

North Carolina End-of-Grade Test of Reading Comprehension—Grade 7

What are the purposes of the NC Testing Program?

The North Carolina End-of-Grade Tests are required by General Statute 115C-174.10 as a component of the North Carolina Annual Testing Program. As stated, the purposes of North Carolina state-mandated tests are “(i) to assure that all high school graduates possess those minimum skills and that knowledge thought necessary to function as a member of society; (ii) to provide a means of identifying strengths and weaknesses in the education process in order to improve instructional delivery; and (iii) to establish additional means for making the education system at the State, local, and school levels accountable to the public for results.” This test is one component of the end-of-grade tests, which include reading comprehension and mathematics tests in grades three through eight. Students in grade three began taking a reading comprehension and mathematics pretest in the fall of 1996.

For school, school system, and state accountability, the scores from the end-of-grade tests at the prior grade are used to estimate a student’s level of knowledge and skills at the beginning of the new grade to determine the amount of growth during the school year (calculated from the difference between the two sets of test scores).

What is measured by the test?

The end-of-grade reading test for grade seven assesses the reading components of the grade seven North Carolina *Standard Course of Study*. The test consists of nine reading selections with three to nine associated questions for each selection. Each student is asked to read six literary selections (two fiction, one nonfiction, one drama, two poems) and three informational selections (two content and one consumer). The variety of selections on each form allows for the assessment of reading for various purposes: for literary experience, to gain information, and to perform a task.

The end-of-grade tests are organized by category, with each item falling into one of four categories: cognition, interpretation, critical stance, or connections. A description of each category and the average percentage of items per form for each category are shown in the table below. Each item is also aligned to a curriculum objective from the North Carolina English Language Arts *Standard Course of Study*.

Descriptive Information for the North Carolina End-of-Grade Test of Reading Comprehension—Grade 7

Category	Description of Category	Average Percentage
Cognition	Refers to the initial strategies a reader uses to understand the selection. It is about purpose and organization of the selection. It considers the text as a whole or in a broad perspective. Cognition includes strategies like using context clues to determine meaning or summarizing to include main points	26%
Interpretation	Requires the student to develop a more complete understanding. It may ask students to clarify, to explain the significance of, to extend, and/or to adapt ideas/concepts.	42%
Critical Stance	Refers to tasks that ask the student to stand apart from the selection and consider it objectively. It involves processes like comparing/contrasting and understanding the impact of literary elements.	26%
Connections	Refers to connecting knowledge from the selection with other information and experiences. It involves the student being able to relate the selection to events beyond/outside the selection. In addition, the student will make associations outside the selection and between selections.	6%

How is the test administered? The North Carolina End-of-Grade Test of Reading Comprehension at grade seven consists of 56 multiple-choice questions administered during a 115-minute block within the last three weeks of school. Three equivalent forms are administered in each classroom to provide information for curriculum evaluation and planning. The tests are scanned and scored by the local education agency with software provided by the NCDPI. Reports of student performance are produced locally. In addition, test scores are aggregated at the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction to fulfill the state and federal reporting requirements for the accountability programs.

How was the test developed? The reading selections were chosen by North Carolina educators to reflect the variety of reading done by students at this level in and out of school and to ensure accessibility to a majority of students. Those chosen are selections that would generally be read by students, would be interesting to the students, and have appropriate content for a reading comprehension test at this grade level. The questions for each selection were written and reviewed by trained North Carolina teachers and educators during the 2000-2001 and 2001-2002 school years and were field tested in the spring of 2002. Each field test question was administered to approximately 1,400 students from randomly selected schools across the state. The grade seven reading test was implemented statewide for the first time in the spring of 2003.

What kinds of scores do students receive on the test? The scores on the end-of-grade reading test are reported on a developmental scale, which allows the measurement of growth in achievement across the grade levels. On the grade seven reading test, the scale scores range from 228-287. The use of scale scores provides for easier and more consistent interpretations of the results from test to test. Achievement levels are also generated to provide an interpretation of student performance relative to a predetermined standard. Student scores are converted to one of the four achievement level categories shown below. In addition, student scores are reported as percentile ranks, which are generated from a statewide distribution of students who took the test during the first year the test was administered or the norming year.

Achievement Levels for the North Carolina End-of-Grade Test of Reading Comprehension—Grade 7

Level	Description	Scale Score Range
1	Students performing at this level do not have sufficient mastery of knowledge and skills in this subject area to be successful at the next grade level.	228-242
2	Students performing at this level demonstrate inconsistent mastery of knowledge and skills in this subject area and are minimally prepared to be successful at the next grade level.	243-251
3	Students performing at this level consistently demonstrate mastery of grade level subject matter and skills and are well prepared for the next grade level.	252-263
4	Students performing at this level consistently perform in a superior manner clearly beyond that required to be proficient at grade level work	264-287

Sample Items The following pages contain a sample selection and sample items that represent the type of material that appears on the North Carolina End-of-Grade Test of Reading Comprehension – Grade 7. The category and objective correspond to the category and curriculum objective that the item is designed to measure. The thinking skill corresponds to the level of thinking the item requires as defined by a thinking skills framework adapted from *Dimension of Thinking* by Robert J. Marzano and others. Additional samples can be found on the NCDPI web site at www.ncpublicschools.org/accountability/testing/eog.

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This selection describes how—and why—wolves communicate by howling. Read the selection and answer the questions that follow.

Wolf Pack

by Sylvia A. Johnson & Alice Aamodt

If you are lucky enough to see wolf tracks in the wild, you will probably not see the footprints of a single animal. Wolves travel in groups; they hunt in groups, and they perform almost all the other activities of their lives in the company of fellow wolves. This is one of the most important facts that modern science has learned about wolves and one of the things that most clearly explains their way of life.

The *pack*, the basic unit of wolf social life, is usually a family group. It is made up of animals related to each other by blood and family ties of affection and mutual aid. The core of a pack is a mated pair of wolves—an adult male and female that have bred and produced young. The other members of the pack are their offspring: young wolves ranging in age from pups to two- and three-year-olds. Most packs have 6 or 7 members, although some may include as many as 15 wolves.

Relationships among creatures that live close together in groups are often very complicated, and this is true of the ties that connect the members of a wolf pack. Scientific studies of captive wolves and wolf packs in the wild have shown that many complex rules of behavior seem to govern the way that the animals relate to each other. The methods that wolves use to communicate with fellow pack members are also quite elaborate.

When wolf pups are born into a pack, one of the most important things they must learn is the “language” of the group, the method by which pack members keep in touch with each other, sharing information and communicating their feelings. Scientists

have discovered that wolves have a very complicated system of communication, quite different from the language of humans but used in a similar way to convey meaning.

The most famous wolf sound is, of course, the howl, and it is a very important part of wolf language.

When people think about howling, they usually imagine a mournful, lonely sound made by a wolf sitting all alone on a hilltop in the moonlight. Like most human images of wolves, however, this one is not very accurate. Wolves howl at any time, not just at night, and they often howl together, not alone.

Group or chorus howling is another means by which the members of a wolf pack reaffirm their ties with each other and their closeness as a group. One wolf—often the alpha male¹—will point its nose at the sky, open its mouth, and start to howl. Immediately the other members of the pack rush to stand beside him, shoulder to shoulder, and join their voices to his. The whole group seems to be excited and happy, tails wagging and bodies wiggling. Each wolf howls on its own note so that a grand chorus of slightly different sounds is produced.

Chorus howling often takes place before a wolf pack goes out to hunt. This ceremony of togetherness may encourage the pack members to cooperate with each other in the difficult job of finding and bringing down prey. At the end of a successful hunt, the pack may also celebrate with a group howl. While wolves are on the track of prey, they are usually silent.

¹ **alpha male**: the male leader of the wolf pack

There are occasions when a wolf will howl by itself. This may happen when an animal is separated from the pack and is trying to locate its companions. Pack members seem to recognize each other's voices and will keep responding to the howl of their wandering relative until the group is reunited.

Because howling is a sound that carries over a considerable distance, it is very useful in communications among separated members of a pack. Howling is also used when members of different packs have to get in touch with each other to relay information about their locations and their intentions.



“Wolf Pack” from *Wolf Pack* by Sylvia A. Johnson and Alice Aamodt. Copyright © 1985 by Lerner Publications a division of the Lerner Publications Group. Used by permission of the publisher. All rights reserved.

“Siblings Howl On Ice” (n.d.). Photograph. Retrieved October 17, 2002, www.wolfpark.org.

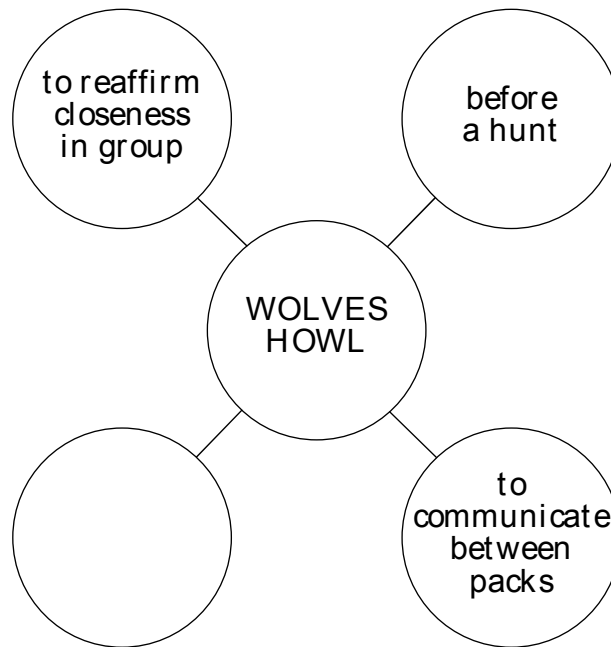
1. According to the selection, what aspect of wolves' lives makes communication ***most important*** for them?

- A Wolves live in packs.
- B Wolves hunt at night.
- C Wolves occupy a large territory.
- D Wolves are an endangered species.

2. What ***most likely*** happens to young wolves after the age of four?

- A They leave the pack and live alone.
- B They leave the pack to form packs of their own.
- C They continue to live as part of their original family pack.
- D They take over from their parents to become leaders of their pack.

3. Which of the following phrases belongs in the empty circle below?



- A while tracking prey
- B when separated from the pack
- C because it is night
- D because it is daylight

4. To what human activity could wolves' "chorus howling" *best* be compared?

- A a baby crying from hunger
- B a choir putting on a concert
- C a family having an argument
- D a sports team cheering before a game

5. Most wolf packs consist of how many members?

- A 3–4
- B 4–5
- C 6–7
- D 9–10

End of Set

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*Answers to
Grade 7 Reading Comprehension Sample Items*

Passage Title	Question Number	Correct Answer	Category	Thinking Skill	Objective Number
Wolf Pack	1	A	Interpretation	Analyzing	2.01
Wolf Pack	2	B	Interpretation	Generating	2.01
Wolf Pack	3	B	Cognition	Organizing	2.01
Wolf Pack	4	D	Connections	Organizing	2.01
Wolf Pack	5	C	Cognition	Knowledge	2.01