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**New York State Testing Program  
Grade 8 Common Core  
English Language Arts Test**

**Released Questions with Annotations**

**August 2013**



THE STATE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT / THE UNIVERSITY OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK /  
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## **New York State Testing Program Grade 8 Common Core English Language Arts Test**

### **Released Questions with Annotations**

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

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

#### ***Annotated Questions Are Teaching Tools***

The released questions are intended to help students, families, educators, and the public understand how the Common Core is different. The annotated questions will demonstrate the way the Common Core should drive instruction and how tests have changed to better assess student performance in accordance with the instructional shifts demanded by the Common Core. They are also intended to help educators identify how the rigor of the State tests can inform classroom instruction and local assessment. To this end, these annotated questions will include instructional suggestions for mastery of the Common Core Learning Standards. (Note that these suggestions are included in the multiple-choice question annotations and will be included in the constructed-response question annotations in a forthcoming addendum.)

The annotated questions will include both multiple-choice and constructed-response questions. With each multiple-choice question released, a rationale will be available to demonstrate why the question measures the intended standards; why the correct answer is correct; and why each wrong answer is plausible but incorrect. Additionally, for each constructed-response question, there will be an explanation for why the question measures the intended standards and sample student responses that would obtain each score on the rubric.

#### ***Understanding ELA Annotated Questions***

##### **Multiple Choice**

Multiple-choice questions are designed to assess Common Core Reading and Language Standards. They will ask students to analyze different aspects of a given text, including central idea, style elements, character and plot development, and vocabulary. Almost all questions, including vocabulary questions, will only be

answered correctly if the student comprehends and makes use of the whole passage. For multiple-choice questions, students will select the correct response from four answer choices.

Multiple-choice questions will assess Reading Standards in a range of ways. Some will ask students to analyze aspects of text or vocabulary. Many questions will require students to combine skills. For example, questions may ask students to identify a segment of text that best supports the central idea. To answer correctly, a student must first comprehend the central idea and then show understanding of how that idea is supported. Questions will require more than rote recall or identification. Students will also be required to negotiate plausible, text-based distractors<sup>1</sup>. Each distractor will require students to comprehend the whole passage.

The rationales describe why the distractors are plausible but incorrect and are based in common misconceptions regarding the text. While these rationales will speak to a possible and likely reason for selection of the incorrect option by the student, these rationales do not contain definitive statements as to why the student chose the incorrect option or what we can infer about knowledge and skills of the student based on their selection of an incorrect response. These multiple-choice questions were designed to assess student proficiency, not to diagnose specific misconceptions/errors with each and every incorrect option.

The annotations accompanying the multiple-choice questions will also include instructional suggestions for mastery of the Common Core Learning Standard measured.

### **Short Response**

Short-response questions are designed to assess Common Core Reading and Language Standards. These are single questions in which students use textual evidence to support their own answer to an inferential question. These questions ask the student to make an inference (a claim, position, or conclusion) based on his or her analysis of the passage, and then provide two pieces of text-based evidence to support his or her answer.

The purpose of the short-response questions is to assess a student's ability to comprehend and analyze text. In responding to these questions, students will be expected to write in complete sentences. Responses should require no more than three complete sentences.

The rubric used for evaluating short-response questions can be found at [www.engageny.org/resource/test-guides-for-english-language-arts-and-mathematics](http://www.engageny.org/resource/test-guides-for-english-language-arts-and-mathematics).

### **Extended Response**

Extended-response questions are designed to measure a student's ability to **Write from Sources**. Questions that measure Writing from Sources prompt students to communicate a clear and coherent analysis of one or two texts. The comprehension and analysis required by each extended response is directly related to grade specific reading standards.

Student responses are evaluated on the degree to which they meet grade-level writing and language expectations. This evaluation is made using a rubric that incorporates the demands of grade specific Common Core Writing, Reading, and Language standards. The integrated nature of the Common Core Learning Standards for ELA and Literacy require that students are evaluated across the strands (Reading, Writing, and Language) with longer piece of writing such as those prompted by the extended-response questions.

The information in the annotated extended-response questions focuses on the demands of the questions and as such will show how the question measures the Common Core Reading standards.

The rubric used for evaluating extended responses can be found at [www.engageny.org/resource/test-guides-for-english-language-arts-and-mathematics](http://www.engageny.org/resource/test-guides-for-english-language-arts-and-mathematics).

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<sup>1</sup> A distractor is an incorrect response that may appear to be a plausible correct response to a student who has not mastered the skill or concept being tested.

***These Released Questions Do Not Comprise a Mini Test***

This document is NOT intended to show how operational tests look or to provide information about how teachers should administer the test; rather, its purpose is to provide an overview of how the new test reflects the demand of the CCSS.

The released questions do not represent the full spectrum of standards assessed on the State tests, nor do they represent the full spectrum of how the Common Core should be taught and assessed in the classroom. Specific criteria for writing test questions as well as additional test information is available at [www.engageny.org/common-core-assessments](http://www.engageny.org/common-core-assessments).

# Directions

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Read this passage. Then answer questions XX through XX.

## Jason's Gold

by Will Hobbs

When the story broke on the streets of New York, it took off like a wildfire on a windy day.

"Gold!" Jason shouted at the top of his lungs. "Read all about it! Gold discovered in Alaska!"

5 The sturdy fifteen-year-old newsboy waving the paper in front of Grand Central Depot had arrived in New York only five days before, after nearly a year spent working his way across the continent.

"Gold ship arrives in Seattle!" Jason yelled. "EXTRA! EXTRA! Read all about it! Prospectors from Alaska. Two tons of gold!"

10 The headline, GOLD IN ALASKA, spanned the width of the entire page, the letters were so enormous.

People were running toward him like iron filings to a magnet. He was selling the *New York Herald* hand over fist. His sack was emptying so fast, it was going to be only a matter of minutes before he was sold out.

15 "Prospectors from Alaska arrive in Seattle! Two tons of gold!"

Jason wanted to shout, Seattle is where I'm from! but instead he repeated the cry "Gold ship arrives in Seattle," all the while burning with curiosity. Beyond the fact that the ship had arrived this very day—this momentous seventeenth of July, 1897—he knew nothing except what was in the headlines. He hadn't even had a chance to read the story yet.

It was unbelievable, all this pushing and shoving. A woman was giving a man a purse-beating over his head for knocking her aside. "Skip the change!" a man in a dark suit cried amid the crush, pressing a silver dollar into Jason's hand for the five-cent newspaper. "Just give me the paper!"

25 When there was only one left, Jason took off running with it like a dog with a prize bone. In the nearest alley, he threw himself down and began to devour the story.

*At six o'clock this morning a steamship sailed into Seattle harbor from Alaska with two tons of gold aboard. Five thousand people streamed from the streets of Seattle onto Schwabacher's Dock to meet the gold ship, the Portland.*

30 Five thousand people at Schwabacher's Dock! He knew Schwabacher's like the back of his hand. Mrs. Beal's rooming house was only six blocks away! Were his brothers,

Abraham and Ethan, among the five thousand? Maybe, but probably not. At that hour they would have been on their way to work at the sawmill. Would they have risked being fired for arriving late? He didn't think so. His older brothers were such cautious sorts.

35 Hurriedly, Jason read on:

*"Show us your gold!" shouted the crowd as the steamer nosed into the dock.*

*The prospectors thronging the bow obliged by holding up their riches in canvas and buckskin sacks, in jars, in a five-gallon milk can, all manner of satchels and suitcases. One of the sixty-eight, Frank Phiscator, yelled, "We've got millions!"*

40 Jason closed his eyes. He could picture this just as surely as if he were there. He'd only been gone for ten months. Suddenly he could even smell the salt water and hear the screaming of the gulls above the crowd. Imagine, he told himself, *millions in gold*. His eyes raced back to the newsprint:

45 *Another of the grizzled prospectors bellowed, "The Klondike is the richest goldfield in the world!"*

*"Hurrah for the Klondike!" the crowd cheered. "Ho for the Klondike!"*

*Klondike*. Jason paused to savor the word. "Klondike," he said aloud. The name had a magical ring to it, a spellbinding power. The word itself was heavy and solid and dazzling, like a bar of shiny gold.

50 *One of the newly rich disembarking the ship was a young man from Michigan who'd left a small farm two years before with almost nothing to his name. As he wrestled a suitcase weighing over two hundred pounds down the gangplank, the handle broke, to a roar from the crowd.*

It almost hurt reading this, it was so stupendous. Two hundred pounds of gold!

55 That man had left home with almost nothing to his name, Jason thought, just like I did. That could have been *me* if only I'd heard about Alaska ten months ago, when I first took off.... It could have been Jason Hawthorn dragging a fortune in gold off that ship.

60 Jason could imagine himself disembarking, spotting his brothers in the crowd, seeing the astonishment in their eyes...their sandy-haired little brother returning home, a conquering hero!

"Dreams of grandeur," he whispered self-mockingly, and found the spot where he'd left off:

65 *A nation unrecovered from the panic of '93 and four years of depression now casts its hopeful eyes upon Alaska. Today's events, in a lightning stroke, point north from Seattle toward that vast and ultimate frontier whose riches have only begun to be plumbed. It may well be that a gold rush to dwarf the great California rush of '49 may already be under way as these lines are penned, as untold numbers of argonauts, like modern Jasons, make ready to pursue their Golden Fleeces. Klondike or Bust!*

Based on the entire passage, what is the meaning of the word “momentous” in line 18?

- A** causes much happiness
- B** creates a great disturbance
- C** occurs simply by chance
- D** becomes historically important

**Key: D**

**MEASURES CCLS: L.8.4A:**

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

**a.** Use context (e.g., the overall meaning of a sentence or paragraph; a word’s position or function in a sentence) as a clue to the meaning of a word or phrase.

**HOW THIS QUESTION MEASURES L.8.4A:**

The question measures L.8.4A because it asks students to determine the meaning of a word, including the nuances of its connotative meaning, using the context of the story. To answer the question correctly, students must determine the relationship between the word “momentous” and the story.

**WHY CHOICE “D” IS CORRECT:**

Students who choose “D” demonstrate the ability to determine the meaning of a word in a story using both contextual clues and a range of strategies, including analysis of word roots. A student may use an analysis of word roots: “moment” (“a point in time”) and “ous” (“full of” or “possessing”) to arrive at an understanding of “momentous” to mean a point in time that is full of meaning, importance, potential, emotion, change, or power. Students may also use contextual clues like “burning with curiosity,” “arrived that very day,” and the details provided by the author showing the excitement over the discovery of gold, to arrive at the idea that the definition of “momentous” has to do with “time,” and significance, importance, meaning, emotion, potential, change, power or other related ideas. By additionally comprehending the historical significance of the events of the plot (particularly clear in lines 63 through 68) and their relationship to the author’s word choice, students choosing “D” understand that the unfolding events have a larger consequence than what is immediately happening to the prospectors, newspaper readers, Jason, and others.

**WHY THE OTHER CHOICES ARE INCORRECT:**

**Choice A:** Students who choose “A” may show a general understanding of the main event in the story: finding gold, as a happy occasion, evidenced primarily by the italicized accounts of gold-laden newly rich prospectors arriving to the awed onlookers in Seattle. However, students choosing this answer may not understand the connotation or nuances of the word which would take into account Jason’s conflicted emotions and the larger context of the discovery of gold as an event of broader historical significance.

**Choice B:** Students who choose “B” may show a general understanding of the word “momentous” as something causing much excitement and emotion by using context clues such as “People running toward him...,” “selling the New York Herald hand over fist,” Jason wanting to shout, and descriptions of the general commotion and excitement. However, the scope of “disturbance” does not accurately capture the connotation implied by the word “momentous,” nor does it connect the term to the historical nature of the passage. The connection to history and its importance is made clear in the final lines of the passage (lines 63 through 68) making option “D” the most accurate definition for “momentous” in the context of this story.

**Choice C:** Students who choose “C” may show an inaccurate interpretation of one aspect of the events of the story. Although some events of the story such as finding gold or the arrival of the ship that day have to some extent occurred by chance, they have not occurred “simply by chance,” nor would the arrival of a ship normally be described as a “chance” event. In addition, the story does not focus on any chance or random aspect of the day, but rather its importance.

**HOW TO HELP STUDENTS MASTER L.8.4A:**

Choices “A” and “B” are plausible for identifying an aspect of the story that may apply to the meaning of the word “momentous.” However, the aspects identified: “happiness,” “disturbance,” and “chance,” are too narrowly focused and fail to take into account the historical significance the author attaches to the meaning of “momentous” making option “D” the best choice. To help students succeed with questions like this, instruction can focus on analyzing how contextual details help a reader determine the meaning and connotation of specific words in a text, and deploying a range of strategies to determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words or phrases.



Read the sentence from line 12 of the passage.

**People were running toward him like iron filings to a magnet.**

The author uses this simile to emphasize that the people

- A** were interested in the news about the gold
- B** were curious about the ship's arrival
- C** wanted to become gold prospectors
- D** were unable to resist reading about the gold

**Key: D**

**MEASURES CCLS: RL.8.4:**

Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone, including analogies or allusions to other texts.

**HOW THIS QUESTION MEASURES RL.8.4:**

The question measures RL.8.4 because it asks students to interpret figurative language and connotation in a text by showing understanding of the comparison made in a simile. To answer correctly, students must analyze the emotions and ideas of the passage's events to determine how the author uses simile to develop a specific detail or scene in the story.

**WHY CHOICE "D" IS CORRECT:**

Students who choose "D" show an understanding that the simile compares the way people were running toward Jason and the news in the papers he is selling with the way iron filings are attracted to a magnet. Iron filings are strongly and unquestionably attracted to magnets suggesting that the people were "unable to resist" moving toward Jason because their interest in the information in the newspapers he is selling is irresistible. Students who choose this answer distinguish its connotation by choosing "unable to resist" over the less accurate options ("were interested in," and "were curious about") presented in "A" and "B."

**WHY THE OTHER CHOICES ARE INCORRECT:**

**Choice A:** Students who choose "A" may show some understanding of the simile and how it applies to the story, but do not demonstrate full comprehension of the connotation of the simile and how the author uses the simile for emphasis of a detail in the story. "Were interested in" shows an understanding of the idea of attraction expressed by the simile; however, this option does not express the degree of attraction implied by the strong and unequivocal way iron filings are attracted to magnets. "Were unable to resist" more accurately describes the particular connotation of the attraction being described in the simile than does "were interested."

**Choice B:** Students who choose "B" may show an understanding of the idea of attraction expressed in the simile, but do not demonstrate full comprehension of the connotation of the simile and how the author uses the simile for emphasis of a detail in the story. By describing the interest people had in the news about the discovery of gold as being like "iron filings to a magnet," the author is qualifying the attraction as strong and unequivocal. "Curious" does not express this attraction as accurately as "unable to resist." In addition, the topic of the peoples' attraction ("the ship's arrival") is not as accurate expression of what the people are interested in as "reading about the gold" is in option "D."

**Choice C:** Students who choose “C” may show an understanding that the people, Jason in particular, are highly interested in gold prospecting, but this does not mean that they themselves wish to become gold prospectors. Students choosing this answer may misunderstand the emphasis intended by the simile, inaccurately inferring that the people were attracted to the news Jason is selling because the people wanted to become gold prospectors.

**HOW TO HELP STUDENTS MASTER RL.8.4:**

Answer choices “A,” “B,” and “C” are all plausible for expressing the idea of attraction suggested by the simile; however, none of them express the degree of attraction and the connotation of the attraction as accurately as “D.” “Curious,” “interested,” and “wanting” can stand in for “filings to a magnet,” but not as accurately as “unable to resist” in choice “D.” “A,” “B,” and “C” also each name a component or related aspect of what the people were attracted to but not as precisely as the topic in “D.” “News about the gold,” “the ship’s arrival,” and “becoming gold prospectors,” are part of what the people are interested in or could be interested in, but “reading about the gold” in choice “D” most exactly expresses what the people are attracted to. To help students succeed with questions like this, instruction can focus on analyzing how authors use figurative language such as similes and metaphors to describe specific elements in a story.

Why does the author alternate between sharing information from the newspaper and showing Jason's response?

- A** to suggest why Jason misses his brothers
- B** to show Jason's feelings at the moment they occur
- C** to portray Jason's interest in reading
- D** to show why Jason might want to return home

**Key: B**

**MEASURES CCLS: RL.8.6**

Analyze how differences in the points of view of the characters and the audience or reader (e.g., created through the use of dramatic irony) create such effects as suspense or humor.

**HOW THIS QUESTION MEASURES RL.8.6:**

This question measures RL.8.6 because it asks students to analyze why an author shifts points of view in a passage and how this affects the meaning of passage. To answer correctly, students must distinguish between various points of view including newspaper quotes, dialogue, and the author's voice which is used to express Jason's own thoughts and to describe the scene. Students then must determine that the effect of alternating points of view is to highlight Jason's feelings at the moment they occur.

**WHY CHOICE "B" IS CORRECT:**

Students who choose "B" show an understanding of the different points of view in the passage and the effect of shifting the point of view back and forth from the quoted sections of the newspaper to Jason's reactions in general. By alternating quotations of the newspaper story with Jason's feelings at the moment they occur, the author makes the passage more exciting, urgent, and immediate.

**WHY THE OTHER CHOICES ARE INCORRECT:**

**Choice A:** Students who choose "A" may show an understanding that after two sections of the quoted newspaper, Jason thinks about his brothers in Seattle. In lines 31 through 34, Jason wonders if his brothers were present at the ship's arrival, decides that they were not, and recalls how their character differs from his. Lines 58 through 60 show Jason creating a hypothetical scenario and considering the reactions of his brothers. However, the details of his response do not make it apparent that he misses his brothers. Jason's thoughts on the newspaper article include information about other topics and feelings making the more general statement in choice "B" more accurate. Students choosing "A" may not understand that the author switches points of view to convey the erroneous inference that Jason misses his brothers. The author reveals Jason's overall feelings as they occur to create immediacy to his feelings.

**Choice C:** Students who choose "C" may show an understanding that Jason desires to read the newspaper, but may misinterpret the author's purpose for alternating the points of view. While the author shows that Jason is interested in reading, the purpose of alternating points of view is used to reveal his overall feelings. Students choosing this answer may not understand that its scope is limited, and may miss that "B" more accurately describes the author's use of this technique.

**Choice D:** Students who choose "D" may show an understanding that Jason imagines returning to Seattle, but may not understand that the choice is limited in its explanation as to why the author alternates points of view. Like in choice "C," the author uses a shift in narration to reveal a specific aspect of Jason's thoughts (in this case, his desire to return home), but the overall effect of this technique is to highlight Jason's thoughts and feelings in general throughout the story making "B" the more accurate choice.

**HOW TO HELP STUDENTS MASTER RL.8.6:**

While choices "A," "C," and "D" are plausible for conveying a real or inferred (correctly or incorrectly) aspect of Jason's response to the newspaper, only choice "B" accurately describes how the author uses a shift in point of view to highlight Jason's feelings throughout the story. The author's technique makes Jason's response to the news more immediate and engaging. The explanations provided in "A," "C," and "D" all show conclusions about the content of the passage which may or may not be accurate or well-supported and/or the explanations are not ones that this particular technique would be effective at generating. To help students succeed with questions like this, instruction can focus on analyzing the different ways authors use various points of view to create specific effects in a story's development and tone.

Which sentence from the passage **best** supports the conclusion that Jason is fascinated by the story of the discovery?

- A** “It was unbelievable, all this pushing and shoving.” (line 21)
- B** “When there was only one left, Jason took off running with it like a dog with a prize bone.” (lines 25 and 26)
- C** “That man had left home with almost nothing to his name, Jason thought, just like I did.” (lines 55 and 56)
- D** “It could have been Jason Hawthorn dragging a fortune in gold off that ship.” (line 57)

**Key: B**

**MEASURES CCLS: RL.8.1:**

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

**HOW THIS QUESTION MEASURES RL.8.1:**

The question measures RL.8.1 because it asks students to identify a correct citation of textual evidence that most strongly supports a specific conclusion about the story. To answer correctly, students must demonstrate an ability to match textual evidence to a conclusion and reject textual evidence which either weakly or erroneously supports the conclusion.

**WHY CHOICE “B” IS CORRECT:**

Students who choose “B” show an ability to distinguish the strongest support for a given conclusion. In this sentence, the author compares Jason rushing off to read the newspaper to that of “a dog with a prize bone.” Students who choose “B” demonstrate an understanding that this simile shows how Jason is eager and fascinated to get his chance to read the story everyone else has been clamoring to learn about.

**WHY THE OTHER CHOICES ARE INCORRECT:**

**Choice A:** Students who choose “A” show an understanding of the excitement the author creates by describing the throng of people eager to read about the discovery of gold. However, the interest of others does not clearly demonstrate why Jason is fascinated by the same events. His fascination is most accurately shown by his eagerness to finally read the newspaper account himself, making “B” the stronger choice.

**Choice C:** Students who choose “C” show an understanding that Jason is frustrated and senses a missed opportunity, but may mistake this detail for the primary reason driving his fascination. Although the connection amongst these feelings is credible, Jason’s fascination is primarily driven by his need to learn more making “B” the best choice.

**Choice D:** Like choice “C,” students who choose “D” may incorrectly conclude that Jason’s wistfulness, frustration, and feeling of missed opportunity solely account for his fascination of the story. While he may feel like he missed an opportunity after reading the story, Jason’s fascination is primarily driven by the stated interest of his customers and topic of the event. Students who choose “D” may not understand that the strongest moment of his fascination is quoted in choice “B” when he is finally able to read the account at his leisure.

## **HOW TO HELP STUDENTS MASTER RL.8.1**

Choices "A," "C," and "D" are all plausible for expressing different embedded emotions of Jason or others that might partially support his fascination with the story of discovery. "A" primarily expresses Jason's disbelief that others are also interested in the topic. "C" and "D" express Jason's later feelings of frustration, which could lead to continued fascination with the topic but may or may not have spurred his initial fascination. Only choice "B" clearly supports the idea that Jason is fascinated by the story of discovery by comparing his feelings at finally getting a chance to read the newspaper with the fascination a dog has over a bone. To help students succeed with questions like this, instruction can focus on building students' capacity to comprehend texts of grade-level complexity and analyzing how authors use specific details to develop various aspects of texts, including their main ideas.

Which detail would be **most** important to include in a summary of the passage?

- A** Jason had gone to New York instead of Alaska.
- B** The headline in the newspaper is written in large print.
- C** A boarding house is near the dock in Seattle.
- D** Jason's brothers work at a sawmill.

**Key: A**

**MEASURES CCLS: RL.8.2**

Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text, including its relationship to the characters, setting, and plot; provide an objective summary of the text.

**HOW THIS QUESTION MEASURES RL.8.2:**

This question measures RL.8.2 because it asks students to differentiate between details in a text and determine the detail that would be most important to include in a summary of the passage. To answer correctly, students must understand the central ideas and events of the passage and which details most strongly support and develop them.

**WHY CHOICE "A" IS CORRECT:**

Students who choose "A" show an understanding that the main character, Jason, has missed a historic opportunity to participate in the early stages of the Klondike gold rush because he chose to move to New York instead of remaining in Seattle. By choosing "A," students demonstrate a comprehension of the centrality of Jason's decision to move, and its effect on the development of the story and his emotions.

**WHY THE OTHER CHOICES ARE INCORRECT:**

**Choice B:** Students who choose "B" may mistake the size of the headline as an essential detail that conveys the importance of the event. However, other, more critical details convey this importance. The size of the headline is a minor detail in the story and would not be essential to include in a summary. Conversely, leaving out the detail summarized in choice "A" would create an incomplete summary, making "A" the best choice.

**Choice C:** Students who choose "C" show an understanding that Jason has a connection to the story due to the fact that he lived near where the events of the newspaper account are taking place. However, it is not just Jason's presence in Seattle, but also his decision to move to New York that drive the emotional content of the narrative making "A" a superior choice.

**Choice D:** Students who choose "D" show an understanding of Jason's connection to Seattle and because of how he wonders if his brothers are present at the docking of the ship he wishes he had been on. Although this detail helps reveal to the reader that Jason knows the area of the events well and that his brothers are different from him, it is a minor detail and does not support the most important ideas in the passage the way choice "A" does.

**HOW TO HELP STUDENTS MASTER RL.8.2:**

Answer choices "B," "C," and "D" are all plausible for pointing to bigger ideas in the passage. "B" points to the significance of the discovery of gold. "C" reminds readers that Jason used to live in Seattle, and choice "D" gives the reader insight into Jason's brothers; however, none of these choices is as central to the main events and ideas of the passage as choice "A," which provides the critical information that Jason went to New York instead of Alaska and is now seeing the consequences of his decision. Choices "B," "C," and "D" represent minor details and would not be essential to an objective summary of the passage. To help students succeed

with questions like this, instruction can focus on identifying central ideas of a text and distinguishing them from the minor details that may not be included in a summary even though they do advance the story.



As mentioned in line 16, Jason wants to shout “Seattle is where I’m from” to show that

- A** he has already heard this news
- B** he knows why the crowd is excited
- C** he knows the prospectors on the ship
- D** he has a personal connection to the events

**Key: D**

**MEASURES CCLS: RL.8.3**

Analyze how particular lines of dialogue or incidents in a story or drama propel the action, reveal aspects of a character, or provoke a decision.

**HOW THIS QUESTION MEASURES RL.8.3:**

The question measures RL.8.3 because it asks students to analyze how particular lines in a story propel the action and reveal aspects of a character. To answer correctly, students must first analyze how Jason’s desire fits into the overall narrative and relates to other aspects of his character, and then interpret the motivation behind his thoughts.

**WHY CHOICE “D” IS CORRECT:**

Students who choose “D” show an understanding of Jason’s frustration at having to wait to read a newspaper account about something he has a personal connection to and his anxiousness to know about an event he might have been able to participate in. In wanting to shout “Seattle is where I’m from,” Jason wishes to show that he is connected to the important news article and it holds special meaning to him.

**WHY THE OTHER CHOICES ARE INCORRECT:**

**Choice A:** Students who choose “A” may not understand that at this point in the story, Jason has only heard part of the news and is eager to read more about the events. His desire to shout stems from a desire to show his connection to events rather than to show others that he already knows about an event.

**Choice B:** Students who answer “B” show an understanding that Jason has some idea of why the crowd is excited. However, knowing why the crowd is excited merely increases Jason’s desire to gain further knowledge about the events described in the newspaper. He wants to shout “Seattle is where I’m from” to show his connection to events and participate in the excitement, not to show he knows why the crowd is excited.

**Choice C:** Students who choose “C” may misinterpret the statements Jason makes about the prospectors on the ship or make an incorrect inference that because Jason lived in Seattle he actually knows those on board. Although he imagines himself as a successful prospector stepping off the boat laden with gold, he does not actually know any of the prospectors on the boat.

**HOW TO HELP STUDENTS MASTER RL.8.3:**

While choices “A,” “B,” and “C” all contain details connected to why Jason might want to shout “Seattle is where I’m from,” only “D” accurately expresses his true motivation to show his personal connection to the unfolding events and desperation to know more about what is happening. Although Jason has heard some of the news, he has not heard all of it, and his wanting to shout is not motivated by the little knowledge he does have, making option “A” inaccurate. “B” expresses a partially true statement in that Jason knows why the crowd is excited, but it is his own excitement that makes their excitement meaningful and explains his desire to shout, making “B” inaccurate. Choice “C” expresses an erroneous conclusion. Jason knows Seattle but he does not know the prospectors on the ship and this is not why he wishes to shout about his connection to the

city or the information he means to convey by doing so. To help students succeed with questions like this, instruction can focus on analyzing how authors use specific details and dialogue to develop the characters' motivations and actions.

Read the excerpt from lines 63 through 65 of the passage.

*A nation unrecovered from the panic of '93 and four years of depression now casts its hopeful eyes upon Alaska. Today's events, in a lightning stroke, point north from Seattle toward that vast and ultimate frontier whose riches have only begun to be plumbed.*

What do these sentences **mainly** suggest?

- A** that Alaska was an exciting state
- B** that many Americans desired great wealth
- C** that the country was still a developing nation
- D** that a great discovery was inspiring the country

**Key: D**

**MEASURES CCLS: RL.8.1**

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

**HOW THIS QUESTION MEASURES RL.8.1:**

This question measures RL.8.1 because it asks students to connect textual evidence to an accurate inference that takes into account the entire passage. To answer correctly, students must comprehend the quoted lines which place the passage in a broader historical context and give the events of Jason's day a deeper meaning. In addition, students must rule out inferences that are less strongly supported, inaccurate, or more loosely connect to the events of the passage.

**WHY CHOICE "D" IS CORRECT:**

Students who choose "D" show an understanding of the historical connection made between the quoted lines of the item and the main theme of the events of the passage. The quoted lines express a generalized significance to the discovery of gold in Alaska suggesting that the discovery will inspire a country struggling from a recent depression. By answering "D," students also show an understanding of a central theme of the passage. The crowds thronging to read about the discovery, the excitement of the newspaper writers, and Jason's excitement all help support the idea that the country is inspired by the events as well.

**WHY THE OTHER CHOICES ARE INCORRECT:**

**Choice A:** Students who choose "A" show an understanding of the significance and excitement occurring in Alaska, but this choice does not address how the excitement in Alaska is inspiring the nation. Students may not connect the events in Alaska to the rest of the passage and the larger historical context of the events unfolding there.

**Choice B:** Students who choose "B" show an understanding of the phrase "riches to be plumbed" in the provided lines, and how the excitement over the discovery of gold suggests that many Americans desire great wealth, but this conclusion fails to express the variety of ways the event itself inspires an entire nation as evidenced by the reactions of Jason, those in Seattle and New York, and newspaper writers. Students answering "B" may not understand the historical impetus for discovery as well.

**Choice C:** Students who choose "C" show an understanding of the country's apparent economic struggles, but may misunderstand the article as inferring that the country is still developing. While the story does mention the recent depression, there is not substantial evidence for the inference made in choice "C," leaving "D" as the most accurate inference of the provided passage.

**HOW TO HELP STUDENTS MASTER RL.8.1:**

Choices "A," "B," and "C" are all plausible for expressing reasonably supportable inferences about the quoted lines; however, none of them fully address the importance of the quoted lines as well as choice "D" which places the information in historical context and connects the lines to ideas and themes in the rest of the story. To help students succeed with questions like this, instruction can focus on building students' capacity to comprehend grade-level complex texts, and using textual evidence to analyze inferences about various aspects of texts, including their main ideas.

## Brain Birds: Amazing Crows and Ravens

by Terry Krautwurst

*No matter where you live, they're your neighbors. You might want to watch them—carefully.*

Let me introduce you to the Corvid family. Like all families, they have their faults. But I think you'll like them anyway, once you get to know them. They're sociable—if a bit loud, especially at gatherings. They're smart and perceptive—though some might say cunning and *deceptive*. And they're exceedingly resourceful—come to think of it, you might keep a close eye on your possessions. They've been known to steal—food, trinkets, baby animals.



Don't worry. I'm speaking not of any human family, but of the bird family Corvidae, and particularly the crows and ravens in the clan *Corvus*. Like most members of that genus—which in North America also includes magpies, nutcrackers and jays—crows and ravens are sturdy, stout-beaked, long-legged birds with powerful wings. They also have something of an attitude, which can vary from aloof to in-your-face.

You can forgive them for their superior airs<sup>1</sup> though, when you consider their resumes. Crows and ravens are the stuff of legend; for centuries, they have been revered and reviled, fawned over and feared by humans. Shakespeare wrote them into his plays, Thoreau into his musings<sup>2</sup>, Poe into his horror tales. Shrines have been built to them; songs sung; chants chanted. Oh—and one more thing: Crows and ravens are the eggheads of the bird world and thus the darlings of avian science. With the arguable exception of parrots, they're the smartest winged species on the planet. They've even outperformed monkeys in some psychological tests. Truth be told, they've outsmarted many a human, too.

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<sup>1</sup>**superior airs:** showing an attitude of self-importance or overconfidence

<sup>2</sup>**musings:** thoughts

## THEY'RE EVERYWHERE

Some 40-plus species of crows and ravens inhabit the skies worldwide over virtually every terrain, from desert to tropics to tundra. In the contiguous United States, the American crow (*Corvus brachyrhynchos*) is easily the most common. Three other crows claim American territory: The slightly smaller fish crow (*C. ossifragus*) ranges along the East Coast and through the Gulf States east of Texas; the Northwestern crow (*C. caurinus*) occupies the Pacific Seacoast from upper British Columbia to the northwestern tip of Washington; and the Mexican or Tamaulipas crow (*C. imparatus*) calls southernmost Texas its home.

Geographically, the crow's larger cousin, the common raven (*C. corax*), is more broadly distributed. Its overall range encompasses almost all of Canada and Alaska; most of the western United States; and New England and the Appalachian mountains. In reality, though, the common raven is less common across its range as a whole, except in higher elevations. Like hawks and eagles, ravens prefer high places from which to search for food.

Although crows and ravens apparently have no trouble telling one another apart, humans have a harder time discerning the distinctions. Size would seem to matter, since an average raven is far larger (2 to 4 pounds, with a wingspan up to 4 feet) than a correspondingly average crow (1 to 1½ pounds, with a wingspan up to 3 feet). But if you judge strictly by size, you can easily mistake a small raven for a large crow or vice versa.



A raven steals a ski cap.

Finally, listen to the bird's calls. The crow's trademark *caw caw* doesn't remotely resemble the raven's characteristic utterance, a deep guttural *crrroak* or *naaaaaahk*.

## SPEAKING OF INTELLIGENCE

That crows and ravens are classified as songbirds may come as a surprise, but it is the presence of a voice box, or syrinx, rather than talent for melody that qualifies them. They use their vocal equipment to communicate with a large vocabulary of expressive calls for courting, gathering, warning and more. Ornithologists<sup>3</sup> have identified as many as 24 crow calls and up to 64 distinct raven vocalizations.

But it's brainpower, not bravado vocals, that really sets crows and ravens apart from other animals. They have the largest cerebral hemispheres, relative to body size, of any birds—the raven's brain is the same size in relation to its body as a chimpanzee's. More

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<sup>3</sup>**Ornithologists:** scientists who study birds

significantly, crows and ravens apply their brainpower; they learn quickly, solve problems and store knowledge in long-term memories.

65 Furthermore, crows and ravens understand cause and effect. In the South Pacific, New  
Caledonian crows sculpt twigs into hooked probes that they use to pry out otherwise  
inaccessible grubs—they make their own “crowbars.” The same crows nip the edges of  
rigid leaves to create sawlike teeth, then shove barbed tools beneath leaf litter to spear  
70 prey. They also carry their tools with them on foraging<sup>4</sup> expeditions, and store them for  
later use.

Stories abound of crows or ravens  
dropping nuts or clam shells onto  
highways and other hard surfaces to  
break them open. In Japan, crows are  
75 reported to have taken the strategy a  
step further by placing nuts in front of  
the tires of cars stopped at red lights.

Scientific research confirms much  
of the anecdotal<sup>5</sup> evidence. In one study  
80 of captive birds, scientist Bernd  
Heinrich dangled bits of meat from the  
end of a 2-foot-long string tied to a perch. He then watched his test subjects—first a pair  
of American crows, and later five common ravens—attempt to bring home the bacon (in  
this case, it was actually salami). The crows tried flying at the food, then tugged at the  
85 string a few times, but gave up within 15 minutes. Time to study the situation didn't help;  
after 30 days, they still hadn't solved the problem. The ravens spent a few hours glancing  
at the puzzle, as if weighing the possibilities. Then one bird flew to the perch, hoisted a  
length of string up with its beak, stepped on the loop, pulled up another length, stepped  
on that loop, and so on until it had reeled in the food. Ultimately, three more ravens also  
90 solved the problem. Two improved on the technique by simply grabbing the string and  
side-stepping along the perch.



None of this would surprise ice fishermen in Finland, where hooded crows use the  
same pull-step-pull-step method to haul in fish on abandoned baited lines.

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<sup>4</sup>**foraging:** wandering around to search for food

<sup>5</sup>**anecdotal:** something that is based on a personal account of an incident

Explain how crows and ravens use their intelligence to help them find, capture, and eat food in the article “Brain Birds: Amazing Crows and Ravens.” Use **two** details from the article to support your answer.

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### **MEASURES CCLS: RI.8.1**

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

### **HOW THIS QUESTION MEASURES RI.8.1:**

This question measures RI.8.1 by asking students to locate and cite evidence from the text that most strongly supports analysis about how crows and ravens use their intelligence to help find, capture, and eat food.

### **CHARACTERISTICS OF RESPONSES RECEIVING FULL CREDIT:**

This question asks the student to locate and organize specific and relevant details in a text to elaborate on how crows and ravens find, capture, and eat food. Students can cite specific details about how crows and ravens use their intelligence to find, capture, and eat food. There are several examples in the text that discuss the intelligence of crows and ravens. An essay that receives full credit will use any of these relevant details to support an explanation of the birds’ intelligence.

Details that may be chosen to show that crows and ravens use their intelligence to find, capture, and eat food include:

- New Caledonian crows use twigs to create “crowbars” that help them pull out grubs. These birds also create leaves with saw-like edges that can be used to spear prey.
- Crows drop nuts and clam shells in front of cars to break the nuts open; some birds have even learned to place nuts in front of the tires of cars parked at stop lights.



- In one study, captive ravens figured out how to reel in a string of dangling meat in a way similar to crows observed in Finland that used a pull-step-pull-step method to haul up fish dangling on lines dropped in holes in the ice.

There is no single “correct” response, but rather responses that are defensible based on the Short-Response (2-Point) Holistic Rubric, and responses that are not. Student responses are evaluated on the relevance, accuracy, and sufficiency of details selected from the text and the organization of details in a logical manner. Student responses should include relevant inferences and conclusions. Responses should be in complete sentences where errors, if present, do not impact readability.

**SAMPLE STUDENT RESPONSES AND SCORES APPEAR ON THE FOLLOWING PAGES:**

Explain how crows and ravens use their intelligence to help them find, capture, and eat food in the article “Brain Birds: Amazing Crows and Ravens.” Use **two** details from the article to support your answer.

Crows and ravens use their intelligence to help them find, capture, and eat food. To find food, crows make their own “crowbars”. By biting rigid leaves, crows sharpen the teeth to pierce leaf litter and spear prey. In Japan, crows eat food by placing nuts in front of cars stopped at red lights. When the cars went forward, the nut would be open. Ravens, however, use a pull-step-pull-step method for obtaining food on a string. The ravens would also just sidestep along a flat surface, pulling the food. Crows and ravens use their intelligence to help them find, capture and eat food.

**Score Point 2 (out of 2 points)**

This response demonstrates evidence of analysis of the text where required by the prompt to explain how both crows and ravens use their intelligence to find, capture, and eat food (*crows make their own “crowbars” and Ravens, however, use a pull-step-pull-step method*). The response provides a sufficient number of concrete details from the text for support as required by the prompt (*crows sharpen the teeth to pierce leaf litter and spear prey and ravens would also just sidestep along a flat surface, pulling the food*). The response includes complete sentences where errors do not impact readability.

Explain how crows and ravens use their intelligence to help them find, capture, and eat food in the article “Brain Birds: Amazing Crows and Ravens.” Use **two** details from the article to support your answer.

Crows and ravens are known to be among the smartest birds on the planet. They would sometimes drop nuts or clam shells on hard surfaces to break them open. There were also rumors that in Japan, crows would drop nuts in front of tires at red lights. In the South Pacific crows also make weapons from twigs and use them on prey.

**Score Point 2 (out of 2 points)**

This response demonstrates evidence of analysis of the text where required by the prompt to explain how both crows and ravens use their intelligence to find, capture, and eat food (*They would sometimes drop nuts or clamshells on hard surfaces to break them open*). The response provides a sufficient number of concrete details from the text for support as required by the prompt (*There were also rumors that in Japan, crows would drop nuts in front of tires and crows also make weapons from twigs*). The response includes complete sentences where errors do not impact readability.

Explain how crows and ravens use their intelligence to help them find, capture, and eat food in the article “Brain Birds: Amazing Crows and Ravens.” Use **two** details from the article to support your answer.

drops nuts/shells on  
highways. puts nuts underneath  
stepped cars.

pull-reel method to bring in  
fishes.

**Score Point 1 (out of 2 points)**

This response provides a mostly literal recounting of details from the text to explain how crows and ravens use their intelligence to find, capture, and eat food (*drops nuts/shells on the highways. Puts nuts underneath stopped cars*).

Explain how crows and ravens use their intelligence to help them find, capture, and eat food in the article “Brain Birds: Amazing Crows and Ravens.” Use **two** details from the article to support your answer.

They drop nuts onto hard surfaces to break them open.

**Score Point 1 (out of 2 points)**

This response provides a mostly literal recounting of details from the text to explain how crows and ravens use their intelligence to find, capture, and eat food (*They drop nuts onto hard surfaces to break them open*). This response contains complete sentences where errors do not impact readability.

Explain how crows and ravens use their intelligence to help them find, capture, and eat food in the article "Brain Birds: Amazing Crows and Ravens." Use **two** details from the article to support your answer.

Crows and Ravens have intelligence. Crows have intelligence because they know when something get put on the ground. Ravens have intelligence by seeing the mice. They is why crows and Ravens are intelligence.

**Score Point 0 (out of 2 points)**

This response does not address any of the requirements of the prompt (*they know when something get put on the ground. Ravens have intelligence by seeing the mice*).

## A Soft Spot for Crows

*by David Shaw*

Crows are probably the most ignored bird species in North America. They are often viewed as pests, or at the very least as untrustworthy. Even the term for a group of crows, a “murder,” hardly creates positive associations. Yet these birds are everywhere. They are as common, and perhaps as despised, as pigeons. But there’s a lot more to the crow family than most people think.

### **It Runs in the Family**

The United States has four resident species of crows. The most abundant and widespread is the American crow, which lives across most of the lower 48 and southern Canada.

The slightly smaller northwestern crow has a nasal voice and occurs only along the coasts of the Pacific Northwest from Puget Sound to south central Alaska.

The fish crow is similar in size and voice to the northwestern crow but lives on the Atlantic coast and in the lower Mississippi River region.

And finally there is the Hawaiian crow, which, as the name implies, occurs only in Hawaii, and there only in a small area of forest. (A fifth species, the tamaulipas, dwells in northern Mexico and is sometimes seen in Texas’ lower Rio Grande valley. But it doesn’t appear to breed north of the border, so it’s not considered a true U.S. resident.)

I don’t remember my first sighting of a crow, though I suspect I was very young. Even after I’d developed as a birder, I’m still not sure when I first put that tick on my list. Strange, because for almost every other species I’ve seen, I can remember where I was, what the weather was like and who was with me. The crow? Nothing. Despite its abundance—or, more likely, because of it—I overlooked the crow, just as most people do.

During the 19th and early 20th centuries, crows were mercilessly pursued. Killed as farm pests, they declined and quickly became wary of people. But rather than flee to remote parts of the country as most hunted species did, crows found safety in cities and towns.

It seems odd, but this is a perfect example of the species’ discerning intelligence. Humans, they learned, will not shoot guns in a city. And food? Well, it’s everywhere! Garbage bins, dumps, picnic areas, parks and backyards were all-you-can-eat buffets to the newly arrived crows. They thrived, and continue to thrive, in our most populous areas.

## Secret Intelligence

30 Now I have a greater appreciation  
for crows than ever, even though I live  
in one of the few parts of the country  
where there are no crows at all! Here in  
interior Alaska, crows are replaced  
35 entirely by their larger cousins, ravens.  
So crows are a novelty to me. When I  
travel to southern Alaska or to the lower  
48, I look forward to watching them.  
Their antics are remarkable. Much like  
40 puppies, or even people, they are  
constantly at play—tussling in the air,  
feigning attacks and learning as they do.



In recent studies of northwestern crows, researchers from the University of  
Washington have determined that the species is capable not just of recognizing humans  
45 individually, but also of teaching their offspring which humans are dangerous.

The study went something like this. A biologist wearing a distinctive mask provided  
an unpleasant experience to adult crows by capturing, banding, and measuring them.  
Later, when the masked researcher walked below the nest, the banded adults gave alarm  
calls and dive-bombed the human.

50 The chicks, while never experiencing the negative associations for themselves, carried  
the fear and aggression toward the masked human—but not other humans—into their  
own adulthood. In short, they were taught to beware not of humans in general, but of one  
human in particular.

### A Different Point of View

This study, while fascinating, is only one example of how crows are capable of  
55 reasoning and solving problems in their environment. When I moved to Olympia,  
Washington, to attend college, I was intrigued by the many shells of clams and mussels  
along the roadsides and sidewalks of town. I couldn't for the life of me figure out how they  
had gotten from the beach, a few hundred yards away, to the pavement in such large  
numbers.

60 Then, one day, birding<sup>1</sup> along the Olympia waterfront, I paused to watch a pair of  
crows foraging<sup>2</sup> on the gravel beach. They were probing around the rocks with their long  
black bills when one popped up holding a small mussel. The bird flew into the misty air  
and passed over my head toward a nearby parking lot.

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<sup>1</sup>**birding:** birdwatching

<sup>2</sup>**foraging:** wandering around to search for food



65 Through my binoculars I watched as  
the crow hovered 20 feet above the  
pavement and let go of the mussel. It fell  
onto the concrete and shattered. The crow  
settled to the ground and pulled the tasty  
70 morsel from inside the broken shell. A  
moment later the bird was back on the  
beach searching for more, and my  
mystery was solved.

75 This kind of discovery makes birding  
in our own backyards—and city streets—  
fascinating. Even with our most common  
and unappreciated species, there are  
things to learn.

80 The crow is much more than a noisy  
pest. Catch one perched in the sunlight,  
and its feather will glitter with an  
iridescent sheen. Then watch as it inspects  
the world through dark, intelligent eyes.  
There's more going on behind those eyes  
than you might suspect. Observe for a few  
85 moments, or hours, and you're sure to  
learn something. So, too, will the crow.

### Interesting Facts about Crows

- Crows are a prominent part of the 1963 Alfred Hitchcock movie *The Birds*. Animal trainer Ray Berwick used several crows in the film, in part because the birds were easy to train.
- Jays and mockingbirds are not the only mimics in the birding world. Crows can mimic several animal sounds.
- Some scientific studies have indicated that crows know how to count.
- Though they are related, crows and ravens are different birds. They look alike, but on average, ravens are several inches longer.
- Crows can always be picked out by their familiar *caw-caw*.
- Crows are very social birds and will congregate in large numbers to sleep. It's common to find roosts with several hundred crows, or even thousands.
- As omnivorous birds, crows will consume almost anything edible. The oldest recorded wild American crow was 16, and a captive one in New York lived to be 59.

According to the author of “A Soft Spot for Crows,” the fact that crows live in cities or towns is an example of their intelligence. Explain the author’s reasoning and tell whether or not it is sound. Use **two** details from the article to support your answer.

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**MEASURES CCLS: RI.8.8:**

Delineate and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text, assessing whether the reasoning is sound and the evidence is relevant and sufficient; recognize when irrelevant evidence is introduced.

**HOW THIS QUESTION MEASURES RI.8.8:**

This question measures RI.8.8 by asking students to assess the soundness of the author’s claim that crows are intelligent because they are able to live in both cities and towns. Students can demonstrate an understanding of the text by citing and differentiating between relevant and irrelevant evidence to support a conclusion.

**CHARACTERISTICS OF RESPONSES RECEIVING FULL CREDIT:**

Students can use the text to explain and support their evaluation of the author’s claim as sound in a number of ways. The author provides several details to argue the intelligence of crows. An essay that receives full credit will cite any of these relevant details to support an explanation of the author’s reasoning and whether the reasoning is sound or not.

Possible details to include in a response include:

- Crows and ravens “learned” that unlike on farms and in the wilderness, humans “will not shoot guns in a city,” making cities safe.
- Crows and ravens also “learned” that food is available “everywhere” in cities and towns in “garbage bins, dumps, picnic areas, parks, and backyard.”

- The ingenuity of crows and ravens has allowed them to “thrive” even in the “most populous areas” of the country.

There is no single “correct” response, but rather responses that are defensible based on the Short-Response (2-Point) Holistic Rubric, and responses that are not. Student responses are evaluated on the relevance, accuracy, and sufficiency of details selected from the text and the organization of details in a logical manner. Student responses should include relevant inferences and conclusions. Responses should be in complete sentences where errors, if present, do not impact readability.

**SAMPLE STUDENT RESPONSES AND SCORES APPEAR ON THE FOLLOWING PAGES:**

According to the author of “A Soft Spot for Crows,” the fact that crows live in cities or towns is an example of their intelligence. Explain the author’s reasoning and tell whether or not it is sound. Use **two** details from the article to support your answer.

According to the author, the fact that crows live in towns and cities is an example of their intelligence. The author's statement is sound for a few reasons. For example, this shows they had the ability to adapt to their environment. Furthermore, the crows learned that in populated areas, people "will not shoot guns." In addition, crows developed the understanding that in large cities and towns food was everywhere, and they would not go hungry.

**Score Point 2 (out of 2 points)**

This response makes a valid claim from the text to explain the author’s reasoning and whether or not it is sound (*The author’s statement is sound for a few reasons and they had the ability to adapt to their environment*). The response provides a sufficient number of concrete details from the text for support as required by the prompt (*the crows learned that in populated areas, people “will not shoot guns” and food was everywhere and they would not go hungry*). This response includes complete sentences where errors do not impact readability.

According to the author of “A Soft Spot for Crows,” the fact that crows live in cities or towns is an example of their intelligence. Explain the author’s reasoning and tell whether or not it is sound. Use **two** details from the article to support your answer.

The fact that crows live in cities or towns is an example of their intelligence because it shows that the birds learned how safe the cities are. No shots are fired in the cities, so the crows won't be hunted. They also learned that there is a lot of food in the city. They can steal food from picnics, garbage cans, and dumpsters. The crows learned all of these things, so they started to live in the cities. So, clearly, the fact that crows inhabit cities and towns is an example of their intelligence.

**Score Point 2 (out of 2 points)**

This response makes a valid claim from the text to explain the author’s reasoning and whether or not it is sound (*The crows learned all of these things and clearly, the fact that crows inhabit cities and towns is an example of their intelligence*). The response provides a sufficient number of concrete details from the text for support as required by the prompt (*No shots are fired in the cities, so the crows won't be hunted and there is a lot of food in the cities. They can steal food from picnics, garbage cans, and dumpsters*). This response includes complete sentences where errors do not impact readability.

According to the author of "A Soft Spot for Crows," the fact that crows live in cities or towns is an example of their intelligence. Explain the author's reasoning and tell whether or not it is sound. Use **two** details from the article to support your answer.

Humans, they learned, will not shoot guns in a city. And food is everywhere. Garbage bins, dumps, picnic areas, parks and backyards.

**Score Point 1 (out of 2 points)**

This response is a mostly literal recounting of details from the text (*Humans, they learned, will not shoot guns in a city* and *food is everywhere and parks and backyards*). While the response provides some information from the text, no valid inference and/or claim is present.

According to the author of "A Soft Spot for Crows," the fact that crows live in cities or towns is an example of their intelligence. Explain the author's reasoning and tell whether or not it is sound. Use **two** details from the article to support your answer.

They live in citys } because they  
can easaly find food }

**Score Point 1 (out of 2 points)**

This response is a mostly literal recounting of details from the text (*they can easaly find food*). No valid inference and/or claim is present.

According to the author of "A Soft Spot for Crows," the fact that crows live in cities or towns is an example of their intelligence. Explain the author's reasoning and tell whether or not it is sound. Use **two** details from the article to support your answer.

According to the author of "A Soft Spot for Crows," the fact that crows live in cities or towns is a example of their intelligence. First, people see the crows. Second, one crow lived to be 59 in New York City. According to the author of "A Soft Spot for Crows," the fact that crows live in cities or towns is a example of their intelligence.

**Score Point 0 (out of 2 points)**

This response does not address any of the requirements of the prompt (*people see the crows and one crow lived to be 59 in New York City*).







### **MEASURES CCLS: RI.8.3:**

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

### **HOW THIS QUESTION MEASURES RI.8.3:**

This question measures RI.8.3 by asking students to analyze how the texts make connections and distinctions between individuals and ideas. Students can demonstrate an understanding of the texts by citing textual details to determine whether the authors' attitudes toward crows and ravens in each article are positive or negative.

### **CHARACTERISTICS OF RESPONSES RECEIVING FULL CREDIT:**

Students who can cite specific details to explain how the authors regard crows and ravens will demonstrate an understanding of the texts. There is no text-based evidence for a negative attitude; however, students must determine that the authors hold positive attitudes despite both authors acknowledging the negative associations commonly made about crows and ravens. Both passages offer several details that help the reader understand the author's attitudes towards crows and ravens. An essay receiving full credit will draw on a number of these examples to support an explanation of each author's attitude.

Students could answer in any manner of ways. Conclusions and support may include:

"Brain Birds": a positive attitude that admires the resourcefulness and cleverness of crows and ravens (despite their negative reputations) could be supported with

- the introductory quote: "But I think you'll like them, once you get to know them"
- descriptions of the many places the birds are referenced in literature and history such as Edgar Allan Poe's "The Raven," Shakespeare's plays, or Thoreau's essays
- the author describes crows and ravens as smart and clever and describes behaviors to prove it:
  - New Caledonian crows use twigs to create "crowbars" that help them pull out grubs. These birds also create leaves with saw-like edges that can be used to spear prey
  - Crows drop nuts and clam shells in front of cars to break the nuts open; some birds have even learned to place nuts in front of the tires of cars parked at stop lights
  - In one study, captive ravens figured out how to reel in a string of dangling meat much like crows in Finland seen to use a pull-step-pull-step method to haul up fish dangling on lines dropped in holes in the ice

"A Soft Spot for Crows": the author acknowledges that crows and ravens are commonly seen in a negative light and sets up the rest of the essay to convince readers otherwise:

- The author describes crows and ravens as "despised," "untrustworthy," "pests," and "ignored"
  - The author admits to overlooking crows as a birder and having to warm up to them despite birders commonly admiring birds that show intelligence, which crows do
- The author mainly presents a positive view by describing ways crows and ravens show their intelligence
  - They play like "puppies" and are enjoyable to observe
  - They can recognize humans and teach their young which humans are dangerous
    - The author describes how some crows dive-bombed a masked experimenter because the crows disliked the way they were handled and taught their young to do so as well
  - When the author moved to Olympia, he discovered that mussel shells far from shore were due to crows scooping mussels from the sea and dropping them on pavement to crack them open for their food
  - The author shows his admiration for crows by describing their intelligent eyes and the iridescent sheen of their feathers
  - He also encourages readers to go out and admire the birds themselves

There is no single “correct” response, but rather responses that sufficiently and clearly develop the topic based on the four overarching criteria in the Extended-Response (4-Point) Holistic Rubric, and responses that do not. Student responses are evaluated on the relevance, accuracy, and sufficiency of details selected from the text and the organization of details in a logical manner. Student responses should include an introductory and concluding comment and relevant inferences and conclusions. Responses should be in complete sentences where errors, if present, do not impact readability.

**SAMPLE STUDENT RESPONSES AND SCORES APPEAR ON THE FOLLOWING PAGES:**

In "Brain Birds" and "A Soft Spot for Crows," are the authors' attitudes toward crows and ravens positive or negative? How do the authors convey their views? Use examples from **both** articles to support your response.

In your response, be sure to

- identify the authors' attitudes toward crows and ravens
- explain how **each** author supports his views
- use examples from **both** articles to support your response

The articles "Brain Birds" and "A Soft Spot for Crows" both discuss ravens and crows. The authors both have certain common attitudes towards these smart birds. However, these authors convey these views differently.

The authors' attitudes toward crows and ravens are positive. Both the writers, for "Brain Birds" and "A Soft Spot for Crows" obviously admire these smart birds. However, they convey these views differently.

In "Brain Birds," the author conveys his positive attitude towards ravens and crows by describing certain reports and studies. These incidents then show how intelligent these birds can be. For example, the author describes an occurrence where crows use an impressive method

to get the fish on abandoned baited fishing lines. The author also describes how New Caledonian crows create tools out of twigs, called "crowbars," to help get food in hard to reach places.

In "A Soft Spot for Crows" the author conveys his attitude towards crows by describing his own feelings and experiences. For example, the author states how he observed crows taking mussel shells and smashing them into pavement to open them up. That way, they could eat the tasty morsel previously protected by the hard shell.

As you can see, both authors have positive attitudes towards crows and ravens. However, they convey these views differently in their writing.

#### Score Point 4 (out of 4 points)

This response clearly introduces a topic that is compelling and follows logically from the task and purpose (*The authors both have certain common views towards these smart birds and The authors' attitudes toward crows and ravens are positive*). The response demonstrates insightful analysis of both articles (*obviously admire these smart birds*). The topic is developed with the sustained use of relevant, well chosen facts and concrete details from both articles (*New Caledonian crows create tools out of twigs, called "crowbars" and he observed crows taking mussel shells and smashing them into pavement to open them up*). The response exhibits clear organization with the skillful use of appropriate and varied transitions (*For example, The author also describes, That way, As you can see*) to create a unified whole. The response establishes and maintains a formal style, with grade-appropriate, stylistically sophisticated language, and a notable sense of voice (*they could eat the tasty morsel previously protected by the hard shell*). The response demonstrates grade-appropriate command of conventions, with few errors.

In "Brain Birds" and "A Soft Spot for Crows," are the authors' attitudes toward crows and ravens positive or negative? How do the authors convey their views? Use examples from **both** articles to support your response.

In your response, be sure to

- identify the authors' attitudes toward crows and ravens
- explain how **each** author supports his views
- use examples from **both** articles to support your response

In "Brain Birds" and "A soft spot for crows", the authors have an attitude for crows and ravens. Their attitude is positive. Usually, they speak of the birds' high intelligence. ~~There are many details which supports this idea.~~

In "Brain Birds" and "A soft spot for crows", the authors' attitudes are positive towards crows and ravens. Both the authors speak of their high intelligence. The authors try to persuade readers that they are not pests, rather they are birds who should be recognized. Another quality the authors state is how fascinated they both are by the size of each bird. In both articles, the authors have a positive attitude towards crows and ravens.

In "Brain Birds" and "A Soft Spot for Crows" the authors talk about how crows manage to get their food out of mussels. They drop them on a concrete street and the mussel opens up that how they get their food. In "Brain Birds", the author states how the ravens managed to retrieve a piece of meat that was dangling from a 2-foot piece of string. The ravens used the pull-step pull-step method. In "A Soft Spot for Crows", the author states how a group of crows managed to beware of one particular human rather than all humans. He says how the crows attacked that one human!

Therefore, the attitude towards crows and ravens is positive. The authors portray ravens as intelligent birds. They contain numerous details which can show that these birds are unique. They should not be portrayed as pests!

#### Score Point 4 (out of 4 points)

This response clearly introduces a topic that follows logically from the task and purpose (*Their attitude is positive*). The response demonstrates insightful analysis of the texts (*The authors try to persuade readers that they are not pests, rather they are birds who should be recognized*). The topic is developed with the sustained use of relevant, well chosen facts and concrete details (*the authors talk about how crows manage to get their food out of mussels; In "Brain Birds, the author states how the ravens managed to retrieve a piece of meat; a group of crows managed to beware of one particular human rather than all humans*). The response exhibits clear organization, with the use of appropriate transitions (*Another quality, In both articles, Therefore*). A formal style is established and maintained using precise language and domain specific vocabulary (*recognized, fascinated, manage, unique*). The concluding statement follows from the topic and information presented (*these birds are unique. They should not be portrayed as pests*). The response demonstrates grade-appropriate command of conventions, with few errors.



In "Brain Birds" and "A Soft Spot for Crows," are the authors' attitudes toward crows and ravens positive or negative? How do the authors convey their views? Use examples from **both** articles to support your response.

In your response, be sure to

- identify the authors' attitudes toward crows and ravens
- explain how **each** author supports his views
- use examples from **both** articles to support your response

\* Crows are sociable - a bit loud, especially on gatherings. They're smart and perceptive" - "Brain Birds". "They are often viewed as pests and untrustworthy" - "A soft spot for crows". These two authors attitudes toward crows and ravens are both positive and negative

"Brain Birds", describes crows and ravens as, smart and perceptive. They're resourceful. They've been known to steal food, trinkets and baby animals. They've outsmarted many humans. Significantly ravens and crows use their brain. they learn fast, and solve problems and remember them for a very long time. They figure out puzzles (how to get what they want.)

"A soft spot for crows", describes crows

as pests and untrustworthy. They have a great intelligence. They know how to get their food. One crow would fly with a mussel or a clam and drop it into hard pavement about 20 feet high and it will shatter into pieces. And then the crow would eat it.

Therefore crows are very intelligent they've sometimes outsmarted people. Crows over pests. They could be fun to watch and learn from do when ever you see a crow or raven look and watch out for them closely.

### Score Point 3 (out of 4 points)

This response clearly introduces a topic that follows from the task and purpose (*These two authors attitudes toward crows and ravens are both positive and negative*) and demonstrates a grade-appropriate analysis of the texts (*Describes crows and ravens as, smart and perceptive. They're resourceful*). The topic is developed with relevant details from the texts (*They've been known to steal food, trinkets and baby animals and One crow would fly with a mussel or a clam and drop it...And then the crow would eat it*). The response exhibits clear organization, with the use of appropriate transitions (*They're resourceful, They've been known, They've outsmarted*). A formal style is established and maintained through the use of precise language and domain specific vocabulary (*resourceful, outsmarted, untrustworthy*). The response demonstrates a grade appropriate command of conventions, with few errors.

In "Brain Birds" and "A Soft Spot for Crows," are the authors' attitudes toward crows and ravens positive or negative? How do the authors convey their views? Use examples from **both** articles to support your response.

In your response, be sure to

- identify the authors' attitudes toward crows and ravens
- explain how **each** author supports his views
- use examples from **both** articles to support your response

In "Brain Birds" and "A Soft Spot for Crows," they both talk about birds. Both authors have an attitude towards the birds. The authors both support their views.

The authors both had attitudes towards the birds: They both are very positive about the crows and ravens. First, they say that the birds are intelligent because they have creative ways to get food. Second, they say how the birds teach their babies which humans are bad and which ones are good. Finally, the birds drop clams and nuts on highway so they break and they can get the food. That is what both authors' attitudes are towards

the birds.

Clearly, both species of bird are smart. Both authors speak of some interesting stuff about the birds. They both have creative ways to get food. Even after reading these articles I still HATE Crows!

**Score Point 3 (out of 4 points)**

This response introduces a topic in a manner that follows generally from the task and purpose (*The authors both support their views*). This response demonstrates grade-appropriate analysis of the texts (*The both are very positive about crows and ravens*). The topic is developed with relevant details from the texts (*the birds are intelligent because they have creative ways to get food, the birds teach their babies which humans are bad and which ones are good, the birds drop clams and nuts on highway so they break and they can get the food*). The response exhibits clear organization, with the use of appropriate transitions (*First, Second, Finally*). The concluding statement follows generally from the information presented (*They both have creative ways to get food. Even after reading these articles I still HATE Crows*). The response demonstrates a grade-appropriate command of conventions, with occasional errors that do not hinder comprehension.

In "Brain Birds" and "A Soft Spot for Crows," are the authors' attitudes toward crows and ravens positive or negative? How do the authors convey their views? Use examples from **both** articles to support your response.

In your response, be sure to

- identify the authors' attitudes toward crows and ravens
- explain how **each** author supports his views
- use examples from **both** articles to support your response

What are your thoughts toward crows? Well in stories "Brain Birds" and "A Soft Spot for Crows" both authors express their attitudes toward crows and ravens. And they both support their views toward these birds.

Both authors think that crows and ravens are very intelligent. For example one of the authors says that crows and ravens could understand cause and effect. Also one of the author says that they are so intelligent that they could recognize humans individually

and that they teach their babies that humans are dangerous. So readers should conclude both authors attitude toward crows and ravens.

**Score Point 2 (out of 4 points)**

This response introduces a topic in a manner that follows from the task (*both authors express their attitudes toward crows and ravens*). This response demonstrates grade-appropriate analysis of the texts (*Both authors think that crows and ravens are very intelligent*). The topic is partially developed with the use of some textual evidence (*crows and ravens could understand cause and effect and they could recognize humans individually and that they teach their babies that humans are dangerous*). This response exhibits some attempt at organization, with inconsistent use of transitions (*For example, Also, So readers*). The concluding statement follows generally from the information presented (*So readers should conclude both authors attitude toward crows and ravens*). The response demonstrates a grade-appropriate command of conventions, with occasional errors that do not hinder comprehension.

In “Brain Birds” and “A Soft Spot for Crows,” are the authors’ attitudes toward crows and ravens positive or negative? How do the authors convey their views? Use examples from **both** articles to support your response.

In your response, be sure to

- identify the authors’ attitudes toward crows and ravens
- explain how **each** author supports his views
- use examples from **both** articles to support your response

Each author has strong opinions that crows are intelligente. They says crows are smart on how to adapt to enviornmental danger and changes. When danger approaches they only attack the thing that is causing a threat. When there was danger in country they migrated to city because of food and you can't carry a gun in city. As you can see, crows are very intelligente creatures.

### Score Point 2 (out of 4 points)

This response introduces a topic that follows generally from the task and purpose (*Each author has strong opinions that crows are intelligente*). The response demonstrates a literal comprehension of the texts (*crows are smart on how to adapt to enviornmental danger and changes*). The response demonstrates an attempt to use evidence (*When there was danger in country they migrated to city because of food and you can't carry a gun in city*). This response exhibits some attempt at organization, with inconsistent use of transitions (*As you can see*). A concluding statement that follows generally from the topic is provided (*crows are very intelligente creatures*). The response demonstrates an emerging command of conventions, with some errors (*intelligente* and *enviornmental*) that may hinder comprehension.

In “Brain Birds” and “A Soft Spot for Crows,” are the authors’ attitudes toward crows and ravens positive or negative? How do the authors convey their views? Use examples from **both** articles to support your response.

In your response, be sure to

- identify the authors’ attitudes toward crows and ravens
- explain how **each** author supports his views
- use examples from **both** articles to support your response

In both “Brain Birds” and “A Soft Spot for Crows”, the author's attitude toward them are positive. The authors convey their view by using scientific research to confirm their view. They also give out facts about the crows and ravens. The authors both compare and contrast information about the birds just to create differences.

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

This response introduces a topic in a manner that follows generally from the task and purpose (*the author’s attitude toward them are positive*). The response demonstrates a literal comprehension of the texts (*convey their view by using scientific research to confirm their view*). The response demonstrates an attempt to use evidence, but only develops ideas with minimal evidence (*give out facts about the crows and ravens. The authors both compare and contrast information about the birds just to create differences*). The response exhibits little attempt at organization and does not provide a concluding statement. The response demonstrates an emerging command of conventions, with some errors (*attitude...are and authors...view*) that may hinder comprehension.



In “Brain Birds” and “A Soft Spot for Crows,” are the authors’ attitudes toward crows and ravens positive or negative? How do the authors convey their views? Use examples from **both** articles to support your response.

In your response, be sure to

- identify the authors’ attitudes toward crows and ravens
- explain how **each** author supports his views
- use examples from **both** articles to support your response

The authors had both positive and negative attitudes towards the crows and ravens in the article "Brain Birds" and "A soft spot for crows". The authors both pointed out good and bad things about the ravens and crows.

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

This response introduces a topic in a manner that follows generally from the task (*The authors had both positive and negative attitudes towards the crows and ravens*). The response demonstrates little understanding of the texts and an attempt to use minimal evidence (*both pointed out good and bad things about the ravens and crows*). The response exhibits little attempt at organization and does not provide a concluding statement. The response demonstrates an emerging command of conventions, with some errors (*article*) that may hinder comprehension.

In “Brain Birds” and “A Soft Spot for Crows,” are the authors’ attitudes toward crows and ravens positive or negative? How do the authors convey their views? Use examples from **both** articles to support your response.

In your response, be sure to

- identify the authors’ attitudes toward crows and ravens
- explain how **each** author supports his views
- use examples from **both** articles to support your response

That they different can of birds.

**Score Point 0 (out of 4 points)**

This response demonstrates a lack of comprehension of the task and little understanding of the texts (*That they different can of birds*). There is no evidence of organization and no concluding statement. The response is minimal, making assessment of conventions unreliable.