New York State Testing Program  
Grade 6 Common Core  
English Language Arts Test

Sample Student Work

With the adoption of the New York P-12 Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) in ELA/Literacy and Mathematics, the Board of Regents signaled a shift in both instruction and assessment. In Spring 2013, New York State administered the first set of tests designed to assess student performance in accordance with the instructional shifts and the rigor demanded by the Common Core State Standards (CCSS). To aid in the transition to new assessments, New York State released a number of resources during the 2012-2013 year, including test blueprints and specifications, sample questions, and criteria for writing assessment questions. These resources can be found at http://www.engageny.org/common-core-assessments.

New York State administered the first ELA/Literacy and Mathematics Common Core tests in April 2013 and is now making a portion of the questions from those tests available for review and use. These released questions will help students, families, educators and the public better understand how tests have changed to assess the instructional shifts demanded by the Common Core and to assess the rigor required to ensure that all students are on track to college and career readiness.

Understanding Sample Student Work

The released test questions include both multiple choice and constructed response questions. Constructed Response questions ask students to write a thoughtful essay in response to questions the test asks. Here, NYSED is providing student responses to a "constructed response" question we have posted on engage.

By looking at the student work, parents, teachers, and students can gain a better sense of what kind of answers earns students a better score. We can also look at this work and see what students know and are able to do at different levels. In general, students who answered well on these questions are likely to be at level 3 or 4. Similarly, students who earn fewer points on each question have a greater likelihood of being classified as a level 1 or level 2. While not guaranteed, if your student is capable of earning full credit on "constructed response" questions they will most likely be prepared to earn a level 3 or 4 on the state test.
Our first rope drop was into a large, dark room. I could hear water splashing noisily down into the bottom from the other side of the huge chamber.

“Tight squeezes, huh?” I muttered.

Jake winked at me and returned to his work. His crooked grin made it hard to be annoyed, so I dug into my pack and pulled out my seat harness with the rappel device\(^1\) and climbing gear attached.

After checking the rope, Jake slipped into his harness with remarkable speed and finesse, then watched me finish. I felt a surge of irritation as he rechecked all the connection points on my harness. It was silly, since he also checked Sean's and Sean checked his, but I felt as if he had expected a mistake.

“You comfortable with this? It’s a ninety-five-foot drop,” Jake said, his expression serious now. “There’s never any shame in turning around.”

Turn around! What would my parents think?

“No problem,” I replied quickly.

Jake raised an eyebrow, but he nodded and turned to the rope. “On rope,” he called, taking hold of it and winding it into his rappel device. He checked the device, then eased himself over the edge. I heard him zipping down the rope from where I stood, well away from the edge to avoid knocking down loose rock. After a moment, his voice rose from the bottom. “Off rope!”

I glanced at Sean, who met my gaze with an almost fatherly expression of patience. He nodded. I stepped up and took hold of the rope. “On rope!”

I wound the rope through my rappel device, checked it, and eased myself over the edge. Up to that moment, I had been nervous, but once I was actually hanging on the rope, a familiar comfort washed over me. I enjoyed rope work, and my nerves relaxed as I

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\(^1\)rappel device: a system of ropes and levers used to descend in a controlled way down a cliff
settled into the process of letting myself down. I watched the growing speck of Jake's headlamp, glancing occasionally at the marble wall in front of me to admire its water-washed surface.

When my feet hit solid ground, I detached from the rope and crawled out of the rock fall zone before hollering up, “Off rope!”

Sean joined us quickly, and we continued without removing our vertical gear, which meant another rope was coming up. We were in walking passage now with blue-and-white marble walls and a stream down the center. We straddled the stream to keep dry and to avoid contaminating the water.

A collection of limestone draperies cascaded down the walls of the passage like magnificent waterfalls of transformed stone. I focused my light on the breathtaking formations. Minerals in the water had given some of the flowstone a dark orange color that contrasted with the brilliant white of the rest. It was moist, living formation, beautiful in a way so different from the rugged, imposing beauty I had seen to this point.

The passage opened into a large room with a big rope ascent. We stopped at the bottom, the cold creeping in on us like a deadly virus. We ate quickly and shared our extras—cheese chunks, jerky, and bite-sized carrots—then packed up.

Jake sent Sean up the rope first as we sat at the bottom and turned off our head-lamps to conserve batteries.

“How long have you been caving?” Jake asked.

“Most of my life,” I boasted.

“Me too,” he replied with a chuckle.

Silence followed, and we heard Sean breathing hard with the effort of the climb.

“Off rope!”

“Your turn,” Jake said.

I clipped on to the rope and started my climb. Climbing requires a harness and a series of small devices that you slide up the rope with your hands and feet. These lock into place when you put weight on them, allowing you to ascend. There is something exhilarating and frightening about climbing rope in the dark, especially on a long climb where you get halfway and can see neither the top nor the bottom. Jake and Sean had
turned off their lights to conserve batteries, and the dramatic effect sent a chill down my spine. I continued climbing, listening to my labored breathing over the sounds of running water in the cave. I was eager to get to the top where I could sit down and have a much-needed drink of water.

I moved my hand ascender up, then stood in the foot loop, but suddenly there was no resistance. I was falling!

As it turns out, there really isn't enough time for a person's life to flash before their eyes in one of these moments. The only thing flashing before my eyes was a cave wall lit by a circle of light from my headlamp. My chest constricted with fear so quickly that I could not even scream. Something large zoomed past in the darkness, followed by a loud crash. I jerked abruptly to a halt. A moment of silence ensued, followed by several exclamations from above.

“What happened?” Jake called up, and I heard the waver in his voice. He must have been out of the fall zone when the rock hit, but he was clearly shaken.

“The main rig point broke,” Sean hollered back.

“Amy, are you all right?”

I remembered to breathe then.

“I guess,” I called back, my voice trembling.

“You're close to the top. Can you finish the climb?”

I wanted to scream that I couldn't, that someone needed to save me, but I knew better. If the backup rig point was at all unstable, I had a better chance of making the top than I did of switching to my rappel device and descending before it gave. I didn't respond. Fear clenched my throat too tightly as I resumed my climb.

“She's heading up,” Sean called.

The breath was rasping in my throat, and I felt as if I couldn't get enough air, but I kept moving. Slide the hand ascender up the rope, stand in the loop to move the chest ascender up, sit down in the harness, and repeat. I was so intent that I started with surprise when my hand ascender contacted the lip of the drop. My legs trembled as I pushed away from the wall to get enough clearance to move the ascender over the lip. With a desperate heave, I pulled myself over and moved as far as I could from the edge before disconnecting.

“Off rope!”

The wavering cry was a female voice, so I knew it was mine. Sean patted me on the back.

“Good job.”
How does the author build suspense throughout the story? Why are lines 62 through 71 important in building suspense? Use details from the story to support your response.

In your response, be sure to
• explain how the author builds suspense throughout the story
• explain the importance of lines 62 through 71 in building suspense
• use details from the story to support your response

Check your writing for correct spelling, grammar, capitalization, and punctuation.
How does the author build suspense throughout the story? Why are lines 62 through 71 important in building suspense? Use details from the story to support your response.

In your response, be sure to
- explain how the author builds suspense throughout the story
- explain the importance of lines 62 through 71 in building suspense
- use details from the story to support your response

Did you ever heard the story "Beyond the Twilight Zone"? If you didn't, you should know that the author builds up suspense throughout the story. Some of the lines were important in adding suspense to the story. But how did they build up suspense? Let's find out.

The author builds suspense throughout the story. They do this when they first say that Amy was nervous. In the story, it stated that Amy was nervous going down the cave. This keeps you wondering what is going to happen. They continue when they land at the bottom of the cave. They do this by saying that the cold was like a deadly virus creeping up on them.
This response clearly introduces a topic in a manner that is compelling and follows from the task and purpose (Did you ever read the story “Beyond the Twilight Zone?” If you didn’t, you should know that the author builds up suspense throughout the story and But how did they build up suspense? Let’s find out). The response demonstrates insightful analysis of the text (This builds up suspense because you don’t know if they are going to fall or if they get stuck or if they make it up the cave). The topic is developed with the sustained use of relevant, well-chosen concrete details from the text (Amy was nervous going down the cave. This keeps you wondering what is going to happen and they turned off the lights to conserve batteries. This meant that they were climbing in the dark. Even worse, they were climbing 95 feet in the dark. This builds up suspense because you don’t know if they are going to fall or if they get stuck or if they make it up the cave). In conclusion, the author does a very good job building up suspense. He uses phrases and descriptions to build up suspense. He also give hints about the characters and it makes more suspenseful.

Score Point 4 (out of 4 points)

This response clearly introduces a topic in a manner that is compelling and follows from the task and purpose (Did you ever read the story “Beyond the Twilight Zone?” If you didn’t, you should know that the author builds up suspense throughout the story and But how did they build up suspense? Let’s find out). The response demonstrates insightful analysis of the text (This builds up suspense because you don’t know if they are going to fall or if they get stuck or if they make it up the cave). The topic is developed with the sustained use of relevant, well-chosen concrete details from the text (Amy was nervous going down the cave. This keeps you wondering what is going to happen and they turned off the lights to conserve batteries. This meant that they were climbing in the dark. Even worse, they were climbing 95 feet in the dark. This builds up suspense because you don’t know if they are going to fall or if they get stuck or if they make it up the cave). In conclusion, the author does a very good job building up suspense. He uses phrases and descriptions to build up suspense. He also give hints about the characters and it makes more suspenseful. The response exhibits clear organization with the skillful use of appropriate and varied transitions to create a unified whole (In the story, There is more importance to the lines 62 through 71, Even worse, In conclusion). The response establishes and maintains a formal style using precise language and domain-specific vocabulary (wondering, get stuck). The concluding section follows clearly from the topic (the author does a very good job building up suspense and hints about the characters and it makes more suspenseful). The response demonstrates grade-appropriate command of conventions, with few errors.
Throughout the passage, "Beyond The Twilight Zone", the author builds suspense. The author tries to make the story sound suspenseful. In lines 62 through 71, the author makes the story extremely suspenseful. These lines help grow the suspense. The suspense makes the reader want to read. This is what the author does in his passage.

The author builds suspense in a terrifying way. He writes and includes many details to show exactly what the reader is feeling. It makes the reader more interested. The part where Amy falls grows the most suspense throughout the passage. It gets everyone wanting to know what happens to Amy. It makes the reader think what happens to Amy. This is how the reader builds suspense throughout the story.

The author uses lines 62 through 71 to build the most intense part of the suspense. In those lines, the author includes details so descriptive about how the author is feeling and what exactly happens to the
This response clearly introduces a topic in a manner that follows logically from the task and purpose (Throughout the passage, “Beyond The Twilight Zone”, the author builds suspense and The suspense makes the reader want to read). The response demonstrates insightful analysis of the text (The author builds suspense in a terrifying way. He writes and includes many details to show exactly what the reader is feeling and Being very descriptive catches the reader’s attention). The topic is developed with the sustained use of relevant, well-chosen concrete details from the text (Amy falling and how she fell and how she was feeling made the reader wonder about what’s going to happen next and Amy’s chest constricted to much fear that she couldn’t even scream when she fell). The response exhibits clear organization with the use of appropriate transitions to create a unified whole (Throughout the passage, The author builds suspense in a terrifying way, In these lines, In conclusion). The response establishes and maintains a formal style using precise language and domain-specific vocabulary (intense, descriptive, terrifying event, comprehend). The concluding section follows clearly from the topic (this is how the author builds suspense in the passage. Being very descriptive catches the reader’s attention. Lines 62 through 71 are the most important lines in building the suspense). The response demonstrates grade-appropriate command of conventions, with few errors.
How does the author build suspense throughout the story? Why are lines 62 through 71 important in building suspense? Use details from the story to support your response.

In your response, be sure to
• explain how the author builds suspense throughout the story
• explain the importance of lines 62 through 71 in building suspense
• use details from the story to support your response

The Author builds up suspense in the story. The way she does this is by making us think something bad is going to happen or by conversations that might get us nervous to find out what will happen. Such as when she said, she was failing, we all wanted to find out would she continue the climb or stop and come down. Also when Sean said “Shes heading up” we were all wondering what was going to happen. Is she going to make it to the top?

Lines 62 through 71 is important for building up the suspense. It is important because this is the part of the story it gets all of us nervous of what will happen. The author writes things such as “and the dramatic effect sent a chill down my spine”. This gives us the chills and makes us wonder even more will she make it to the top?
Another thing the author writes is "my chest constricted with fear..." This is another example of something that gets us nervous to find out what happens. These line are the lines that gives us the most suspense.

Throughout the story the author leaves us with fear and questions. We all want to know what will happen. Will she make it to the top? These reasons explain how the author builds up suspense throughout the story.

Score Point 3 (out of 4 points)
This response clearly introduces a topic in a manner that follows from the task and purpose (The Author builds up suspense in the story). This response demonstrates grade-appropriate analysis of the text (by making us think something bad is going to happen or by conversations that might get us nervous to find out what will happen and This gives us the chills and makes us wonder even more will she make it to the top?). The topic is developed with relevant details from the text (The author writes things such as “and the dramatic effect sent a chill down my spine”). The use of relevant evidence is sustained, with some lack of variety (my chest constricted with fear). The response exhibits clear organization with the use of appropriate transitions to create a unified whole (Such as, Also, Lines 62 through 71 is important for building up the suspense, Another thing, Throughout the story). The response establishes and maintains a formal style using grade-appropriate, stylistically sophisticated language and domain-specific vocabulary (conversations, nervous, wondering, gives us chills, leaves us with fear). The concluding section follows from the topic and information presented (Throughout the story the author leaves us with fear and questions. We all want to know what will happen and These reasons explain how the author builds up suspense throughout the story). The response demonstrates grade-appropriate command of conventions, with occasional errors (suspence) that do not hinder comprehension.
How does the author build suspense throughout the story? Why are lines 62 through 71 important in building suspense? Use details from the story to support your response.

In your response, be sure to

- explain how the author builds suspense throughout the story
- explain the importance of lines 62 through 71 in building suspense
- use details from the story to support your response

In the story "Beyond The Twilight Zone", the author describes suspense in a nervous or frightening way. She builds up this feeling in the story by having describing the setting a dark, cold cave. This allows the reader to know something is going to happen but they don't know what.

The author uses suspense by having the character Amy climbing up the cave. While she is climbing, Amy’s main rig point broke. This is when people wanted to know what happens next.

Lines 62-71 are important in the story because that is when the
Score Point 3 (out of 4 points)

This response clearly introduces a topic in a manner that follows from the task and purpose (the author describes suspense in a nervous or frightening way. She builds up this feeling in the story by having describing the setting a dark, cold cave). This response demonstrates grade-appropriate analysis of the text (This allows the reader to know something is going to happen but they dont know what). The topic is developed with relevant details from the text (Amy climbing up the cave, Amy’s main rig point broke, she felt no resistance). The use of relevant evidence is sustained, with some lack of variety (Lines 62-71 are important in the story because that is when the accident of Amy climbing up the cave, went down). The response exhibits clear organization with the use of appropriate transitions to create a unified whole (In the story, While she is climbing, Lines 62-71 are important in the story). The response establishes and maintains a formal style using some precise language and domain-specific vocabulary (frightening, accident, sound effects). No concluding statement is provided. The response demonstrates grade-appropriate command of conventions, with occasional errors (dont) that do not hinder comprehension.
How does the author build suspense throughout the story? Why are lines 62 through 71 important in building suspense? Use details from the story to support your response. In your response, be sure to
• explain how the author builds suspense throughout the story
• explain the importance of lines 62 through 71 in building suspense
• use details from the story to support your response

In the story “Beyond The Twilight Zone” Amy goes through caves exploring them for the first time without her parents. She saw it at a whole different level compared to how it is when her parents are there. Throughout the story the author builds suspense.

The author builds suspense throughout the story. The way he did that was by telling us what was going on throughout the story. For example it showed us how the person felt when they fell off a part of a mountain. They showed how she didn’t want to do it anymore but she didn’t say anything. That is how the author builds suspense throughout the story.

The importance of lines 62 through 71 in
The response introduces a topic in a manner that follows generally from the task and purpose (Throughout the story the author builds suspense). The response demonstrates a literal comprehension of the texts (Amy goes through caves exploring them for the first time without her parents). The topic is partially developed with the use of some textual evidence (how the person felt when they fell off a part of a mountain and showed how she didn’t want to do it anymore but she didn’t say anything). The use of relevant evidence is inconsistent (It telled us how she was so thirsty. It told us how she turned off the lights so she can save battery because she didn’t need it at that point. It really showed her emotions throughout those lines of the story. That is how the author build suspense throughout the story.

Score Point 2 (out of 4 points)

This response introduces a topic in a manner that follows generally from the task and purpose (Throughout the story the author builds suspense). The response demonstrates a literal comprehension of the texts (Amy goes through caves exploring them for the first time without her parents). The topic is partially developed with the use of some textual evidence (how the person felt when they fell off a part of a mountain and showed how she didn’t want to do it anymore but she didn’t say anything). The use of relevant evidence is inconsistent (It telled us how she was so thirsty. It told us how she turned off the lights so she can save battery because she didn’t need it at that point. It really showed her emotions throughout those lines of the story. That is how the author build suspense throughout the story.

This response exhibits some attempt at organization, with inconsistent use of transitions (In the story, The author builds suspense through out the story. The importance of lines 62 through 71). A formal style is not maintained, with inconsistent use of domain-specific vocabulary (telling us what was going on, how the person felt, eager). The concluding statement follows generally from the topic and information presented (That is how the author build suspense throughout the story). The response demonstrates grade-appropriate command of conventions, with occasional errors (telled) that do not hinder comprehension.
How does the author build suspense throughout the story? Why are lines 62 through 71 important in building suspense? Use details from the story to support your response.

In your response, be sure to
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Score Point 2 (out of 4 points)
This response introduces a topic in a manner that follows generally from the task and purpose (the author talks about how the girl in the story is so scared because she was falling). This response demonstrates a literal comprehension of the text (Lines 62-71 are so important because they explain the main plot of the situation. Starting at 62 it starts to lead you into the problem which is about happen). The topic is partially developed with some textual evidence (she was falling and how her chest was constricting with fear; describing how frightened she was). This response exhibits some attempt at organization, with inconsistent use of transitions (In the story and Lines 62-71 are so important). The response establishes but fails to maintain a formal style, with inconsistent use of language and domain-specific vocabulary (scared, wondering, problem). No concluding statement is provided. The response demonstrates grade-appropriate command of conventions, with occasional errors that do not hinder comprehension.
How does the author build suspense throughout the story? Why are lines 62 through 71 important in building suspense? Use details from the story to support your response.

In your response, be sure to

- explain how the author builds suspense throughout the story
- explain the importance of lines 62 through 71 in building suspense
- use details from the story to support your response

The author builds suspense by telling what the characters feel and by making the story about this dangerous sport that anything could happen while doing.

Lines 62 through 71 are very important because that’s where the problem in the story actually happens when Amy is about to fall and it also tells how the problem was resolved like when Amy showed all her bravery and kept climbing.

**Score Point 1 (out of 4 points)**

This response introduces a topic in a manner that follows generally from the task (*The author builds suspense by telling what the characters feel and by making the story about this dangerous sport that anything could happen while doing*). The response demonstrates an attempt to use minimal evidence (*Amy is about to fall and Amy showed all her bravery and kept climbing*). The response exhibits little attempt at organization (*The author builds suspense and Lines 62 through 71 are very important*). The response lacks a formal style and includes language that is imprecise (*dangerous sport and kept climbing*). The response demonstrates an emerging command of conventions, with some errors (*was resolved like when, kept, climbing*) that may hinder comprehension.
How does the author build suspense throughout the story? Why are lines 62 through 71 important in building suspense? Use details from the story to support your response.
In your response, be sure to
• explain how the author builds suspense throughout the story
• explain the importance of lines 62 through 71 in building suspense
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Score Point 1 (out of 4 points)
This response introduces a topic in a manner that follows generally from the task but demonstrates a little understanding of the text (The author’s building suspense through out the story). The response demonstrates an attempt to use minimal evidence (lines with the most action and the ones who give more detial). This response exhibits little attempt at organization and lacks a formal style. The response demonstrates an emerging command of conventions, with some errors (On lines...are important, suspense, detial) that may hinder comprehension.
How does the author build suspense throughout the story? Why are lines 62 through 71 important in building suspense? Use details from the story to support your response.

In your response, be sure to
• explain how the author builds suspense throughout the story
• explain the importance of lines 62 through 71 in building suspense
• use details from the story to support your response

The author built suspense by making surprises happening like the cave with the shiny minerals.

Score Point 0 (out of 4 points)
This response demonstrates a lack of comprehension of the text and task. The evidence provided is completely irrelevant (the cave with the shiny minerals). There is no evidence of organization and language is imprecise (making surprises happening). The response demonstrates an emerging command of conventions, with some errors (author and surprises happening) that may hinder comprehension.