

**NEW JERSEY
ASSESSMENT OF KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS
(NJ ASK)
Grades 6 through 8**

**SPECULATIVE WRITING:
SAMPLE PROMPTS
AND
GUIDANCE FOR TEACHERS**

Updated: December 7, 2009

Introduction

- In keeping with the New Jersey Core Curriculum Content Standards (NJCCCS) for language arts literacy and the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) Writing Frameworks, the department seeks to assess student writing skills through a broad range of writing challenges;
- Toward that end, the department is developing additional types of writing tasks to supplement the familiar picture prompts and persuasive tasks.

- Beginning in 2008, speculative/text-based writing tasks replaced the familiar picture prompt on assessments in grades 6-8.
- The department will continue to use a variety of tasks – persuasive, narrative, and/or expository prompts – to assess student writing achievement. All tasks will be rooted in the NJCCCS for writing (Standard 3.2) and the Writing Framework for the 2011 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP).
- The following slides provide additional examples of speculative writing prompts, and guidance in understanding how they will be scored.

What should students know about speculative/text-based writing prompts?

- Speculative writing tasks will present students with a briefly described situation to which they are asked to respond with a narrative. The given situation will provide students with information that may be used as a springboard for a student to write a story, actual or fictional. This text-based speculative prompt may be thought of as a variation of the speculative/picture prompt. Both speculative writing tasks require that students use their imagination to speculate about something.
- Students will be given information from the given situation to make decisions, solve a problem, and create original work.
- Each student is given 2 blank planning pages, and 4 lined pages. Only the lined pages are scored. (Students may use as many of the lined pages as needed to respond to the prompt.)

Guidelines

- Students are given 30 minutes to construct a narrative or story based on the given writing prompt, or some aspect of that prompt.
- During testing, the NJ ASK Writer's Checklist is provided to encourage students to read, reread, revise, and edit their written work.
- For the purposes of scoring, all students' writing is considered a first draft in the assessment writing process. During testing, students are not permitted to confer with others nor to refer to outside resources such as a dictionary, thesaurus, or classroom displays.
- The student's written response will be scored using the NJ Registered Holistic Scoring Rubric (The 5 point rubric for grade 5, or the 6 point rubric for grades 6 through 8.)

Samples

- The samples on the following slides illustrate the format of text-based speculative prompts.
- Use these samples in conjunction with the New Jersey Registered Holistic Scoring Rubric(s), the New Jersey Core Curriculum Content Standard 3.2, and instructional best practices.



Sample #1

May be used with 6th grade students

Think what it would be like to live one day in the setting of your favorite book, short story, or television show. What would happen to you in this place? What would you do?

Use your imagination to write a story about your experience in this place.

Sample #2

May be used with 6th grade students

The young girl was hoping to go with an after-school club that was going on a camping and hiking trip to one of New Jersey's state parks. Her parents were reluctant to let her go on the trip.

Write a story about the girl, her problem, and how she solves it.

Sample #3

May be used with 7th grade students

A 7th grade student had a big test the following day. The championship basketball game was after school, and grandma's 75th birthday party was at 6 PM that evening. How was he ever going to study?

Write a story about this 7th grader, and how he deals with his problem.

Sample #4

May be used with 7th grade students

Sasha dreams of becoming a famous inventor. She jots down ideas, and makes observations about how things work. She hopes to invent something that will help people.

Imagine what Sasha might invent. Write a story about her invention, and how it can be used.

Sample #5

May be used with 8th grade students

A girl arrives home from school to find that the backdoor is ajar. She is not sure if she should go in. What should she do?

Write a story about the girl, and what she does next.

Sample #6

May be used with 8th grade students

After weeks of preparation, Ella proudly handed in a history report. Her best friend in the same class copied a report from the Internet. When the graded papers were returned, Ella received a C+ while her friend received an A.

Write a story about how Ella might deal with this situation.

Sample #7

May be used at any middle school grade level

The boy packed his necessary belongings in his suitcase for a trip to visit his cousin. Several hours later, he reached his destination only to find he was missing an important item he intended to bring.

Write a story about what you think he is missing, and what he does about it.

Sample #8

May be used at any middle school grade level

The last day of school was approaching. All of the students were excited in anticipation of the coming summer vacation. Sam had been planning his first day off from school. He could not wait. Then without warning something changed all of his careful planning.

Write a story about what happened to change his plans.

Suggested Web Sites

- **NJ ASK Criterion-Based Holistic Scoring: A writing Handbook (2008)**
<https://www.measinc.com/njask/Files/Criterion-Based%20Holistic%20Scoring%20-%20A%20Writing%20Handbook%20Grades%207%20&%208.pdf>
- **NJCCCS**
<http://www.nj.gov/education/cccs/>
- **Writing Framework for the 2011 NAEP**
<http://www.nagb.org/frameworks/2011naep-writing-framework.doc>
- **NJDOE Office of State Assessments**
<http://www.nj.gov/education/assessment/>

Thank you!

Sample numbers 3, 5, 6, and 7 were based on contributions from the following educators:

Scott Taylor, Carol Moser, Michelle Mullan, Jamie Farber, Kelly Toth, Christina Harris, Lauren Maynes, Evelyn, Blanchard, Jennifer Wawanolett, Janice Anderson, Gina Canneto— **Little Silver**

Bonnie Crotty, Maria Schiano, Andy Dougherty, Karri Campanella, Ellen Spears – **Fair Haven**

Melissa Osmun, Jannett Pachero, Maria Iozzi -- **Red Bank Borough**

Jennifer Benbrook-- **Freehold Township Elem. and Middle Schools**; MaryBeth Manno-- **Union Beach**

Sallyann Jauch, Debby Agro, Erin Cross, Kathy Young, Jerry Malanaga – **Shrewsbury Borough**

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