



Exemplar Early High School Reading Test Questions



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Introduction

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Reporting Categories

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

Key Ideas and Details

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

Craft and Structure

These questions require students to determine word and phrase meanings and analyze an author's word choice rhetorically as well as influences on the English language; to analyze text structure; and to understand purpose and point of view.

Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

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

Improvement Ideas

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

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

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

Answer Key

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

Passage: “Biscotti di Prato”

SOCIAL SCIENCE: This passage is adapted from the article “Biscotti di Prato” by Pamela Sheldon Johns (©2011 by The Art of Eating).

A walk down the narrow, cobbled Via Ricasoli in the center of the small city of Prato, Italy, brings you to the Antonio Mattei bakery, where small groups of people are gathered, reluctant to leave the charming and elegant shop. The marble counters and wooden shelves are laden with the Italian cookies known as biscotti, and the air is rich with the aroma of eggs, sugar, and almonds. As you sink your teeth into the crisp exterior, the biscotti resist only slightly.

Antonio Mattei was a baker in Prato during the Risorgimento, the galvanizing mid-19th-century period of unification of Italy. His good friend Pellegrino Artusi described him as “that good man from Prato . . . he had the genius of his art and was honest and industrious.” In 1858, Mattei created a cookie that was baked twice in his wood-burning oven. He found a following for these biscotti, and received important awards from the international fairs held in Florence in 1861, London in 1862, and Paris in 1867, launching the cookie into the greater world.

The word *biscotto*, “cooked twice,” comes from the Latin *biscoctus*; a second slow baking is an ancient way to dry bread to preserve it. Mattei had based his recipe on a twice-baked, sourdough-leavened bread flavored with aniseed. At the turn of the last century, it was a food of peasant farmers, who bought it when they entered the city walls on Mondays to sell their wares. The same unsweetened rusks are still sold at the Mattei bakery, while for the biscotti we know today, Mattei developed an egg-based, sweetened dough.

- 35 Before Mattei died in 1885, he asked that his son Emilio leave the recipe for his beloved creation unchanged. The promise was kept even when the business was sold to a woman named Italia Ciampolini in 1904 and when it was inherited by Ernesto Pandolfini, an orphan she adopted. He continued to make Mattei’s biscotti, and he added new recipes, such as the chewy *brutti buoni*, cookies made with chopped almonds and pine nuts in whipped egg whites, and the glorious *filone candito*, a brioche loaf filled with candied cherries and covered with a thin layer of almond paste. In 1961, Pandolfini’s son Paolo and Paolo’s cousin Renzo Guarducci took over, keeping the tradition as originally promised to Mattei.
- 50 Since 1991, the bakery has been overseen by Paolo’s four children, who compare themselves to the four ingredients used to make biscotti. Francesco, the flour, manages the bakery and is in charge of quality control; Marcella, the almonds, handles the accounting; Elisabetta, the eggs, does the marketing; and Letizia, the sugar, is responsible for the design of the store and packaging. Francesco remembers, “I took my first steps in the rooms above this bakery. I have been breathing these aromas since I was born. My father left this work to me, and I had to continue. It was hard to be a young man with new ideas, but I knew I couldn’t change anything.” He has, however, introduced a separate label with innovative biscotti recipes and flavors, such as rose, pistachio, candied orange zest, and peperoncino.

Question 1

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The word *biscotto*, "cooked twice," comes from the Latin *biscocutus*; a second slow baking is an ancient way to dry bread to preserve it. Mattei had based his recipe on a twice-baked, sourdough-leavened bread flavored with aniseed. At the turn of the last century, it was a food of peasant farmers, who

The main purpose of the passage is to:

- A. explain how Ciampolini transformed an ailing biscotti bakery into a thriving business.
- B. relate the history of biscotti and of the bakery in which they were created.
- C. discuss how the differences among biscotti bakers reflect the national spirit of Italy.
- D. describe why Prato was the ideal location for biscotti to have been invented.

Sequence	Grade	Item type	DOK level	Reporting category	Correct response
1	EHS	Selected Response	3	Craft and Structure	B

This selected-response question requires students to understand the main rhetorical purpose of the passage (aligns with the Common Core State Standards College and Career Readiness anchor standard [CCRA] R.6). Students must read the entire passage carefully in order to infer its main purpose. They then must identify an accurate statement of the main purpose among answer options that include subordinate purposes or purposes for which no textual support exists.

Correct Response

Only answer option B accurately describes the main purpose of the text. The other purposes presented are not supported by the text.

Improvement Idea Statements

Reporting category	Grade	Low statement (scored below ACT Readiness Range)	High statement (scored at or above ACT Readiness Range)
Craft and Structure	EHS	As you read, consider the purpose of texts and parts of texts. Also, analyze how texts are organized, how authors use point of view, and how authors use words and phrases.	Read complex texts from a variety of genres. Analyze how parts of texts relate to the whole and how an author uses point of view and word choice to advance his or her purpose.

Question 2

SOCIAL SCIENCE: This passage is adapted from the article "Biscotti di Prato" by Pamela Sheldon Johns (©2011 by The Art of Eating).

Antonio Mattei was a baker in Prato during the Risorgimento, the galvanizing mid-19th-century period of unification of Italy. His good friend Pellegrino Artusi described him as "that good man from Prato . . . he had the genius of his art and was honest and industrious." In 1858, Mattei created a cookie that was baked twice in his wood-burning oven. He found a following for these biscotti, and received important awards from the international fairs held in Florence in 1861, London in 1862, and Paris in 1867, launching the cookie into the greater world.

The word *biscotto*, "cooked twice," comes from the Latin *biscoctus*; a second slow baking is an ancient way to dry bread to preserve it. Mattei had based his recipe on a twice-baked, sourdough-leavened bread flavored with aniseed. At the turn of the last century, it was a food of peasant farmers, who bought it when they entered the city walls on Mondays to sell their wares. The same unsweetened rusks are still sold at the Mattei bakery, while for the biscotti we know today, Mattei developed an egg-based, sweetened dough.

Before Mattei died in 1885, he asked that his son Emilio leave the recipe for his beloved creation unchanged. The promise was kept even when the business was sold to a woman named Italia Ciampolini in 1904 and when it

Beginning with the highlighted paragraph, the passage shifts from a:

- A. descriptive scene narrated in present tense to a historical summary narrated largely in past tense.
- B. specific description of a tourist destination to a general overview of local cuisine.
- C. picture of life in rural Italy to a discussion of how it changed during the Risorgimento.
- D. list of the variety of desserts offered at a bakery to an explanation of how one type of dessert is made.

Sequence	Grade	Item type	DOK level	Reporting category	Correct response
2	EHS	Selected Response	3	Craft and Structure	A

This selected-response question requires students to understand and draw conclusions about how the author organizes and presents the text (aligns with CCRA.R.5). Students must carefully read the entire passage, recognize the purpose of the highlighted paragraph, and identify the presentation and tense shifts that occur beginning with the highlighted paragraph.

Correct Response

Answer option A correctly describes the shift in presentation that begins with the highlighted paragraph. The first paragraph describes the Antonio Mattei bakery as it is today (narrated in the present tense). The second paragraph shifts to the past tense and describes the origins of the bakery.

Improvement Idea Statements

Reporting category	Grade	Low statement (scored below ACT Readiness Range)	High statement (scored at or above ACT Readiness Range)
Craft and Structure	EHS	As you read, consider the purpose of texts and parts of texts. Also, analyze how texts are organized, how authors use point of view, and how authors use words and phrases.	Read complex texts from a variety of genres. Analyze how parts of texts relate to the whole and how an author uses point of view and word choice to advance his or her purpose.

Question 3

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A walk down the narrow, cobbled Via Ricasoli in the center of the small city of Prato, Italy, brings you to the Antonio Mattei bakery, where small groups of people are gathered, reluctant to leave the charming and elegant shop. The marble counters and wooden shelves are laden with the Italian cookies known as biscotti, and the air is rich with the aroma of eggs, sugar, and almonds. As you sink your teeth into the crisp exterior, the biscotti resist only slightly.

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Think about the preceding passage as you read the following excerpt.

All in the Family

Houshi Ryokan is a traditional Japanese inn nestled beside Mt. Hakusan, about 200 miles from Tokyo. Like most *ryokans*, Houshi offers an escape from the bustling modern world, with peaceful gardens and soothing hot spring baths.

But Houshi's remarkable history sets it apart. Once thought to be the world's oldest hotel (another Japanese hotel is older), Houshi instead holds the distinction of being the world's oldest continuously operating family business. For 46 generations, since 718 A.D., a man named Zengoro Houshi has managed the inn. And because Japanese law states that family names may be passed on only by sons, the Houshi family has sometimes legally adopted a son-in-law, who then became Zengoro Houshi.

Explain a factor that strongly influences how both the Antonio Mattei bakery and Houshi Ryokan are run today. Using both the passage and the excerpt, provide three details to support your answer.

Sequence	Grade	Item type	DOK level	Reporting category	Correct response
3	EHS	Constructed Response	3	Integration of Knowledge and Ideas	See scoring guide.

This constructed-response task requires students to make cross-text connections between information and ideas in two texts (aligns with CCRA.R.9). Specifically, this task requires students to determine how the business described in the main passage (the Antonio Mattei bakery) is similar to the business described in the excerpt (Houshi Ryokan). Students must read both the passage and the excerpt carefully, compare the information provided in the two texts, and identify a common factor that influences how the two businesses are run. Students must then construct a written response identifying a factor common to both businesses, citing evidence from both the main passage and the excerpt in support of their answer.

Improvement Idea Statements

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

Scoring Guide

Synthesis-Compare

Explain a factor that strongly influences how both the Antonio Mattei bakery and Houshi Ryokan are run today. Using both the passage and the excerpt, provide three details to support your answer.

Scoring Framework

This synthesis-compare task is scored on a 0–4-point scale. A full-credit response includes the components described in the following table.

Claim	Evidence
an interpretive statement that explains a factor that strongly influences how both the Antonio Mattei bakery and Houshi Ryokan are run today (1 point)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ a detail from the passage or excerpt that supports the claim (1 point) ▪ a detail from the passage or excerpt that supports the claim (1 point) ▪ a detail from the passage or excerpt that supports the claim (1 point)

Acceptable Responses

The following table does not represent a definitive collection of acceptable responses. Other responses will also be included in the anchor papers and practice sets.

Claims	Evidence (Claim)
1. Both the operators of the Antonio Mattei bakery and the operators of Houshi Ryokan focus on carrying on long-standing traditions of the business.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The family who currently runs the Antonio Mattei bakery has had to promise to continue to use Antonio Mattei's original biscotti recipe. (1, 2) ▪ Everyone who manages Houshi Ryokan must bear the family name, even if that means (for a son-in-law) having to be legally adopted into the family. (1, 2)
2. Both the operators of the Antonio Mattei bakery and the operators of Houshi Ryokan are committed to celebrating the influence of one family on the business.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Antonio Mattei's original biscotti recipe has remained key to the business even through several changes in ownership and leadership. (1, 2) ▪ The Antonio Mattei bakery is still named after Antonio Mattei, the business's founder. (1)
3. Both the operators of the Antonio Mattei bakery and the operators of Houshi Ryokan seem interested in making sure customers are drawn in by the physical appeal—rooted in tradition—of each business.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Houshi Ryokan has the honor of being the world's oldest continuously operating family business. (1) ▪ When Francesco Paolo, one of the overseers of the Antonio Mattei bakery, wanted to create new biscotti recipes, he had to do so under a separate label. (1) ▪ For 46 generations, Houshi Ryokan has been managed by a man who is always called "Zengoro Houshi." (1, 2) ▪ Both businesses were originally passed from father to son, and, even in recent years, the Antonio Mattei bakery has been passed from a father to his children. (1) ▪ Today, the Antonio Mattei bakery is an inviting place where people like to linger. (3) ▪ The marble counters and wooden shelves laden with biscotti at the Antonio Mattei bakery invoke an earlier time. (3) ▪ Houshi Ryokan still features the hot springs that were discovered by a Buddhist monk. (3) ▪ People come to Houshi Ryokan today to escape the modern world. (3) ▪ The focus at Houshi Ryokan is on peaceful natural surroundings. (3) ▪ The Antonio Mattei bakery offers visitors a restful escape that is hard for them to leave. (3) ▪ Four siblings currently run the Antonio Mattei bakery, formerly their father's business, together. (2)

Unacceptable Responses

The following is not a definitive list of unacceptable responses. Other responses will also be included in the anchor papers and practice sets.

- Both the Antonio Mattei bakery and Houshi Ryokan are interesting places. (Claim)
- A Buddhist monk was the founder of Houshi Ryokan. (Evidence)
- Antonio Mattei founded the Antonio Mattei bakery. (Evidence)
- The Antonio Mattei bakery is located in Prato, Italy, where Antonio Mattei was a baker. (Evidence)

Scoring Rubric and Guidelines

<p>4</p>	<p>The answer includes an accurate claim, one accurate piece of evidence from the passage, one accurate piece of evidence from the excerpt, and one accurate piece of evidence from the passage or excerpt.</p> <p>EXAMPLE 1 Both the operators of the Antonio Mattei bakery and the operators of Houshi Ryokan are committed to celebrating the influence of one family on the business. Antonio Mattei's original biscotti recipe has remained key to the business even through several changes in ownership and leadership. Everyone who manages Houshi Ryokan must bear the family name, even if that means (for a son-in-law) having to be legally adopted into the family. Both businesses were originally passed from father to son, and, even in recent years, the Antonio Mattei bakery has been passed from a father to his children.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ A claim must be paraphrased or interpreted. A response may offer a claim as a single statement, or it may be comprised of several statements that appear in different parts of the response. ▪ A claim of difference earns one point, even when it consists of two statements. ▪ Details include but aren't limited to facts, figures, quotations, paraphrases, and other information and ideas from the passage. ▪ Support must relate logically to the claim, or it does not earn credit. ▪ A claim is insufficient when it provides no indication that the student has read the text or followed the task. On its own, an insufficient claim is not creditable. An insufficient task may be creditable, however, if the evidence offered clarifies the claim.
<p>3</p>	<p>The answer includes an accurate claim, one accurate piece of evidence from the passage, and one accurate piece of evidence from the passage or excerpt.</p> <p>EXAMPLE 2 Both the operators of the Antonio Mattei bakery and the operators of Houshi Ryokan focus on carrying on long-standing traditions of the business. The family who currently runs the Antonio Mattei bakery has had to promise to continue to use Antonio Mattei's original biscotti recipe. For 46 generations, Houshi Ryokan has been managed by a man who is always called "Zengoro Houshi."</p> <p>The answer includes one piece of evidence from the passage, one piece of evidence from the excerpt, and one piece of evidence from the passage or excerpt.</p> <p>EXAMPLE 3 Today, the Antonio Mattei bakery is an inviting place where people like to linger. The focus at Houshi Ryokan is on peaceful natural surroundings.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ A claim and a piece or pieces of evidence may appear in a single statement or sentence. ▪ A response may offer one or more pieces of evidence that support an implied claim. In this case, a point is awarded for each textual detail, but not for the implied claim. ▪ The maximum score for a response that offers three or more pieces of evidence but no claim is score point 3. ▪ Accurate claims may be awarded a point, even if no evidence is offered. For this task, the maximum score for a response that offers more than one claim but no evidence is score point 1.

2	<p>The answer includes an accurate claim and one accurate piece of evidence from either the passage or the excerpt.</p> <p>EXAMPLE 4 Both the operators of the Antonio Mattei bakery and the operators of Houshi Ryokan seem interested in making sure customers are drawn in by the physical appeal—rooted in tradition—of each business. People come to Houshi Ryokan today to escape the modern world.</p> <p>The answer includes two accurate pieces of evidence, one from the passage and one from the excerpt.</p> <p>EXAMPLE 5 The Antonio Mattei’s original biscotti recipe has remained key to the business even through several changes in ownership and leadership. For 46 generations, Houshi Ryokan has been managed by a man who is always called “Zengoro Houshi!”</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Responses do not have to be in complete sentences or paragraphs. Even a one- or two-word response can receive a point. ▪ A response may offer one piece of evidence without a claim. This evidence is creditable as long as it can be used to support an implied claim. ▪ If a response gives the same answer or support twice using different words, it only earns one point. ▪ Extraneous material in a response, as long as it doesn’t contradict the appropriate response, is not taken into consideration when assigning a score.
1	<p>The answer is a single claim.</p> <p>EXAMPLE 6 Both the operators of the Antonio Mattei bakery and the operators of Houshi Ryokan focus on carrying on long-standing traditions of the business.</p> <p>The answer is a piece of evidence from either the passage or the excerpt.</p> <p>EXAMPLE 7 When Francesco Paolo wanted to create new biscotti recipes, he had to do so under a separate label.</p>	
0	<p>The answer shows effort but offers neither an acceptable claim, nor acceptable pieces of evidence.</p> <p>EXAMPLE 8 The Antonio Mattei bakery is located in Prato, Italy, where Antonio Mattei was a baker.</p>	