

# North Carolina End-of-Grade Tests

## Reading Comprehension—Grade 8

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*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 student accountability, the grade 8 end-of-grade tests are used as a way for students to demonstrate that they have the knowledge and skills necessary to meet the competency requirement for high school graduation. For school, school system, and state accountability, the scores from the prior grade (for example, grade 7) 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 8 assesses the reading strand of the grade 8 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 1, 2, and 3 of the curriculum. 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 8

Goal/ Strand	Description of Goal/Strand	Difficulty of Items in Pool
1	The learner will use strategies and processes that enhance control of communication skills development.	52%
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.	64%
	2.2 The learner will analyze, synthesize, and organize information and discover related ideas, concepts, or generalizations.	58%
	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.	58%

*How is the test administered?*

The end-of-grade reading test for grade 8 consists of 68 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 23,000 students from randomly selected schools across the state. The grade 8 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 8 reading test the scale scores range from 132 to 187 with a mean of 158.7 and a standard deviation of 8.9. 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 8

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.	9%	132-144
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.	26%	145-155
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.	41%	156-165
IV	Students performing at this level consistently perform in a superior manner clearly beyond that required to be proficient at grade level work.	24%	166-187

## Ooka and the Stolen Smell

*You have probably read a story about stolen money or jewelry, but have you ever read of a stolen smell? Read the following passage to learn how a student stole a smell and how he was punished for this crime.*

Now it so happened in the days of old Yedo, as Tokyo was once called, that the storytellers told marvelous tales of the wit and wisdom of His Honorable Honor, Ooka Tadasuke.

This famous judge never refused to hear a complaint, even if it seemed strange or unreasonable. People sometimes came to his court with the most unusual cases, but Ooka always agreed to listen. And the strangest case of all was the famous Case of the Stolen Smell.

It all began when a poor student rented a room over a *tempura* shop—a shop where fried food could be bought. The student was a most likeable young man, but the shopkeeper was a miser who suspected everyone of trying to get the better of him. One day he heard the student talking with one of his friends.

"It is sad to be so poor that one can only afford to eat plain rice," the friend complained.

"Oh," said the student, "I have found a very satisfactory answer to the problem. I eat my rice each day while the shopkeeper downstairs fries his fish. The smell comes up, and my humble rice seems to have much more flavor. It is really the smell, you know, that makes things taste so good."

The shopkeeper was furious. To think that someone was enjoying the smell of his fish for nothing! "Thief!" he shouted. "I demand that you pay me for the smells you have stolen."

"A smell is a smell," the young man replied. "Anyone can smell what he wants to. I will pay you nothing!"

Scarlet with rage, the shopkeeper rushed to Ooka's court and charged the student with

theft. Of course, everyone laughed at him, for how could anyone steal a smell? Ooka would surely send the man about his business. But to everyone's astonishment, the judge agreed to hear the case.

"Every man is entitled to his hour in court," he explained. "If this man feels strongly enough about his smells to make a complaint, it is only right that I, as city magistrate, should hear the case." He frowned at the amused spectators.

Gravely, Ooka sat on the dais and heard the evidence. Then he delivered his verdict.

"The student is obviously guilty," he said severely. "Taking another person's property is theft, and I cannot see that a smell is different from any other property."

The shopkeeper was delighted, but the student was horrified. He was very poor, and he owed the shopkeeper for three months' smelling. He would surely be thrown into prison.

"How much money have you?" Ooka asked him.

"Only five *mon*, Honorable Honor," the boy replied. "I need that to pay my rent, or I will be thrown out into the street."

"Let me see the money," said the judge.

"The judge listened to the pleasant clink of the money and said to the shopkeeper, "You have now been paid. If you have any other complaints in the future, please bring them to the court. It is our wish that all injustices be punished and all virtue rewarded."

"But, most Honorable Honor," the shopkeeper protested, "I did not get the money! The thief dropped it from one hand to the other. See! I have nothing." He held up his empty hands to show the judge.

Ooka stared at him gravely. "It is the court's judgment that the punishment should fit the crime. I have decided that the price of the *smell* of food shall be the *sound* of money. Justice has prevailed as usual in my court."

1. Why were people astonished and amused when Ooka decided to hear the shopkeeper's complaint?
  - A They knew the student was too poor to pay.
  - B They thought that the idea of stolen smells was silly.
  - C They didn't like the shopkeeper.
  - D They knew that Ooka always avoided small cases.
  
2. The shopkeeper demonstrates that he is a miser by doing what?
  - A cooking only fish every day
  - B refusing to pay the magistrate
  - C trying to charge the student for smelling his fish
  - D getting angry at the magistrate's verdict
  
3. If the story had ended when Ooka declared the student guilty, the moral of the story would have been which of the following?
  - A Taking anything that belongs to someone else is stealing.
  - B There are big and little crimes.
  - C The punishment should fit the crime.
  - D Treat others the way you want to be treated.

4. What is the mood of this story at the end?
  - A serious
  - B sad
  - C peaceful
  - D lighthearted
  
5. Which word *best* completes this character map?



- A honest
- B fair
- C friendly
- D helpful