

Middle School English Language Arts (0049)

<i>Test at a Glance</i>			
Test Name	Middle School English Language Arts		
Test Code	0049		
Time	2 hours		
Number of Questions	90 multiple-choice questions (Part A); 2 constructed-response questions (short-answer essay) (Part B)		
Format	Multiple-choice and constructed-response questions		
Weighting	Multiple-choice: 75% of total score Short constructed-response: 25% of total score		
	Content Categories	Approximate Number of Questions	Approximate Percentage of Total Score
	I. Reading and Literature II. Language and Linguistics III. Composition and Rhetoric IV. Short Essays 1. Literary Analysis 2. Rhetorical Analysis	37 16 37 2	31% 13% 31% 25%
Pacing and Special Tips	In allocating time on this assessment, it is expected that about 90 minutes will be spent on the multiple-choice section and about 30 minutes will be spent on the constructed-response section; the sections are not independently timed.		

About This Test

The Middle School English Language Arts test is designed to assess whether an examinee has the knowledge and competencies necessary for a beginning teacher of English Language Arts at the middle school level. The 90 multiple-choice questions constitute approximately 75% of the examinee's score and fall into three categories: knowledge of concepts relevant to reading and literature study, knowledge of the development and use of the English language, and knowledge of concepts relevant to the study of composition and rhetoric. The two equally weighted constructed-response questions constitute approximately 25% of the examinee's score and emphasize the use of critical thinking skills. One question will ask examinees to interpret a piece of literary or nonfiction text and/or to discuss an approach to interpreting text; the other question will ask examinees to discuss the rhetorical elements of a piece of writing. With respect to the examinee's allocation of time on this assessment, it is expected that about 90 minutes will be spent on the multiple-choice section and about 15 minutes will be spent on each essay question (for an approximate total of 30 minutes on the constructed-response portion); the sections are not separately timed.

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Topics Covered

Representative descriptions of topics covered in each category are provided below.

Multiple Choice

I. Reading and Literature

- Identifying major works and authors of literature appropriate for adolescents
- Interpreting, paraphrasing, and comparing various types of texts, including fiction, poetry, essays, and other nonfiction
- Identifying and analyzing figurative language and other literary elements, e.g., metaphor, simile, voice, narrative point of view, tone, style, setting, diction, mood, allusions, irony, clichés, analogy, hyperbole, personification, alliteration, and foreshadowing
- Identifying patterns, structures, and characteristics of literary forms and genres, e.g., elements of fiction, features of different poetic and prose forms, and metrical patterns and rhyme schemes
- Situating and interpreting texts within their historical and cultural contexts
- Recognizing various strategic approaches to and elements of teaching reading and textual interpretation, e.g., phonics and whole-language approaches, cueing systems, and metacognition

II. Language and Linguistics

- Understanding elements of traditional grammar, e.g., sentence types, sentence structure, parts of speech, modifiers, sentence combining, phrases and clauses, capitalization, and punctuation

- Understanding various semantic elements, e.g., euphemism, jargon, idiom, and connotation and denotation
- Understanding subjects relating to the analysis and history of English, e.g., etymology, morphemes, roots, prefixes and suffixes, and dialects and dialect formation

III. Composition and Rhetoric

- Understanding strategies for teaching writing and theories of how students learn to write
 - Recognizing individual and collaborative approaches to teaching writing, e.g., elements of the writing process (prewriting, drafting, revising, editing, publishing, evaluating)
 - Knowledge of various tools and response strategies for assessing student writing, e.g., peer review, portfolios, holistic scoring, scoring rubrics, self-assessment, and conferencing
- Recognizing, understanding, and evaluating rhetorical features of writing, e.g., purpose, types of discourse (narrative, persuasive, informational, etc.), and organizational strategies

Short Essays

Question 1: Literary Analysis

Stimulus

The stimulus for the literary analysis question will consist of a selection of prose (fiction or nonfiction) **OR** poetry (a whole short poem or an excerpt from a longer work).

Task

Examinees will be asked to do both of the following:

- Describe and give examples of the use of one or two specified literary element(s) present in the stimulus, e.g., metaphor, simile, voice, narrative point of view, tone, style, setting, diction, mood, allusions, irony, clichés, analogy, hyperbole, personification, alliteration, foreshadowing
- Discuss how the author's use of the literary element(s) contributes to the overall meaning and/or effectiveness of the text

Question 2: Rhetorical Analysis

Stimulus

The stimulus for the rhetorical analysis question will consist of a selection of fiction or nonfiction prose.

Task

Examinees will be asked to do both of the following:

- Identify and describe and/or give examples of the use of one or more rhetorical elements in the stimulus, e.g., purpose, types of discourse (narrative, persuasive, informational, etc.), organizational strategies
- Discuss the degree to which the use of the rhetorical element(s) is effective in conveying the author's point and contributing to the overall meaning of the text

Sample Test Questions

The sample questions that follow illustrate the kinds of questions in the test. They are not, however, representative of the entire scope of the test in either content or difficulty. Answers with explanations follow the questions.

Directions: Each of the questions or statements below is followed by four suggested answers or completions. Select the one that is best in each case.

1. _____ is a narrative that takes abstract ideas of behavior—good or bad, wise or foolish—and attempts to make them concrete and striking. The chief actor in these stories is usually an animal or inanimate object that behaves like a human and engages in a single significant act intended to teach a moral lesson.

Which of the following will correctly complete the passage above?

- (A) A myth
- (B) A fable
- (C) An epic
- (D) A legend

Questions 2–4 refer to the following poem.

There is no frigate like a book
To take us lands away,
Nor any coursers like a page
(Line) Of prancing poetry.
5 This traverse may the poorest take
Without oppress of toll;
How frugal is the chariot
That bears a human soul!

Reprinted by permission of the publishers and the Trustees of Amherst College from *The Poems of Emily Dickinson*, edited by Thomas H. Johnson, Cambridge, Mass.: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, Copyright 1951 © 1955, 1979 by the President and Fellows of Harvard College.

2. Which of the following is the best restatement of lines 5–6?
- (A) Travel exposes an individual to new experiences.
 - (B) Reading is an adventure that costs nothing.
 - (C) Chariots are an inexpensive means of travel.
 - (D) Poetry, in comparison with fiction, lacks seriousness.

3. In the poem, books and reading are described in terms related to
- (A) laborious activities
 - (B) wealth and poverty
 - (C) geographical regions
 - (D) modes of transportation
4. The word “prancing” (line 4) is used to
- (A) link the images of “frigate” (line 1) and “chariot” (line 7)
 - (B) underline the contrast between “book” (line 1) and “page” (line 3)
 - (C) reinforce the image of horses, or “coursers” (line 3)
 - (D) introduce an image that will dominate the last four lines of the poem
5. If atoms are the letters of the chemical language, then molecules are the words. But in order to put the chemical letters together to form chemical words, we have to know something about the rules of chemical spelling.

In the passage above, a discussion of atoms is introduced by

- (A) an analogy
 - (B) an aphorism
 - (C) an example
 - (D) a hypothesis
6. They set two rats in cages side by side, and one was furtive, timid, and small, and the other was glossy, bold, and big.

The sentence above is an example of a

- (A) simple sentence
- (B) compound sentence
- (C) complex sentence
- (D) compound-complex sentence

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7. My sister and I always loved sledding down the hill behind our house.

The underlined word in the sentence above is an example of

- (A) a conjunction
- (B) a participle
- (C) a gerund
- (D) an adverb

Questions 8–9 refer to the following passage.

Unlike some writers who talk of language use with wailing and gnashing of teeth (see Edwin Newman’s petulant discussions of language misuse or any of Jacques Barzun’s tirades on contemporary English), George Orwell recognized the complexity of the interrelationship between thinking and language and avoided the simplistic thinking that argues that if we “correct” people’s use of English, we will somehow have solved the “problem” of the “decline” of the English language.

8. The author puts the words “correct,” “problem,” and “decline” in quotation marks primarily in order to suggest that
- (A) they are examples of words that are misused in the English language
 - (B) the complex interrelationship between thinking and language has affected the way in which people try to correct one another’s speech
 - (C) the problem of the decline of the English language is too severe to be solved merely by correcting people’s speech
 - (D) they reflect a limited perspective and should not be accepted uncritically

9. The author’s tone in describing Newman and Barzun can best be described as

- (A) dismissive
- (B) bitter
- (C) defensive
- (D) spiteful

10. Freewriting, brainstorming, clustering, and idea mapping are most important during which stage of the writing process?

- (A) Prewriting
- (B) Drafting
- (C) Revising
- (D) Proofreading

Answers

1. The correct answer is B. The statements on which the question is based constitute a definition of a fable. While all of the choices are types of narrative, only a fable fits the full description.

2. The correct answer is B. The syntax of line 5 of the poem is inverted. Read as “the poorest [people] may take this traverse [i.e., this travel; this route],” the sense becomes plainer, as does the sense of line 6: “without oppress [oppression or burden] of toll [i.e., payment].” What remains is to determine that “this traverse” refers to taking “us lands away” (line 2). It is a book (line 1) or “page of prancing poetry” (lines 3–4) that can do that.

3. The correct answer is D. The comparison in line 1 of a book to a ship (“a frigate”) and in lines 2–3 of poetry to swift horses (“coursers”) makes it clear that books and reading are described in terms of modes of transportation. That interpretation is reinforced by the metaphor of a chariot bearing a human soul (lines 7–8).

4. The correct answer is C. The description of poetry as “prancing” in line 4 calls to mind the rhythm of poetry and reinforces the image of spirited, galloping horses (coursers) in line 3.

5. The correct answer is A. By suggesting that atoms are like letters, the author of the passage has used an analogy; that is, the author has characterized one thing by reference to another thing that functions in a similar way.

6. The correct answer is B. A simple sentence contains only one independent clause. This sentence has three independent clauses joined by the conjunction “and.” Without dependent clauses, the sentence cannot be characterized as either “complex” or “compound-complex.”

7. The correct answer is C. In this sentence, the word “sledding” is a gerund, a verb form (the present participle) functioning as a noun.

8. The correct answer is D. In the paragraph, the speaker explains that George Orwell recognized the complexity of language use and avoided simplistic arguments for improving how people speak. What follows are terms the speaker would consider related to such simplistic arguments. The quotation marks call attention to the terms and discourage readers from taking them at face value.

9. The correct answer is A. In contrasting Orwell’s discussions of language with those of writers exemplified by Newman and Barzun, the speaker implies that the arguments of Newman and Barzun are simplistic and hence easily dismissed. The hyperbole in “wailing and gnashing of teeth” (line 1) and the characterization of Newman’s work as “petulant” and Barzun’s as “tirades” (line 2) have already signaled disapproval, implying that these authors are more emotional than thoughtful. While it is possible that the speaker is dismissing Newman and Barzun out of spite or bitterness, or even defensiveness, there is nothing in the structure of this excerpt to support choices B, C, or D.

10. The correct answer is A. The terms mentioned are processes and devices associated with generating new ideas and organizing them. These processes and devices would not be associated with proofreading (D). While they might be part of drafting (B) or revising (C), they are most important during the prewriting stage of the writing process.

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This section presents sample questions and constructed-response samples along with the standards used in scoring the essays. When you read these sample responses, keep in mind that they will be less polished than if they had been developed at home, edited, and

carefully presented. Examinees do not know what questions will be asked and must decide, on the spot, how to respond. Readers take these circumstances into account when scoring the responses. Readers will assign scores based on the following scoring guide.

SCORING GUIDE

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The response is successful in the following ways:

- It demonstrates an ability to analyze the stimulus material thoughtfully and in depth.
- It demonstrates a strong knowledge of the subject matter relevant to the question.
- It responds appropriately to all parts of the question.
- It demonstrates facility with conventions of standard written English.

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The response demonstrates some understanding of the topic, but it is limited in one or more of the following major ways:

- It may indicate a misreading of the stimulus material or provide superficial analysis.
- It may demonstrate only superficial knowledge of the subject matter relevant to the question.
- It may respond to one or more parts of the question inadequately or not at all.
- It may contain significant writing errors.

1

The response is seriously flawed in one or more of the following ways:

- It may demonstrate weak understanding of the subject matter or of the writing task.
- It may fail to respond adequately to most parts of the question.
- It may be incoherent or severely underdeveloped.
- It may contain severe and persistent writing errors.

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Response is blank, off-topic, totally incorrect, or merely rephrases the question.

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Sample Question: Literary Analysis

“Why, thank you so much. I’d adore to.”

I don’t want to dance with him. I don’t want to dance with anybody. And even if I did, it wouldn’t be him. He’d be well down among the last ten. I’ve seen the way he dances. . . . Just think, not a quarter of an hour ago, here I was sitting, feeling sorry for the poor girl he was dancing with. And now I’m going to be the poor girl.

“The Waltz,” a short story by humorist Dorothy Parker, opens with the lines above. Explain how Parker establishes tone and uses perspective in the excerpt.

Sample Response That Received a Score of 3:

Dorothy Parker tells the story in the first person with two contrasting perspectives: what her character says and what she is really thinking. This sets an amusing and intimate tone throughout the excerpt.

Contributing to the sense of intimacy with her character is the conversational tone of her thoughts. Immediately the reader identifies with the character. Also, the use of present tense, so we are overhearing the character’s thoughts as she is having them, contributes to the intimacy of the internal dialogue. When she says that she didn’t want to dance with anyone, and even if she did “it wouldn’t be him,” it feels like the character is having a private conversation with the reader.

Finally, the reader is left with a feeling of ironic amusement. The character who so politely agrees to dance has just been feeling sorry for her partner’s previous victim: “Just think, not a quarter of an hour ago, here I was sitting, feeling sorry for the poor girl he was dancing with. And now I’m going to be the poor girl.” Again, the reader identifies with the intimate tone the character uses since at one time or another most of us have also agreed to do something we would have preferred not to, just to be polite.

Sample Response That Received a Score of 1:

In the above passage, Parker establishes tone with short, precise sentences, gradually getting longer. She used perspective in dealing with the fact that she does not want to dance and especially with him. She also was putting herself in the other girl’s position.

Sample Question: Rhetorical Analysis

The following paragraph is adapted from an essay by Jane Jacobs.

City planners and architectural designers operate on the premise that city people seek emptiness, obvious order, and quiet. Nothing could be less true. The love of people for watching activity and other people is evident in cities everywhere. This trait reaches an almost ludicrous extreme on upper Broadway in New York City, where the street is divided by a narrow, central mall right in the middle of traffic. Benches have been placed at the cross-street intersections of this long mall, and on any day when the weather is even barely tolerable they are filled with people watching the pedestrians, the traffic, and each other.

Describe the major organizational features of the paragraph. Refer directly to the excerpt to support your description of its organization.

Sample Response That Received a Score of 3:

This paragraph is organized around the refutation of a point made in the first sentence. The topic sentence is the third sentence of the paragraph, which is the refutation of the first sentence. “The love of people for watching activity . . . in cities everywhere” is in direct opposition to the assertion made in the first sentence, that planners and designers operate on the belief that urbanites seek peace and quiet. These two ideas are linked effectively by a short sentence that simply states that the first assertion is false.

From there, the author provides a specific example: upper Broadway in New York City. The author describes a scene where even in pretty bad weather, benches are “filled with people watching pedestrians, the traffic, and each other.” This evidence further refutes the first statement and supports the author’s thesis that people do not want to have emptiness and quiet but watch activity and other people. This paragraph is written to persuade the reader, and might be part of a longer persuasive essay.

Sample Response That Received a Score of 1:

The paragraph clearly introduces what the theme is going to be about. Then it says how we love to watch activities and others. She shows how important it is to people to really do the activities they enjoy by saying that regardless of the weather conditions people do what they like. The paragraph explains its point clearly and supports it by examples, like by describing people that like to watch traffic and activity.