



# Exemplar Grade 3 Reading Test Questions



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# Introduction

This booklet explains ACT<sup>®</sup> Aspire<sup>®</sup> Grade 3 Reading test questions by presenting, with their answer keys, sample questions aligned to each reporting category on the test. A key includes the question's depth-of-knowledge (DOK) level,<sup>1</sup> an explanation of the task posed by each question, a thorough explanation of correct responses, ideas for improvement, and more. The exemplar test questions included here are representative of the range of content and types of questions found on the ACT Aspire Grade 3 Reading test. Educators can use this resource in several ways:

- Become familiar with ACT Aspire question types.
- See what typical questions in each ACT Aspire reporting category look like.
- Help reinforce or adjust teaching and learning objectives.
- Learn how ACT Aspire improvement idea statements can help students identify key skills they have not yet mastered.

Each ACT Aspire Reading assessment contains several passages, including literary narratives (prose fiction, memoirs, personal essays) and informational texts (social science, natural science). Within and across grade levels, the passages span a range of complexity levels in order to provide students, teachers, and parents with information about how well students understand texts of increasing difficulty. Students answer a series of selected-response (multiple-choice), technology-enhanced, and constructed-response questions that assess their abilities to recognize meaning in, reason logically about, and make connections between and among texts. ACT Aspire Reading questions operate at various DOK levels, or cognitive complexities, and reflect a range of difficulty appropriate for the grade level.

All levels of ACT Aspire Reading assessments include constructed-response tasks that measure the higher-order cognitive processes necessary for reading and understanding increasingly complex texts. Constructed-response tasks are scored according to rubrics that allow students to receive varying amounts of credit for responses that are correct or partially correct, enabling differentiation between multiple skill levels.

The types of constructed-response tasks in ACT Aspire Reading assessments include the following examples:

- Formulate a conclusion by making connections within a passage, and provide support using specific details from the text.

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<sup>1</sup> Norman L. Webb, "Depth-of-Knowledge Levels for Four Content Areas," last modified March 28, 2002, <http://facstaff.wcer.wisc.edu/normw/All%20content%20areas%20%20DOK%20levels%2032802.doc>.

- Formulate a conclusion by making connections between a pair of passages, and provide support using specific details from both texts.
- Identify cause-and-effect relationships within a passage, and provide support using specific details from the text.
- Identify similarities and differences between the key ideas of paired passages, and provide support using specific details from both texts.

## Reporting Categories

ACT Aspire Reading tests assess skills in the following reporting categories, which are the same as the categories listed in the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) Reading strand and those found in the ACT College and Career Readiness Standards in Reading.

### Key Ideas and Details

These questions require students to read texts closely; to determine central ideas and themes and summarize information and ideas accurately; and to understand sequential, comparative, and cause-effect relationships.

### Craft and Structure

These questions require students to determine word and phrase meanings and analyze an author's word choice rhetorically; to analyze text structure; and to understand purpose and point of view.

### Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

These questions require students to understand how arguments are constructed and to make connections to prior knowledge and between and among texts.

## Improvement Ideas

ACT Aspire includes simple improvement ideas at the reporting category (skill) level on student and parent reports. These improvement ideas are provided for the lowest performing skill for each subject tested. The skills are always ordered from highest performing to lowest performing based on the percentage of points correct. If the percentages for two or more skills are tied, the skill with the lower number of total points is displayed first.

Keep in mind that the order of skills listed on reports may not always be exemplary of where to focus learning. For example, the skills in which a student performed within the ACT Readiness Range may not always be listed first, and the skills in which a student did not perform within the ACT Readiness Range may not always be listed last. Also, keep in mind the total number of points possible in each skill when interpreting the percentage correct.

There are two levels of improvement idea statements (low and high) for ACT Aspire summative reporting. Low statements are given on the report if the student's lowest skill score is below the ACT Readiness Range for that particular skill. High statements are given on the report if the student's lowest skill score is at or above the ACT Readiness Range for that particular skill.

# Answer Key

This section presents a reading passage and the sequence number, grade, question type, DOK level, alignment to the ACT Aspire reporting categories, and correct response for each question. Each question is accompanied by an explanation of the question and the correct response as well as improvement idea statements for ACT Aspire Reading.

## Passage: “Rolling West”

### Rolling West

- 1 Across the empty prairie, a line of wagons rolled slowly along. The wagons’ white tops gleamed against the blue prairie sky. The wagons looked like sailing ships drifting among the tall grasses that waved in the wind.
- 2 In the 1800s, people loaded covered wooden wagons with their belongings and headed west on the Oregon Trail with other families. The journey was over two thousand miles long and took up to five months. Mules or oxen pulled the covered wagons. Each wagon looked like a large wooden box on wheels with a rounded cloth top. Its top helped shield the family’s clothing, dishes, and few pieces of furniture from sun and rain.
- 3 There were no stores along the Oregon Trail. A covered wagon carried sacks of flour and cornmeal, rice, sugar, dried fruit, and beans. Water barrels and tools for repairs hung outside the wagon. Little room was left for passengers. Most travelers walked alongside the wagons.
- 4 On the prairie, the Oregon Trail was mainly dirt tracks. The heavy wagons churned up clouds of dust. In rain, wagon wheels sank deep into mud. In the mountains, the trail was sometimes bare rock. On steep mountains, men tied ropes to the front of each wagon and helped the animals pull.
- 5 When a river was deep, men took the wheels off the wagon. They tied a rope to the wagon bed and pulled the wagon bed with the family’s belongings across the river. The mules and oxen swam across.
- 6 Many wagons were nearly worn out when they got to Oregon. Wobbly wheels were braced with sticks. Rags were wrapped around wheel hubs to hold the spokes in place. Even so, the covered wagons did their job well.

## Question 1

**Rolling West**

Across the empty prairie, a line of wagons rolled slowly along. The wagons' white tops gleamed against the blue prairie sky. The wagons looked like sailing ships drifting among the tall grasses that waved in the wind.

In the 1800s, people loaded covered wooden wagons with their belongings and headed west on the Oregon Trail with other families. The journey was over two thousand miles long and took up to five months. Mules or oxen pulled the covered wagons. Each wagon looked like a large wooden box on wheels with a rounded cloth top. Its top helped shield the family's clothing, dishes, and few pieces of furniture from sun and rain.

There were no stores along the Oregon Trail. A covered wagon carried sacks of flour and cornmeal, rice, sugar, dried fruit, and beans. Water barrels and tools for repairs hung outside the wagon. Little room was left for passengers. Most travelers walked alongside the wagons.

What is the main purpose of the highlighted paragraph?

- A. To describe how covered wagons were used
- B. To explain how a covered wagon was built
- C. To tell how families lived in their covered wagons
- D. To show how animals were used to pull covered wagons

Sequence	Grade	Question type	DOK level	Reporting category	Correct response
1	3	Selected response	3	Craft and Structure	A

This selected-response question requires students to analyze the rhetorical role of a paragraph (aligns with the Common Core State Standards College and Career Readiness anchor standard [CCRA] R.5). To answer the question, students must read the entire highlighted paragraph carefully, determine its implied purpose, and distinguish this purpose from functions that are subordinate or for which no text support exists.

**Correct Response**

Only answer option A accurately describes the main purpose of the highlighted paragraph (“To describe how covered wagons were used”). The other answer options reference information from the passage, but none describe the main purpose of the paragraph.

**Improvement Idea Statements**

Reporting category	Grade	Low statement (scored below ACT Readiness Range)	High statement (scored at or above ACT Readiness Range)
Craft and Structure	3	As you read, think about the purpose of texts and parts of texts, how texts are organized, how authors use point of view, and how information in texts can help you figure out what words mean.	Read as many above grade-level texts as you can. Think about how texts are structured, how authors use point of view, how context helps determine word meanings, and how authors use words and phrases.

## Question 2

**Rolling West**

The wagons' white tops gleamed against the blue prairie sky. The wagons looked like sailing ships drifting among the tall grasses that waved in the wind.

In the 1800s, people loaded covered wooden wagons with their belongings and headed west on the Oregon Trail with other families. The journey was over two thousand miles long and took up to five months. Mules or oxen pulled the covered wagons. Each wagon looked like a large wooden box on wheels with a rounded cloth top. Its top helped shield the family's clothing, dishes, and few pieces of furniture from sun and rain.

There were no stores along the Oregon Trail. A covered wagon carried sacks of flour and cornmeal, rice, sugar, dried fruit, and beans. Water barrels and tools for repairs hung outside the wagon. Little room was left for passengers. Most travelers walked alongside the wagons.

On the prairie, the Oregon Trail was mainly dirt tracks. The heavy wagons churned up clouds of dust. In rain, wagon

Which highlighted quotation from the passage gives evidence that wagons were able to travel on water as well as on land?

- A. "The wagons looked like sailing ships drifting among the tall grasses that waved in the wind."
- B. "Its top helped shield the family's clothing, dishes, and few pieces of furniture from sun and rain."
- C. "In rain, wagon wheels sank deep into mud."
- D. "They tied a rope to the wagon bed and pulled the wagon bed with the family's belongings across the river."

Sequence	Grade	Question type	DOK level	Reporting category	Correct response
2	3	Selected response	3	Integration of Knowledge and Ideas	D

This selected-response question requires students to evaluate the specific claims and evidence in a text (aligns with CCRA R.8). To answer the question, students must read the entire passage and each highlighted quotation carefully, then determine which highlighted quotation provides evidence for the claim that wagons were able to travel on water as well as land.

**Correct Response**

Only answer option D provides evidence for the the stated claim ("They tied a rope to the wagon bed and pulled the wagon bed with the family's belongings across the river"). The other answer options reference water and how the wagons traveled but do not serve as evidence for the claim that wagons were able to travel on water as well as land.

**Improvement Idea Statements**

Reporting category	Grade	Low statement (scored below ACT Readiness Range)	High statement (scored at or above ACT Readiness Range)
Integration of Knowledge and Ideas	3	As you read, think about how authors present and support their ideas. Also read different texts on the same topic and think about how these texts are similar and different.	Read as many above grade-level texts as you can. Think about how authors use reasons and evidence to support their ideas. Also, look for connections between and among related texts.

## Question 3

**Rolling West**

Across the empty prairie, a line of wagons rolled slowly along. The wagons' white tops gleamed against the blue prairie sky. The wagons looked like sailing ships drifting among the tall grasses that waved in the wind.

In the 1800s, people loaded covered wooden wagons with their belongings and headed west on the Oregon Trail with other families. The journey was over two thousand miles long and took up to five months. Mules or oxen pulled the covered wagons. Each wagon looked like a large wooden box on wheels with a rounded cloth top. Its top helped shield the family's clothing, dishes, and few pieces of furniture from sun and rain.

There were no stores along the Oregon Trail. A covered wagon carried sacks of flour and cornmeal, rice, sugar, dried fruit, and beans. Water barrels and tools for repairs hung outside the wagon. Little room was left for passengers. Most travelers walked alongside the wagons.

This question has 3 parts. You must enter your answer for each part in the box provided. Read all parts before answering.

**Part A**  
Name one way covered wagons made the journey along the Oregon Trail easier for the travelers.

600

**Part B**  
Name a second way covered wagons made the journey along the Oregon Trail easier for the travelers.

600

**Part C**  
Name a third way covered wagons made the journey along the Oregon Trail easier for the travelers.

600

Sequence	Grade	Question type	DOK level	Reporting category	Correct response
3	3	Constructed response	2	Key Ideas and Details	See sample student responses.

This constructed-response task requires students to read closely and provide evidence (aligns with CCRA R.1). Specifically, this task requires students to read the passage carefully and determine three ways covered wagons made the journey along the Oregon Trail easier for travelers. Students must then construct a written response that demonstrates an understanding of the text by using specific textual evidence to support the claim stated in the prompt.



### Improvement Idea Statements

Reporting category	Grade	Low statement (scored below ACT Readiness Range)	High statement (scored at or above ACT Readiness Range)
Key Ideas and Details	3	Read as many grade-level texts as you can. Work on identifying important details, drawing reasonable conclusions, recognizing main ideas and themes, and understanding how parts of a text relate to one another.	Read as many above grade-level texts as you can. Work on identifying main ideas and themes and on recognizing sequences and relationships (comparative, cause/effect).

### Scoring Framework

#### Evidence

A detail the author uses to show how covered wagons made the journey along the Oregon Trail easier for the travelers (1 point)

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**Sample Student Response—Score Point 3****Part A**

Name one way covered wagons made the journey along the Oregon Trail easier for the travelers.

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Covered wagons were pulled by mules or oxen.

**Part B**

Name a second way covered wagons made the journey along the Oregon Trail easier for the travelers.

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Covered wagons carried food because there weren't stores.

**Part C**

Name a third way covered wagons made the journey along the Oregon Trail easier for the travelers.

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Wagons could be pulled across a river with the wheels off.

**Scoring Rationale**

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- 3** This response earns Score Point 3.
- An acceptable response is offered in Part A.
  - An acceptable response is offered in Part B.
  - An acceptable response is offered in Part C.
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**Sample Student Response—Score Point 2****Part A**

Name one way covered wagons made the journey along the Oregon Trail easier for the travelers.

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they carried familys belongings

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**Part B**

Name a second way covered wagons made the journey along the Oregon Trail easier for the travelers.

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they carried supplies

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**Part C**

Name a third way covered wagons made the journey along the Oregon Trail easier for the travelers.

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**Scoring Rationale**

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- 2** This response earns Score Point 2.
- An acceptable response is offered in Part A.
  - An acceptable response is offered in Part B.
  - This response does not earn credit for Part C because no response is offered.
  - Please note that a student may also receive Score Point 2 if acceptable responses are offered in any two of the three parts.
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**Sample Student Response—Score Point 1****Part A**

Name one way covered wagons made the journey along the Oregon Trail easier for the travelers.

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wagons looked like sailing ships

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**Part B**

Name a second way covered wagons made the journey along the Oregon Trail easier for the travelers.

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took 5 months

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**Part C**

Name a third way covered wagons made the journey along the Oregon Trail easier for the travelers.

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ox pulled wagons

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**Scoring Rationale**

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- 1 This response earns Score Point 1.
- An acceptable response is offered in Part C.
  - This response does not earn credit for Part A because it is not evidence supporting the prompt; it is a description of the appearance of the wagons.
  - This response does not earn credit for Part B because it is not evidence supporting the prompt; it is a detail focusing on the travel time.
  - Please note that a response may earn Score Point 1 if evidence is offered in any one of the three parts.
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**Sample Student Response—Score Point 0****Part A**

Name one way covered wagons made the journey along the Oregon Trail easier for the travelers.

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covered wagons made the journey along the Oregon Trail easier for the travelers

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**Part B**

Name a second way covered wagons made the journey along the Oregon Trail easier for the travelers.

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they slept in wagons

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**Part C**

Name a third way covered wagons made the journey along the Oregon Trail easier for the travelers.

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**Scoring Rationale**

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- 0** This response earns Score Point 0.
- This response does not earn credit for Part A because it is not evidence from the passage; it is a restatement of the prompt.
  - This response does not earn credit for Part B because it is not supported by information in the passage; the passage indicates that there was little room in the wagons for anything but belongings and supplies.
  - This response does not earn credit for Part C because no response is offered.
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**Scoring Guidelines**

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- i. Creditable evidence may be verbatim, paraphrased, or a logical inference based on information from the text.**
  - ii. If a response gives the same answer or support twice using different words, it does not earn additional points.**
  - iii. Responses do not have to be in complete sentences. Even a one- or two-word response can receive a point.**
  - iv. Extraneous material in a response, as long as it doesn't contradict the appropriate response, is not taken into consideration when assigning a score.**
  - v. Each part of the response must be entered in the correct box. Each part can receive a maximum of 1 point, even if multiple pieces of evidence are offered in the same box.**
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