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## READING FOR THE STATE ASSESSMENT

On the end of year assessment for English Language Arts, you will be asked to read several different passages and answer questions based on those passages. The following units will review some of types of texts you will be asked to read and some of the types of questions you will be asked to answer.

### Narrative Fiction



\*Download the attached pdf to take notes during the lesson.

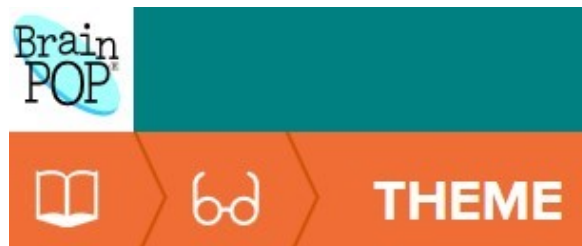
**Narrative** writing is any kind of writing that tells a story. That’s because “narrative” means story.

**Fiction** writing is based on imaginative events or stories that did not actually happen. When reading narrative fiction, a reader analyzes how its parts—its characters, settings, mood, and events—work together to create meaning.

Like an informational text, a narrative fiction story will also have a central idea. In fiction writing, the central idea is the **theme**.

Use the [theme litmus test](#) to answer any questions about theme.

For more on finding the **Theme** of a passage, click on the link below.



### **Review of Literary Devices:**

- **plot/structure** - a literary term used to describe the events that make up a story, or the main part of a story
- **character**- any person, a figure, an inanimate object, or animal in a story
- **setting**- an environment or surrounding in which an event or story takes place
- **theme**- a main idea or an underlying meaning of a literary work, which may be stated directly or indirectly
- **symbol**- an object, action or event representing another, to give an entirely different meaning that is much deeper and more significant
- **mood**- a literary element that evokes certain feelings or vibes in readers through words and descriptions

Some story details are **explicit**, or clearly stated. But story information can also be less direct. The reader might have to make an **inference**, or an educated guess based on details in the story and his or her own knowledge.

*Read this part of a short story about two criminals who kidnap a child and hold him for ransom.*

### from "The Ransom of Red Chief" by O. Henry

... We selected for our victim the only child of a prominent citizen named Ebenezer Dorset. The father was respectable and tight, a mortgage fancier and a stern, upright collection-plate passer and forecloser. The kid was a boy of ten, with bas-relief freckles, and hair the colour of the cover of the magazine you buy at the newsstand when you want to catch a train. Bill and me figured that Ebenezer would melt down for a ransom of two thousand dollars to a cent. But wait till I tell you.

About two miles from Summit was a little mountain, covered with a dense cedar brake. On the rear elevation of this mountain was a cave. There we stored provisions. One evening after sundown, we drove in a buggy past old Dorset's house. The kid was in the street, throwing rocks at a kitten on the opposite fence.

"Hey, little boy!" says Bill, "would you like to have a bag of candy and a nice ride?"

The boy catches Bill neatly in the eye with a piece of brick.

"That will cost the old man an extra five hundred dollars," says Bill, climbing over the wheel.

That boy put up a fight like a welter-weight cinnamon bear; but, at last, we got him down in the bottom of the buggy and drove away. We took him up to the cave and I hitched the horse in the cedar brake. After dark I drove the buggy to the little village, three miles away, where we had hired it, and walked back to the

The first question asks the reader to make an **inference** about a **character** based on details in the story.

#### *Question 5 in Questions Section:*

How does the beginning of this passage develop the little boy's character in the story?

- a. Rather than being immature, the little boy is shown to be clever.
- b. Rather than focusing on the kidnapping, the little boy attempts to find the fun in the situation.
- c. Rather than feeling sorry for himself, the little boy focuses on survival.
- d. Rather than being fearful, the little boy is established as being a handful.

***HINT:***

| Evidence  | Inference   |
|---|---|
| <p>“The kid was in the street, throwing rocks at a kitten on the opposite fence.”</p> <p>“The boy catches Bill neatly in the eye with a piece of brick.”</p> <p>“That boy put up a fight like a welter-weight cinnamon bear...”</p> | <p>What inference can you make about the boy based on the evidence?</p> |

The second question asks the reader to identify a **synonym** for a word used in the passage using **context clues**. A **synonym** is a word or phrase that means exactly or nearly the same as another word or phrase. **Context clues** are hints that an author gives to help define a difficult or unusual word. The clue may appear within the same sentence as the word to which it refers, or it may appear somewhere else in the passage.

Notice that this question begins with **PART A**. This signifies to the reader the question has two parts. The next question will be **PART B** and the reader will be asked to provide support for **PART A**.

***Question 6 in Questions Section:***

PART A: What does the word “prominent” in the paragraph most likely mean?

We selected for our victim the only child of a **prominent** citizen named Ebenezer Dorset. The father was respectable and tight, a mortgage fancier and a stern, upright collection-plate passer and forecloser. The kid was a boy of ten, with bas-relief freckles, and hair the colour of the cover of the magazine you buy at the news-stand when you want to catch a train. Bill and me figured that Ebenezer would melt down for a ransom of two thousand dollars to a cent. But wait till I tell you.

- a. Large

- b. Charitable
- c. Distinguished
- d. Friendly

*HINT: To figure out the meaning of the word “prominent”, answer the following questions...*

**How is the word “prominent” being used? Who is it describing?**

**Are there any other words used to describe the same character?**

***Question 7 in Questions Section:***

**PART B: Which of the following phrases best supports the answer to Part A?**

- a. "The father was respectable"
- b. "a mortgage fancier"
- c. "stern, upright"
- d. "collection-plate passer"

**from "The Ransom of Red Chief" by O. Henry *cont.***

..."You know, Sam," says Bill, "I've stood by you without batting an eye in earthquakes, fire and flood -- in poker games, dynamite outrages, police raids, train robberies and cyclones. I never lost my nerve yet till we kidnapped that two-legged skyrocket of a kid. He's got me going. You won't leave me long with him, will you, Sam?"

"I'll be back some time this afternoon," says I. "You must keep the boy amused and quiet till I return. And now we'll write the letter to old Dorset."

Bill and I got paper and pencil and worked on the letter while Red Chief, with a blanket wrapped around him, strutted up and down, guarding the mouth of the cave. Bill begged me tearfully to make the ransom fifteen hundred dollars instead of two thousand. "I ain't attempting," says he, "to decry the celebrated moral aspect of parental affection, but we're dealing with humans, and it ain't human for anybody to give up two thousand dollars for that forty-pound chunk of freckled wildcat. I'm willing to take a chance at fifteen hundred dollars. You can charge the difference up to me."

The next question asks the reader to analyze how **characters** interact within the passage.

***Question 8 in Questions Section:***

Which of the following best describes the relationship between the child and his kidnappers?

- a. The boy fears his kidnappers and does whatever they ask of him.
- b. The boy believes the kidnapping is all in good fun and unintentionally gains the friendship of his abductors.
- c. The kidnappers are annoyed by the boy and even come to fear him, especially Bill.

d. The kidnapers see the boy only as a means to an end and are thus willing to put up with him.

*HINT: Underline at least two details that help you understand Bill's true feelings about the boy.*



**from "The Ransom of Red Chief" by O. Henry *cont.***

**... Gentlemen: I received your letter to-day by post, in regard to the ransom you ask for the return of my son. I think you are a little high in your demands, and I hereby make you a counter-proposition, which I am inclined to believe you will accept. You bring Johnny home and pay me two hundred and fifty dollars in cash, and I agree to take him off your hands. You had better come at night, for the neighbours believe he is lost, and I couldn't be responsible for what they would do to anybody they saw bringing him back. Very respectfully, EBENEZER DORSET.**

"Great pirates of Penzance!" says I; "of all the impudent -- "

But I glanced at Bill, and hesitated. He had the most appealing look in his eyes I ever saw on the face of a dumb or a talking brute.

"Sam," says he, "what's two hundred and fifty dollars, after all? We've got the money. One more night of this kid will send me to a bed in Bedlam. Besides being a thorough gentleman, I think Mr. Dorset is a spendthrift for making us such a liberal offer. You ain't going to let the chance go, are you?"

"Tell you the truth, Bill," says I, "this little he ewe lamb has somewhat got on my nerves too. We'll take him home, pay the ransom and make our get-away."

We took him home that night. We got him to go by telling him that his father had bought a silver-mounted rifle and a pair of moccasins for him, and we were going to hunt bears the next day.

It was just twelve o'clock when we knocked at Ebenezer's front door. Just at the moment when I should have been abstracting the fifteen hundred dollars from the box under the tree, according to the original proposition, Bill was counting out two hundred and fifty dollars into Dorset's hand.

*"The Ransom of Red Chief" by O. Henry (1910) is in the public domain*

The last set of questions ask the reader to identify the theme (Part A) and then support (Part B) that theme with details from the text. Remember, a **theme** is a main idea or an underlying meaning of a literary work.



***Question 9 in Questions Section:***

PART A: Which of the following best describes a theme of the text?

- a. There may be unintended consequences of committing a crime.
- b. Children can be more challenging than adults.
- c. Greed will only lead to tragedy.
- d. Parents should be more involved in their children's lives.

*HINT: To figure out the theme of the passage, answer the following questions...*

**What was the kidnappers' plan at the beginning of the text?**

**Did the plan work? How was the outcome different than they planned?**

***Question 10 in Questions Section:***

PART B: Which of the following quotes best supports the answer to Part A?

- a. "After dark I drove the buggy to the little village, three miles away, where we had hired it, and walked back to the mountain."
- b. "'I've stood by you without batting an eye in earthquakes, fire and flood-- in poker games, dynamite outrages, police raids, train robberies and cyclones. I never lost my nerve yet till we kidnapped that two-legged skyrocket of a kid."
- c. "You must keep the boy amused and quiet till I return."
- d. "Just at the moment when I should have been abstracting the fifteen hundred dollars from the box under the tree, according to the original proposition, Bill was counting out two hundred and fifty dollars into Dorset's hand."

Click [here](#) for more practice reading and answering questions based on Narrative Fiction.