

# **Reading Framework for the 2007 National Assessment of Educational Progress**



**National Assessment Governing Board  
U.S. Department of Education**

# What Is NAEP?

The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) is a congressionally mandated project of the U.S. Department of Education's National Center for Education Statistics. It assesses what U.S. students should know and be able to do in geography, reading, writing, mathematics, science, U.S. history, the arts, civics, and other academic subjects. Since 1969, NAEP has surveyed the achievement of students at ages 9, 13, and 17 and, since the 1980s, in grades 4, 8, and 12. Measuring educational achievement trends over time is critical to measuring progress.

## The 2005–2006 National Assessment Governing Board

The National Assessment Governing Board was created by Congress to formulate policy for NAEP. Among the Governing Board's responsibilities are developing objectives and test specifications and designing the assessment methodology for NAEP.

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**September 2006**

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# Executive Summary

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This document, the *Reading Framework for the 2007 National Assessment of Educational Progress*, describes the content and format of the 4th, 8th, and 12th grade assessments. The 2007 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) Reading Assessment will be administered in grades 4 and 8 at the national and state levels, as well as for Trial Urban District Assessment (TUDA) participants, continuing a trend of results which began in 1992.

## What Is the NAEP Reading Assessment?

The NAEP reading assessment measures the achievement of the nation's students in reading. Authorized by Congress and administered by the U.S. Department of Education, NAEP regularly reports to the public on the educational progress of students in various subject areas. NAEP collects achievement information on nationally representative samples of students in grades 4, 8, and 12 and on state-level samples of fourth and eighth graders.

As *The Nation's Report Card*<sup>TM</sup>, the NAEP reading assessment reports how well students perform in reading various texts and responding to those texts in both multiple-choice and constructed-response formats. The latter questions ask students to write their responses and explain and support their ideas with information from the text. NAEP provides information about student achievement that is needed to help the public, decisionmakers, and education professionals understand strengths and weaknesses in student performance and make informed decisions about education.

Since 1992, the NAEP Reading Framework has provided guidelines for developing the reading assessments administered to random samples of students. The NAEP Reading Framework reflects the ideas of many individuals and organizations involved in reading education, including researchers, policymakers, teachers, business representatives, and other members of the public. NAEP is a project of the National Center for Education Statistics, U.S. Department of Education, and is overseen by the National Assessment Governing Board.

The NAEP Reading Framework reflects research that views reading comprehension as a dynamic, interactive process. The NAEP definition of reading literacy has been used internationally to help the public understand what students should know and be able to perform in the area of reading. This understanding plays a role in unifying the important reading dimensions for student achievement. Reading includes the ability to understand and use written texts for enjoyment and to learn, to participate in society, and to achieve one's goals.

## What Must Students Know and Be Able To Do?

The NAEP Reading Framework specifies three contexts for reading: reading for literary experience, reading for information, and reading to perform a task (see exhibit 1).

## Exhibit 1. Contexts for Reading Specified in the NAEP Reading Framework

| Context for Reading             | Description  |
|---------------------------------|--|
| Reading for Literary experience | Readers explore events, characters, themes, settings, plots, actions, and the language of literary works by reading novels, short stories, poems, plays, legends, biographies, myths, and folktales. |
| Reading for information         | Readers gain information to understand the world by reading materials such as magazines, newspapers, textbooks, essays, and speeches.  |
| Reading to perform a task       | Readers apply what they learn from reading materials such as bus or train schedules, directions for repairs or games, classroom procedures, tax forms (grade 12), maps, and so on.                   |

The Framework also specifies four aspects of reading that characterize the way readers respond to text: forming a general understanding, developing interpretation, making reader/text connections, and examining content and structure (see exhibit 2).

## Exhibit 2. Aspects of Reading and Reader Responses

| Aspects of Reading              |  |  |   |
|---------------------------------|--|--|---|
| Forming a General Understanding | Developing Interpretation                    | Making Reader/Text Connections             | Examining Content and Structure                 |
| Consider text in its entirety   | Focus on specific parts                      | Think beyond the text                      | Consider why and how the text was developed     |
| ↓                               | ↓  | ↓  | ↓   |
| Understanding in a broad way    | Linking information across parts of the text | Applying the text to real-world situations | Considering the content, organization, and form |

Detailed information on sample questions and results can be found on the NAEP Web site at <http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard>.

## How Is the NAEP Reading Assessment Designed?

The reading assessment includes a booklet with reading materials and comprehension questions. The questions are presented in both multiple-choice and constructed-response formats. At least half are constructed-response questions, which allow students to write their answers and explain and support their ideas. Materials used in the assessment are taken from sources that are typically available to students, such as collections of stories, children's magazines, or informational books. By giving students different types of

materials, NAEP is able to provide a measure of reading performance that reflects students' typical reading experiences both in and out of school.

## **What Accommodations Are Made for Special Populations?**

NAEP's intention is to assess all students who are capable of participating in the reading assessment. Although some students may be excluded according to carefully defined criteria, English-language learners and students with disabilities are accommodated as necessary with extra testing time, individual or small group administrations, large-print booklets, and/or multiple sessions. However, because NAEP is a reading comprehension assessment, test administrators are not allowed to read the passages and questions aloud to students. Since NAEP measures reading in English, the assessment cannot be translated into other languages.

## **How Are the Results of the NAEP Reading Assessment Reported?**

NAEP reading assessment results are reported in two ways: scale scores and achievement levels. Scale scores, ranging from 0 to 500, are average scores for groups of students. Achievement level scores are reported as percentages of students who attain each of three achievement levels: *Basic*, *Proficient*, and *Advanced*. Achievement levels serve to identify percentages of students taking NAEP who have demonstrated certain reading proficiencies. Authorized by NAEP legislation and adopted by the National Assessment Governing Board, these achievement levels are performance standards based on the collective judgments of experts about what students should know and be able to do in terms of the NAEP Reading Framework.

## **What Are the Limitations of the NAEP Reading Assessment?**

School-based tests provide curriculum-specific results so that teachers and administrators can alter classroom practice. As currently designed, the NAEP reading assessment cannot provide the kind of diagnostic information that pertains to individual students. Instead, it profiles the performance of groups of students at a given time—and across time—without promoting particular approaches in curriculum or prescribing actions for certain school districts. Yet, combined with other information, NAEP is an integral part of our nation's evaluation of the condition and progress of education.



# Chapter One

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This document, the *Reading Framework for the 2007 National Assessment of Educational Progress*, describes the content and format of the 4th, 8th, and 12th grade assessments. The 2007 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) Reading Assessment will be administered in grades 4 and 8 at the national and state levels, as well as for Trial Urban District Assessment (TUDA) participants, continuing a trend of results which began in 1992.

## What Is the NAEP Reading Assessment?

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As *The Nation's Report Card*<sup>TM</sup>, the NAEP reading assessment reports how well students perform in reading various texts and responding to those texts in multiple-choice and constructed-response formats. It provides information about student achievement that is needed to help the public, decisionmakers, and education professionals understand the strengths and weaknesses in student performance and make informed decisions about education.

The NAEP reading assessment measures comprehension by asking students to read passages and answer questions about what they have read. As such, it represents a measure of reading achievement and provides a broad picture of what our nation's students should be able to read and understand at specific grade levels. Students use various skills and strategies in the reading assessment. However, NAEP does not report on strategies such as finding a detail or summarizing a plot. This is in keeping with NAEP's role as an assessment of overall achievement rather than a diagnostic test for individual students.

Although broad implications for instruction can be inferred from the assessment, NAEP does not specify how reading should be taught, nor does it prescribe a particular curricular approach to teaching reading.

The NAEP Reading Framework provides the guidelines and theoretical basis for developing the 1992–2007 reading assessments. It reflects the ideas of many diverse individuals and organizations involved in reading education. In developing the framework for the national assessment of reading, researchers, policymakers, teachers, business representatives, and other experts have specified behaviors of proficient readers who are active, strategic, knowledgeable, and motivated to read.

The *Report of the National Reading Panel* summarizes research describing such a reader: "In the cognitive research, reading is purposeful and active. According to this view, a reader reads a text to understand what is read, to construct memory representations of what is

understood, and to put this understanding to use” (National Institute for Child Health and Human Development (NICHD), 2000b, p. 4–39). These processes are the basis for establishing broad goals for reading that are addressed by NAEP.

## Goals for Reading Literacy

The goals for reading literacy are to develop good readers who:

- read with enough fluency to focus on the meaning of what they read;
- form an understanding of what they read and extend, elaborate, and critically judge its meaning;
- use various strategies to aid their understanding and plan, manage, and check the meaning of what they read;
- apply what they already know to understand what they read;
- read various texts for different purposes;
- possess positive reading habits and attitudes.

These characteristics of good readers are appropriate for students as early as third grade, as this is the grade level by which it is expected that children will learn to read. National programs such as the Reading Excellence Act and No Child Left Behind focus on improving reading achievement. Policy and the commitment of resources at the national and state levels continue to focus on this goal. Therefore, it makes sense that the NAEP Reading Framework should also reflect this aim.

The National Research Council’s research-based report *Preventing Reading Difficulties in Young Children* (Snow et al., 1998) corroborates the characteristics listed above when it describes third-grade accomplished readers as being able to:

- summarize major points from fiction and nonfiction texts;
- read longer fictional selections and chapter books independently;
- discuss underlying themes or messages when interpreting fiction;
- distinguish cause and effect, fact and opinion, main idea, and supporting details when interpreting nonfiction.

These characteristics are important for describing the performance of good readers in the NAEP reading assessment.

## Definitions of Reading Literacy

### National

Reading literacy is a fundamental right of every person. It gives people access to information and the ability to function in life. Reading enriches through the power of language and the beauty of poetry. It extends the human experience through the exploration of events in literary works. It is the key to knowledge and information.

Today, reading literacy means more than a functional ability to read simple directions and books. In *The Keys to Literacy*, Reid Lyon (1998) describes the multifaceted nature of the reading process:

In general, if children can read the words on a page accurately and fluently, they will be able to construct meaning at two levels. At the first level, literal understanding is achieved. However, constructing meaning requires far more than literal comprehension. Children must eventually guide themselves through text by asking questions such as: “Why am I reading this, and how does this information relate to my reasons for doing so?” “What is the author’s point of view?” “Do I understand what the author is saying and why?” “Is the text internally consistent?” It is this second level of comprehension that leads readers to reflective, purposeful understanding. (p. 4)

In a world driven by information technology, the complexity of reading literacy is increasing as the format of texts becomes more diverse. Varied texts such as CD-ROMs, Web pages, newspapers, and magazines place different demands on the reader. As information technology grows, people will encounter even more varied texts and will be called on to use information in new ways.

## **International**

When the 1992 NAEP reading assessment was developed, no one could have predicted the effect the NAEP Reading Framework would have on the design of international reading assessments. The frameworks of two international assessments provide pertinent evidence of this trend:

- The Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) is being conducted under the auspices of the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement and focuses on the achievement of young children (ages 9 and 10).
- The Program for International Student Assessment (PISA), conducted under the auspices of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, is a regular survey of 15-year-olds and assesses aspects of their preparedness for adult life. Reading literacy, mathematical literacy, and scientific literacy are the primary domains assessed.

PIRLS most closely aligns with the fourth-grade NAEP assessment. PISA samples students in grade 10, in contrast to NAEP’s sampling of grades 8 and 12. Strong similarities exist among the three assessments’ definitions of reading literacy.

PIRLS defines reading literacy as “the ability to understand and use those written language forms required by society and/or valued by the individual. Young readers can construct meaning from a variety of texts. They read to learn, to participate in communities of readers, and for enjoyment” (International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement, 2000, p. 3).

PISA defines reading literacy as “understanding, using, and reflecting on written texts in order to achieve one’s goals, to develop one’s knowledge and potential, and to participate in society” (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2000, p. 18).

All three definitions of reading literacy (NAEP, PIRLS, and PISA) convey the notion that reading involves developing an understanding of various texts, thinking about them, and using various texts for many different purposes. For example, readers may use maps to gain information, stories to enjoy the human experience, and science texts to form hypotheses.

The congruence in framework definitions clearly represents a growing international agreement on the important dimensions of reading literacy. This agreement has played the same unifying role in the international assessment of reading as that of the Third International Mathematics and Science Study in the international assessment of mathematics.

One way NAEP reflects current definitions of literacy is by differentiating among three contexts for reading and four aspects of reading. Contexts for reading and aspects of reading are the foundation of the NAEP reading assessment.

### **Contexts for Reading**

- Reading for literary experience
- Reading for information
- Reading to perform a task

Many commonalities exist among different reading contexts, including developing understanding, reflecting critically on the text, and analyzing the author’s perspective. The contexts are not mutually exclusive. For example, readers may read historical novels for literary experience and information. However, distinctions exist because various texts and tasks can place differing demands on the reader. Readers often have greater facility with one type of reading material than another. For example, some people can read novels with greater ease than they can read technical manuals.

Different contexts for reading lead to real differences in what readers do. When reading for literary experience, readers make complex, abstract summaries and identify major themes. They describe the interactions of various literary elements (for example, setting, plot, characters, and theme). When reading for information, readers may critically judge the form and content of the text and explain their judgments. They may also look for specific pieces of information. When reading to perform a task, readers may search quickly for specific pieces of information. The contexts for reading and the reader’s expectations may influence the comprehension process, determine what strategies and skills are used to develop meaning, and influence the extent to which content is integrated with prior knowledge.

The contexts for reading are addressed by the specific tasks, or items, on the NAEP reading assessment. An item can be easy even if the text is complex. For example, given a difficult text and a question with wording directly from the text, a reader might scan the text, find the relevant information, and answer the question with ease. Because this type of item requires little more than matching words or phrases, it can be accomplished without having an understanding of the passage as a whole or even the specific part of the text addressed by the item. Once readers have a certain level of automaticity, they can handle simple tasks such as this. However, to respond to a text within the Reading Framework, readers must be able to understand the text in its entirety as well as focus on specific parts and think beyond what was directly stated.

**Reading for literary experience involves the reader in exploring themes, events, characters, settings, problems, and the language of literary works.** The reader brings his or her experiences and knowledge to the text in activities such as anticipating events, picturing settings, predicting consequences, analyzing actions, and considering the language of literary works. He or she thinks about the authors' and characters' perspectives and considers the language and story structure. Various types of texts are associated with reading for literary experience, including novels, short stories, poems, plays, legends, biographies, myths, and folktales.

**Reading for information engages the reader with aspects of the real world.** Reading for information is most commonly associated with textbooks, primary and secondary sources, newspaper and magazine articles, essays, and speeches. Two features that distinguish informational text from literary text are organization and presentation of information. Informational text is organized by topic and supporting details, whereas literary text is organized by the structure of a story, poem, or drama. Informational texts may have boldfaced headings, graphics, illustrations, and captions that signal important text. However, some commonalities exist between literary and informational text and the skills and strategies required for reading each: Both require people to critically analyze the text, reflect on it, and draw conclusions.

When reading for information, readers need to know the specific text patterns, or forms of organization (for example, cause and effect, sequential order, comparison/contrast, opinion and supporting arguments), to develop understanding. People frequently have different purposes for reading text of this nature; for example, to find specific pieces of information, answer a question, or get some general information when glancing through a magazine article. Reading informational text requires orientations to the text that differ from those used in reading for literary experience because readers are specifically focused on acquiring information. When people read for information, they may select parts of the text they need rather than reading from beginning to end.

**Reading to perform a task involves reading to accomplish something.** When people read to perform tasks, they use their expectations of the purpose and structure of practical text to guide how they select, understand, and apply information. Practical text may include charts, bus or train schedules, directions for games or repairs, classroom or library procedures, tax or insurance forms, recipes, voter registration materials, maps, referenda,

consumer warranties, or office memos. The reader's orientation involves looking for specific information to do something. Readers need to apply information, not simply understand it. For this type of reading, readers are not likely to savor the style or thought in the texts as they might in reading for literary experience.

NAEP assesses reading for literary experience and reading for information in grades 4, 8, and 12. Reading to perform a task is assessed only in grades 8 and 12. Contexts for reading are shown in exhibit 1.

### Exhibit 1. Contexts for Reading Specified in the NAEP Reading Framework

| Context for Reading             | Description  |
|---------------------------------|--|
| Reading for Literary experience | Readers explore events, characters, themes, settings, plots, actions, and the language of literary works by reading novels, short stories, poems, plays, legends, biographies, myths, and folktales. |
| Reading for information         | Readers gain information to understand the world by reading materials such as magazines, newspapers, textbooks, essays, and speeches.  |
| Reading to perform a task       | Readers apply what they learn from reading materials such as bus or train schedules, directions for repairs or games, classroom procedures, tax forms (grade 12), maps, and so on.                   |

The proportion of items related to each context for reading changes from grade to grade to reflect the changing demands made of students as they mature. The proportion of items in each grade is shown in exhibit 2.

### Exhibit 2. Percentage of NAEP Reading Items, by Grade and Context for Reading

| Grade | Context for Reading         |                     |                       |
|-------|-----------------------------|---------------------|-----------------------|
|       | For Literary Experience (%) | For Information (%) | To Perform a Task (%) |
| 4     | 55                          | 45                  | No scale              |
| 8     | 40                          | 40                  | 20                    |
| 12    | 35                          | 45                  | 20                    |

## Aspects of Reading

- Forming a general understanding
- Developing interpretation
- Making reader/text connections
- Examining content and structure

Readers develop understanding in different ways. They focus on general topics or themes, interpret and integrate ideas within and across texts, make connections to background knowledge and experiences, and examine the content and structure of the text. NAEP's questions and tasks are based on these four aspects of reading and require the selection and integration of various reading strategies rather than the application of a specific strategy or skill. Inherent in these aspects are the strategies that readers use to build and examine their understanding and adjust their approach. According to the *Report of the National Reading Panel* (NICHD, 2000b), readers use their knowledge of the world, including language and print, to make meaning.

### Forming a General Understanding

To form a general understanding, the reader must consider the text as a whole and have a global knowledge of it. Students may be asked, for example, to demonstrate a general understanding by providing the topic of a passage, explaining the purpose of an article, or reflecting on the theme of a story. Tasks and questions that measure this aspect of reading include:

- Write a paragraph telling what the story/poem is about.
- Which of the following is the best statement of the theme of the story?
- Write a paragraph telling what this article generally tells you.
- What is this text supposed to help you do?
- What would you tell someone about the main character?

### Developing Interpretation

To develop an interpretation, the reader must extend initial impressions to develop a more complete understanding of what was read. This process involves linking information across parts of a text as well as focusing on specific information. Questions that assess this aspect of reading include drawing inferences about the relationship of two pieces of information and providing evidence to determine the reason for an action. Questions that assess this aspect of reading include:

- What event marked a change in the plot or situation?
- What caused the character to \_\_\_\_\_?
- What caused this event?

- What is the meaning of \_\_\_\_\_?
- What type of person is this character? Explain.
- What does this idea imply?
- In what ways are these ideas important to the topic or theme?
- What will be the result of this step in the directions?
- What does this character think about \_\_\_\_\_?

### **Making Reader/Text Connections**

To make reader/text connections, the reader must link information in the text with knowledge and experience. This might include applying ideas in the text to the real world. All student responses must be text based to receive full credit. NAEP does not ask students about their personal feelings. Tasks and questions that assess this aspect of reading include:

- Why do \_\_\_\_\_ (bullfrogs eat dragonflies)? Is there anything else you think \_\_\_\_\_ (they might eat)? Explain your answer using information from the text and what you know.
- Colonists lived in different ways than we live today. Tell about two of these differences.
- Would you have liked to live in colonial times? Use information from the text to support your answer.
- In this story, two characters chose different ways to solve a problem. Which solution was most effective in solving the problem? Use information from the text to support your answer.
- How would you change the directions to build this \_\_\_\_\_ if you did not have a \_\_\_\_\_?

### **Examining Content and Structure**

Examining text content and structure requires critically evaluating, comparing and contrasting, and understanding the effect of features such as irony, humor, and organization. Questions used to assess this aspect of reading require readers to stand apart from the text, consider it objectively, and evaluate its quality and appropriateness. Knowledge of text content and structure is important. Questions ask readers to determine the usefulness of a text for a specific purpose, evaluate the language and textual elements, and think about the author's purpose and style. Some questions also require readers to make connections across parts of a text or between texts. For example, students might be asked to compare a poem and a story with the same theme or relate information from a first-person account to a textbook description of an event. Questions that assess this aspect of reading include:

- Compare the structure of this magazine article to that one.
- How useful would this be for \_\_\_\_\_? Why?
- Does the author use (irony, personification, humor) effectively? Explain.



- What is the author's point of view? Using the text, provide a sentence or two to support your response.
- Is this information needed for \_\_\_\_\_? Explain your reasoning.
- What other information would you need to find out about \_\_\_\_\_? Support your answer with information from the text.

Exhibit 3 portrays the four aspects of reading. Although the strategies and skills required to master these aspects overlap to some extent, successfully mastering one aspect may not depend on successfully mastering any other aspect, and the aspects are not mutually exclusive. For example, comparing two authors' points of view would require forming a general understanding before making the comparison. The reader would use several aspects of reading to provide a wide range of responses to reading.

### Exhibit 3. Aspects of Reading and Reader Responses

| Aspects of Reading              |  |  |   |
|---------------------------------|--|--|---|
| Forming a General Understanding | Developing Interpretation                    | Making Reader/Text Connections             | Examining Content and Structure                 |
| Consider text in its entirety   | Focus on specific parts                      | Think beyond the text                      | Consider why and how the text was developed     |
| ↓                               | ↓  | ↓  | ↓   |
| Understanding in a broad way    | Linking information across parts of the text | Applying the text to real-world situations | Considering the content, organization, and form |

Exhibit 4 shows the percentage of time students in a given grade would spend on NAEP items that measure each aspect of reading (general understanding and developing interpretation are combined) if they responded to all items in the NAEP reading assessment. Originally, the 1989 Reading Committees proposed a distribution of one-third of the items for each reading aspect. Please refer to the NAEP Web site (<http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard>) for sample student responses, performance data, and a glossary of NAEP terms.

**Exhibit 4. Percentage Distribution of Student Time, by Grade and Aspect of Reading**

| Grade | Aspect of Reading   |                                    |                                     |
|-------|---|------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
|       | Forming a General Understanding and Developing Interpretation (%) | Making Reader/Text Connections (%) | Examining Content and Structure (%) |
| 4     | 60  | 15                                 | 25                                  |
| 8     | 55  | 15                                 | 30                                  |
| 12    | 50  | 15                                 | 35                                  |

Exhibit 5 shows sample NAEP questions by context for reading and aspect of reading. The bulleted items are the skills involved in each aspect of reading. Readers are expected to demonstrate a level of competency in each aspect.

**Exhibit 5. Sample NAEP Questions and Reading Strategies, by Context for Reading and Aspect of Reading**

| Context for Reading             | Aspect of Reading   |  |  |  |
|---------------------------------|---|--|--|--|
|                                 | Forming a General Understanding   | Developing Interpretation  | Making Reader/Text Connections   | Examining Content and Structure  |
| Reading for literary experience | <i>What is the story/plot about?</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Synthesis</li> <li>• Analysis</li> <li>• Inference</li> </ul>                               | <i>How did this character change from the beginning to the end of the story?</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Synthesis</li> <li>• Analysis</li> <li>• Inference</li> <li>• Using details</li> </ul> | <i>What other character that you have read about had a similar problem?</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Analogy</li> <li>• Synthesis</li> <li>• Using details</li> <li>• Relating information and ideas</li> </ul>  | <i>What is the mood of this story, and how does the author use language to achieve it?</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Using details</li> <li>• Inference</li> <li>• Analysis</li> <li>• Synthesis</li> <li>• Search</li> </ul>                                       |
| Reading for information         | <i>What point is the author making about this topic?</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Generalization</li> <li>• Using details</li> <li>• Synthesis</li> </ul> | <i>What caused this change?</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cause and effect</li> <li>• Inference</li> <li>• Search</li> </ul>  | <i>What other event in history or recent news is similar to this one?</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Analogy</li> <li>• Synthesis</li> <li>• Analysis</li> <li>• Inference</li> <li>• Using details</li> <li>• Relating information and ideas</li> </ul> | <i>Is this author biased? Support your answer with information about this article.</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Synthesis</li> <li>• Analysis</li> <li>• Judgment</li> <li>• Inference</li> <li>• Using details</li> <li>• Determining fact and opinion</li> </ul> |
| Reading to perform a task       | <i>What time can you get a nonstop flight to X?</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Search</li> </ul>  | <i>What must you do before step 3?</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Search</li> <li>• Inference</li> <li>• Sequence</li> </ul>   | <i>Describe a situation in which you would omit step 5.</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inference</li> <li>• Analysis</li> <li>• Using details</li> <li>• Relating information and ideas</li> </ul>   | <i>Is the information in this brochure easy to use?</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evaluation</li> <li>• Using details</li> <li>• Synthesis</li> <li>• Search</li> </ul>   |

The following fourth-grade informational passage and questions were released from the NAEP 2000 reading assessment. The bracketed text below each question presents the reading aspect assessed and the percentage of students who answered the question successfully. Additional sample passages and questions can be found in appendix A and on the NAEP Web site (<http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard>).

Please refer to the Web site for sample student responses and performance data.



### Grade 4 Sample Reading Passage and Questions: Informational

Imagine shivering on a cold winter's night. The tip of your nose tingles in the frosty air. Finally, you climb into bed and find the tasty treat you have been waiting for—your very own hot brick. If you had lived in colonial days, that would not sound as strange as it does today. Winters were hard in this New World, and the colonists had to think of clever ways to fight the cold. At bedtime, they heated soapstones, or bricks, in the fireplaces. They wrapped the bricks in cloths and tucked them into their beds. The brick kept them warm at night, at least for as long as its heat lasted.

Before the colonists slipped into bed, they rubbed their icy sheets with a bed warmer. This was a metal pan with a long wooden handle. The pan held hot embers from the fireplace. It warmed the bedding so well that sleepy bodies had to wait until the sheets cooled before climbing in.

Staying warm wasn't just a bedtime problem. On winter rides, colonial travelers covered themselves with animal skins and warm blankets. Tucked under the blankets, near their feet, were small tin boxes called foot stoves. A foot stove held burning coals. Hot smoke puffed from small holes in the stove's lid, soothing freezing feet and legs. When the colonists went to Sunday services, their foot stoves, furs, and blankets went with them. The meeting houses had no heat of their own until the 1800s.

At home, colonial families huddled close to the fireplace, or hearth. The fireplace was wide and high enough to hold a large fire, but its chimney was large, too. That caused a problem: Gusts of cold air blew into the house. The area near the fire was warm, but in the rest of the room it might still be cold enough to see your breath.

Reading or needlework was done by candlelight or by the light of the fire. During the winter, animal skins sealed the drafty windows of some cabins and blocked out the daylight. The living area inside was gloomy, except in the circle of light at the hearth.

Early Americans did not bathe as often as we do. When they did, their "bathroom" was the kitchen, in that toasty space by the hearth. They partially filled a tub of cold water, then

warmed it up with water heated in the fireplace. A blanket draped from chairs for privacy also let the fire's warmth surround the bather.

The household cooks spent hours at the hearth. They stirred the kettle of corn pudding or checked the baking bread while the rest of the family carried on their own fireside activities. So you can see why the fireplace was the center of a colonial home. The only time the fire was allowed to die down was at bedtime. Ashes would be piled over the fire, reducing it to embers that might glow until morning.

By sunrise, the hot brick had become a cold stone once more. An early riser might get dressed under the covers, then hurry to the hearth to warm up.

Maybe you'd enjoy hearing someone who kept warm in these ways tell you what it was like. You wouldn't need to look for someone who has been living for two hundred years. In many parts of the country, the modern ways didn't take over from the old ones until recently. Your own grandparents or other older people might remember the warmth of a hearthside and the joy of having a brick to cuddle up to.

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### Questions for "A Brick to Cuddle Up To"

(See appendix A for scoring criteria or rubrics.)

**1. You would probably read this article if you wanted to know how the colonists**

- a. cooked their food
- b. traveled in the winter
- c. washed their clothes
- d. kept warm in cold weather

[Aspect, General understanding; Key, D; Percent correct, 85]

**2. After reading this article, would you like to have lived during colonial times? What information in the article makes you think this?**

(Responses to this question were scored according to a three-level rubric.)

[Aspect, Reader/text connections; Percent full comprehension, 20]

**3. Some of the ways that colonists kept warm during the winter were different from the ways that people keep warm today. Tell about two of these differences.**

(Responses to this question were scored according to a three-level rubric.)

[Aspect, Reader/text connections; Percent full comprehension, 17]

- 4. Do you think “A Brick to Cuddle Up To” is a good title for this article? Using information from the article, tell why or why not.**

(Responses to this question were scored according to a three-level rubric.)

[Aspect, Developing interpretation; Percent full comprehension, 37]

- 5. Give two reasons stated in the article why the hearth was the center of the home in colonial times.**

(Responses to this question were scored according to a three-level rubric.)

[Aspect, Developing interpretation; Percent full comprehension, 20]

- 6. A colonist would probably have used a foot stove when**

- a. going on a trip
- b. sleeping in bed
- c. sitting by the fireplace
- d. working around the house

[Aspect, Developing interpretation; Key, A; Percent correct, 36]

- 7. Pretend that you are an early American colonist. Describe at least three activities you might do during a cold winter evening. Be specific. Use details from the article to help you write your description.**

(Responses to this question were scored according to a four-level rubric.)

[Aspect, Developing interpretation; Percent extensive, 12]

- 8. In writing this article, the author mostly made use of**

- a. broad ideas
- b. specific details
- c. important questions
- d. interesting characters

[Aspect, Examining content and structure; Key, B; Percent correct, 66]

- 9. Does the author help you understand what colonial life was like? Use examples from the article to explain why or why not.**

(Responses to this question were scored according to a three-level rubric.)

[Aspect, Examining content and structure; Percent full comprehension, 20]

# Chapter Two

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## How Is the NAEP Reading Assessment Designed?

### Purposes of the Assessment

With the reauthorization of the NAEP program in 1988, 1994, and 2002, Congress mandated that NAEP provide a fair and accurate measurement of academic achievement in reading and other subjects. In this mission, NAEP:

- informs the public about trends in the reading proficiency of students at state and national levels;
- provides data for comparing student achievement across states;
- informs policymakers about relationships between student achievement and key background variables;
- provides comparative data on the performance of states, regions, and groups.

As *The Nation's Report Card*<sup>TM</sup>, NAEP provides descriptive information about student reading achievement to the general public, policymakers, and educators. The NAEP reading assessment is not intended to be a model for teaching reading. It measures the outcomes of instruction as reflected in the behaviors of readers.

### Methodology

NAEP measures student achievement by taking a stratified random sample of schools throughout the nation and in participating states. NAEP also uses a matrix-sampling design of test items so that no one student takes the entire test.<sup>1</sup> The design distributes the large numbers of items across school buildings, districts, and states but limits the number of items that an individual student takes. The assessment is designed to glean information from hundreds of items but restricts the amount of time that any student has to spend responding to the assessment to approximately 50 minutes. Consequently, students taking the assessment will have one of eight or more possible booklets of passages and questions.

### Format of the Assessment

Given the broad goals of the NAEP Reading Framework and its emphasis on the use of authentic texts, the assessment is given either in two 25-minute blocks or one 50-minute block. In the fourth grade, only 25-minute blocks are used. Students receive a booklet containing the reading materials and questions. Questions are presented in multiple-choice or constructed-response formats. At least half are constructed-response questions, which allows students to write their answers and explain and support their ideas. There are two types of constructed-response questions: short, requiring a one- or two-sentence answer, and extended, requiring a paragraph or full-page response.

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<sup>1</sup> Passages and accompanying items are divided into blocks and administered to representative samples of students. Results are pooled, profiling the performance of groups of students on the entire assessment.

All NAEP questions emphasize critical thinking and reasoning rather than factual recall. Multiple-choice questions require students to choose a single, clear answer. In contrast, constructed-response questions require students to integrate information from the text with their background knowledge, reorganize ideas, and critically consider the text. In an assessment of reading, it is important to have items that can directly and accurately reflect how readers use multiple strategies to build understanding.

## Reading Passages

To reach the goal of approximating actual reading experiences, NAEP reading passages are typical of those read by students every day. The passages are taken from authentic texts found in the environments of students in grades 4, 8, and 12. Selected passages are original sources, not simplifications, paraphrases, abridgments, or modernizations. Only minimal changes are permitted in reading passages used in NAEP (for example, substituting an obscure word, revising a confusing phrase, or replacing an unfamiliar popular name). Such changes do not affect overall passage difficulty level, purpose, or meaning. Complete stories, articles, or chapters of textbooks are used to engage students' interest. These passages make it possible to ask questions that elicit various reading strategies.

Passages vary in length. In 4th grade, students read passages of 250 to 800 words; in 8th grade, 400 to 1,000 words; and in 12th grade, 500 to 1,500 words. In grades 8 and 12, students may be given two related reading passages in the 50-minute block.

The selected passages for each grade are developmentally and topically appropriate. In addition, passages are intact and meet criteria for genre, language, interest, and organization. These criteria include curricular considerations, appropriateness of the topic, style, perspective, and fairness. Documents are genuine and relate to tasks that are appropriate for the grade level and experiences of the students being assessed. Exhibit 6 outlines the major criteria for passage selection.

### Exhibit 6. Criteria for Passage Selection

- Developmental appropriateness
- Topic appropriateness
- Language appropriateness
- Fairness
- Interest level
- Reproducibility (copyright, format, Internet use)
- Diversity among authors

Item difficulty is a function of the difficulty of the passage, the complexity of the text, and the amount of background knowledge required to respond correctly. Because of their limitations, conventional readability estimates are not the main criteria for determining the

difficulty of a passage, which is a function of the complexity of its arguments, the abstractness of its concepts, and the inclusion of unusual points of view and shifting time frames—factors not addressed by traditional readability measures. As the difficulty of the passages increases, so does the difficulty of the questions because the questions focus on important points in the text.

Passages range in difficulty from those that could be read by the least proficient readers (for example, about second-grade level in a fourth-grade class) to those that could be read by only the most proficient readers (for example, possibly eighth-grade level in a fourth-grade class), as determined by teachers in specific grades.

## **Item Development**

Items are based on the aspects of reading and the related strategies readers use to build understanding. In developing the items, NAEP focuses on the range of questions that tap into each aspect of reading as well as the important elements of text. Exhibits 7 through 9 list sample questions that address each aspect of reading and element of text in a given context: reading for literary experience (exhibit 7), reading for information (exhibit 8), and reading to perform a task (exhibit 9). Note that the elements of text are related to the organization and type of text and therefore vary with the context for reading.



**Exhibit 7. Sample NAEP Items, by Element of Literary Text and Aspect of Reading**

| Element of Literary Text | Aspect of Reading   |   |   |   |
|--------------------------|---|---|---|---|
|                          | Forming a General Understanding   | Developing Interpretation   | Making Reader/Text Connections  | Examining Content and Structure   |
| Theme                    | What is the moral in the story? Use evidence from the story in your response.                             | How does the setting help to illustrate the theme of the story?                           | Do you think the lesson in this story is true today? Why or why not?  | Explain what makes this story a fable.  |
| Major characters         | What was the major character's opinion of _____?  | What causes the main character to do _____? Use evidence from the story in your response. | How do you think the character's actions might be different today? Support your response with evidence from the story.        | How does the author's description of _____ help explain the character's actions?                              |
| Major events             | Write a short summary of the major events in the story.   | What happens after _____?   | How do you think the story would have ended if _____ had not happened?  | How do the first events help you predict the ending?  |
| Problem                  | How does _____ make the problem worse? Use evidence from the text to support your response.               | How did _____ help solve the problem?   | How does the problem in the story compare with another story you have read? Include evidence from the text and another story. | Why does the author explain the problem in the first part of the story? Explain with evidence from the story. |
| Vocabulary               | Which words describe what the story is mostly about? Use evidence from the text to support your response. | Which words let you know that time has gone by? Explain with evidence from the story.     | Explain the double meaning of _____. Tell which meaning better explains the major ideas in the passage.                       | Why does the author use the words _____ to describe how _____ feels?  |

**Exhibit 8. Sample NAEP Items, by Element of Informational Text and Aspect of Reading**

| Element of Informational Text | Aspect of Reading   |  |   |  |
|-------------------------------|---|--|---|--|
|                               | Forming a General Understanding   | Developing Interpretation  | Making Reader/Text Connections  | Examining Content and Structure  |
| Central purpose               | What might be the author's message in this article?   | How does the author support the message?   | Do you agree with the author's message? Give evidence from the text.  | Based on what you read, what might be the reason the author wrote this?  |
| Major ideas                   | Give a summary of the major ideas.  | How does the big idea in the first section relate to the big idea in the last section? | Who might need or want this information? Use details from the text in your answer.                                | What did the author do to present information clearly?                   |
| Supporting ideas              | Identify ideas that most closely relate to the topic. Give evidence from the text to support your choice.     | How does the author show you that the main idea is important?                          | Which details about the _____ help you to have a clear image of the topic? Explain why you chose them.            | What information did the author have to know before writing the article? |
| Adjunct aids                  | The chart in this article is mostly used to _____?  | How does the information in the chart support the information in the article?          | Why did the author include the picture with the chart? Explain using what you know and information from the text. | What is the significance of the map to the article? Explain.             |
| Vocabulary                    | Which words describe what the passage is mostly about? Use the evidence from the text to support your choice. | Which words do you think mean the same as the title? Tell why you think so.            | Explain the double meaning of _____. Tell which meaning better explains the major ideas in the passage.           | Why did the author give a definition of _____ in paragraph 2?            |

**Exhibit 9. Sample NAEP Items, by Element of Practical Text and Aspect of Reading**

| Element of Practical Text | Aspect of Reading  |  |   |  |
|---------------------------|--|--|---|--|
|                           | Forming a General Understanding  | Developing Interpretation  | Making Reader/Text Connections  | Examining Content and Structure  |
| Central purpose           | What is the purpose of the document? Use evidence from the document in your response.                                | Do these directions list all the materials you need? Give a reason for your answer.          | Do you think the directions would be the same for ____? Use evidence from the text.                               | Is this mainly for readers familiar with the activity? Explain why or why not.                         |
| Key information           | Tell how this information would be useful. Use evidence from the document.   | Why is it important to do ____ before ____? Use evidence from the document in your response. | Compare the directions to a set of directions you have used in the past. Which set is easier to follow? Tell why. | Name one step that is important in order to follow the directions. Explain why this step is important. |
| Key organizing features   | Tell what you need to complete the steps. Which features indicate this?  | What happens after ____? Explain why this is an important step.                              | When might you use these steps? Support your answer with evidence from the text.                                  | Explain how the author organized this document. Use support from the text.                             |
| Key graphics              | What is the significance of the graphics to the total set of directions? Use support from the text in your response. | Why does the second picture show ____?   | Which additional graphics would you add to make the directions clear? Use support from the text.                  | Why is there boldface print at the front of each section?  |
| Vocabulary                | Which words tell what the document is mostly about? Use evidence from the text to support your response.             | Use the context to tell the meaning of ____.   | Explain why the phrase ____ is useful in these directions.  | Why does the author use the words ____ to present the last step of the directions?                     |

## **Review Process**

An extensive review process ensures that the assessments are consistent in meeting the criteria outlined in the framework. External reading committees and state-level testing and reading experts check the content of the assessments. Items are reviewed for bias and sensitivity, and test specialists review the items for technical qualities. An extensive editorial review provides quality assurance. Finally, as mandated by NAEP law, the National Assessment Governing Board reviews the items both before and after field testing for appropriateness and bias.

## **Accommodations**

NAEP reading is administered to English-language learners and students with disabilities who, by judgment of the school staff, are capable of taking the assessment. NAEP's intent is to assess all selected students from the target population. Therefore, every effort is made to ensure that all selected students who are capable of participating in the assessment are assessed. Some students sampled for NAEP participation are excluded according to carefully defined criteria. These criteria were revised in 1996 to more clearly communicate a presumption of inclusion except under special circumstances. Students are excluded only if the school's Individual Education Plan (IEP) team determines that the student cannot participate or the student's cognitive functioning is so severely impaired that she or he cannot participate.

According to these criteria, students who are English-language learners, as well as those with disabilities who have IEPs that indicate accommodation strategies and procedures, participate in the assessment. Accommodations include (but are not limited to):

- extra testing time
- individual or small-group administrations
- large-print booklets
- multiple testing sessions

Accommodations may be provided in combination—for example, extra testing time and individual administration. Because NAEP considers the domain of its reading assessment to be reading, the assessment cannot be read aloud. Moreover, NAEP does not provide an alternate language version, since the assessment measures reading in English.

# Chapter Three

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## How Are Results of the NAEP Reading Assessment Reported?

NAEP reading assessment results are reported in terms of average scores for groups of students on the NAEP 0–500 scale and as percentages of students who attain each of the three achievement levels: *Basic*, *Proficient*, and *Advanced* (see exhibit 10). The achievement levels offer a means of identifying percentages of students who have demonstrated certain reading proficiencies. Authorized by NAEP legislation and adopted by the National Assessment Governing Board, the achievement levels are performance standards based on the collective judgments of experts about what students should know and be able to do in terms of the NAEP Reading Framework.

### Exhibit 10. Policy Definitions of NAEP Achievement Levels

|            |   |
|------------|---|
| Advanced   | Superior performance.   |
| Proficient | Solid academic performance for each grade assessed. Students reaching this level have demonstrated competency over challenging subject matter, including subject-matter knowledge, application of such knowledge to real-world situations, and analytical skills appropriate to the subject matter. |
| Basic      | Partial mastery of prerequisite knowledge and skills that are fundamental for proficient work at each grade.  |

As part of the process for setting achievement levels for each NAEP subject area, panels of teachers, curriculum experts, policymakers, and members of the general public use the generic policy definitions to develop descriptions of what students should know and be able to do at the *Basic*, *Proficient*, and *Advanced* levels. These descriptions are presented in exhibits 11 and 12 to illustrate *Basic*, *Proficient*, and *Advanced* performance on the NAEP reading assessment for fourth and eighth graders.

## Exhibit 11. NAEP Reading Achievement Levels: Grade 4

| Reading Achievement Level | Description  |
|---------------------------|--|
| <i>Advanced</i>           | <p>Fourth-grade students performing at the <i>Advanced</i> level should be able to generalize about topics in the reading selection and demonstrate an awareness of how authors compose and use literary devices. When reading text appropriate to fourth grade, they should be able to judge texts critically and, in general, give thorough answers that indicate careful thought.</p> <p>For example, when reading <b>literary</b> text, <i>Advanced</i>-level students should be able to make generalizations about the point of the story and extend its meaning by integrating personal experiences and other readings with ideas suggested by the text. They should be able to identify literary devices such as figurative language.</p> <p>When reading <b>informational</b> text, <i>Advanced</i>-level fourth graders should be able to explain the author's intent by using supporting material from the text. They should be able to make critical judgments of the form and content of the text and explain their judgments clearly.</p>   |
| <i>Proficient</i>         | <p>Fourth-grade students performing at the <i>Proficient</i> level should be able to demonstrate an overall understanding of the text, providing inferential as well as literal information. When reading text appropriate to fourth grade, they should be able to extend the ideas in the text by making inferences, drawing conclusions, and making connections to their own experiences. The connections between the text and what the student infers should be clear.</p> <p>For example, when reading <b>literary</b> text, <i>Proficient</i>-level fourth graders should be able to summarize the story, draw conclusions about the characters or plot, and recognize relationships such as cause and effect.</p> <p>When reading <b>informational</b> text, <i>Proficient</i>-level students should be able to summarize the information and identify the author's intent or purpose. They should be able to draw reasonable conclusions from the text, recognize relationships such as cause and effect or similarities and differences, and identify the meaning of the selection's key concepts.</p> |
| <i>Basic</i>              | <p>Fourth-grade students performing at the <i>Basic</i> level should demonstrate an understanding of the overall meaning of what they read. When reading text appropriate for fourth graders, they should be able to make relatively obvious connections between the text and their own experiences and extend the ideas in the text by making simple inferences.</p> <p>For example, when reading <b>literary</b> text, they should be able to tell what the story is generally about—providing details to support their understanding—and be able to connect aspects of the stories to their own experiences.</p> <p>When reading <b>informational</b> text, <i>Basic</i>-level fourth graders should be able to tell what the selection is generally about or identify the purpose for reading it, provide details to support their understanding, and connect ideas from the text to their background knowledge and experiences.</p>   |

## Exhibit 12. NAEP Reading Achievement Levels: Grade 8

| Reading Achievement Level | Description  |
|---------------------------|--|
| <i>Advanced</i>           | <p>Eighth-grade students performing at the <i>Advanced</i> level should be able to describe the more abstract themes and ideas of the overall text. When reading text appropriate to eighth grade, they should be able to analyze both meaning and form and support their analyses explicitly with examples from the text, and they should be able to extend text information by relating it to their experiences and to world events. At this level, student responses should be thorough, thoughtful, and extensive.</p> <p>For example, when reading <b>literary</b> text, <i>Advanced</i>-level eighth graders should be able to make complex, abstract summaries and theme statements. They should be able to describe the interactions of various literary elements (e.g., setting, plot, characters, and theme) and explain how the use of literary devices affects both the meaning of the text and their response to the author's style. They should be able to critically analyze and evaluate the composition of the text.</p> <p>When reading <b>informational</b> text, they should be able to analyze the author's purpose and point of view. They should be able to use cultural and historical background information to develop perspectives on the text and be able to apply text information to broad issues and world situations.</p> <p>When reading <b>practical</b> text, <i>Advanced</i>-level students should be able to synthesize information that will guide their performance, apply text information to new situations, and critique the usefulness of the form and content.</p> |
| <i>Proficient</i>         | <p>Eighth-grade students performing at the <i>Proficient</i> level should be able to show an overall understanding of the text, including inferential as well as literal information. When reading text appropriate to eighth grade, they should be able to extend the ideas in the text by making clear inferences from it, by drawing conclusions, and by making connections to their own experiences—including other reading experiences. Proficient eighth graders should be able to identify some of the devices authors use in composing text.</p> <p>For example, when reading <b>literary</b> text, students at the <i>Proficient</i> level should be able to give details and examples to support themes that they identify. They should be able to use implied as well as explicit information in articulating themes; to interpret the actions, behaviors, and motives of characters; and to identify the use of literary devices such as personification and foreshadowing.</p> <p>When reading <b>informational</b> text, they should be able to summarize the text using explicit and implied information and support conclusions with inferences based on the text.</p> <p>When reading <b>practical</b> text, <i>Proficient</i>-level students should be able to describe its purpose and support their views with examples and details. They should be able to judge the importance of certain steps and procedures.</p>  |

*continued on page 26*

**Exhibit 12. NAEP Reading Achievement Levels: Grade 8 (continued)**

| Reading Achievement Level | Description   |
|---------------------------|---|
| <i>Basic</i>              | <p>Eighth-grade students performing at the <i>Basic</i> level should demonstrate a literal understanding of what they read and be able to make some interpretations. When reading text appropriate to eighth grade, they should be able to identify specific aspects of the text that reflect the overall meaning, extend the ideas in the text by making simple inferences, recognize and relate interpretations and connections among ideas in the text to personal experience, and draw conclusions based on the text.</p> <p>For example, when reading <b>literary</b> text, <i>Basic</i>-level eighth graders should be able to identify themes and make inferences and logical predictions about aspects such as plot and characters.</p> <p>When reading <b>informational</b> text, they should be able to identify the main idea and the author's purpose. They should make inferences and draw conclusions supported by information in the text. They should recognize the relationships among the facts, ideas, events, and concepts of the text (e.g., cause and effect, order).</p> <p>When reading <b>practical</b> text, they should be able to identify the main purpose and make predictions about the relatively obvious outcomes of procedures in the text.</p> |

The reading performance of fourth graders and the aspects of reading can be illustrated by a map that positions item descriptions along the NAEP reading composite scale where items are likely to be answered successfully by students (see exhibit 13). The descriptions used on the map focus on the reading skill or ability needed to answer the question. For each test item indicated, students who scored above the scale point had a higher probability of successfully answering the question, and students who scored below the scale point had a lower probability of successfully answering the question. Item maps are useful indicators of higher or lower probability of successfully answering test questions depending on students' overall ability as measured by the NAEP scale.

NAEP achievement level descriptions provide descriptions of *Basic*, *Proficient*, and *Advanced* performance. However, based on the NAEP reading results, it may be useful to give some information about students who score below the *Basic* level. These students are not necessarily nonreaders. They may be able to read but not well enough to attain the minimum score for *Basic*. For example, exhibit 13 indicates what fourth-grade students scoring below *Basic* could do on the 2000 NAEP reading assessment. As one can see, students who scored below *Basic* could complete tasks such as identifying a character trait and identifying a character's problem, tasks that require some reading and comprehension skills. Given the length and difficulty of the passages, the skills demonstrated by some of the students who scored below *Basic* indicated some comprehension. Additional NAEP reading questions with performance results are available on the NAEP Web site at <http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard>.

The NAEP reading assessment provides important information for nationally representative samples of students in grades 4, 8, and 12 and for state-level samples of fourth and eighth graders. NAEP also reports on subgroups of students by gender,



race/ethnicity, region of the country, location of school (e.g., central city, urban fringe/large town, rural/small town), eligibility for free or reduced price lunch, public or nonpublic school, and other variables of interest. For an example of how NAEP reports such data, see *Fourth-Grade Reading Highlights 2005* [National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), 2005] or the NAEP Web site at <http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard>.

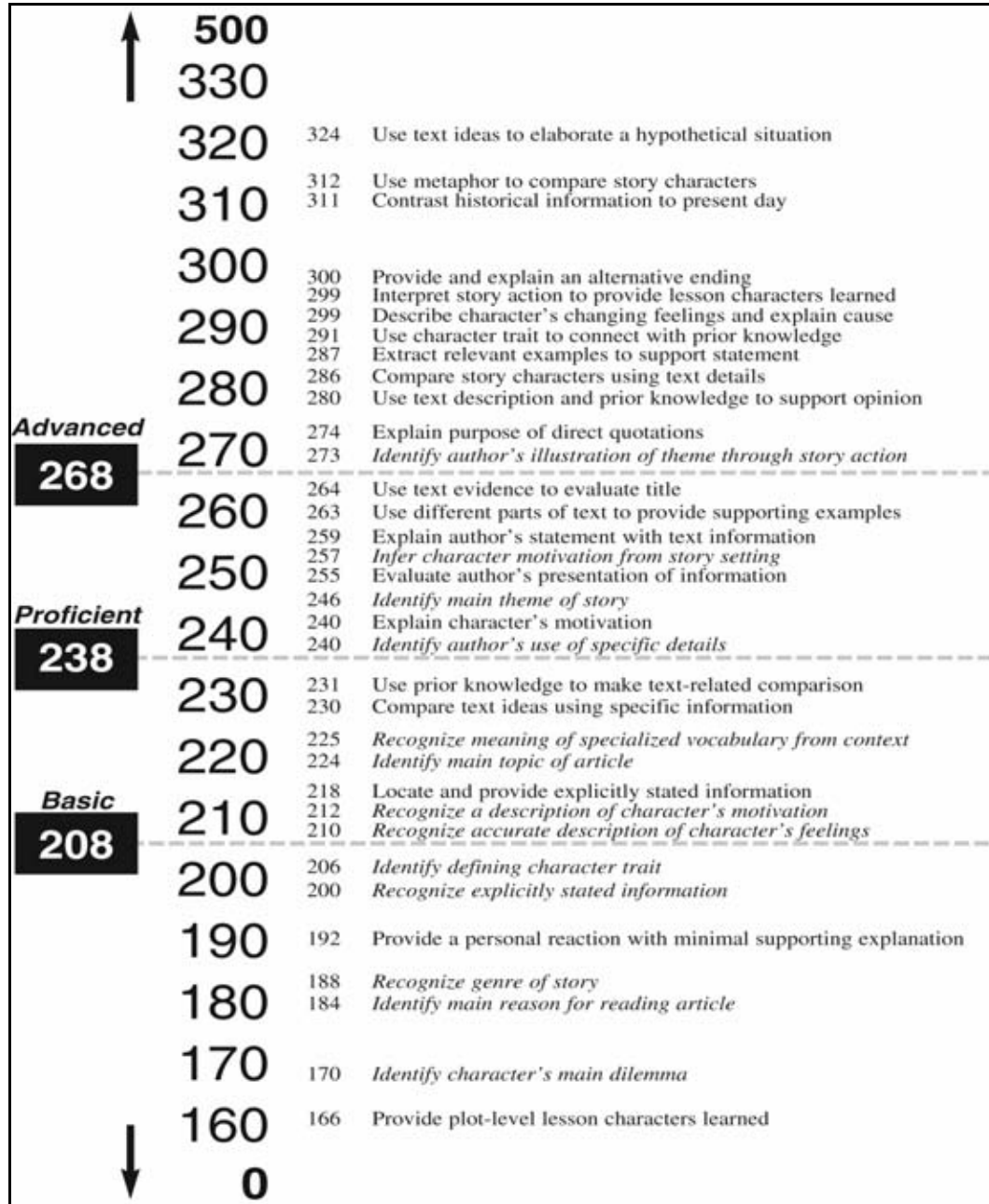
One of NAEP's most important functions is to report trends in the average reading achievement of students over time. This information helps policymakers and the public answer the following:

- Are students improving in reading achievement over time?
- Are percentages of students at the upper achievement levels increasing, decreasing, or remaining the same?
- Are the gaps in achievement among various groups narrowing?

This information is useful in making decisions about the allocation of resources and the framing of policy related to reading. For examples of how NAEP reports trends, see *The Nation's Report Card: Reading 2005* (Perie et al., 2005) or the NAEP Web site at <http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard>.

Students participating in NAEP respond to a background survey that provides information to round out the picture of reading in the United States. This survey gathers information on items such as time spent reading in and out of school, home activities related to reading, and types of activities their teachers use for reading instruction. Some activities are related to average scores on NAEP. NAEP collects only background information that is related to reading achievement. For example, students who report having the opportunity to read books for fun every day have significantly higher average scores than those who only read for fun once or twice a week. However, a complex mix of educational and socioeconomic factors may affect student achievement. To see how NAEP reports relate information from the surveys to the main part of NAEP, see the NAEP Web site at <http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard>.

The results of the NAEP reading assessment and analysis of those results provide a useful snapshot of reading achievement in the United States that can be compared with achievement in previous years to identify trends and background factors in reading. When interpreting NAEP results, keep in mind that there is no simple causal relationship between membership in a subgroup and performance on NAEP.

**Exhibit 13. Selected Item Descriptions on NAEP Reading Scale: Grade 4**


Note: Regular type denotes a constructed-response question. Italic type denotes a multiple-choice question. Each grade 4 reading question was mapped onto the NAEP 0–500 reading scale. The position of the question on the scale represents the scale score attained by students who had a 65-percent probability of successfully answering a constructed-response question or a 74-percent probability of correctly answering a four-option, multiple-choice question. Only selected questions are presented. Scale score ranges for reading achievement levels are referenced on the map.

Source: National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 2000 NAEP reading assessment.

# Chapter Four

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## What Are the Foundations for the NAEP Reading Assessment?

**T**he NAEP Reading Framework reflects professional viewpoints, empirical evidence from high-quality research on reading, and the best technical design possible in a reading assessment that measures the achievement of thousands of students. It embraces a broad concept of reading that is supported by the findings of contemporary research and is relevant to state and local standards and curricula. It is based on recognition of the fact that a balance of approaches and programs is needed to produce successful readers. The framework is a synthesis of various perspectives, emphases, and opinions among professionals in universities, states, local districts, and classrooms.

An obvious goal of reading education is the development of highly skilled readers. Consequently, it is reasonable that a process guiding the development of a national assessment of reading should start with a clear vision of that goal (see “What Is the NAEP Reading Assessment?”). As a result of that starting point, the NAEP Reading Framework focuses on tasks highly skilled readers in 4th, 8th, and 12th grades should perform. The assessment does not focus solely on the many specific skills a reader must use but seldom uses in isolation. This is in keeping with NAEP’s role as an assessment of overall achievement rather than a diagnostic tool for individual students. Although teachers certainly need to know which specific skills students possess or need to improve, policymakers and the general public are concerned mainly with whether students are reaching overall goals.

### Reading Process

The NAEP reading assessment approaches reading as a complex process rather than a simple set of skills. This approach is confirmed by the following statement in the *Report of the National Reading Panel* (NICHD, 2000a):

Comprehension is defined as “intentional thinking during which meaning is constructed through interactions between text and reader” (Harris and Hodges, 1995). Thus, readers derive meaning from text when they engage in intentional, problemsolving thinking processes. (p. 14)

### Types of Assessments

The NAEP reading assessment is an assessment of overall achievement, not a tool for diagnosing the needs of individuals or groups of students. A diagnostic assessment of reading ability for students in grade 4 would examine an individual student’s ability to read fluently aloud, using both the ability to decode words and to recognize them instantly. It would explore what specific comprehension skills the reader could demonstrate, such as finding the main idea, relating cause and effect, inferring character qualities, and detecting sequence. However, an achievement measure such as NAEP asks broader questions (e.g.,

How well does this student or group of students read? Is this level of achievement good enough to meet the standard that has been set?).

NAEP examines whether students can use multiple skills, not specific skills, to comprehend what they read. Effective reading programs definitely focus on teaching specific reading skills. However, when people actually read, they choose and orchestrate arrays of skills, sometimes almost simultaneously. The NAEP reading assessment examines whether students can actually use sets of skills in reading for different purposes.

## **Background Surveys**

Because reading proficiency results from factors in the home, school, and community, the NAEP reading assessment includes several background surveys. They provide information on the resources and activities both in and out of school that affect students' development as readers. Surveys are administered to students, teachers, and principals. NAEP reports survey results as general trends and as they relate to average scores and achievement levels on the assessment. The factors addressed in the background surveys were considered carefully as the committee guiding the development of the NAEP reading assessment debated, reached agreement, and worked to articulate the framework for the assessment.

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## **Appendix A**

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### **Sample Reading Passages, Items, and Scoring Rubrics**

# Sample Reading Passages, Items, and Scoring Rubrics

## Grade 4—“A Brick to Cuddle Up To”

### Scoring Criteria for Constructed-Response Questions

**Note:** Performance results may not total 100 percent due to off-task and omitted responses.

**Question 2.** After reading this article, would you like to have lived during colonial times? What information in the article makes you think this?

### Scoring Guide

| Score and Description  |
|--|
| <p><b>Evidence of Full Comprehension</b></p> <p>These responses give an opinion using clear and substantive information from the article and displaying an ability to make a personal connection with the text information. The supporting information is explicitly from the article and is used appropriately in support of their opinion.</p>                   |
| <p><b>Evidence of Partial or Surface Comprehension</b></p> <p>These responses support an opinion of colonial life with unclear information or information related to colonial life that is not clearly from the article. Or, they use evidence from the article to describe colonial life without explicitly stating an opinion.</p>                               |
| <p><b>Evidence of Little or No Comprehension</b></p> <p>These responses contain inappropriate information from the article or personal opinions about the article but do not demonstrate an understanding of what it was like to live during colonial times as described in the article. They may answer the question, but provide no substantive explanation.</p> |

[Full, 20 percent; Partial, 58 percent; Little or no comprehension, 20 percent]



**Question 3. Some of the ways that colonists kept warm during the winter were different from the ways that people keep warm today. Tell about two of these differences.**

### **Scoring Guide**

| <b>Score and Description</b>  |
|---|
| <p><b>Evidence of Full Comprehension</b></p> <p>These responses explain at least two ways the colonists kept warm that are different from two methods used today. The explanations of both the colonial and/or modern methods must be clear, logical, and distinct. These responses demonstrate an ability to link information from the article with related knowledge about the way things are done today.</p> |
| <p><b>Evidence of Partial or Surface Comprehension</b></p> <p>These responses include some information about how people keep warm. However, they describe no more than one difference between the ways colonists kept warm and the ways people keep warm today. Or, they talk only about the colonists without linking information from the article with knowledge about methods of keeping warm today.</p>     |
| <p><b>Evidence of Little or No Comprehension</b></p> <p>These responses contain inappropriate information from the article and/or do not explain how colonists kept warm in the winter. They may or may not discuss how people keep warm today.</p>   |

[Full, 17 percent; Partial, 59 percent; Little or no comprehension, 21 percent]

**Question 4. Do you think “A Brick to Cuddle Up To” is a good title for this article? Using information from the article, tell why or why not.**

### **Scoring Guide**

| <b>Score and Description</b>  |
|---|
| <b>Evidence of Full Comprehension</b><br>These responses support an opinion with a clear explanation of the relationship between the title and the article. They summarize or articulate information from the article and tell whether it does or does not relate to the title.   |
| <b>Evidence of Partial or Surface Comprehension</b><br>These responses support an opinion with a vague explanation that does not demonstrate a clear understanding of how the title applies to the article. Or, they use evidence from the article to assess the title’s appropriateness without explicitly stating or implying an opinion. |
| <b>Evidence of Little or No Comprehension</b><br>These responses contain inappropriate information from the article or personal opinions about the article and/or do not demonstrate any understanding of the title. They may answer the question, but they provide no substantive explanation from the article.                            |

[Full, 37 percent; Partial, 32 percent; Little or no comprehension, 27 percent]

**Question 5. Give two reasons stated in the article why the hearth was the center of the home in colonial times.**

### **Scoring Guide**

| <b>Score and Description</b>  |
|---|
| <b>Evidence of Full Comprehension</b><br>These responses provide two text-based reasons why the hearth was the center of the colonial home. They demonstrate understanding of why the daily conditions in a colonial household highlighted the hearth's importance.   |
| <b>Evidence of Partial or Surface Comprehension</b><br>These responses give only one text-based reason why the hearth was important. Although the responses must demonstrate the need for a hearth, they do not have to explicitly mention its role.  |
| <b>Evidence of Little or No Comprehension</b><br>These responses contain inappropriate information from the article or personal opinions about the article that fail to address the importance of the hearth. They demonstrate no understanding of how the colonists used the hearth as described in the article. |

[Full, 20 percent; Partial, 46 percent; Little or no comprehension, 20 percent]

**Question 7. Pretend that you are an early American colonist. Describe at least three activities you might do during a cold winter evening. Be specific. Use details from the article to help you write your description.**

### Scoring Guide

| Score and Description  |
|--|
| <p><b>Extensive</b></p> <p>These responses demonstrate an overall understanding of how staying warm was a central concern for colonists on a cold winter evening. They present three or more evening activities, three of which involve the need to stay warm as described in the article.</p>   |
| <p><b>Essential</b></p> <p>These responses demonstrate an understanding of the colonial lifestyle portrayed in the article. They present at least three text-based evening activities, one or two of which involve the need to stay warm as described in the article.</p>  |
| <p><b>Partial</b></p> <p>These responses begin to discuss a typical evening in the colonies. They use details that are based on superficial information from the article and describe one or two activities unrelated to the need to stay warm (which was the major focus of the article). Or, they mention one or two activities from the article that involve staying warm. Or, they generalize about the need to stay warm without specifying any activity.</p> |
| <p><b>Unsatisfactory</b></p> <p>These responses contain inappropriate information from the article or personal opinions about the article but do not discuss a typical colonial evening. They demonstrate no understanding of the colonists' lifestyle as portrayed in the passage.</p>  |

[Extensive, 12 percent; Essential, 6 percent; Partial, 52 percent; Unsatisfactory, 24 percent]

**Question 9. Does the author help you understand what colonial life was like? Use examples from the article to explain why or why not.**

### **Scoring Guide**

| <b>Score and Description</b>   |
|--|
| <p><b>Evidence of Full Comprehension</b></p> <p>These responses provide an opinion about the author’s abilities. In addition, they provide at least one supportive example from the text that demonstrates an objective consideration of the article and/or text-based critical judgment of the author’s competence.</p>   |
| <p><b>Evidence of Partial or Surface Comprehension</b></p> <p>These responses provide an opinion about the author. These opinions go beyond simply “yes” or “no” by demonstrating some understanding of the information in the article. They fail to provide appropriate evidence from the article to support their opinion concerning the author’s abilities.</p> |
| <p><b>Evidence of Little or No Comprehension</b></p> <p>These responses contain inappropriate information from the article or unsupported personal opinions about either the article or the author. These personal opinions provide no evidence of understanding the information in the article.</p>   |

[Full, 20 percent; Partial, 29 percent; Little or no comprehension, 51 percent]

## Grade 4 Sample Reading Passage: Literary

### HUNGRY SPIDER AND THE TURTLE

(Description of Story)\*

“Hungry Spider and the Turtle” is a West African folktale that humorously depicts hunger and the custom of hospitality through the actions and conversations of the title characters.

Spider and Turtle live in different countries. They first meet when Turtle, famished from traveling a long way from home, comes upon Spider’s house. While Spider is well known among his neighbors for his great appetite and his greediness, Turtle, being a stranger, believes Spider’s offer of a meal to be sincere. It becomes clear that Spider wants all the food for himself and that his gesture of hospitality is merely show so that people will not speak badly of him. Turtle realizes that he has been tricked out of having any food but doesn’t let on that he knows. He suavely concurs with Spider that it was a fine meal; and as Turtle leaves, he assures Spider of similar hospitality if Spider ever visits in his country.

In time, the gluttonous Spider finds himself a long way from home in Turtle’s country. Now it is Turtle’s turn to use local custom as a camouflage for true intent. He repays Spider’s gesture of hospitality, and Spider gets the meal that he deserves.

\* We did not receive copyright approval to put the actual text from the student booklet on the Web site. The full text can be found in Harold Courlander, “Hungry Spider and the Turtle,” from *The Cow-Tail Switch & Other West African Stories*. Copyright © 1987 by Henry Holt and Company, Inc.

## Questions for “Hungry Spider and the Turtle”

### 1. Why did Spider invite Turtle to share his food?

- a. to amuse himself
- b. to be kind and helpful
- c. to have company at dinner
- d. to appear generous

[Aspect, Developing interpretation; Key, D; Percent correct, 40]

### 2. There is a saying, “Don’t get mad, get even.” How does this apply to the story?

[Aspect, Examining content and structure; Percent acceptable, 55]

**3. Which best describes Spider's character?**

- a. patient
- b. friendly
- c. selfish
- d. angry

[Aspect, General understanding; Key, C; Percent correct, 77]

**4. What do Turtle's actions at Spider's house tell you about Turtle?**

[Aspect, Developing interpretation; Percent acceptable, 41]

**5. When Turtle remains quiet about his mistreatment by Spider, the author wants to**

- a. believe Turtle is afraid
- b. have sympathy for Turtle
- c. feel dislike for Turtle
- d. think Turtle deserved no dinner

[Aspect, Examining content and structure; Key, B; Percent correct, 60]

**6. Think about Spider and Turtle in the story. Pick someone you know, have read about, or have seen in the movies or on television and explain how that person is like either Spider or Turtle.**

[Aspect, Reader/text connections; Percent extensive, 14]

**7. Spider's behavior during the first part of the story is most like that of**

- a. mothers protecting their children
- b. thieves robbing banks
- c. runners losing races
- d. people not sharing their wealth

[Aspect, Reader/text connections; Key, D; Percent correct, 73]

**8. Who do you think would make a better friend, Spider or Turtle? Explain why.**

[Aspect, Reader/text connections; Percent acceptable, 62]

**9. Spider’s visit to Turtle in the second part of the story mainly shows that**

- a. Turtle could treat Spider the same way
- b. Spider could float on the water
- c. Spider could get a free meal
- d. Turtle lived in a small house

[Aspect, Examining content and structure; Key, A; Percent correct, 82]

**10. Do you think Turtle should have done what he did to Spider? Explain why or why not.**

[Aspect, Reader/text connections; Percent acceptable, 61]

**11. The final sentence of the story is: “People always say that one good meal deserves another.” The author uses this sentence as a way of saying that**

- a. Turtle and Spider both were good cooks
- b. Turtle should not have invited Spider to dinner
- c. Spider earned what Turtle did to him
- d. Spider should have cooked what Turtle liked to eat

[Aspect, Examining content and structure; Key, C; Percent correct, 73]

**Grade 4—“Hungry Spider and the Turtle”****Scoring Criteria for Constructed-Response Questions**

**Note:** Performance results may not total 100 percent due to off-task and omitted responses.

**Question 2.** There is a saying, “Don’t get mad, get even.” How does this apply to the story?

**Scoring Guide**

| <b>Score and Description</b>   |
|--|
| <b>Acceptable</b><br>Acceptable answers indicate that Turtle got back at Spider or got revenge for Spider’s not sharing his food.              |
| <b>Unacceptable</b><br>Unacceptable responses do not demonstrate an understanding of Turtle’s getting back at Spider for not sharing his food. |

[Acceptable, 55 percent; Unacceptable, 37 percent]



**Question 4. What do Turtle's actions at Spider's house tell you about Turtle?**

**Scoring Guide**

| Score and Description   |
|---|
| <p><b>Acceptable</b></p> <p>Acceptable responses indicate, essentially, that Turtle was any of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• passive</li> <li>• patient</li> <li>• polite</li> <li>• correct or right</li> <li>• resigned</li> <li>• long-suffering</li> <li>• smart</li> <li>• hungry/desperate for food</li> <li>• suckered</li> <li>• always trying over and over</li> </ul> |
| <p><b>Unacceptable</b></p> <p>Unacceptable responses include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• washed his feet</li> <li>• dirty</li> </ul> <p>The following responses are unacceptable unless accompanied by a valid explanation or supportive information.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• nice</li> <li>• friendly</li> </ul>  |

[Acceptable, 41 percent; Unacceptable, 52 percent]

**Question 6. Think about Spider and Turtle in the story. Pick someone you know, have read about, or have seen in the movies or on television and explain how that person is like either Spider or Turtle.**

### Scoring Guide

| Score and Description  |
|--|
| <p><b>Extensive</b></p> <p>These responses demonstrate an in-depth, rich understanding of the character of Spider or Turtle and link this understanding to a real-world person or a fictional character. Evidence of depth of understanding includes describing more than one essential story-character trait linked to a real-world person or a fictional character, providing a sophisticated interpretation of an essential story-character trait that is linked to a real-world person or a fictional character, identifying how a real-world person or a fictional character is like Spider in one way and like Turtle in another, or identifying a pair of real-world people or fictional characters and explaining how these two people or characters are like Spider and Turtle. For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “My brother and Spider are alike because they both unfairly control the people around them to their own advantage.”</li> <li>• “My brother and Spider are alike because they both cheat people and are selfish.”</li> <li>• “Scrooge is like Spider because he is greedy, and Bob Cratchet is like Turtle because he gets something in the end too.”</li> <li>• “My friend Anne is like Turtle because when someone calls her names, she just walks away, but sometimes she’s like Spider and plays tricks on people.”</li> </ul> |
| <p><b>Essential</b></p> <p>These responses demonstrate a good understanding of the character of Spider or Turtle by providing any important character trait that is related or linked to a real-world person or a fictional character. For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “My older brother and Turtle are alike because they both get revenge on their enemies.”</li> <li>• “My sister is like Spider because she likes to trick people.”</li> </ul>   |

*continued on page 46*

## Scoring Guide (Question 6, continued)

| Score and Description   |
|---|
| <p><b>Partial</b></p> <p>These responses indicate some understanding of the character of Spider or Turtle in the story by providing information about the character of Spider or Turtle but fail to make a connection with a real-world person or character; or they make the connection between a story character and a real-world person or a fictional character but do so on a trivial point; or they make a connection between a story character and a real-world person or fictional character but don't distinguish whether the story character is like Spider or like Turtle. For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Turtle was right to get revenge on Spider for the way that Spider treated him.”</li> <li>• “My friend is like Turtle because they both wipe their feet a lot.”</li> <li>• “Mindy is like Turtle because she is friendly.”</li> <li>• “On Chip and Dale’s Rescue Rangers, Dale is always selfish.”</li> </ul> |
| <p><b>Unsatisfactory</b></p> <p>These responses demonstrate little or no understanding of the character of Spider or Turtle. In these responses, students often name a character but do not relate this character to Spider or Turtle or provide only inappropriate characteristics. Also, students may summarize a story or movie but not relate it to Spider or Turtle in any clear way. For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “My friend is like Turtle.”</li> <li>• “Turtle always washed his feet.”</li> <li>• “My friend Jeff because he is friendly.”</li> <li>• “Someone in my class is friendly like Spider.”</li> </ul>   |

[Extensive, 14 percent; Essential, 16 percent; Partial, 22 percent; Unsatisfactory, 34 percent]

**Question 8. Who do you think would make a better friend, Spider or Turtle? Explain why.**

### Scoring Guide

| Score and Description   |
|---|
| <p><b>Acceptable</b></p> <p>Acceptable responses mention either Spider or Turtle and cite evidence from the story to support the student's choice. The information cited in the explanation must be appropriate within the context of the story.</p> <p>For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "I think Turtle would be a good friend because he isn't mean to people."</li> </ul> |
| <p><b>Unacceptable</b></p> <p>Unacceptable responses include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "I think Spider, because he shared his food."</li> </ul>   |

[Acceptable, 62 percent; Unacceptable, 34 percent]

**Question 10. Do you think Turtle should have done what he did to Spider? Explain why or why not.**

### Scoring Guide

| Score and Description   |
|---|
| <p><b>Acceptable</b></p> <p>Acceptable responses either agree or disagree with Turtle's actions and mention something about the fact that Spider was mean to Turtle or that Turtle tricked him and got revenge. The information included in the explanation must be appropriate within the context of the story. For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "Turtle was right to get back at Spider because Spider was mean to him."</li> <li>• "Turtle was not right to get back at Spider because it was not a nice thing to do."</li> </ul> |
| <p><b>Unacceptable</b></p> <p>Unacceptable responses include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "Turtle was right to get back at Spider because Turtle was hungry."</li> </ul>   |

[Acceptable, 61 percent; Unacceptable, 32 percent]

## Grade 8 Sample Reading Passage: Informational

### THE LOST PEOPLE OF MESA VERDE

by Elsa Marston

*The Anasazi lived peacefully on the mesa for 800 years. Then they disappeared.*

In the dry land of southwestern Colorado, a beautiful plateau rises. It has so many trees that early Spanish explorers called it Mesa Verde, which means “green table.” For about eight hundred years Native Americans called the Anasazi lived on this mesa. And then they left. Ever since the cliff houses were first discovered a hundred years ago, scientists and historians have wondered why.

Anasazi is a Navajo word meaning “the ancient ones.” When they first settled there, around 500 A.D., the Anasazi lived in alcoves in the walls of the high canyons. Later they moved to the level land on top, where they built houses of stone and mud mortar. As time passed, they constructed more elaborate houses, like apartment buildings, with several families living close together.

The Anasazi made beautiful pottery, turquoise jewelry, fine sashes of woven hair, and baskets woven tightly enough to hold water. They lived by hunting and by growing corn and squash. Their way of life went on peacefully for several hundred years.

Then around 1200 A.D. something strange happened, for which the reasons are not quite clear. Most of the people moved from the level plateau back down into alcoves in the cliffs. The move must have made their lives difficult because they had to climb back up to the plateau to do the farming. But it seems the Anasazi planned to stay in the canyon walls, for they soon filled the alcoves with amazing cliff dwellings. “Cliff Palace,” the most famous of these, had more than two hundred rooms.

For all the hard work that went into building these new homes, the Anasazi did not live in them long. By 1300 A.D., the cliff dwellings were empty. Mesa Verde was deserted and remained a ghost country for almost six hundred years. Were the people driven out of their homes by enemies? No sign of attack or fighting, or even the presence of other tribes, has been found.

Archaeologists who have studied the place now believe there are other reasons. Mesa Verde, the beautiful green table, was no longer a good place to live. For one thing, in the second half of the thirteenth century there were long periods of cold, and very little rain fell—or else it came at the wrong time of year. Scientists know this from examining the wood used in the cliff dwellings. The growth rings in trees show good and bad growing seasons. But the people had survived drought and bad weather before, so there must have been another reason.

As the population grew, more land on the mesa top had to be farmed in order to feed the people. That meant that trees had to be cut to clear the land and also to use for houses and fuel. Without the forests, the rain began to wash away the mesa top.

How do we know about erosion problems that happened about eight hundred years ago? The Anasazi built many low dams across the smaller valleys on the mesa to slow down rain runoff. Even so, good soil washed away, and the people could no longer raise enough food. As the forests dwindled, the animals, already overhunted, left the mesa for mountainous areas with more trees.

And as the mesa “wore out,” so did the people. It appears that the Anasazi were not healthy. Scientists can learn a lot about ancient people’s health by studying the bones and teeth found in burials. The mesa dwellers had arthritis, and their teeth were worn down by the grit in corn meal, a main part of their diet.

As food became scarce, people grew weaker. Not many lived beyond their twenties. Women died very young, and few babies survived. Living so close together in the cliff houses, where everyone was hungry and worried, the people must have suffered from emotional strain. They probably quarreled often.

In the end, the Anasazi must have given up hope that things would get better. Families packed up and went away. Of course, the “ancient ones” did not simply disappear. They moved southeast to another area and mingled with other peoples. After a while, their heritage as the people of the Mesa Verde was forgotten.

In time the trees grew back, and the plateau became green once more. But, for the Anasazi, it was too late. Although they respected nature and tried to farm wisely, land that was used too hard could not support them forever.

Yet in their cliff houses and crafts, the “ancient ones” left us a superb monument. It is truly one of the most fascinating pictures of America’s past.

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## Questions for “The Lost People of Mesa Verde”

- 1. After reading this article, what do you think is the most important information about the Anasazi?**

[Aspect, General Understanding; Percent acceptable, 60 percent]

- 2. The three moves made by the Anasazi are listed below. Explain the possible reasons that were suggested in the article for each move.**

500–1200 A.D.—The Anasazi moved from the alcoves to the top of Mesa Verde.

1200 A.D.—The Anasazi moved back down into the alcoves in the cliffs.

1300 A.D.—The Anasazi left Mesa Verde.

[Aspect, Developing interpretation; Percent extensive, 9 percent]

- 3. If you had lived with the Anasazi at Mesa Verde, would you have preferred living on the top of the mesa or in the cliff houses built into the alcoves? Explain your preference by using information from the article.**

[Aspect, Reader/text connections; Percent full comprehension, 29]

- 4. If you could talk to the author of this article, what is one question you could ask her about the Anasazi that is not already answered in the article? Explain why you would want to know this information?**

[Aspect, Reader/text connections; Percent full comprehension, 15]

- 5. Which idea from the text about the Anasazi do the photographs support?**

- a. They were able to create many useful objects.
- b. Farming was probably their major source of food.
- c. Wood seems to have been their primary building material.
- d. Their life became much easier when they moved into the cliff dwellings.

[Aspect, Developing interpretation; Key, A; Percent correct, 70]

- 6. Imagine that you are living with the people of Mesa Verde during the 1200s when they left the mesa. Some of your friends and neighbors do not want to leave the area. Based on information in the article, what would you tell these people to convince them to leave?**

[Aspect, Examining content and structure; Percent full comprehension, 41 percent]

**7. The Anasazi's life before 1200 A.D. was portrayed by the author as being**

- a. dangerous and warlike
- b. busy and exciting
- c. difficult and dreary
- d. productive and peaceful

[Aspect, Developing interpretation; Key, D; Percent correct, 59]

**8. The title and photograph on the first page of the article are probably meant to make the disappearance of the Anasazi seem to be**

- a. a personal tragedy
- b. a terrible mistake
- c. an unsolved mystery
- d. an important political event

[Aspect, Developing interpretation; Key, C; Percent correct, 84]

**9. Some people say that the Anasazi's success as a civilization may have actually caused their own decline. Using information in the article, explain why you agree or disagree with this statement.**

[Aspect, Developing interpretation; Percent extensive, 12]

## Grade 8—"The Lost People of Mesa Verde"

### Scoring Criteria for Constructed-Response Questions

**Note:** Performance results may not total 100 percent due to off-task and omitted responses.

**Question 1. After reading this article, what do you think is the most important information about the Anasazi?**

### Scoring Guide

| Score and Description  |
|--|
| <p><b>Acceptable</b></p> <p>These responses provide a specific detail or a general impression from the passage that relates to some aspect of the Anasazi portrayed in the article.</p>  |
| <p><b>Unacceptable</b></p> <p>These responses contain inaccurate information from the article or inappropriate personal opinions about the article. They do not provide any valid information or appropriate interpretation about the Anasazi as they were portrayed in the article.</p> |

[Acceptable, 60 percent; Unacceptable, 40 percent]



**Question 2. The three moves made by the Anasazi are listed below. Explain the possible reasons that were suggested in the article for each move.**

500–1200 A.D.—The Anasazi moved from the alcoves to the top of Mesa Verde.

1200 A.D.—The Anasazi moved back down into the alcoves in the cliffs.

1300 A.D.—The Anasazi left Mesa Verde.

### **Scoring Guide**

| <b>Score and Description</b>  |
|---|
| <b>Extensive</b><br>These responses identify a reason for all three moves, even though the reasons for all the moves are not explicitly discussed in the article. These responses go beyond simply restating the article to interpret some of the information provided in the article as it relates to the moves. |
| <b>Essential</b><br>These responses identify a reason for three of the moves discussed in the article. The reasons may be brief or simple restatements of information in the article as long as they are logical and taken from the passage.  |
| <b>Partial</b><br>These responses discuss reasons for only one or two of the moves described in the article. They receive credit for one explanation if they state that the article did not provide possible reasons for the first move.  |
| <b>Unsatisfactory</b><br>These responses do not identify the reasons provided by the article for any of the moves that were made by the Anasazi. These responses may provide some facts about the Anasazi but do not relate them to any of the moves.   |

[Extensive, 9 percent; Essential, 16 percent; Partial, 56 percent; Unsatisfactory, 15 percent]

**Question 3. If you had lived with the Anasazi at Mesa Verde, would you have preferred living on the top of the mesa or in the cliff houses built into the alcoves? Explain your preference by using information from the article.**

### Scoring Guide

| Score and Description   |
|---|
| <p><b>Evidence of Full Comprehension</b></p> <p>These responses state a preference and provide an explanation that reflects an appropriate interpretation of information in the article. The evidence must logically support the preference and must come directly from the article.</p>  |
| <p><b>Evidence of Partial or Surface Comprehension</b></p> <p>These responses state a preference but explain it with a vague or somewhat unclear interpretation of the information in the article. Or, they may not state a preference, but they may use information from the article to explain the conditions on top of the mesa and in the alcoves. Or, they state a preference but use information from the article that does not support their preference.</p> |
| <p><b>Evidence of Little or No Comprehension</b></p> <p>These responses contain inappropriate information from the article or personal opinions about the article that demonstrate no understanding of life on top of the mesa or in the alcoves. They may answer the question but not explain their preference. Or, they may only repeat information from the prompt.</p>  |

[Full, 29 percent; Partial, 44 percent; Little or no comprehension, 22 percent]

**Question 4. If you could talk to the author of this article, what is one question you could ask her about the Anasazi that is not already answered in the article? Explain why you would want to know this information.**

### **Scoring Guide**

| <b>Score and Description</b>  |
|---|
| <b>Evidence of Full Comprehension</b><br>These responses pose one unanswered question about the Anasazi and provide a clear explanation of how this additional information would be useful. The explanation must be noncircular. For example, it may focus on why the question is puzzling or how the answer might be useful on a personal level.   |
| <b>Evidence of Partial or Surface Comprehension</b><br>These responses demonstrate some understanding of the article by posing a question that is not answered in the article. However, the question is accompanied with a circular explanation or no explanation. Or, they may ask a question about the Anasazi experience that is only vaguely answered in the text and provides essential information about the Anasazi. |
| <b>Evidence of Little or No Comprehension</b><br>These responses contain inappropriate information from the article or personal opinions about the article but fail to pose any questions concerning the Anasazi. Or, they pose questions that are already answered in the article. Or, they pose questions that provide no indication that they have read the passage (e.g., questions about the author).                  |

[Full, 15 percent; Partial, 51 percent; Little or no comprehension, 25 percent]

**Question 6. Imagine that you are living with the people of Mesa Verde during the 1200s when they left the mesa. Some of your friends and neighbors do not want to leave the area. Based on information in the article, what would you tell these people to convince them to leave?**

### **Scoring Guide**

| <b>Score and Description</b>   |
|--|
| <b>Evidence of Full Comprehension</b><br>These responses discuss one or more ways of convincing the Anasazi to leave the mesa. The arguments are based on appropriate information from the article.  |
| <b>Evidence of Partial or Surface Comprehension</b><br>These responses discuss one or more ways of convincing the people to leave the mesa. They do so, however, with arguments based on personal conjecture rather than information from the text. Or, they use broad statements such as “If you stay, you will die” rather than specific information from the article. |
| <b>Evidence of Little or No Comprehension</b><br>These responses contain inappropriate information from the article or personal opinions about the article that fail to address the need to leave the mesa. Or, they address the issue using inaccurate information to support their opinion.  |

[Full, 41 percent; Partial, 29 percent; Little or no comprehension, 22 percent]

**Question 9. Some people say that the Anasazi's success as a civilization may have actually caused their own decline. Using information in the article, explain why you agree or disagree with this statement.**

## Scoring Guide

| Score and Description  |
|--|
| <p><b>Extensive</b></p> <p>These responses assess the statement and provide an explanation that focuses on more than one aspect of the Anasazi's lifestyle. They demonstrate an explicit understanding of causal relationships between events and outcomes by connecting and integrating ideas across the text with their own ideas about the statement. Or, they must demonstrate their understanding of the paradox of success leading to decline.</p> |
| <p><b>Essential</b></p> <p>These responses state whether they agree or disagree with the statement and provide an appropriate explanation that is based on information in the article. The explanation must demonstrate a clear understanding of the statement.</p>  |
| <p><b>Partial</b></p> <p>These responses state whether they agree or disagree with the statement, but their explanation is based solely on inappropriate information from the text. Or, they provide some information from the article about the Anasazi but do not relate it to why the civilization declined.</p>  |
| <p><b>Unsatisfactory</b></p> <p>These responses do not discuss the validity of the statement. Or, they simply state their agreement with no explanation or an explanation relying on circular reasoning. Or they give an elaborate opinion that is not text-based.</p>   |

[Extensive, 12 percent; Essential, 16 percent; Partial, 30 percent; Unsatisfactory, 25 percent]

## **Appendix B**

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### **NAEP Reading Framework Panels**

# NAEP Reading Framework Panels

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## 2002 Reading Framework Advisory Panel

**Phyllis Aldrich (Chair)**

Curriculum Coordinator  
Saratoga-Warren BOCES  
Saratoga Springs, New York

**Marilyn Adams**

Senior Scientist  
BBN Laboratories, Inc.  
Cambridge, Massachusetts

**Peter Afflerbach**

Professor  
University of Maryland  
College Park, Maryland

**Rosalinda Barrera**

Professor  
University of Illinois  
Champaign, Illinois

**Sheila Colson**

English Teacher  
Andrew Hamilton Elementary  
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

**Janet Jones**

Reading Resource Teacher  
Berry Elementary School  
Waldorf, Maryland

**Peggy McCardle**

Associate Chief  
Child Health & Behavior Branch  
National Institute for Child Health and  
Human Development  
Rockville, Maryland

**Patricia McGonegal**

English Teacher  
Mount Mansfield High School  
Jericho, Vermont

**Jane Murray**

English Teacher  
The Levy Curriculum Center  
Manhattan Beach, California

**Peggy Peterson**

Mississippi Department of Education  
Jackson, Mississippi

**Sheila Potter**

Former Michigan Department of  
Education official  
Lansing, Michigan

**Cathy Roller**

Director for Research and Policy  
International Reading Association  
Newark, Delaware

**Mary Rogers Rose**

North Carolina Department of Education  
Raleigh, North Carolina

**Steve Stahl**

Professor  
University of Georgia  
Athens, Georgia

## Consultants

**Suzanne Clewell**

Supervisor of Reading, retired  
Montgomery County Public Schools  
Rockville, Maryland

**Barbara Kapinus**

Reading Consultant  
Hyattsville, Maryland

## **1992 Steering and Project Planning Committees**

### **Steering Committee**

#### **American Association of School Administrators**

Gary Marx, Associate Executive Director  
Arlington, Virginia

#### **American Educational Research Association**

Carole Perlman, Director of Research and Evaluation  
Chicago, Illinois

#### **American Federation of Teachers**

Marilyn Rauth, Director of Educational Issues  
Washington, D.C.

#### **Association of State Assessment Programs**

Edward Roeber, Co-Chairman  
Lansing, Michigan

#### **Association of Supervision and Curriculum Development**

Helene Hodges  
Alexandria, Virginia

#### **Council of Chief State School Officers**

H. Dean Evans, Superintendent of Public Instruction  
State Department of Education  
Indianapolis, Indiana

#### **National Alliance of Business**

Esther Schaeffer  
Washington, D.C.

#### **National Association of Elementary School Principals**

Kathleen Holliday, Principal  
Potomac, Maryland

#### **National Association of Secondary School Principals**

Scott Thompson, Executive Director  
Reston, Virginia

#### **National Association of Test Directors**

Paul LeMahieu  
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

#### **National Catholic Education Association**

Robert J. Kealey  
Washington, D.C.

#### **National Education Association**

Ann Smith, Board Member  
Ormond Beach, Florida

#### **National Governors' Association**

Mike Cohen  
Washington, D.C.

#### **National Parent-Teacher Association**

Ann Kahn  
Alexandria, Virginia

#### **National School Board Association**

Harriet C. Jelnek, Director  
Rhineland, Wisconsin

### **Project Planning Committee**

#### **Marilyn Adams**

BBN Laboratories  
Cambridge, Massachusetts

#### **Marsha Delain**

South Carolina Department of Education  
Columbia, South Carolina

#### **Lisa Delpit**

Institute for Urban Research  
Morgan State University  
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#### **William Feehan**

Chase Manhattan Bank  
New York, New York

#### **Philip Gough**

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University of Texas at Austin  
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#### **Edward Haertel**

Stanford University  
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**Elfrieda Hiebert**

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**Janet Jones**

Charles County Public Schools  
Waldorf, Maryland

**Judith Langer**

School of Education  
State University of New York  
Albany, New York

**P. David Pearson**

University of Illinois  
College of Education  
Champaign, Illinois

**Charles Peters**

Oakland Schools  
Pontiac, Michigan

**John P. Pikulski**

College of Education  
University of Delaware  
Newark, Delaware

**Keith Stanovich**

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