

Assessment Content at Grade 4

The content of the assessment varied by grade to reflect the reading skills appropriate for each grade level, with differing proportions of assessment questions devoted to each of the contexts for reading. At grade 4, assessment questions were divided between two of the contexts for reading: reading for literary experience and reading for information, with a slightly higher proportion of assessment questions devoted to reading for literary experience. The 2007 fourth-grade reading assessment included a total of 10 reading passages and 100 questions.

READING ACHIEVEMENT LEVELS AT GRADE 4

The following descriptions are abbreviated versions of the full achievement-level descriptions for grade 4 reading. The cut score depicting the lowest score representative of that level is noted in parentheses. The full descriptions can be found at <http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/reading/achieve.asp>.

Basic (208): Fourth-grade students performing at the *Basic* 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.

Proficient (238): Fourth-grade students performing at the *Proficient* 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.

Advanced (268): Fourth-grade students performing at the *Advanced* 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.

What Fourth-Graders Know and Can Do in Reading

The item map below is useful for understanding performance at different levels on the scale. The scale scores on the left represent the average scores for students who were likely to get the items correct or complete. The lower-boundary scores at each achievement level are noted in boxes. The descriptions of selected assessment questions are listed in the right column and indicate what students needed to do to answer the question successfully. For example, the

map on this page shows that fourth-graders performing near the middle of the *Basic* range (students with an average score of 220) were likely to be able to recognize the meaning of specialized vocabulary from context. Students performing near the lower end of the *Proficient* range (with an average score of 239) were likely to be able to identify a character's problem and describe how it was solved.

GRADE 4 NAEP READING ITEM MAP

	Scale score	Question description
	500	
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Advanced	347	Integrate text ideas to provide and explain their application
	326	Evaluate titles and support judgment about them
	324	Provide text-based inference and support with story details
	302	Explain causal relation between character's action and story outcome
	290	Read across text to provide a sequence of specific information
	290	Describe change in story character and explain cause
	284	Use dialogue or action to provide inference about character trait
	277	<i>Recognize author's purpose for including information</i>
	268	Provide causal relation between text ideas
	268	
Proficient	265	Connect relevant text ideas to provide an explanation
	264	Extend text information to provide an opinion
	257	<i>Recognize the main purpose of an article</i>
	250	<i>Use local story context to recognize meaning of a word</i> (shown on page 31)
	242	Retrieve relevant information to fit description
	239	Identify character's problem and describe how it was solved
	238	<i>Recognize the main message of a story</i>
	238	
Basic	237	Use story details to infer and describe character's feelings
	236	Use character trait to make a comparison
	231	<i>Recognize fact supported by text information</i>
	226	<i>Recognize paraphrase of explicitly stated supporting example</i>
	220	<i>Recognize meaning of specialized vocabulary from context</i>
	216	<i>Recognize support for interpretation of character</i>
	209	<i>Recognize literal information from text</i>
	208	
	205	<i>Make simple inference to recognize relationship of picture to text</i>
	203	<i>Recognize the main topic of an article</i>
200	Provide text-based explanation of character's importance to story (shown on page 32)	
193	<i>Recognize character's motivation for central story action</i>	
189	<i>Recognize important lesson based on story theme</i> (shown on page 30)	
158	Use explicitly stated information to provide character motivation (shown on page 33)	
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NOTE: Regular type denotes a constructed-response question. *Italic* type denotes a multiple-choice question. The position of a question on the scale represents the average 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. For constructed-response questions, the question description represents students' performance rated as completely correct. Scale score ranges for reading achievement levels are referenced on the map.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 2007 Reading Assessment.

Sample Reading Passage

The short story below is an example of what a fourth-grader might read for literary experience. The story centers around one main character and how her actions over the course of a single day bring about a change in her situation. The four sample questions that follow were based on this reading passage.

DISHPAN DUCKS

By Margaret Springer

Illustrated by Don Dyen

Rosa walked home from school slowly. The rows of apartment buildings and the streets full of cars looked all the same. And it was cold.

Rosa missed her country. She had begun to learn some English, but she did not know what to say or what to do when other kids were around. They were friendly, but Rosa felt safer being alone.

Behind Rosa's brick apartment building was a special place, a small creek where Rosa always stopped after school. There were ducks there, and she could speak to them in her language. The ducks seemed to understand.

Every afternoon Rosa sat on a concrete slab above the creek and watched the ducks until Mama came home from work.

Rosa did not feed them. She knew that most "people food" was not right for ducks. But she watched them swim and feed and walk up to her, quacking. Once they even walked over Rosa's tummy as she lay with her feet stretched out on the bumpy grass. They like me, Rosa said to herself.

One day after school, the ducks were not in the water. They did not waddle toward Rosa, even though she stayed very still. Something was wrong.

Gently, Rosa tiptoed to where the ducks were huddled. "Are you sick?" she whispered. They looked different. They looked greasy.

Then Rosa noticed the creek. An oily film covered it, making patches of color on the water's surface. She looked closely at the ducks. Their feathers were stuck together. They could not swim. They could not fly.

I must get help, said Rosa to herself. But how? I don't know anyone. Mama told me not to speak to strangers. Besides, I don't know how to ask in English.



Rosa had an idea. She rushed back to the street, walked to the traffic light, then raced around the corner and back to the school yard.

Rosa was in luck. Boys and girls were still there, practicing baseball with the gym teacher. Rosa had never played baseball in this country.

"Please! Come!" said Rosa, breathless, "Ducks!"

"Hello, Rosa," said the teacher. "What's the trouble?"

"Ducks!" said Rosa again. It was one of the few English words she was sure of. "Come. Please. Ducks!"

She pointed in the direction of the creek. The kids were staring at her, but she didn't care. "Ducks!" she said again, her eyes pleading.

The teacher said something in English to his team. They looked at Rosa and talked all at once. Then the teacher smiled. "OK, Rosa," he said. "Show us." They all grabbed their jackets and their baseball mitts and bats, and followed Rosa to the creek.

Pretty soon there were more people at Rosa's creek than she had ever seen there before. First the police came with their squad cars and sirens. Then came the firefighters with their big trucks and Humane Society workers in their vans.

People came out from the apartment building with dishpans and towels and liquid dish detergent. Rosa did not understand all the talk, but she knew what was happening.

The ducks were too weak to fly or run away. She and the other kids rounded them up and held them in the dishpans while the Humane Society people worked. Four washes for each duck with mild detergent, and four rinses with clear water. It reminded Rosa of doing the wash.

After a while someone brought a blow-dryer. Rosa laughed as the ducks were blown fluffy-dry. One by one, they were packed carefully into cages in the Humane Society vans.

"We'll keep them for a few days," one of the workers said. "They need time to regain the natural oils in their feathers, so they can keep themselves warm and swim properly. A big factory upstream spilled four hundred gallons of diesel fuel into the storm sewers last night. What a mess! You got to these ducks just in time, young lady."

Rosa did not know what the man was saying, but she saw how everyone smiled at her, and she felt proud.

By the time Rosa's mama came home, the cars and the vans and the people were gone. Rosa was in her special place by the creek. But she was not alone. She was playing baseball with three friends. Rosa was good at baseball. She was getting better at English, too.

"Home run!" she shouted, laughing, after she slugged the ball almost to the parking lot. Rosa was happy. And the dishpan ducks were safe.

Sample Question on Overall Message

This sample question asked students to use their understanding of the story to infer a possible lesson that one could learn from reading the story. This question was classified under the reading aspect, *developing interpretation*.

Seventy-seven percent of AI/AN fourth-graders selected the correct answer (choice A), recognizing the general theme underlying the story's action. Of the incorrect answers, choice B is based on literal story details and was selected by 16 percent of AI/AN fourth-graders.

Percentage of fourth-grade students in each response category in 2007

Student group	Choice A	Choice B	Choice C	Choice D	Omitted
Nation (all students)	82	13	2	3	#
AI/AN students	77	16	3	5	#

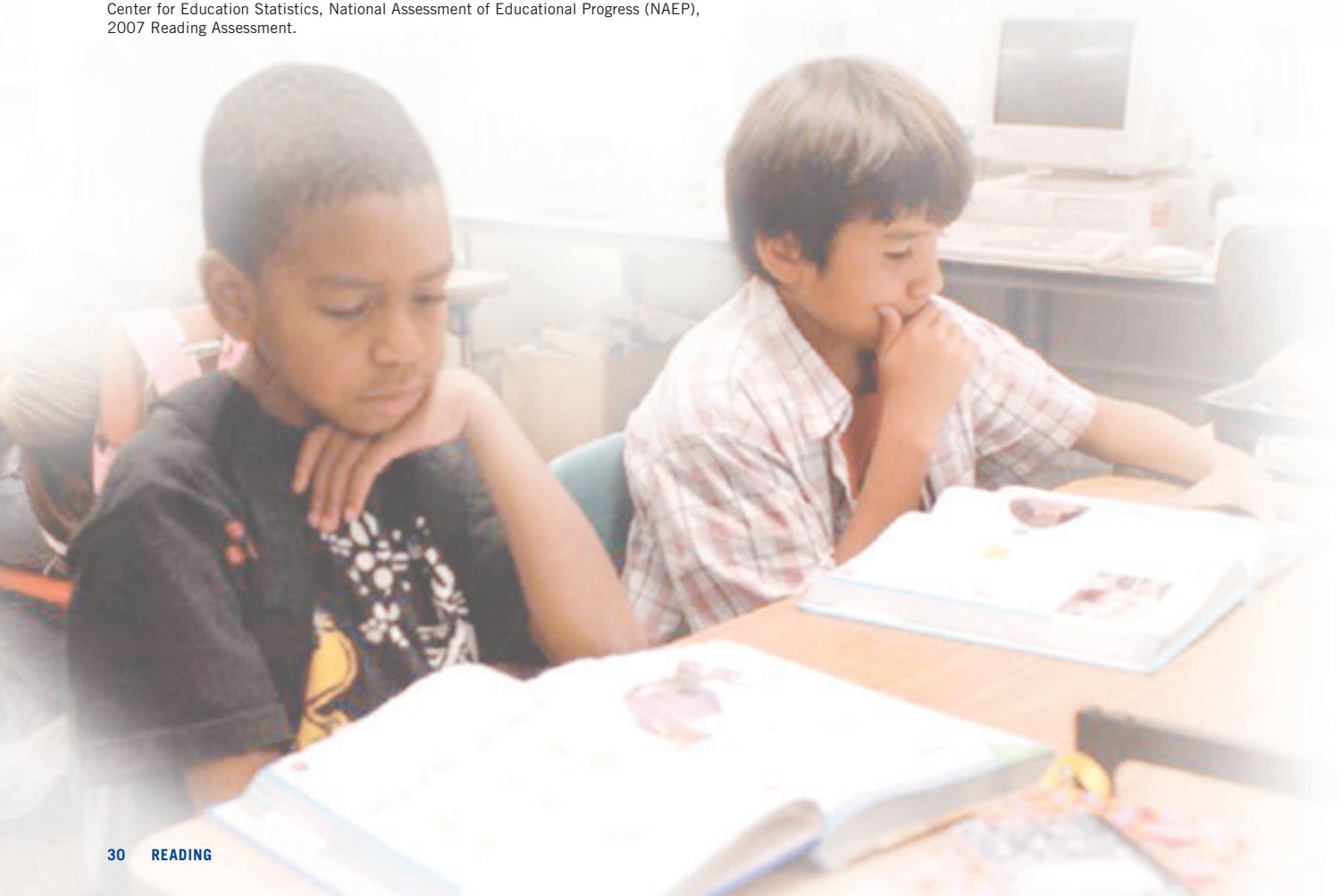
Rounds to zero.

NOTE: AI/AN = American Indian/Alaska Native. Detail may not sum to totals because of rounding.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 2007 Reading Assessment.

Which of the following lessons is most important to the story?

- A People need to work together in an emergency.
- B Oil spills need to be cleaned up by experts.
- C Animals and people need to take baths.
- D Children need to play baseball to make friends.



Sample Question on Vocabulary in Context

This sample question asked fourth-graders to use their understanding of a part of the story to identify the meaning of a word. The meaning is related to a major event in the story. This question was classified under the reading aspect, *developing interpretation*.

Forty-four percent of AI/AN fourth-graders selected the correct answer (choice B), demonstrating their understanding that the main character knows only a few English words and so uses her eyes to ask for help with the emergency. Of the incorrect answers, choices C and D, which are ordinary functions of the eyes, were selected by 49 percent of fourth-graders identified as AI/AN.

Percentage of fourth-grade students in each response category in 2007

Student group	Choice A	Choice B	Choice C	Choice D	Omitted
Nation (all students)	7	52	21	20	1
AI/AN students	7	44	27	22	#

Rounds to zero.

NOTE: AI/AN = American Indian/Alaska Native. Detail may not sum to totals because of rounding.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 2007 Reading Assessment.

What does the word “pleading” mean, as it is used in the sentence below? *“Ducks,” she said again, her eyes pleading.*

- A Yelling
- B Begging
- C Looking
- D Blinking

Sample Question on Character Function

This sample question asked fourth-graders to use their understanding of the plot of the story to explain the importance of one of the characters. This question was classified under the reading aspect, *developing interpretation*.

Sixty-six percent of AI/AN fourth-graders' responses were rated as "Acceptable." The response on the right was acceptable as it provided both something specific that the gym teacher did, as well as a general statement about how he helped to solve the problem.

Why is the gym teacher important in the story? Use examples of what he says or does in your answer.

Response rated as "Acceptable"

He is important because he led
the school kids to the creek.
He says ok Rosa, show us.
And he helps solve the problem.

Percentage of fourth-grade students in each response category in 2007

Student group	Acceptable	Unacceptable	Omitted
Nation (all students)	75	23	2
AI/AN students	66	29	4

NOTE: AI/AN = American Indian/Alaska Native. Detail may not sum to totals because a small percentage of responses that did not address the assessment task are not shown.
SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 2007 Reading Assessment.

Sample Question on Character Motivation

This sample question asked students to demonstrate their understanding of the main character by providing the motivation for an action at a particular point in the story. In addition, students needed to support their answer with details from the story. This question was classified under the reading aspect, *developing interpretation*.

Student responses for this question were rated using the following three-level scoring guide:

Full comprehension—These responses use details from the story to explain why Rosa visits the ducks at the beginning of the story.

Partial or surface comprehension—These responses demonstrate a general understanding of why Rosa visits the ducks at the beginning of the story but do not support it with details from the story. Or, responses may provide a story detail related to Rosa visiting the ducks but are unrelated to why she visits them.

Little or no comprehension—These responses provide inappropriate information or personal opinions that are not related to why Rosa visits the ducks at the beginning of the story.

The first student response on the right was rated as “Full comprehension” because it provided both a reason why Rosa visits the ducks—“because she feels safer”—and supports it with details related to why she feels safer with the ducks. Forty-five percent of AI/AN fourth-graders provided a response rated as “Full comprehension.” The second response was rated as “Partial comprehension” because it provided a story detail related to Rosa visiting the ducks at the beginning of the story. Thirty-eight percent of AI/AN fourth-graders provided a response rated as “Partial.”

Explain why Rosa visits the ducks at the beginning of the story. Use details from the story in your answer.

Response rated as “Full comprehension”

Rosa goes because she feels safer alone so she goes to the creek. She feels better because she could talk to the ducks in her language and they understand her.

Response rated as “Partial comprehension”

Rosa visits the ducks because she liked them and her mama wouldn't be home.

Percentage of fourth-grade students in each response category in 2007

Student group	Full comprehension	Partial or surface comprehension	Little or no comprehension	Omitted
Nation (all students)	54	34	11	1
AI/AN students	45	38	14	2

NOTE: AI/AN = American Indian/Alaska Native. Detail may not sum to totals because a small percentage of responses that did not address the assessment task are not shown.
SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 2007 Reading Assessment.