

North Carolina End-of-Grade Tests

Reading Comprehension—Grade 4

What is end-of-grade testing and what is its purpose?

The purpose of the end-of-grade tests is twofold: (1) to provide accurate measurement of individual student skills and knowledge specified in the North Carolina *Standard Course of Study* and (2) to provide accurate measurement of the knowledge and skills attained by groups of students for school, school system, and state accountability. All students in grades 3 through 8 take reading comprehension and mathematics tests at the end of the school year. Beginning in the fall of 1996, students in grade 3 will also take a reading comprehension and mathematics pretest.

For school, school system, and state accountability, the scores from the prior grade (for example, grade 3) will be used as an estimate of a student's entering level of knowledge and skills to determine the amount of growth during the school year (difference between the two sets of test scores).

What is measured by the test?

The end-of-grade reading test for grade 4 assesses the reading strand of the grade 4 English Language Arts curriculum (revised in 1991) of the North Carolina *Standard Course of Study*. The test consists of ten reading passages and from 3 to 8 associated questions. Each student is asked to read four literary passages (for example, narrative fiction, essay, drama, poetry); four content-based passages selected from art, science, health, mathematics, and social studies; and two consumer/human interest passages (for example, recipes, projects, relevant short pieces from popular magazines). The variety of passages on each form allows for the assessment of reading for various purposes: for literary experience, to gain information, and to perform a task.

The associated questions for each passage address goals 2 and 3 of the curriculum. Goal 1, the understanding and knowledge of one's reading, is not assessed at this grade level. It was felt that students in this grade level, while exhibiting reading strategies as they read, would not be able to explain the strategies they used. Goal 4, personal response, is not assessed by the reading multiple-choice test. This goal is better assessed with an open-ended format.

Table 1. Descriptive Information for the North Carolina End-of-Grade Test Reading Comprehension—Grade 4

Goal/ Strand	Description of Goal/Strand	Difficulty of Items in Pool
2	The learner will use language for the acquisition, interpretation, and application of information.	60%
	2.1 The learner will identify, collect, or select information and ideas.	63%
	2.2 The learner will analyze, synthesize, and organize information and discover related ideas, concepts, or generalizations.	56%
	2.3 The learner will apply, extend, and expand on information and concepts.	59%
3	The learner will use language for critical analysis and evaluation.	53%

How is the test administered?

The end-of-grade reading test for grade 4 consists of 65 multiple-choice questions administered during a 100-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 locally.

How was the test developed?

The passages were selected by curriculum specialists to reflect the variety of reading done by students in and out of school and to be accessible to a majority of students (based on readability analyses). The selected passages were ones that would generally be read by students, would be interesting to the students, and were appropriate content for a reading comprehension test. The questions for each passage were written and reviewed by trained North Carolina teachers and educators during the 1990-91 and 1991-92 school years. The questions were field tested in May of 1992. The field test involved approximately 28,000 students from randomly selected schools across the state. The grade 4 reading test was implemented statewide for the first time in the spring of 1993.

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 reading achievement across the grade levels. On the grade 4 reading test the scale scores range from 119 to 174 with a mean of 147.1 and a standard deviation of 9.6. The standard error of measurement for individual scores on the test is about 2 to 5 points. The use of scale scores helps make interpretations easier and more consistent from test to test.

Percentiles were established based on the first administration of the of the test statewide in 1993.

Achievement levels (descriptors of performance) were established from teacher judgements during the 1992 field tests and from the student scores on the 1993 administration of the test.

Table 2. Achievement Levels for the North Carolina End-of-Grade Test Reading Comprehension – Grade 4

Level	Description	Percent of Students (92)	Range of Scores (93)
I	Students performing at this level do not have sufficient mastery of knowledge and skills in the subject to be successful at the next grade level.	12%	119-134
II	Students performing at this level demonstrate inconsistent mastery of knowledge and skills in this subject are and are minimally prepared to be successful at the next grade level.	28%	135-144
III	Students performing at this level consistently demonstrate mastery of grade level subject matter and skills and are well prepared for the next grade level.	40%	145-155
IV	Students performing at this level consistently perform in a superior manner clearly beyond that required to be proficient at grade level work.	20%	156-174

To Reach The Promised Land

by Stephen Ray Lilley

Today, public schools in the United States are free and open to everyone. There was a time, however, when going to school was not a simple matter. In the following passage, read about the sacrifices one famous American educator had to make in order to go to school.

Nine-year-old Booker, his sister Amanda, and older brother John stood close to their mother. Excitement filled the air as the Yankee army moved through Virginia in the spring of 1865.

For months Booker had heard his mother praying at night as he drifted off to sleep by the fire: "Lord, let the Yankees win this war, and let them make me and my children free." Now they watched a blue-uniformed soldier standing on the "big house" porch unfold a piece of paper and begin reading.

"All persons held as slaves... henceforward shall be free," he proclaimed.

Life suddenly became very difficult for Booker's family. They had always been owned, like land or livestock. Now free, they had no home, no jobs, no money, only each other. Booker's stepfather worked at a salt furnace near Malden, West Virginia. Putting their belongings in a small cart, the family walked hundreds of miles through the Appalachian Mountains to join him.

In Malden, Booker and John went to work with their stepfather. Work began before daylight and ended after dark. As he shoveled salt into huge wooden barrels, Booker saw children walking to school. "I had the feeling that to get into a schoolhouse and study... would be about the same as getting into paradise," he later said.

But the family needed Booker's income. Booker's stepfather, a tough and practical man, told him attending school was impossible. Knowing how much her son wanted to learn to read, Booker's mother saved every spare penny and bought him a well-used copy of Webster's "Blue-Backed Speller." For weeks he pored over the book, memorizing the alphabet and letter sounds.

Booker convinced his parents he should take lessons at night from a black teacher. Then he told them he wished to attend day school. His stepfather finally accepted the idea, on condition that Booker work at the salt furnace before and after school. Overjoyed, Booker quickly agreed.

Each day Booker faced new obstacles. For a time he worked in a coal mine deep underground in terrifying conditions. Sometimes his candle blew out, and he wandered helplessly in total darkness. Still, he studied at night. Then one day he heard some miners speaking of a school called the Hampton Institute where poor students could work to pay their expenses. "I resolved at once to go to that school, although I had no idea where it was... or how I was going to reach it," he later wrote.

Booker T. Washington became Hampton's most famous graduate and devoted his life to teaching. He taught the first classes at the Tuskegee Institute in Alabama and then built it into one of the most important schools for blacks in the United States. Today, millions of people admire this man who struggled to reach "the promised land."

1. What would be the *best* description of Booker T. Washington's attitude toward attending school?
- A determined
 - B hopeless
 - C practical
 - D anxious
2. Why did Booker's stepfather *not* allow him to attend school?
- A African Americans were not allowed to attend school.
 - B There were no schools in the town.
 - C The family needed Booker's income to live.
 - D A coal miner did not need an education in order to get a job.
3. What might be the *best* reason for recommending this passage to a friend?
- A It quotes Booker T. Washington.
 - B It describes working in a coal mine.
 - C It sets a good example for other people to follow.
 - D It describes the Southern plantations.
4. The information in this passage would be *least* useful in writing a report about what?
- A famous African Americans
 - B famous American educators
 - C famous American presidents
 - D the life of African Americans after the Civil War
5. To Booker, what is "the promised land"?
- A a faraway country
 - B a good education
 - C a well-paying job
 - D a guaranteed place
6. The teacher asked the class, "Why do you think education was so important to Booker that he devoted his life to it?"
- Ann** said, "Booker thought that becoming a good educator would make him a famous person. He could then start the Tuskegee Institute."
- Bill** said, "Booker thought blacks would never be completely free until they were educated. Education could get them jobs in which they would not have to work so hard with their hands like he did."
- Cathie** said, "Booker had to work hard when he was a young boy. He thought school was difficult and others should have to work as hard as he did because it is good for them."
- Dan** said, "Booker thought learning to read was important. Therefore, he wanted to teach others to read also."
- Which student gave the *best* answer?
- A Ann
 - B Bill
 - C Cathie
 - D Dan
7. In the third paragraph, what does "henceforward" mean?
- A in front of
 - B up until now
 - C from now on
 - D on the porch