

Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (PSSA) Vocabulary - Grade 8 Practice Test (Sample)

Study Guide



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SAMPLE

Questions

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- 1. Which technique uses logical reasoning to support a claim?**
 - A. Descriptive writing**
 - B. Argumentative writing**
 - C. Narrative writing**
 - D. Expository writing**
- 2. What is a gerund?**
 - A. The past form of a verb used as an adjective**
 - B. The present participle form of a verb used as a noun**
 - C. A command given in written form**
 - D. A noun that is derived from an adverb**
- 3. What is meant by "explicit" in a text?**
 - A. Clearly expressed or fully stated**
 - B. Implied or suggested**
 - C. Left to interpretation**
 - D. Incomplete or vague**
- 4. Which of the following is an example of hyperbole?**
 - A. I am so hungry I could eat a horse**
 - B. The sky is blue today**
 - C. Please close the door**
 - D. He runs very quickly**
- 5. What is the effect of a strong 'resolution' in a story?**
 - A. It introduces new characters**
 - B. It deepens the conflict within the narrative**
 - C. It provides closure and satisfaction to the reader**
 - D. It creates curiosity for a sequel**
- 6. What does it mean to interpret a text?**
 - A. To summarize the main idea**
 - B. To provide an explanation of its meaning**
 - C. To translate the text into another language**
 - D. To critique the author's style**

- 7. What does the main idea of a text represent?**
- A. The summary of the text's concluding paragraphs**
 - B. The author's central thought or chief topic**
 - C. A collection of random facts**
 - D. A character's perspective within the text**
- 8. What is a critical function of a subject in a sentence?**
- A. To describe the benefits of the action**
 - B. To indicate whom or what the sentence is about**
 - C. To complicate the sentence structure**
 - D. To express the main idea without specificity**
- 9. What is an interrogative sentence?**
- A. A sentence that makes a statement**
 - B. A sentence in the indicative mood that asks a question**
 - C. A sentence that gives a command**
 - D. A sentence that expresses emotion**
- 10. What role does denotation play in understanding text?**
- A. It provides emotional depth to the narrative**
 - B. It establishes the literal meaning of words for comprehension**
 - C. It indicates the author's biases**
 - D. It suggests stylistic choices**

Answers

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- 1. B**
- 2. B**
- 3. A**
- 4. A**
- 5. C**
- 6. B**
- 7. B**
- 8. B**
- 9. B**
- 10. B**

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Explanations

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1. Which technique uses logical reasoning to support a claim?

- A. Descriptive writing
- B. Argumentative writing**
- C. Narrative writing
- D. Expository writing

Argumentative writing is the technique that employs logical reasoning to support a claim. This form of writing typically involves presenting a viewpoint and backing it up with evidence, such as facts, statistics, expert opinions, and logical arguments. The primary goal of argumentative writing is to persuade the reader to accept a particular position by clearly articulating the reasoning behind it. In contrast, descriptive writing focuses on vividly depicting scenes or objects using sensory details, without trying to convince the reader of a particular point of view. Narrative writing tells a story or recounts events, emphasizing characters and plot rather than making a claim supported by logic. Expository writing aims to inform or explain a topic clearly and concisely, often using facts but not necessarily in a way that supports an argument or claim. Thus, argumentative writing stands out because it specifically utilizes logical reasoning as a fundamental component of advocating for a position.

2. What is a gerund?

- A. The past form of a verb used as an adjective
- B. The present participle form of a verb used as a noun**
- C. A command given in written form
- D. A noun that is derived from an adverb

A gerund is a verb form that ends in -ing and functions specifically as a noun within a sentence. This means it can take the place of a noun in various grammatical contexts - for example, it can be the subject of a sentence, the object of a verb, or the object of a preposition. In the correct choice, the term "present participle form of a verb" refers to this -ing ending distinguishing the gerund from other verb forms. Thus, the phrase "used as a noun" accurately identifies its grammatical function, confirming why this choice is the correct answer. Understanding this helps clarify how gerunds are employed in writing and speech, enriching a student's grasp of verb forms and their uses.

3. What is meant by "explicit" in a text?

- A. Clearly expressed or fully stated**
- B. Implied or suggested
- C. Left to interpretation
- D. Incomplete or vague

The term "explicit" in a text refers to something that is clearly expressed or fully stated. When a statement is explicit, it means that the meaning is straightforward, leaving no room for doubt or ambiguity. An explicit message conveys information that is directly articulated, making it easy for the reader to understand without needing to infer or guess. This contrasts with other options where meanings are more ambiguous, reserved, or open to interpretation, which does not align with the definition of "explicit."

4. Which of the following is an example of hyperbole?

A. I am so hungry I could eat a horse

B. The sky is blue today

C. Please close the door

D. He runs very quickly

Hyperbole is a figure of speech that involves exaggeration for emphasis or effect, often used to create a strong impression or to convey a feeling more intensely. The statement "I am so hungry I could eat a horse" illustrates hyperbole because it dramatically exaggerates the speaker's level of hunger. It implies an extreme condition that is not literally possible, and the purpose is to emphasize just how hungry the speaker feels. This makes it clear that the speaker is expressing their hunger in a way that goes beyond reality for dramatic emphasis. The other examples do not use exaggeration to convey a strong emotional state or to create a vivid image. The sky being described as blue is a straightforward observation without embellishment. A request to close the door is a simple command with no exaggerative quality. Saying someone runs very quickly presents a fact about someone's speed but does not involve any hyperbolic expression.

5. What is the effect of a strong 'resolution' in a story?

A. It introduces new characters

B. It deepens the conflict within the narrative

C. It provides closure and satisfaction to the reader

D. It creates curiosity for a sequel

A strong resolution in a story serves to provide closure and satisfaction to the reader by tying up loose ends and addressing the main conflicts presented throughout the narrative. This element is critical as it allows readers to understand the outcomes of the characters' journeys and the consequences of their actions. When a resolution is well-crafted, it leaves a lasting impression, ensuring that the story feels complete and fulfilling. This sense of closure encourages readers to reflect on the story and appreciate the development of characters and themes, making them feel rewarded for their engagement with the text.

6. What does it mean to interpret a text?

A. To summarize the main idea

B. To provide an explanation of its meaning

C. To translate the text into another language

D. To critique the author's style

Interpreting a text involves providing an explanation of its meaning. This means going beyond simply summarizing the main idea or translating the text into a different language. Interpreting entails analyzing the text, considering the author's intent, context, and the various themes or messages conveyed. It requires a deeper engagement with the content, allowing the reader to understand and explain not only what the text says but also why it is significant or how it relates to broader concepts. This process often involves making connections and drawing insights that enhance comprehension and appreciation of the text.

7. What does the main idea of a text represent?

- A. The summary of the text's concluding paragraphs
- B. The author's central thought or chief topic**
- C. A collection of random facts
- D. A character's perspective within the text

The main idea of a text represents the author's central thought or chief topic. This is the core concept that the author wants to convey throughout the piece, encapsulating the overall message or argument of the text. It is typically not confined to just one paragraph or section but rather is a thread that runs through the entire work, helping readers understand the primary focus or theme. Identifying the main idea allows readers to grasp what the author is emphasizing and understand the intent behind the writing, which is crucial for effective comprehension. By recognizing the central thought, readers can better analyze details, arguments, and evidence in the text that support this main idea.

8. What is a critical function of a subject in a sentence?

- A. To describe the benefits of the action
- B. To indicate whom or what the sentence is about**
- C. To complicate the sentence structure
- D. To express the main idea without specificity

The correct choice highlights that a critical function of a subject in a sentence is to indicate whom or what the sentence is about. This foundational role is essential in sentence structure, as the subject provides clarity regarding the primary focus of the action being described. Understanding the subject allows readers to quickly grasp who is performing the action or who is being described in the sentence. The other choices do not accurately represent the function of a subject. For example, describing the benefits of an action relates to the predicate or objects in a sentence rather than the subject. Complicating the sentence structure refers to additional elements that can be included, but does not define the subject's role. Expressing the main idea without specificity would more closely pertain to themes or ideas rather than highlighting the specific subject, which always needs to be clearly identified in a sentence.

9. What is an interrogative sentence?

- A. A sentence that makes a statement
- B. A sentence in the indicative mood that asks a question**
- C. A sentence that gives a command
- D. A sentence that expresses emotion

An interrogative sentence is defined as a sentence in the indicative mood that asks a question. This type of sentence typically begins with a helping verb or an interrogative word such as "who," "what," "where," "when," "why," or "how." The primary function of an interrogative sentence is to elicit information from the listener or reader, which distinguishes it from other sentence types like declarative sentences that make statements, imperative sentences that give commands, or exclamatory sentences that express strong emotion. The structure and purpose of an interrogative sentence are crucial in understanding how we communicate inquiries effectively.

10. What role does denotation play in understanding text?

- A. It provides emotional depth to the narrative**
- B. It establishes the literal meaning of words for comprehension**
- C. It indicates the author's biases**
- D. It suggests stylistic choices**

Denotation is crucial for understanding text because it refers to the literal or primary meaning of words, devoid of any emotional or associative implications. In the context of comprehension, knowing the denotative meaning of words helps readers grasp the fundamental ideas being conveyed without misunderstanding or misinterpretation. This foundational understanding enables readers to build a clearer picture of the narrative or argument being presented, making it easier to engage with the text. When interpreting any written work, having a solid grasp of denotation is essential, as it allows for accurate interpretation of terms and phrases, which is the first step in a deeper analysis of connotations, themes, and the overall message.