



**The New York City
Department of Education**

**Grade 8 English Language Arts
(ELA) Benchmark Assessment**

**Teacher Guide
Fall 2012**

November 26, 2012–January 11, 2013



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Test Design and Instructional Purpose

The English Language Arts (ELA) Benchmark Assessment is designed to help you collect *some* information about your students' progress toward meeting the Common Core expectations for eighth grade.

There are two ELA Benchmark Assessments available—one for the fall and one for the winter. The question types and complexity of the texts reflect what we anticipate will be on the Grade 8 Common Core Learning Standards-aligned New York State test over the next two years. The test contains the following item types:

- Multiple choice
- Short answer constructed response
- Extended response/performance task

These items are designed to provide evidence of students' skills in reading comprehension, critical thinking, and answering text-dependent questions. The extended response/performance task items require comparison, analysis, synthesis, and/or opinion or argumentation.

These Benchmark Assessments provide an objective measure of your students' performance on cognitively rich tasks based on complex grade-level texts without scaffolding or support. In other words, these assessments provide information on what your students can accomplish independently and their mastery of the Common Core Learning Standards. They look at how well students can transfer skills they've learned to new situations. Additionally, the assessments allow grade-level teams to look at student work across classes to identify learning trends and to develop strategies to address key areas of need.

No single test, including this Benchmark Assessment, can cover all skills and concepts contained within the Common Core Learning Standards. Therefore, it is best to analyze this assessment along with evidence collected from daily observation, class work, homework, and school- or teacher-made assessments.

Test Content

The ELA Benchmark Assessment is designed to take two full 40-minute class periods. On the first day, students read two passages and answer 6–10 multiple-choice questions and two short-response questions. On the second day, students re-read the same two passages and complete an extended response/performance task linking the two passages.

The passages and questions of the ELA Benchmark Assessment are designed to embody three key shifts at the heart of the ELA Literacy Standards:

- *Reading and writing grounded in evidence from the text(s).* The multiple-choice, short-response, and extended-response/performance task questions are designed to provide students opportunities to make explicit the evidence that supports their close analysis of a specific text and, in some cases, of multiple texts.

- *Regular practice with complex text and academic vocabulary.* Texts were selected in accordance with the quantitative and qualitative requirements of the Common Core Learning Standards.
- *Building knowledge through content-rich nonfiction and informational texts.* Text passages represent a greater emphasis on nonfiction and informational texts.¹

Passages

This Grade 8 Benchmark Assessment has two passages:

- *Migrant Mother, 1936:* an informational passage about how this famous photograph by Dorothea Lange enlightened the nation about the poverty of migrant workers during the Great Depression.
- *“Get People With a Little Spirit”:* an informational passage about how Roy Stryker and his photographers’ photos captured the poverty of sharecroppers during the Great Depression.

These passages were chosen to align to genres and text types specified in the Grade 8 PARCC Model Content Framework.²

Standards Alignment

The items associated with this assessment are aligned to the following Common Core Learning Standards:

8.RI.1. Cite the textual evidence that most strongly supports an analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

8.RI.2. 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.

8.RI.3. Analyze how a text makes connections among and distinctions between individuals, ideas, or events (e.g., through comparisons, analogies, or categories).

8.RI.5. 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.

¹ In Grades 3 to 5, the Fall Benchmark Assessments focus on fiction passages, and the Winter Benchmark Assessments focus on informational and nonfiction passages. In Grades 6–8, both the Fall and Winter Benchmark Assessments focus on informational and nonfiction passages.

² The Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) is a collaborative effort among 23 states to develop a common set of K–12 assessments in English and Math that align to the Common Core State Standards (CCSS). The PARCC Model Content Frameworks, designed by content experts, are voluntary resources to support implementation of the CCSS and to guide development of assessments in Grades 3–12. For more information, refer to:

http://www.parcconline.org/sites/parcc/files/PARCC%20MCF%20for%20ELA%20Literacy_Fall%202011%20Release%20%28rev%29.pdf

If you have any questions, contact the NYC Acuity Helpdesk at 866-NYC-6550 or NYCAcuity@ctb.com.

8.L.1 Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking.

8.W.2. Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas, concepts, and information through the selection, organization, and analysis of relevant content.

8.L.4. Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words or phrases based on grade 8 reading and content, choosing flexibly from a range of strategies.

Rubrics for Scoring Short-Response and Extended-Response/Performance Task Items

Item # 4

Key Elements	
Details from the text:	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The photographs showed a squalid scene. 2. The <i>Migrant Mother</i> photograph evokes the uncertainty and despair resulting from continual poverty. 3. The Resettlement Administration hired a team of photographers to document the plight of the migrant farm workers. 4. The object of taking photographs of the workers was to demonstrate the need for federal assistance for them and justify legislation to provide it. 5. After Dorothea Lange's pictures were published, the government sent twenty thousand pounds of food to California migrant workers. 6. other relevant text-based detail 	
Criteria	
2	<p>Proficient</p> <p>A <i>proficient</i> response:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gives sufficient evidence of the ability to determine the relevance of evidence to support a claim • Includes specific information that makes clear reference to the text • Adequately supports the specified claim with clearly relevant details from the text
1	<p>Partial</p> <p>A <i>partial</i> response:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gives limited evidence of the ability to determine the relevance of evidence to support a claim • Includes some information that makes reference to the text • Supports the specified claim with limited relevant details from the text
0	<p>No credit</p> <p>A response gets no credit if it provides no evidence of the ability to determine the relevance of evidence to support a claim, includes no relevant information from the text, or is vague.</p>
Exemplars	
2	<p>The photos were shocking to the public because they showed how much the farmers suffered during the Great Depression. Although <i>Migrant Mother</i> does not show the camp, you can tell from the picture that the woman is in a desperate situation. Her clothes are ragged and her children unkempt. She looks worn out. These photos helped the Roosevelt administration show the American people that the poor needed federal assistance.</p>
1	<p>The photos were shocking because many people didn't know how poor the farmers were.</p>
0	<p>The author claims that life was bad for them. The picture is sad.</p>

Item # 8

Key Elements	
Details from the text:	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Roy Stryker wanted the FSA photographers to capture the "mood" of the Great Depression. 2. Stryker wanted the photographers to show the farmers' determination in the face of poverty: "Get people with a little spirit. Pictures of men, women, and children who appear as if they really believed in the U.S." 3. The documentary photographers described in the text tried to capture the human spirit of the suffering farmers. 4. Throughout the text, the plight of farmers during the Great Depression is emphasized. 5. The story told by the photographer in the final paragraph showed the spirit and determination of a farmer who was facing difficult conditions. 6. In the final paragraph, the author emphasizes that the stories behind the documentary pictures inspired the nation to be kinder. 7. other relevant text-based detail 	
Criteria	
2	<p>Proficient</p> <p>A <i>proficient</i> response:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gives sufficient evidence of the ability to determine how the title reflects the main idea of the text • Includes specific information that makes clear reference to the text • Adequately supports the specified claim with clearly relevant details from the text
1	<p>Partial</p> <p>A <i>partial</i> response:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gives limited evidence of the ability to determine how the title reflects the main idea of the text • Includes some information that makes reference to the text • Supports the explanation with limited details from the text
0	<p>No credit</p> <p>A response gets no credit if it provides no evidence of the ability to determine how the title reflects the main idea of the text, includes no relevant information from the text, or is vague.</p>
Exemplars	
2	<p>The title "Get People with a Little Spirit" reflects how the photographers employed by the FSA sought to show the plight of the farmers during the Great Depression. Roy Stryker wanted the photographers to show the "mood" of the depression, not just the facts. The way the photos were taken made the viewers sympathize with the farmers. Seeing what the poor were going through made the nation kinder toward them.</p>

1	The title of the passage "Get People With a Little Spirit" refers to how the photographers tried to show the personalities of the farmers they were photographing.
0	The title is about what Roy Stryker said in the passage.

Item # 9

Key Elements	
<u>Details from "Migrant Mother":</u>	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The Farm Security Administration employed a team of photographers to document the lives of the poverty-stricken migrant farm workers. 2. The object was to demonstrate the need for federal assistance and justify legislation that would make it possible. 3. The idea behind the photographs was to "introduce America to Americans." 4. Dorothea Lange, one of the photographers, took pictures at a pea pickers' camp. 5. She discovered a woman there living in a makeshift tent with her children. 6. She photographed the woman and her children, showing their tattered and dirty clothing. 7. The photographs documented the poor living conditions and the anxiety experienced by the woman, but also her pride, strength, and spirit. 8. The <i>Migrant Mother</i> photograph has a classically triangular composition with the mother at the center and two small heads on either side. 9. When the photographs Dorothea Lange took were published, the nation was shocked. 10. "It was unconscionable that the workers who put food on American tables could not feed themselves." 11. These pictures showed the human consequences of poverty and influenced the federal government to promptly send twenty thousand pounds of food to help the California migrant workers. 12. other relevant text-based detail 	
<u>Details from "Get People With a Little Spirit":</u>	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Walker Evans was one of the photographers hired by the Farm Security Administration to chronicle the Great Depression and provide some good press for the Roosevelt administration's efforts to aid the poor. 2. Walker Evans thought of his work as art. 3. The pictures taken by the FSA photographers chronicled "the plight of starving Southern sharecroppers, migrant pea-pickers, and dust-blown Dakota farms." 4. Roy Stryker, the project director, wanted the photographs not merely to capture poverty but also to show man's determination in the face of it. 5. Stryker wasn't beyond using the photographs as propaganda to publicize the reform works of the Roosevelt administration. 6. Walker Evans sometimes composed his photographs in order to capture the stark beauty of the sharecroppers' dirt-poor lives. 7. He added or removed objects to create a balance to show the order that he believed lay beneath the surface of the poverty of the sharecroppers. 8. When shooting <i>Migrant Mother</i>, Dorothea Lange had the mother raise her hand to her face in order for her to appear less hard and more pensive. 9. Dorothea Lange also turned the heads of the mother's children away from the camera to reduce the likelihood of happy grins on their faces that would be 	

<p>incongruous with the message.</p> <p>10. The photographers framed their subjects to make their plight more acceptable to mainstream America.</p> <p>11. Dorothea Lange did not show photographs of all seven of the Migrant Mother's children.</p> <p>12. Pictures of the farmers inspired the nation to be kinder.</p> <p>13. other relevant text-based detail</p>	
Criteria	
4	<p>Meets Standard (Meets criteria at grade level):</p> <p>Introduce a topic clearly, previewing what is to follow; organize ideas, concepts, and information into broader categories.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides a clear introduction that previews what is to follow in the writing. • Ideas, concepts, and information are organized into broader categories. <p>Develop the topic with relevant, well-chosen facts, definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information and examples.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develops the topic with relevant, well-chosen facts, definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information and examples. <p>Use appropriate and varied transitions to create cohesion and clarify the relationships among ideas and concepts.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uses appropriate and varied transitions to create cohesion and clarify the relationships among ideas and concepts. <p>Use precise language and domain-specific vocabulary to inform about or explain the topic.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uses precise language and domain-specific vocabulary to inform about or explain the topic. <p>Establish and maintain a formal style.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establishes and maintains a formal style. <p>Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from and supports the information or explanation presented.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides a concluding statement or section that follows from the information presented. <p>Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar, usage, capitalization, punctuation, and spelling when writing.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrates command of the conventions of standard English grammar, usage, capitalization, punctuation, and spelling when writing.
3	<p>Near Standard (Mostly meets criteria):</p> <p>Introduce a topic clearly, previewing what is to follow; organize ideas, concepts, and information into broader categories.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides a basic introduction to topic. • Writing contains clear evidence of an organizational structure. • Ideas, concepts, and information are mostly organized into broader categories.

	<p>Develop the topic with relevant, well-chosen facts, definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information and examples.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mostly develops the topic with relevant facts, definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information and examples. <p>Use appropriate and varied transitions to create cohesion and clarify the relationships among ideas and concepts.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uses mostly appropriate transitions to create cohesion and clarify the relationships among ideas and concepts. <p>Use precise language and domain-specific vocabulary to inform about or explain the topic.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uses domain-specific vocabulary to inform about or explain the topic. <p>Establish and maintain a formal style.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establishes and maintains a formal style in most of text. <p>Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from and supports the information or explanation presented.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides a concluding statement or section that mostly follows from the information presented. <p>Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar, usage, capitalization, punctuation, and spelling when writing.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrates fairly good command of the conventions of standard English grammar, usage, capitalization, punctuation, and spelling when writing.
2	<p>Approaching Standard (Partially meets criteria):</p> <p>Introduce a topic clearly, previewing what is to follow; organize ideas, concepts, and information into broader categories.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides a basic introduction to topic. • Writing contains some evidence of an organizational structure. • Ideas, concepts, and information are organized somewhat into broader categories. <p>Develop the topic with relevant, well-chosen facts, definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information and examples.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develops the topic partially with facts, definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information and examples. <p>Use appropriate and varied transitions to create cohesion and clarify the relationships among ideas and concepts.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some transitions are present in writing that somewhat create cohesion and clarify the relationship between ideas and concepts. <p>Use precise language and domain-specific vocabulary to inform about or explain the topic.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uses some domain-specific vocabulary to inform about or explain the topic.

	<p>Establish and maintain a formal style.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establishes and maintains a formal style in portions of text. <p>Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from and supports the information or explanation presented.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides a concluding statement or section that partially follows from the information presented. <p>Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar, usage, capitalization, punctuation, and spelling when writing.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Demonstrates partial command of the conventions of standard English grammar, usage, capitalization, punctuation, and spelling when writing.
1	<p>Below Standard (Barely meets criteria):</p> <p>Introduce a topic clearly, previewing what is to follow; organize ideas, concepts, and information into broader categories.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides a minimal introduction to topic. Writing contains minimal organizational structure. Any use of strategies are minimally effective in their capacity to organize ideas, concepts, etc. <p>Develop the topic with relevant, well-chosen facts, definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information and examples.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develops the topic minimally, with facts, definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information and examples being largely absent. <p>Use appropriate and varied transitions to create cohesion and clarify the relationships among ideas and concepts.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Minimal evidence of transitions are present. <p>Use precise language and domain-specific vocabulary to inform about or explain the topic.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Uses minimal domain-specific vocabulary to inform about or explain the topic. <p>Establish and maintain a formal style.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Minimal and sporadic use of formal style. <p>Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from and supports the information or explanation presented.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides a concluding statement or section that barely follows from the information presented. <p>Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar, usage, capitalization, punctuation, and spelling when writing.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Demonstrates minimal command of the conventions of standard English grammar, usage, capitalization, punctuation, and spelling when writing.
0	<p>Far Below Standard:</p>

	<p>Introduce a topic clearly, previewing what is to follow; organize ideas, concepts, and information into broader categories.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides little or no introduction to topic. • Writing contains little, if any, organizational structure. • Does not compose or supply any information about topic; no apparent use of strategy is present. <p>Develop the topic with relevant, well-chosen facts, definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information and examples.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides no development of the topic; no relevant information or examples are included. • Demonstrates no understanding of the text or topic. <p>Use appropriate and varied transitions to create cohesion and clarify the relationships among ideas and concepts.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No evidence of use of transitions is present. <p>Use precise language and domain-specific vocabulary to inform about or explain the topic.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uses domain-specific vocabulary to inform about or explain the topic. <p>Establish and maintain a formal style.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does not establish a formal style. <p>Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from and supports the information or explanation presented.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides no concluding statement or section that sums up main points. <p>Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar, usage, capitalization, punctuation, and spelling when writing.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrates no command of standard English writing mechanics.
Exemplars	
4	<p>Art can definitely have an impact on social issues. In both texts, the art created by the documentary photographers during the Great Depression was intended to influence the reactions of society to current events. The focus of the documentary photographs was the plight of the farmers. One effect of these photographs was that Americans realized the serious consequences of the Great Depression for farmers and that these farmers deserved help.</p> <p>During the Great Depression, a team of 13 photographers was hired to document the hard lives of the migrant farm workers as well as the plight of other farmers. The photographers considered their work art and planned their photographs so that they would have a certain balance. They not only wanted to show the bleak conditions but also the dignity of the farmers' lives. They wanted to convey the personalities of the workers so that the public would empathize with them. They did not want the photographs to be cluttered or the subjects to look hard or mean. It was hoped by the Roosevelt administration that once Americans saw the photographs, they would understand why these workers needed federal assistance.</p> <p>One of the most powerful photographs was taken by Dorothea Lange.</p>

	<p>This photograph, called <i>Migrant Mother</i>, portrays a weary woman and some of her children living in poverty at a pea pickers' camp. The woman and children are wearing tattered, dirty clothing. But the photograph was also intended to show the woman's determination and pride in spite of her circumstances. Lange arranged the scene of the woman and her children to send a certain message about the mother's spirit and the family's situation. This creative photograph and others Dorothea Lange shot had an important impact on the nation. People were shocked at the images they saw of the destitute farm workers. The federal government promptly sent twenty thousand pounds of food to help migrant workers in California.</p> <p>Documentary photographs taken by Dorothea Lange and others during the Great Depression provide a good example of how art can influence social issues. The photographers were aware of this possible effect and shot their pictures with that idea in mind. As a consequence of these photographs, the nation realized how much help the migrant farm workers needed. These photographs of people suffering the hardships of poverty were truly art that made a difference in society.</p>
3	<p>It is true that art can affect social issues. The photographers referred to in both texts took pictures to show the plight of farmers during the Great Depression. They planned the scenes in order to send a certain message about the poor conditions. The effect of their photographs was to make Americans more aware of how bad things really were for the farmers.</p> <p>The Farm Security Administration hired a team of photographers to document the plight of the starving Southern sharecroppers, migrant pea pickers, and dust-blown Dakota farms. They were supposed to show how severe conditions were and demonstrate the need for federal assistance for farm workers.</p> <p>One famous photograph was taken by Dorothea Lange. This photograph shows a tired woman and some of her children in California. Lange arranged the woman and her children so that the picture sent a specific message to Americans. This photograph and others Dorothea Lange shot shocked people. The result was that the federal government promptly sent food to help migrant workers in California.</p> <p>The documentary photographs taken during the Great Depression were shot by photographers who saw themselves as artists. They show that art can have an effect on social issues. After viewing these photographs, the nation realized how much help the migrant farm workers needed. These photographs of people suffering the hardships of poverty made a difference.</p>
2	<p>Photographers during the Great Depression thought of their work as art. They took pictures of poor farmers. They felt sorry for the farmers. They showed the plight of starving Southern sharecroppers, migrant pea pickers, and dust-blown farms.</p> <p>There were 13 photographers working for the Farm Security Administration. Dorothea Lange and Walker Evans were two of them. The project director was upset with the photographers for not listening to him. He said they should not be too creative with their pictures. He wanted some propaganda to show the reforms of the Roosevelt administration. The project director's name was Roy Stryker.</p> <p>The pictures taken by the photographers were seen by many people. Some of them were taken by Dorothea Lange. One was of an American Indian and her family. She took time to make the picture look good. When her</p>

	<p>photographs were published, people were shocked. The government then sent help to the farmers. The pictures had an effect.</p>
1	<p>Photographers took thousands of pictures during the Great Depression. The pictures showed farm families. Two of them were Dorothea Lange and Walker Evans. Photographers went to migrant farm workers in there camps. Some were pea pickers. They were in California. People were suffering in these pictures. The photographers think there work is art. They wanted their photos to help people. The farmers were starving and poor. People did get help because of these pictures. The project director was Roy Stryker. There were 13 photographers. One photographer told a story about a farmer in Ohio. It made people kinder.</p>
0	<p>The great depression was hard for farmers. Photographers took many pictures. The pictures were in a article and the pictures showed farmers and there children. One of the pictures was of an American Indian. She lives in a tent with her children. The farm security administration hired the photographers. The director of the project was Roy Stryker. Two photographers were Dorothea Lange and Walker Evans. He made Roy Stryker mad.</p>



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