e.g., analogy, details and examples, use of authoritative sources, use of inductive and deductive reasoning, etc.).
- Recognition of effective persuasive argumentation versus argumentation containing bias.
- Items may assess basic fallacies of logic (e.g., stereotyping, hasty generalization, false analogy, emotional appeal, post hoc ergo propter hoc, false dilemma and etc.).
- Items may assess adequacy, accuracy and appropriateness of author's evidence and credibility of sources.
- Items may assess the identification of author's use of fact versus opinion or the appropriateness of author's defense of facts or opinions.
- Items may examine cause-and-effect relationships.

Grade 6 Standard 9

Analyze how two or more texts address similar themes or topics in order to build knowledge or to compare the approaches the authors take.

6.1.9.9 Literature

Assessed at classroom level only.

6.2.9.9 Informational Text

Assessed at classroom level only.

Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity

Grade 6 Standard 10

Read and comprehend complex literary and informational texts independently and proficiently.

6.1.10.10 Literature

Assessed at classroom level only.

6.2.10.10 Informational Text

Assessed at classroom level only.

Grade 7

Key Ideas and Details

Grade 7 Standard 1

Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.

Standard Specifications

- Textual evidence may be explicitly stated or implied.
- Students may be required to cite specific textual evidence literally or to identify such evidence generally.
- Items include, but are not limited to, making inferences, generalizations, and predictions; drawing conclusions; recognizing cause/effect relationships; comparing and contrasting; identifying relevant details; distinguishing between fact and opinion.
- Writing and speaking will be assessed at the classroom level only.

7.4.1.1 Literature

Cite several pieces of textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

Item Specifications

- Items may require interpretation of symbolism.

7.5.1.1 Informational Text

Cite several pieces of textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

Item Specifications

- Items may require interpretation of symbolism.

Grade 7 Standard 2

Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas.

Standard Specifications

- Items may encompass either parts of a text (e.g., determine the central or main idea of one or more paragraphs, a section, a verse, etc.) or an entire text.

- Items may assess central idea, theme, central message or main idea. Any of these terms may be used when referencing an entire text or an extended section of a text.
- Items may also assess identification of topic and/or subject.
- Items may use the term *author's message* when assessing the central or main idea the author intended to convey to the reading audience. (Items may also use this term in conjunction with and/or when assessing *author's point-of-view* (see Standard 6).
- The terms central concept or central issue may also be used.
- *Key supporting details* are considered relevant, or specific, details.
- Items may require summarizing or paraphrasing.
- Items may require distinguishing fact from opinion.
- Item may require recognizing similarities and differences in ideas or themes.

7.4.2.2 Literature

Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text; provide an objective summary of the text.

7.5.2.2 Informational Text

Determine two or more central ideas in a text and analyze their development over the course of the text; provide an objective summary of the text.

Grade 7 Standard 3

Analyze how and why individuals, events, and ideas develop and interact over the course of a text.

Standard Specification:

- For the purpose of assessment, in addition to their literal meaning, the terms *events* and *ideas* may include a consideration of literary elements and concepts—how they develop, interact, and/or shape a character (or an individual) or plot (or someone's story) over the course of a text.
- For the purpose of assessment, the term *individuals* may include inanimate or nonhuman subjects (characteristics, relationships, etc.).

7.4.3.3 Literature

Analyze how particular elements of a story or drama interact (e.g., how setting shapes the characters or plot).

Item Specifications

- Items may address characterization in a poem as well as a story or drama.
- Items may address basic and/or complex characterization.
- When assessing characterization, items may include evaluation of:
    - character traits (emotions, motivations, attitudes, intentions)

    - methods of characterization (behavior/actions, dialogue/speech, thoughts)
    - characters' influence or effect on story/plot development (sequence of events, setting—time and place—and /or theme)
    - comparison/contrast of characters
    - conflict within, between, and/or among characters, including recognition of specific types of conflict (e.g., person vs. person, person vs. society, person vs. self, person vs. nature, etc.)
    - impact of setting on characters
    - prediction of characters' likely action in the future
- Items may require the identification of main ideas or supporting ideas that aid in development of character, setting, or events—plot.
- Items may assess literary elements as stand-alone features (e.g., students may be required to identify the events that comprise the main plot, or students may be required to identify the setting of a story).
- Items may assess literary elements in relationship to one another (e.g., students may be required to understand how setting impacts conflict, how the sequence of events shapes the resolution, or how setting and plot work together to create mood, etc.).
- In the case of first person point-of-view where the narrator is a character in the passage, items may assess literary point-of-view.

7.5.3.3 Informational Text

Analyze the interactions between individuals, events, and ideas in a text (e.g., how ideas influence individuals or events, or how individuals influence ideas or events).

Item Specifications

- Items include, but are not limited to, understanding sequence of events and their effect on individuals; cause and effect; and prediction.
- Items may include analysis of the motivation of individuals—real people—and/or interpretation of their actions based on events.
- Items may address the author's method of organization for nonfiction text or an individual's method of evaluating a problem or concept (e.g., problem/solution; cause/effect; compare/contrast; chronological order; description).
- In the case of literary nonfiction presented as a narrative, such as a memoir, introduction of real people or characters and/or events and their development may be assessed via plot technique (i.e., exposition, rising action), etc.
- If an author uses literary style in informative text, items may assess literary elements such as mentioned above in item specifications for benchmark 7.4.3.3.

Craft and Structure

Grade 7 Standard 4

Interpret words and phrases as they are used in a text, including determining technical, connotative, and figurative meanings, and analyze how specific word choices shape meaning or tone.

Standard Specifications

- Items are not developed from a predetermined list of words and phrases. Items arise from words and phrases appearing in context and are appropriate to the assessment of reading comprehension.
- *Tone* refers to the author's attitude towards her/his subject. Author's tone—as derived from specific words, phrases, figures of speech/figurative language—may be assessed under this benchmark.
- Use context (e.g., the overall meaning of a sentence or paragraph; a word's position or function in a sentence) as a clue to the meaning of a word or phrase. Context may appear in close proximity to the word or phrase in question (i.e., in the same sentence, paragraph, or surrounding paragraphs) or it may be represented cumulatively throughout the text.
- Use common, grade-appropriate Greek or Latin affixes and roots as clues to the meaning of a word (e.g., belligerent, bellicose, rebel).
- Consult reference materials (e.g., dictionary, glossary, or thesaurus), both print and digital, to determine or clarify the precise meaning of a word or its part of speech.
- Verify the preliminary determination of the meaning of a word or phrase (e.g., by checking the inferred meaning in context or in a dictionary).
- Interpret figures of speech (e.g., literary, biblical, and mythological allusions) in context.
- Use the relationship between particular words (e.g., synonym/antonym, analogy) to better understand each of the words.
- Distinguish among the connotations (associations) of words with similar denotations (definitions) (e.g., refined, respectful, polite, diplomatic, condescending).
- Accurately use grade-appropriate general academic and domain-specific words and phrases.
- Items may include, but are not limited to, identification of: imagery, synonyms, antonyms, multiple-meaning words and phrases, figures of speech/figurative language such as analogy, simile, metaphor, personification, hyperbole, irony, pun and paradox; analysis of: symbolism and samples and examples to arrive at meaning.

7.4.4.4 Literature

Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the impact of rhymes and other repetitions of sounds (e.g., alliteration) on a specific verse or stanza of a poem or section of a story or drama.

7.5.4.4 Informational Text

Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative, connotative, and technical meanings; analyze the impact of a specific word choice on meaning and tone.

Grade 7 Standard 5

Analyze the structure of texts, including how specific sentences, paragraphs, and larger portions of the text (e.g., a section, chapter, scene, or stanza) relate to each other and the whole.

Standard Specifications

- Analysis may require a consideration of a single text in its entirety.
- Items may compare or contrast components of a single text or components of more than one text (e.g., how one paragraph differs from another in function or purpose).
- Items may assess how the structure of the text contributes to the development of theme, setting, plot, topic, concept, and/or idea.
- Author's and/or narrator's tone—as it is made evident from structuring of text—may be assessed under this standard.
- Creation of mood—as it is made evident from structuring of text—may be assessed under this standard.
- Items may assess recognition of the impact or efficacy of text features such as photographs, illustrations, examples, captions, headings, graphics, charts, and tables.
- Items may assess author's presentation of sequence of events or sequence of ideas.
- Considerations of text structure may also include the devices used to create lines of poetry (e.g., verse, rhythm, meter, rhyme, syllabication, alliteration, assonance, consonance).

7.4.5.5 Literature

Analyze how a drama's or poem's form or structure (e.g., soliloquy, sonnet) contributes to its meaning.

Item Specifications

- Fiction is also included under this benchmark.
- Items may assess distinguishing features of fiction, drama, or poetry.

7.5.5.5 Informational Text

Analyze the structure an author uses to organize a text, including how the major sections contribute to the whole and to the development of the ideas.

Item Specifications

- The author's sequencing of events may be a consideration in the author's development of ideas.
- Items may address author's method of organization for nonfiction text; problem/solution; cause/effect; compare/contrast; chronological order; classification; description.
- Because informational text can include literary nonfiction, considerations of text structure may also require evaluation of some literary techniques (e.g., the function of lines of poetry, either created by the author or quoted from another source to convey an idea or further illustrate a point).

Grade 7 Standard 6

Assess how point-of-view or purpose shapes the content and style of a text.

Standard Specifications

- *Point-of-view* items assessed under this standard may include either the method of narration (i.e., literary point-of-view) or the author's perspective (i.e., author's point-of-view). (Literary point-of-view items may also be assessed under benchmark 7.3.)
- The terms *point-of-view* and *narration*, solely as they relate to the vantage point from which the author presents action of a story, are interchangeable.
- The terms *author's point-of-view* and *author's perspective*, solely as they relate to the author's purpose, may be used.
- Items may use the term *author's message* in conjunction with and/or when assessing author's point-of-view or author's perspective. (Items may also use this term when assessing the central or main idea the author intended to convey to the reading audience. See Standard 2.)
- Items may assess the recognition of and/or the distinction among first-person, third-person limited, and third-person omniscient literary points-of-view.
- Author's choices, as they relate to author's purpose, include stylistic techniques that shape the author's message. These choices and techniques are therefore assessed under this standard. Considerations of the author's style include, but are not limited to, development of voice, word choice, syntax, use of different types of language (e.g., literal, figurative, satirical, poetic devices, imagery), etc.
- Author's and/or narrator's tone—as derived from author's style—may be assessed under this standard.
- Creation of mood—as derived from author's style—may be assessed under this standard.

7.4.6.6 Literature

Analyze how an author develops and contrasts the points-of-view of different characters or narrators in a text, including those from diverse cultures.

Item Specifications

- Items may assess a character's point-of-view/perspective.

7.5.6.6 Informational Text

Determine an author's point of view or purpose in a text and analyze how the author distinguishes his or her position from that of others.

Item Specifications

- The terms *author's point-of-view* and *author's perspective*, solely as they relate to the author's purpose, are interchangeable. (In literary nonfiction, the author and the narrator may be—but are not necessarily—one and the same.)
- Items may assess the appropriateness and/or credibility of author's sources.

Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

Grade 7 Standard 7

Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse formats and media, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words.

7.1.7.7 Literature

Assessed at classroom level only.

7.2.7.7 Informational Text

Assessed at classroom level only.

Grade 7 Standard 8

Delineate and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text, including the validity of the reasoning as well as the relevance and sufficiency of the evidence.

Standard Specifications

- *Validity of reasoning* refers to logicality or probability, i.e., whether something makes sense (e.g., an article discussing dinosaurs that gives an obviously incorrect historical time frame for their existence).
- *Relevance and sufficiency of evidence* refers to the author's credibility, i.e., whether her/his claims are supported by appropriate sources (e.g., an article on a life-changing experience featuring quotations from an interview with the featured person).

7.4.8.8 Literature

Not applicable to literature.

7.5.8.8 Informational Text

Trace and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text, assessing whether the reasoning is sound and the evidence is relevant and sufficient to support the claims.

Item Specifications

- Items may assess the author's appropriate or inappropriate use of methods of argumentation (e.g., analogy, details and examples, use of authoritative sources, use of inductive and deductive reasoning, etc.).
- Recognition of effective persuasive argumentation versus argumentation containing bias.
- Items may assess basic fallacies of logic (e.g., stereotyping, hasty generalization, false analogy, emotional appeal, post hoc ergo propter hoc, false dilemma, etc.).
- Items may assess adequacy, accuracy and appropriateness of author's evidence and credibility of sources.
- Items may assess the identification of author's use of fact versus opinion or the appropriateness of author's defense of facts or opinions.
- Items may examine cause and effect relationships.

Grade 7 Standard 9

Analyze how two or more texts address similar themes or topics in order to build knowledge or to compare the approaches the authors take.

7.1.9.9 Literature

Assessed at classroom level only.

7.2.9.9 Informational Text

Assessed at classroom level only.

Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity

Grade 7 Standard 10

Read and comprehend complex literary and informational texts independently and proficiently.

7.1.10.10 Literature

Assessed at classroom level only.

7.2.10.10 Informational Text

Assessed at classroom level only.

Grade 8

Key Ideas and Details

Grade 8 Standard 1

Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.

Standard Specifications

- Textual evidence may be explicitly stated or implied.
- Students may be required to cite specific textual evidence literally or to identify such evidence generally.
- Items include, but are not limited to, making inferences, generalizations, and predictions; drawing conclusions; recognizing cause/effect relationships; comparing and contrasting; identifying relevant details; distinguishing between fact and opinion.
- Writing and speaking will be assessed at the classroom level only.

8.4.1.1 Literature

Cite the textual evidence that most strongly supports an analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

Item Specifications

- Items may require interpretation of symbolism.

8.5.1.1 Informational Text

Cite the textual evidence that most strongly supports an analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

Item Specifications

- Items may require interpretation of symbolism.

Grade 8 Standard 2

Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas.

Standard Specifications

- Items may encompass either parts of a text (e.g., determine the central idea main idea of one or more paragraphs, a section, a verse, etc.) or an entire text.

- Items may assess central idea, theme, central message or main idea. Any of these terms may be used when referencing an entire text or an extended section of a text.
- Items may also assess identification of topic and/or subject.
- Items may use the term *author's message* when assessing the central or main idea the author intended to convey to the reading audience. (Items may also use this term in conjunction with and/or when assessing author's point-of-view (see Standard 6).
- The terms *central concept* or *central issue* may also be used.
- *Key supporting details and ideas* are considered relevant, or specific, details and ideas.
- Items may require summarizing or paraphrasing.
- Items may require distinguishing fact from opinion.
- Item may require recognizing similarities and differences in ideas or themes.

8.4.2.2 Literature

Determine a theme or central idea of a text, including those by and about Minnesota American Indians, and analyze its development over the course of the text, including its relationship to the characters, setting, and plot; provide an objective summary of the text.

Item Specifications

- For the purpose of assessment, the term *by and about* should be interpreted as *by and/or about*.
- Passages and items are not limited to the cultural experience of Minnesota American Indians but may also include representation of the cultural experience of diverse cultures, groups, or communities within the United States and around the world.
- Items may address themes/central ideas that focus on matters other than cultural experience of specific groups, communities, or cultures.
- Items include, but are not limited to, character traits (emotions, motivations); methods of characterization (behavior, action, speech); characters' effect on plot (sequence of events), setting (time and place), and/or theme; comparison/contrast of characters; prediction of characters' likely action in the future; impact of setting on characters; and conflict within, between, and/or among characters.

8.5.2.2 Informational Text

Determine a central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text, including its relationship to supporting ideas; provide an objective summary of the text.

Item Specifications

- Passages and items may include/address topics representing the cultural experience of Minnesota American Indians; however, items are not limited to the cultural experience of Minnesota American Indians.

- Items may address ideas that focus on the experience of diverse groups, communities, or cultures.
- Items include, but are not limited to, character traits (emotions, motivations); methods of characterization (behavior, action, speech); characters' effect on plot (sequence of events), setting (time and place), and/or theme; comparison/contrast of characters; prediction of characters' likely action in the future; impact of setting on characters; and conflict within, between, and/or among characters.

Grade 8 Standard 3

Analyze how and why individuals, events, and ideas develop and interact over the course of a text.

Standard Specifications

- For the purpose of assessment, in addition to their literal meaning, the terms *events* and *ideas* may include a consideration of literary elements and concepts—how they develop, interact, and/or shape a character (or an individual) or plot (or someone's story) over the course of a text.
- For the purpose of assessment, the term *individuals* may include inanimate or nonhuman subjects (characteristics, relationships, etc.).

8.4.3.3 Literature

Analyze how particular lines of dialogue or incidents in a story or drama propel the action, reveal aspects of a character, or provoke a decision.

Item Specifications

- Items are not limited to analysis of dialogue or incidents.
- Items may address characterization in a poem as well as a story or drama.
- Items may address basic and/or complex characterization.
- When assessing characterization, items may include evaluation of:
    - character traits (emotions, motivations, attitudes, intentions)
    - methods of characterization (behavior/actions, dialogue/speech, thoughts)
    - characters' influence or effect on story/plot development (sequence of events, setting—time and place—and /or theme)
    - comparison/contrast of characters
    - conflict within, between, and/or among characters (including recognition of specific types of conflict such as person vs. person, person vs. society, person vs. self, person vs. nature, etc.)
    - impact of setting on characters
    - prediction of characters' likely action in the future
- Items may require the identification of main ideas or supporting ideas that aid in development of character, setting, or events—plot.

- Items may assess literary elements as stand-alone features (e.g., students may be required to identify the events that comprise the main plot, or students may be required to identify the setting of a story).
- Items may assess literary elements in relationship to one another (e.g., students may be required to understand how setting impacts conflict, how the sequence of events shapes the resolution, or how setting and plot work together to create mood, etc.).
- In the case of first person point-of-view where the narrator is a character in the passage, items may assess literary point-of-view.

8.5.3.3 Informational Text

Analyze how a text makes connections among and distinctions between individuals, ideas, or events (e.g., through comparisons, analogies, or categories).

Item Specifications

- Items include, but are not limited to, understanding sequence of events and their effect on individuals; cause and effect; and prediction.
- Items may include analysis of the motivation of individuals—real people—and/or interpretation of their actions based on events.
- Items may address the author's method of organization for nonfiction text or an individual's method of evaluating a problem or concept (e.g., problem/solution; cause/effect; compare/contrast; chronological order; description).
- In the case of literary nonfiction presented as a narrative, such as a memoir, introduction of real people or characters and/or events and their development may be assessed via plot technique (i.e., exposition, rising action), etc.
- If an author uses literary style in informative text, items may assess literary elements such as mentioned above in item specifications for benchmark 8.4.3.3.

Craft and Structure

Grade 8 Standard 4

Interpret words and phrases as they are used in a text, including determining technical, connotative, and figurative meanings, and analyze how specific word choices shape meaning or tone.

Standard Specifications

- Items are not developed from a predetermined list of words and phrases. Items arise from words and phrases appearing in context and are appropriate to the assessment of reading comprehension.
- *Tone* refers to the author's attitude towards her/his subject. Author's tone—as derived from specific words, phrases, figures of speech/figurative language—may be assessed under this benchmark.
- Use context (e.g., the overall meaning of a sentence or paragraph; a word's position or function in a sentence) as a clue to the meaning of a word or phrase.

Context may appear in close proximity to the word or phrase in question (i.e., in the same sentence, paragraph, or surrounding paragraphs) or it may be represented cumulatively throughout the text.

- Use common, grade-appropriate Greek or Latin affixes and roots as clues to the meaning of a word (e.g., precede, recede, secede).
- Consult reference materials (e.g., dictionary, glossary, or thesaurus), both print and digital, to determine or clarify the precise meaning of a word or its part of speech.
- Verify the preliminary determination of the meaning of a word or phrase (e.g., by checking the inferred meaning in context or in a dictionary).
- Interpret figures of speech (e.g. verbal irony, puns) in context.
- Use the relationship between particular words to better understand each of the words.
- Distinguish among the connotations (associations) of words with similar denotations (definitions) (e.g., bullheaded, willful, firm, persistent, resolute).
- Accurately use grade-appropriate general academic and domain-specific words and phrases.
- Items may include, but are not limited to, identification of: imagery, synonyms, antonyms, multiple-meaning words and phrases, figures of speech/figurative language such as analogy, simile, metaphor, personification, hyperbole, irony, pun and paradox; analysis of: symbolism and samples and examples to arrive at meaning.

8.4.4.4 Literature

Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone, including analogies or allusions to other texts.

8.5.4.4 Informational Text

Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative, connotative, and technical meanings; analyze the impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone, including analogies or allusions to other texts.

Grade 8 Standard 5

Analyze the structure of texts, including how specific sentences, paragraphs, and larger portions of the text (e.g., a section, chapter, scene, or stanza) relate to each other and the whole.

Standard Specifications

- Analysis may require a consideration of a single text in its entirety.
- Items may compare or contrast components of a single text or components of more than one text (e.g., how one paragraph differs from another in function or purpose).

- Items may assess how the structure of the text contributes to the development of theme, setting, plot, topic, concept, and/or idea.
- Author's and/or narrator's tone—as it is made evident from structuring of text—may be assessed under this standard.
- Creation of mood—as it is made evident from structuring of text—may be assessed under this standard.
- Items may assess recognition of the impact or efficacy of text features such as photographs, illustrations, examples, captions, headings, graphics, charts, and tables.
- Items may assess author's presentation of sequence of events or sequence of ideas.
- Considerations of text structure may also include the devices used to create lines of poetry (e.g., verse, rhythm, meter, rhyme, syllabication, alliteration, assonance, consonance).

8.4.5.5 Literature

Compare and contrast the structure of two or more texts and analyze how the differing structure of each text contributes to its meaning and style.

Item Specifications

- Items may assess distinguishing features of fiction, drama, or poetry.

8.5.5.5 Informational Text

Analyze in detail the structure of a specific paragraph in a text, including the role of particular sentences in developing and refining a key concept.

Item Specifications

- The author's sequencing of events may be a consideration in the author's development of ideas.
- Items may address author's method of organization for nonfiction text; problem/solution; cause/effect; compare/contrast; chronological order; classification; description.
- Because informational text can include literary nonfiction, considerations of text structure may also require evaluation of some literary techniques (e.g., the function of lines of poetry, either created by the author or quoted from another source to convey an idea or further illustrate a point).

Grade 8 Standard 6

Assess how point-of-view or purpose shapes the content and style of a text.

Standard Specifications

- *Point-of-view* items assessed under this standard may include either the method of narration (i.e., literary point-of-view) or the author's perspective (i.e., author's

point-of-view.) (Literary point-of-view items may also be assessed under benchmark 8.3).

- The terms *point-of-view* and *narration*, solely as they relate to the vantage point from which the author presents action of a story, are interchangeable
- The terms *author's point-of-view* and *author's perspective*, solely as they relate to the author's purpose, may be used.
- Items may use the term *author's message* in conjunction with and/or when assessing author's point-of-view or author's perspective. (Items may also use this term when assessing the central or main idea the author intended to convey to the reading audience. See Standard 2.)
- Items may assess the recognition of and/or the distinction among first-person, third-person limited, and third-person omniscient literary points-of-view.
- Author's choices, as they relate to author's purpose, include stylistic techniques that shape the author's message. These choices and techniques are therefore assessed under this standard. Considerations of the author's style include, but are not limited to, development of voice, word choice, syntax, use of different types of language (e.g., literal, figurative, satirical, poetic devices, imagery), etc.
- Author's and/or narrator's tone—as derived from author's style—may be assessed under this standard.
- Creation of mood—as derived from author's style—may be assessed under this standard.

8.4.6.6 Literature

Analyze how differences in the points-of-view of the characters and the audience or reader (e.g., created through the use of dramatic irony) create such effects as suspense or humor.

Item Specifications

- Items may assess a character's point-of view/perspective.
- In addition to dramatic irony, items may include evaluation of how devices designed to affect the audience's point-of-view (e.g., ethos, pathos, and catharsis) help determine meaning and create mood.

8.5.6.6 Informational Text

Determine an author's point-of-view or purpose in a text and analyze how the author acknowledges and responds to conflicting evidence or viewpoints.

Item Specifications

- The terms *author's point-of-view* and *author's perspective*, solely as they relate to the author's purpose, are interchangeable. (In literary nonfiction, the author and the narrator may be—but are not necessarily—one and the same.)
- Items may assess the appropriateness and/or credibility of author's sources.

Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

Grade 8 Standard 7

Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse formats and media, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words.

8.1.7.7 Literature

Assessed at classroom level only.

8.2.7.7 Informational Text

Assessed at classroom level only.

Grade 8 Standard 8

Delineate and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text, including the validity of the reasoning as well as the relevance and sufficiency of the evidence.

Standard Specifications

- *Validity of reasoning* refers to logicality or probability (i.e., whether something makes sense, for example an article discussing dinosaurs that gives an obviously incorrect historical time frame for their existence).
- *Relevance and sufficiency of evidence* refers to the author's credibility (i.e., whether her/his claims are supported by appropriate sources such as an article on a life-changing experience featuring quotations from an interview with the featured person).

8.4.8.8 Literature

Not applicable to literature.

8.5.8.8 Informational Text

Delineate and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text, assessing whether the reasoning is sound and the evidence is relevant and sufficient; recognize when irrelevant evidence is introduced.

Item Specifications

- Items may assess the author's appropriate or inappropriate use of methods of argumentation (e.g., analogy, details and examples, use of authoritative sources, use of inductive and deductive reasoning, etc.).
- Recognition of effective persuasive argumentation versus argumentation containing bias.
- Items may assess basic fallacies of logic (e.g., stereotyping, hasty generalization, false analogy, emotional appeal, post hoc ergo propter hoc, false dilemma, etc.).

- Items may assess adequacy, accuracy and appropriateness of author's evidence and credibility of sources.
- Items may assess the identification of author's use of fact versus opinion or the appropriateness of author's defense of facts or opinions.
- Items may examine cause and effect relationships.

Grade 8 Standard 9

Analyze how two or more texts address similar themes or topics in order to build knowledge or to compare the approaches the authors take.

8.1.9.9 Literature

Assessed at classroom level only.

8.2.9.9 Informational Text

Assessed at classroom level only.

Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity

Grade 8 Standard 10

Read and comprehend complex literary and informational texts independently and proficiently.

8.1.10.10 Literature

Assessed at classroom level only.

8.2.10.10 Informational Text

Assessed at classroom level only.

Grade 10

Note: At this grade, benchmark codes have the number 9 in the grade position because the standards apply to the 9–10 grade cluster.

Key Ideas and Details

Grade 10 Standard 1

Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.

Standard Specifications

- Textual evidence may be explicitly stated or implied.
- Students may be required to cite specific textual evidence literally or to identify such evidence generally.
- Items include, but are not limited to, making inferences, generalizations, and predictions; drawing conclusions; recognizing cause/effect relationships; comparing and contrasting; identifying relevant details; distinguishing between fact and opinion.
- Writing and speaking will be assessed at the classroom level only.

9.4.1.1 Literature

Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

Item Specifications

- Items may require interpretation of symbolism.

9.5.1.1 Informational Text

Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

Item Specifications

- Items may require interpretation of symbolism.

Grade 10 Standard 2

Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas.

Standard Specifications

- Items may encompass either parts of a text (e.g., determine the central or main idea of one or more paragraphs, a section, a verse, etc.) or an entire text.

- Items may assess central idea, theme, central message or main idea. Any of these terms may be used when referencing an entire text or an extended section of a text.
- Items may also assess identification of topic and/or subject.
- Items may use the term *author's message* when assessing the central or main idea the author intended to convey to the reading audience. (Items may also use this term in conjunction with and/or when assessing author's point-of-view (see Standard 6).
- The terms *central concept* or *central issue* may also be used.
- *Key supporting details* are considered relevant, or specific, details.
- Items may require summarizing or paraphrasing.
- Items may require distinguishing fact from opinion.
- Item may require recognizing similarities and differences in ideas or themes.

9.4.2.2 Literature

Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze in detail its development over the course of the text, including how it emerges and is shaped and refined by specific details; provide an objective summary of the text.

Item Specifications

- The term *specific details* is interpreted as key, supporting, or relevant details.

9.5.2.2 Informational Text

Determine a central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text, including how it emerges and is shaped and refined by specific details; provide an objective summary of the text.

Item Specifications

- The term *specific details* is interpreted as key, supporting, or relevant details.

Grade 10 Standard 3

Analyze how and why individuals, events, and ideas develop and interact over the course of a text.

Standard Specification:

- For the purpose of assessment, in addition to their literal meaning, the terms *events* and *ideas* may include a consideration of literary elements and concepts—how they develop, interact, and/or shape a character (or an individual) or plot (or someone's story) over the course of a text.
- For the purpose of assessment, the term *individuals* may include inanimate or nonhuman subjects (characteristics, relationships, etc.).

9.4.3.3 Literature

Analyze how complex characters (e.g., those with multiple or conflicting motivations) develop over the course of a text, interact with other characters, and advance the plot or develop the theme.

Item Specifications

- Items may address characterization in a poem, story or drama.
- Items may address basic and/or complex characterization. Complex characterization includes understanding of terminology/concepts such as *static, dynamic, flat,* and *round*.
- When assessing characterization, items may include evaluation of:
    - character traits (emotions, motivations, attitudes, intentions)
    - methods of characterization (behavior/actions, dialogue/speech, thoughts)
    - characters' influence or effect on story/plot development (sequence of events, setting—time and place—and /or theme)
    - comparison/contrast of characters
    - conflict within, between, and/or among characters (including recognition of specific types of conflict, e.g., person vs. person, person vs. society, person vs. self, person vs. nature, etc.)
    - impact of setting on characters
    - prediction of characters' likely action in the future
- Items may require the identification of main ideas or supporting ideas that aid in development of character, setting, or events—plot.
- Items may assess literary elements as stand-alone features (e.g., students may be required to identify the events that comprise the main plot, or students may be required to identify the setting of a story).
- Items may assess literary elements in relationship to one another (e.g., students may be required to understand how setting impacts conflict, how the sequence of events shapes the resolution, or how setting and plot work together to create mood, etc.).
- In the case of first person point-of-view where the narrator is a character in the passage, items may assess literary point-of-view.

9.5.3.3 Informational Text

Analyze how the author unfolds an analysis or series of ideas or events, including the order in which the points are made, how they are introduced and developed, and the connections that are drawn between them.

Item Specifications

- Items include, but are not limited to, understanding sequence of events and their effect on individuals; cause and effect; and prediction.
- Items may include analysis of the motivation of individuals—real people—and/or interpretation of their actions based on events.

- Items may address the author's method of organization for nonfiction text or an individual's method of evaluating a problem or concept (e.g., problem/solution; cause/effect; compare/contrast; chronological order; description).
- In the case of literary nonfiction presented as a narrative, such as a memoir, introduction of real people or characters and/or events and their development may be assessed via plot technique, (i.e., exposition, rising action), etc.
- If an author uses literary style in informative text, items may assess literary elements such as mentioned above in item specifications for benchmark 10.4.3.3.

Craft and Structure

Grade 10 Standard 4

Interpret words and phrases as they are used in a text, including determining technical, connotative, and figurative meanings, and analyze how specific word choices shape meaning or tone.

Standard Specifications

- Items are not developed from a predetermined list of words and phrases. Items arise from words and phrases appearing in context and are appropriate to the assessment of reading comprehension.
- *Tone* refers to the author's attitude towards her/his subject. Author's tone—as derived from specific words, phrases, figures of speech/figurative language—may be assessed under this benchmark.
- Use context (e.g., the overall meaning of a sentence, paragraph, or text; a word's position or function in a sentence) as a clue to the meaning of a word or phrase. Context may appear in close proximity to the word or phrase in question (i.e., in the same sentence, paragraph, or surrounding paragraphs), or it may be represented cumulatively throughout the text.
- Identify and correctly use patterns of word changes (and/or affixes) that indicate different meanings or parts of speech (e.g., analyze, analysis, analytical; advocate, advocacy).
- Consult reference materials (e.g., dictionary, glossary, or thesaurus), to determine or clarify the precise meaning of a word, its part of speech or its etymology.
- Verify the preliminary determination of the meaning of a word or phrase (e.g., by checking the inferred meaning in context or in a dictionary).
- Interpret figures of speech (e.g., euphemism, oxymoron) in context and analyze their role in the text.
- Analyze nuances in the meaning of words with similar denotations and connotations.
- Accurately use grade-appropriate, general academic and domain-specific (including technical) words and phrases.

- Items may include, but are not limited to, identification of: imagery, synonyms, antonyms, multiple-meaning words and phrases, figures of speech/figurative language such as analogy, simile, metaphor, personification, hyperbole, irony, pun and paradox; analysis of: symbolism and samples and examples to arrive at meaning.

9.4.4.4 Literature

Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in the text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the cumulative impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone (e.g., how the language evokes a sense of time and place; how it sets a formal or informal tone).

9.5.4.4 Informational Text

Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative, connotative, and technical meanings; analyze the cumulative impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone (e.g., how the language of a court opinion differs from that of a newspaper).

Grade 10 Standard 5

Analyze the structure of texts, including how specific sentences, paragraphs, and larger portions of the text (e.g., a section, chapter, scene, or stanza) relate to each other and the whole.

Standard Specifications

- Analysis may require a consideration of a text in its entirety.
- Items may compare or contrast components of a single text or components of more than one text (e.g., how one paragraph differs from another in function or purpose).
- Items may assess how the structure of the text contributes to the development of theme, setting, plot, topic, concept, and/or idea.
- Author's and/or narrator's tone—as it is made evident from structuring of text—may be assessed under this standard.
- Creation of mood—as it is made evident from structuring of text—may be assessed under this standard.
- Items may assess recognition of the impact or efficacy of text features such as photographs, illustrations, examples, captions, headings, graphics, charts, and tables.
- Items may assess author's presentation of sequence of events or sequence of ideas.
- Considerations of text structure may also include the devices used to create lines of poetry (e.g., verse, rhythm, meter, rhyme, syllabication, alliteration, assonance, consonance).

9.4.5.5 Literature

Analyze how an author's choices concerning how to structure a text, order events within it (e.g., parallel plots), and manipulate time (e.g., pacing, flashbacks) create such effects as mystery, tension, or surprise.

Item Specifications

- The phrase *order of events* may be considered sequence of events.
- Items may assess distinguishing features of fiction, drama, or poetry.

9.5.5.5 Informational Text

Analyze in detail how an author's ideas or claims are developed and refined by particular sentences, paragraphs, or larger portions of a text (e.g., a section or chapter).

Item Specifications

- The author's sequencing of events may be a consideration in the author's development of ideas.
- Items may address author's method of organization for nonfiction text; problem/solution; cause/effect; compare/contrast; chronological order; classification; description.
- Because informational text can include literary nonfiction, considerations of text structure may also require evaluation of some literary techniques (e.g., the function of lines of poetry, either created by the author or quoted from another source to convey an idea or further illustrate a point).

Grade 10 Standard 6

Assess how point-of-view or purpose shapes the content and style of a text.

Standard Specification

- *Point-of-view* items assessed under this standard may include either the method of narration (i.e., literary point-of-view) or the author's perspective (i.e., author's point-of-view.) (Literary point-of-view items may also be assessed under benchmark 10.3.)
- The terms *point-of-view* and *narration*, solely as they relate to the vantage point from which the author presents action of a story, are interchangeable.
- The terms *author's point-of-view* and *author's perspective*, solely as they relate to the author's purpose, may be used.
- Items may use the term *author's message* in conjunction with and/or when assessing author's point-of-view or author's perspective. (Items may also use this term when assessing the central or main idea the author intended to convey to the reading audience. See Standard 2.)
- Items may assess the recognition of and/or the distinction among first-person, third-person limited, and third-person omniscient literary points-of-view.

- Author's choices, as they relate to author's purpose, include stylistic techniques that shape the author's message. These choices and techniques are therefore assessed under this standard. Considerations of the author's style include, but are not limited to, development of voice, word choice, syntax, use of different types of language (e.g., literal, figurative, satirical, poetic devices, imagery), etc.
- Author's and/or narrator's tone—as derived from author's style—may be assessed under this standard.
- Creation of mood—as derived from author's style—may be assessed under this standard.

9.4.6.6 Literature

Analyze a particular point-of-view or cultural experience reflected in a work of literature from outside the United States, drawing on a wide reading of world literature.

Item Specifications

- Items may assess a character's point-of-view/perspective.
- Items are not limited to cultural experience outside the United States, but may include representation of the experience of diverse cultures, groups, or communities within the United States.
- Items may assess how the relationship between a character and the point-of-view of the audience or reader (e.g., created through the use of dramatic irony, ethos, pathos, catharsis, etc.) help determine meaning and create mood.

9.5.6.6 Informational Text

Determine an author's point-of-view or purpose in a text and analyze how an author uses rhetoric to advance that point-of-view or purpose.

Item Specifications

- The terms *author's point-of-view* and *author's perspective*, solely as they relate to the author's purpose, are interchangeable. (In literary nonfiction, the author and the narrator may be—but are not necessarily—one and the same.)
- *Rhetoric* is defined as the effective use of language for a specific purpose.
- Items may assess the appropriateness and/or credibility of author's sources.

Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

Grade 10 Standard 7

Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse formats and media, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words.

9.1.7.7 Literature

Assessed at classroom level only.

9.2.7.7 Informational Text

Assessed at classroom level only.

Grade 10 Standard 8

Delineate and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text, including the validity of the reasoning as well as the relevance and sufficiency of the evidence.

Standard Specifications

- *Validity of reasoning* refers to logicality or probability, i.e., whether something makes sense (e.g., an article discussing dinosaurs that gives an obviously incorrect historical time frame for their existence).
- *Relevance and sufficiency of evidence* refers to the author's credibility (i.e., whether her/his claims are supported by appropriate sources, such as an article on a life-changing experience featuring quotations from an interview with the featured person).

9.4.8.8 Literature

Not applicable to literature.

9.5.8.8 Informational Text

Delineate and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text, assessing whether the reasoning is valid and the evidence is relevant and sufficient; identify false statements and fallacious reasoning.

Item Specifications

- Items may assess the author's appropriate or inappropriate use of methods of argumentation (e.g., analogy, details and examples, use of authoritative sources, use of inductive and deductive reasoning, etc.).
- Recognition of effective persuasive argumentation versus argumentation containing bias.
- Items may assess basic fallacies of logic (e.g., stereotyping, hasty generalization, false analogy, emotional appeal, post hoc ergo propter hoc, false dilemma, etc.).
- Items may assess adequacy, accuracy and appropriateness of author's evidence and credibility of sources.
- Items may assess the identification of author's use of fact versus opinion or the appropriateness of author's defense of facts or opinions.
- Items may examine cause and effect relationships.

Grade 10 Standard 9

Analyze how two or more texts address similar themes or topics in order to build knowledge or to compare the approaches the authors take.

9.1.9.9 Literature

Assessed at classroom level only.

9.2.9.9 Informational Text

Assessed at classroom level only.

Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity

Grade 10 Standard 10

Read and comprehend complex literary and informational texts independently and proficiently.

9.1.10.10 Literature

Assessed at classroom level only.

9.2.10.10 Informational Text

Assessed at classroom level only.