



Exemplar Grade 3 Reading Test Questions



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Introduction

This booklet explains ACT Aspire® Grade 3 Reading test questions by presenting, with their answer keys, sample questions aligned to each reporting category on the test. A key includes the question's depth-of-knowledge (DOK) level,¹ an explanation of the task posed by each question, a thorough explanation of correct responses, ideas for improvement, and more. The exemplar test questions included here are representative of the range of content and types of questions found on the ACT Aspire Grade 3 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: “Snake Surprise”

Snake Surprise

1 For months, I had earned money by washing windows and raking leaves. Now, the day was here. I had saved enough to buy the guitar that sat in the window of Mendoza’s Music Supply.

2 My older sister Jess drove me to Mendoza’s. When we arrived, I saw a crowd gathering outside the store. People were yelling and pointing at the ground. Jess doubled her speed, and I ran after her.

3 A green rope with yellow stripes lay on the sidewalk. Then it began twisting and turning. I stepped closer, only to spring back again. The rope wasn’t just moving—it was slithering! “A snake!” I cried.

4 “Oh, the poor thing!” Jess exclaimed as the snake coiled up in fear. As Jess picked it up, the snake wrapped itself gently around her wrist like a bracelet. It poked its tongue in and out, thanking my sister for rescuing it from the busy sidewalk. “Don’t worry, Rose,” Jess said to me. “It’s just a harmless garter snake.”

5 I had to laugh. Jess could charm anyone, even snakes.

6 “What are you going to do with that slimy thing?” a boy asked us.

7 “I don’t know,” I said. Sunlight was glinting off Mendoza’s store window. The beautiful guitar behind the glass winked at me. It was almost mine! But the snake was watching me with shining black eyes. I couldn’t ignore it. “Can we help it?” I asked Jess.

8 “What about your guitar, Rose?” she asked.

9 I reached out and took the snake from her hands. It wasn’t slimy at all. It was hard and dry on top and smooth underneath. Its pink tongue tickled my hand.

10 “I can wait to buy my guitar another day,” I said. “Let’s find our new friend a home.”

Question 1

Snake Surprise

For months, I had earned money by washing windows and raking leaves. Now, the day was here. I had saved enough to buy the guitar that sat in the window of Mendoza's Music Supply.

My older sister Jess drove me to Mendoza's. When we arrived, I saw a crowd gathering outside the store. People were yelling and pointing at the ground. Jess doubled her speed, and I ran after her.

A green rope with yellow stripes lay on the sidewalk. Then it began twisting and turning. I stepped closer, only to spring back again. The rope wasn't just moving—it was slithering! "A snake!" I cried.

"Oh, the poor thing!" Jess exclaimed as the snake coiled up in fear. As Jess picked it up, the snake wrapped itself gently around her wrist like a bracelet. It poked its tongue in and out, thanking my sister for rescuing it from the busy sidewalk. "Don't worry, Rose," Jess said to me. "It's just a harmless garter snake."

I had to laugh. Jess could charm anyone, even snakes.

"What are you going to do with that slimy thing?" a boy asked us.

From whose point of view is the passage told?

A. The music store owner's

B. The snake's

C. Jess's

D. Rose's

Sequence	Grade	Question type	DOK level	Reporting category	Correct response
1	3	Selected Response	3	Craft and Structure	D

This selected-response question requires students to understand the point of view from which the passage is told (aligns with the Common Core State Standards anchor standard [CCRA] R.6). Students must read the entire text carefully to determine the identity of the narrator. To answer this question, students must be familiar with aspects of narrative point of view and narrative voice. The correct answer is selected from among answer options that mistake point of view or misattribute perspective.

Correct Response

Only answer option D correctly identifies the point of view (Rose's). The story is not told from the point of view of the other characters presented as options.

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	3	As you read, think about the purpose of texts and parts of texts, how texts are organized, how authors use point of view, and how information in texts can help you figure out what words mean.	Read as many above grade-level texts as you can. Think about how texts are structured, how authors use point of view, how context helps determine word meanings, and how authors use words and phrases.

Question 2

Snake Surprise

For months, I had earned money by washing windows and raking leaves. Now, the day was here. I had saved enough to buy the guitar that sat in the window of Mendoza's Music Supply.

My older sister Jess drove me to Mendoza's. When we arrived, I saw a crowd gathering outside the store. People were yelling and pointing at the ground. Jess doubled her speed, and I ran after her.

A green rope with yellow stripes lay on the sidewalk. Then it began twisting and turning. I stepped closer, only to spring back again. The rope wasn't just moving—it was slithering! "A snake!" I cried.

"Oh, the poor thing!" Jess exclaimed as the snake coiled up in fear. As Jess picked it up, the snake wrapped itself gently around her wrist like a bracelet. It poked its tongue in and out, thanking my sister for rescuing it from the busy sidewalk. "Don't worry, Rose," Jess said to me. "It's just a harmless garter snake."

I had to laugh. Jess could charm anyone, even snakes.

"What are you going to do with that slimy thing?" a boy asked us.

Which of the following best describes the narrator's reaction to the garter snake?

- A. She is excited to see a snake for the first time.
- B. She is scared until she realizes the snake isn't dangerous.
- C. She is angry that the snake ruined her plans to buy a guitar.
- D. She is happy to share her knowledge about snakes with the crowd.

Sequence	Grade	Question type	DOK level	Reporting category	Correct response
2	3	Selected Response	2	Key Ideas and Details	B

This selected-response question requires students to use information in the text to make a supportable inference (aligns with CCRA.R.1). Students must read the entire passage carefully, identifying key ideas about the narrator's reaction to the garter snake. Students must then select an inference about the narrator's reaction that is best supported by the text, choosing from among answer options that include inferences not supported by the text.

Correct Response

Answer option B ("She is scared until she realizes the snake isn't dangerous") is the only choice supported by the text. The third paragraph provides a detail about the narrator's reaction when she first sees the snake ("I stepped closer, only to spring back again"), and the ninth paragraph reveals that she holds the snake. These details support the inference that she is at first scared but eventually overcomes her fear.

Improvement Idea Statements

Reporting category	Grade	Low statement (scored below ACT Readiness Range)	High statement (scored at or above ACT Readiness Range)
Key Ideas and Details	3	Read as many grade-level texts as you can. Work on identifying important details, drawing reasonable conclusions, recognizing main ideas and themes, and understanding how parts of a text relate to one another.	Read as many above grade-level texts as you can. Work on identifying main ideas and themes and on recognizing sequences and relationships (comparative, cause/effect).

Question 3

Snake Surprise

For months, I had earned money by washing windows and raking leaves. Now, the day was here. I had saved enough to buy the guitar that sat in the window of Mendoza's Music Supply.

My older sister Jess drove me to Mendoza's. When we arrived, I saw a crowd gathering outside the store. People were yelling and pointing at the ground. Jess doubled her speed, and I ran after her.

A green rope with yellow stripes lay on the sidewalk. Then it began twisting and turning. I stepped closer, only to spring back again. The rope wasn't just moving—it was slithering! "A snake!" I cried.

"Oh, the poor thing!" Jess exclaimed as the snake coiled up in fear. As Jess picked it up, the snake wrapped itself gently around her wrist like a bracelet. It poked its tongue in and out, thanking my sister for rescuing it from the busy sidewalk. "Don't worry, Rose," Jess said to me. "It's just a harmless garter snake."

I had to laugh. Jess could charm anyone, even snakes.

"What are you going to do with that slimy thing?" a boy asked us.

Think about the passage "Snake Surprise" as you read the following story.

A Sticky Problem

Leon skipped along the sidewalk beside his sister Ella. Suddenly he stopped, looking puzzled. "Something's wrong with my shoe," he said. "It feels like I stepped in glue."

Ella bent down and looked at it. "It's a wad of bubble gum," she said. "Wait here." She ran into the house.

Ella came out a moment later with ice cubes wrapped in a small towel. She rubbed the cold cubes over the soft, sticky gum. After ten minutes the gum was hard. Ella pulled it off. It was just like pulling the peel off an orange.

"Wow," Leon said. "You know everything, don't you, Ella?"

Ella smiled at her little brother. "In a few years, you'll know as much as I do," she said.

Describe one way Ella's personality in "A Sticky Problem" is similar to Jess's personality in "Snake Surprise." Use one detail from each passage to support your answer.

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

This constructed-response task requires students to make connections between information and ideas in two texts (aligns with CCRA.R.9). Specifically, this task requires students to determine how the personality of a character from "Snake Surprise" (Jess) is similar to the personality of a character from "A Sticky Problem" (Ella). Students must read both texts carefully, compare the information provided in the two texts, and determine how the personalities of these two characters are similar. Students must then construct a written response identifying this similarity, citing evidence from both texts to support their answer.

Improvement Idea Statements

Reporting category	Grade	Low statement (scored below ACT Readiness Range)	High statement (scored at or above ACT Readiness Range)
Integration of Knowledge and Ideas	3	As you read, think about how authors present and support their ideas. Also read different texts on the same topic and think about how these texts are similar and different.	Read as many above grade-level texts as you can. Think about how authors use reasons and evidence to support their ideas. Also, look for connections between and among related texts.

Scoring Guide

Synthesis–Compare

Describe one way Ella’s personality in “A Sticky Problem” is similar to Jess’s personality in “Snake Surprise.” Use one detail from each passage to support your answer.

Scoring Framework

This Synthesis-Compare task is scored on a 0–3 point scale. A full-credit response includes the following components:

Claim	Evidence
an accurate statement that explains how Ella and Jess’s personalities are similar (1 point)	a detail from the passage that supports the claim (1 point)
	a detail from the excerpt that supports the claim (1 point)

Acceptable Responses

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

Claims	Evidence
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ They are both able to easily solve a problem. ▪ They both teach their younger brother or sister something. ▪ They are both kind to others. ▪ They both like to help others. ▪ They are both smart. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Jess helped the snake; Ella unstuck the gum from Leon’s shoe. ▪ Jess showed Rose that the snake was harmless; Ella showed Leon how to remove the gum. ▪ Jess was kind to the snake/Jess was kind to Rose; Ella was kind to Leon when she helped him.

Unacceptable Responses

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

Responses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ They are not similar. ▪ They’re both people. ▪ They are both older sisters.

Scoring Rubric and Guidelines

Score point	Description and example(s)	Notes
3	<p>The answer includes an accurate claim and two pieces of accurate evidence.</p> <p>EXAMPLE 1 They are both good problem solvers. Ella removes gum from a shoe, and Jess helps a snake.</p> <p>EXAMPLE 2 They both are kind to their younger brother or sister. Ella helps Leon with his shoe, and Jess takes Rose to buy a guitar.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ A creditable claim is an interpretive statement based on evidence from the text. ▪ A claim may appear as a single statement or sentence or in different parts of the response. ▪ Creditable evidence may be verbatim, paraphrased, or a logical inference based on information from the text. ▪ A single sentence or statement can contain both a claim and evidence. ▪ Credit may be given to an otherwise insufficient claim if the student offers accurate and appropriate evidence. ▪ Creditable evidence must indicate a logical connection to the claim. ▪ Some students may offer evidence that implies a claim. In the case of Example 4, a point is awarded for each textual detail, but not for the implied claim. The maximum score for a response that offers two or more pieces of evidence but no claim is score point 2. ▪ 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 OR two pieces of evidence.</p> <p>EXAMPLE 3 They are both smart. Like how Ella solved the gum problem.</p> <p>EXAMPLE 4 Jess showed Rose that the snake was harmless, and Ella showed Leon how to remove the gum.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ If a response gives the same answer or support twice using different words, it only earns 1 point. ▪ Responses do not have to be in complete sentences or paragraphs. Even a one- or two-word response can receive a point.
1	<p>The answer is a single claim OR a piece of evidence.</p> <p>EXAMPLE 5 They both teach their younger brother or sister something.</p> <p>EXAMPLE 6 Ella used ice to unstick the gum.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Extraneous material in a response, as long as it does not contradict the appropriate response, is not taken into consideration when assigning a score.
0	<p>The answer shows effort but offers neither an acceptable claim, nor acceptable pieces of evidence.</p> <p>EXAMPLE 7 They are both older sisters.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ When a response offers an incorrect claim, evidence is not creditable, even if this evidence is listed among the acceptable responses.