Exemplar Grade 8 English Test Questions

ACT® Aspire®

Introduction

This booklet explains ACT Aspire® Grade 8 English 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 8 English 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.

Reporting Categories

ACT Aspire English tests assess students' developed ability to revise and edit texts. A typical English test contains several stimuli, or texts, and a series of selected-response (multiple-choice) and technology-enhanced questions. Texts used in the assessments represent various content areas (including English language arts, the humanities, and the social and natural sciences), and, considered collectively, reflect a range of text complexity levels from simple to complex, as appropriate for students' age and educational attainment. The questions fall under the following reporting categories.

Conventions of Standard English

The questions in this category require students to apply an understanding of the conventions of standard English grammar, usage, and mechanics to revise and edit text.

Punctuation and Usage Conventions

These questions require students to edit text to conform to standard English punctuation and usage.

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[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**.

Sentence Structure and Formation

These questions test understanding of relationships between and among clauses, placement of modifiers, and shifts in construction.

Production of Writing

The questions in this category require students to apply an understanding of the rhetorical purpose and the focus of a piece of writing to develop a topic effectively and to use various strategies to achieve logical organization, topical unity, and general cohesion.

Topic Development

These questions require students to demonstrate an understanding of and control over the rhetorical aspects of texts by identifying the purpose of parts of texts, determining whether a text has met its intended goal, and evaluating the relevance of material in terms of a text's focus.

Organization, Unity, and Cohesion

These questions require students to use various strategies to ensure that text is logically organized, flows smoothly, and has an effective introduction and conclusion.

Knowledge of Language

These questions require students to demonstrate effective language use through ensuring precision and concision in word choice and maintaining consistency in style and tone.

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 stimulus text and the sequence number, grade, question type, DOK level, alignment to the ACT Aspire reporting categories, and correct response for each question about the text. Each question is accompanied by an explanation of the question and the correct response as well as improvement idea statements for ACT Aspire English.

Text: "Ghost Bird"

Ghost Bird

In 1951, fifteen-year-old David Wingate examined the limestone cliffs of the Bermuda Islands. He was looking for the Bermuda petrel, or cahow, a seabird once so common that the Bermuda night sky was filled with its eerie cries. The bird, thought to have been extinct for three hundred years, had reportedly been spotted—twice. Wingate, a bird lover and Bermuda native, had joined a team of naturalists who were hoping to confirm the reports. For days they searched, the team found a cahow chick tucked into a crevice, along with a few other cahow nests.

Wingate became focused on saving the cahow. After leaving Bermuda to study zoology at Cornell University in New York, he returned in the late 1950s to search the islands for the bird. He found eighteen nesting pairs, most of them fairly healthy, on several remote islets. Though the cahow still existed, Wingate knew that its current breeding habitat—burrows created in fragile limestone cliffs—was threatened by hurricanes, rising sea levels, and erosion.

Over a period of years, Wingate, as Bermuda's conservation officer, transformed an elevated, uninhabited fifteen-acre Bermuda island that was unpopulated, called Nonsuch, into a haven for this endangered species. He restored native flora and created dozens of sturdy, soil-filled burrows, providing the cahow with safe nesting places. Speakers played prerecorded cahow calls to attract the first birds. Soon, there were eight pairs of cahows nesting on Nonsuch Island.

Wingate feels that there is no sound more beautiful than the haunting cries of the cahow—the unbelievably reappearing "ghost bird," as he calls it—again filling the Bermuda night sky. In 2009, eighty-six nesting pairs on Nonsuch Island produced dozens of healthy chicks that left their burrows to fly out to sea. Many of these birds returned to Nonsuch to make nests of their own.

Question 1

Ghost Bird

In 1951, fifteen-year-old David Wingate examined the limestone cliffs of the Bermuda Islands. He was looking for the Bermuda petrel, or cahow, a seabird once so common that the Bermuda night sky was filled with its eerie cries. The bird, thought to have been extinct for three hundred years, had reportedly been spotted—twice. Wingate, a bird lover and Bermuda native, had joined a team of naturalists who were hoping to confirm the reports. For days they searched, the team found a cahow chick tucked into a crevice, along with a few other cahow nests.

Wingate became focused on saving the cahow. After leaving Bermuda to study zoology at Cornell University in New York, he returned in the late 1950s to search the islands for the bird. He found eighteen nesting pairs, most of them fairly healthy, on several remote islets. Though the cahow still existed, Wingate knew that its current breeding habitat—burrows created in fragile limestone cliffs—was threatened by hurricanes, rising sea levels, and erosion.

Over a period of years, Wingate, as Bermuda's conservation officer, transformed an elevated, uninhabited fifteen-acre Bermuda island that was unpopulated, called Nonsuch, into a haven for this endangered species. He restored native flora and created dozens of sturdy, soil-filled burrows

- A. NO CHANGE
- B. Days passed as they searched,
- C. They spent days searching,
- D. After days of searching,

Sequence	Grade	Question type	DOK level	Reporting category	Correct response
1	8	Selected Response	2	Conventions of Standard English	D

This selected-response question requires students to recognize and revise a run-on sentence (two or more independent clauses joined without proper punctuation and/or conjunctions; aligns with the Common Core State Standards' College and Career Readiness anchor standards [CCRA] W.5 and L.1). The student must read through this complex sentence and recognize that the sentence contains two independent clauses joined only by a comma, resulting in a comma splice. The student must then pick the answer option that does not create another comma splice.

Correct Response

Answer option D is the only option that correctly replaces the independent clause in the highlighted portion with a dependent (introductory) clause. Because an independent clause immediately follows the highlighted portion, the first part of the sentence must either be a dependent clause or an independent clause followed either by a comma and a coordinating conjunction or by a semicolon. Answer options A, B, and C create comma splices because they include independent clauses followed only by a comma.

Improvement Idea Statements

Reporting category	Grade	Low statement (scored below ACT Readiness Range)	High statement (scored at or above ACT Readiness Range)
Conventions of Standard English	8	Work on using parts of speech and punctuation (including colons, semicolons, and dashes) correctly. Avoid errors in sentence construction.	Challenge yourself to write increasingly complex sentences, avoiding all errors in sentence construction and using parts of speech and punctuation correctly.

Question 2

Ghost Bird

study zoology at Cornell University in New York, he returned in the late 1950s to search the islands for the bird. He found eighteen nesting pairs, <mark>most of them fairly healthy,</mark> on several remote islets. Though the cahow still existed, Wingate knew that its current breeding habitat—burrows created in fragile limestone cliffs—was threatened by hurricanes, rising sea levels, and erosion.

Over a period of years, Wingate, as Bermuda's conservation officer, transformed an elevated, uninhabited fifteen-acre <u>Bermuda island that was unpopulated,</u> called Nonsuch, into a haven for this endangered species. He restored native flora and created dozens of sturdy, soil-filled burrows, providing the cahow with safe nesting places. Speakers played prerecorded cahow calls to attract the first birds. Soon, there were eight pairs of cahows nesting on Nonsuch Island.

Wingate feels that there is no sound more beautiful than the haunting cries of the cahow—the unbelievably reappearing "ghost bird," as he calls it—again filling the Bermuda night sky. In 2009, eighty-six nesting pairs on Nonsuch Island produced dozens of healthy chicks that left their burrows to fly out to sea. Many of these birds returned to Nonsuch to make nests of their own.

Given that all the choices are accurate, which one most clearly emphasizes how close the cahow was to extinction when Wingate began his project?

- A. NO CHANGE
- B. some of the pairs having made sturdy nests in the cliffs,
- C. likely the cahow's entire breeding population,
- D. more cahows than he had expected to find,

Sequence	Grade	Question type	DOK level	Reporting category	Correct response
2	8	Selected Response	3	Production of Writing	C

This selected-response question requires students to develop and focus text through the revision of information (aligns with CCRA.W.4–5). To answer the question, students must read the entire sentence carefully and select the answer option that accomplishes the specific rhetorical purpose outlined in the question (a purpose aimed at providing more precise information about the idea being developed).

Correct Response

Answer option C is the only option that satisfies the rhetorical purpose outlined in the stem. The stem calls for a statement that emphasizes "how close the cahow was to extinction." Answer option C, within the context of the sentence, calls attention to the fact that the entire breeding population of the cahow was likely limited to eighteen nesting pairs. Answer options A and B offer statements that aren't related to the cahow's closeness to extinction, and option D would seem to indicate that the cahows were more plentiful than expected.

Improvement Idea Statements

Reporting category	Grade	Low statement (scored below ACT Readiness Range)	High statement (scored at or above ACT Readiness Range)
Production of Writing	8	In your writing, work on developing you topic effectively, organizing ideas in a logical, cohesive way, and expressing ideas in a precise, concise, and stylistically consistent manner.	Practice writing for a variety of purposes. Continue working on developing topics effectively, on organizing ideas in logical, cohesive ways, and on expressing ideas in a stylistically consistent manner.

Question 3

Ghost Bird

to search the islands for the bird. He found eighteen nesting pairs, most of them fairly healthy, on several remote islets. Though the cahow still existed, Wingate knew that its current breeding habitat—burrows created in fragile limestone cliffs—was threatened by hurricanes, rising sea levels, and erosion.

Over a period of years, Wingate, as Bermuda's conservation officer, transformed an elevated, uninhabited fifteen-acre Bermuda island that was unpopulated, called Nonsuch, into a haven for this endangered species. He restored native flora and created dozens of sturdy, soil-filled burrows, providing the cahow with safe nesting places. Speakers played prerecorded cahow calls to attract the first birds. Soon, there were eight pairs of cahows nesting on Nonsuch Island.

Wingate feels that there is no sound more beautiful than the haunting cries of the cahow—the unbelievably reappearing "ghost bird," as he calls it—again filling the Bermuda night sky. In 2009, eighty-six nesting pairs on Nonsuch Island produced dozens of healthy chicks that left their burrows to fly out to sea. Many of these birds returned to Nonsuch to make nests of their own.

- A. NO CHANGE
- B. area of Bermuda that was relatively high up,
- C. place that was soon to be a haven,
- D. Bermuda island,

Sequence	Grade	Question type	DOK level	Reporting category	Correct response
3	8	Selected Response	3	Knowledge of Language	D

This selected-response question requires students to recognize and revise instances of redundancy in text (aligns with CCRA.W.4–5, L.3). Students must read the entire sentence carefully, identify the redundancy in the highlighted portion, and select the answer option that eliminates this redundancy.

Correct Response

Answer option D is the only choice that does not unnecessarily repeat information provided elsewhere in the sentence. It also eliminates wordiness.

Improvement Idea Statements

Reporting category	Grade	Low statement (scored below ACT Readiness Range)	High statement (scored at or above ACT Readiness Range)
Knowledge of Language	8	In your writing, work on choosing language that is precise and concise while maintaining consistency in style and tone.	In your writing, experiment with how word choices affect meaning and how language functions differently in different contexts.