

**2021-2022**



**Grade 8 - Item Type Sampler**  
**English Language Arts**

**Directions:**

On the following pages of your booklet are passages and questions for the Grade 8 *Nebraska Student-Centered Assessment System English Language Arts (NSCAS-ELA)* Item Type Sampler.

Read these directions carefully before beginning this item type sampler.

This item type sampler will include several different types of questions. Some questions are based on one or two passages. Multiple choice questions will ask you to select an answer from among four choices. Multiple select questions will ask you to select multiple correct answers from among five or more answer choices. For some questions, there may be two parts, Part A and Part B, where each part has a multiple choice or multiple select question.

For all questions:

- Read each question carefully and choose the best answer.
- You may use scratch paper to make notes.
- Be sure to answer ALL the questions.

When you come to the word STOP, you have finished the Grade 8 NSCAS English Growth Language Arts Item Type Sampler.

## ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS - ITEM TYPE SAMPLER

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The items on this page are not passage-based.

★ 1. Read the paragraph.

The band had finished. They began another one of their hits. Then they began another one of their hits. Andrew stood transfixed as the music rolled around him. It was as if he were suspended in space somewhere. He was seeing everything. He was hearing everything.

Which revisions need to be made to improve the author's sentence fluency? Select **all** that apply.

- A. The word *transfixed* should be eliminated.
- B. The pronouns need to be corrected for accuracy.
- C. Misspelled words need to be corrected within the passage.
- D. The beginnings of the sentences need more variation throughout.
- E. The paragraph needs to have more complex sentences instead of mostly simple sentences.

★ 2. Read the paragraph from a student's draft of a report.

Books that have been made into movies seem to be huge box office attractions these days, especially for teens. It is exciting to see the characters from your favorite book come to life on the big screen. However, not all young adults appreciate or even like the movie versions of their favorite novels.

What could the writer use to BEST support the topic sentence in the paragraph?

- A. interviews with students who go to a lot of movies
- B. reasons that students prefer the books over movies
- C. the names of movies that have not been box office hits
- D. a list of popular books that have yet to be made into movies

The item on this page is not passage-based.

★ 3. Read the paragraph.

[1] George Norris was an influential Nebraskan who had a large impact not only on the state of Nebraska but also on the United States. [2] During his nearly 40 years in the United States Mr. Norris worked **above and beyond** on a wide range of legislative bills and actions. [3] A major accomplishment was the adoption of the Twentieth Amendment, which eliminated “lame-duck” sessions in the United States Senate. [4] He also fought for the introduction of presidential primary elections and the direct election of U.S. senators. [5] Another main accomplishment included the Rural Electrification Act, bringing electricity to the most remote rural areas of the country, including his home state. [6] In the state of Nebraska, George Norris promoted the idea of a one-house legislature, called the Unicameral, making Nebraska the first and only state in the nation with such a format. [7] George Norris’ political career ended in 1942, when he was not elected for his sixth term as a senator. [8] However, his impact is still felt in Nebraska and the nation.

Select the words that could replace **above and beyond** to make the paragraph more precise. Select **all** that apply.

- A. bravely
- B. concisely
- C. creatively
- D. determinedly
- E. endlessly
- F. excessively

## ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS - ITEM TYPE SAMPLER

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The item on this page is not passage-based.

- ★ 4. A student is writing a research report about the American Revolution. Read a paragraph from the report.

The American colonists originally were proud to be citizens of England. However, the large distance between the Colonies and the government in England made them feel very far removed from England. When King George instituted several new taxes on the colonists, without their consent, the rift widened. When American colonists decided to boycott British goods to show their displeasure, the king sent British soldiers to the Colonies to keep the colonists in line. After the colonists carried out the Boston Tea Party, costing British merchants thousands of dollars, the king further angered the colonists by passing a series of taxes and laws that became known as “The Intolerable Acts.” The American colonists declared their desire for independence, and the start of the American Revolution soon followed.

Which statement is the BEST thesis statement for the paragraph?

- A. Many different events led to the start of the American Revolution.
- B. The Boston Tea Party was an important event in the history of the city of Boston.
- C. The leaders of the American Revolution were important to the success of colonists.
- D. British generals used a variety of techniques in various battles throughout the American Revolution.

### What Is a Penny Worth?

- 1      What is a penny worth? The logical answer is one cent. Certainly, that is what a penny is worth to people who use U.S. currency. A better question is: “What does a penny cost?” Here the answer is not straightforward. While a penny is worth one cent, the cost of making a penny in 2016 was 1.5 cents. In other words, it costs more than a penny to make a penny.
- 2      In 2014, the President of the United States ordered a review of the penny to determine whether it should be phased out. Due to the high cost of producing pennies, some people support the idea of eliminating them. Others argue that pennies still have value despite their relatively high price.

### The Cost of Pennies

- 3      Before 1982, pennies used to contain about 95% copper and about 5% zinc. Then the U.S. Mint changed the recipe, producing pennies that are mostly zinc, covered by only a little bit of copper. The switch created a lighter-weight coin, and zinc coins were also cheaper to make. Indeed, the estimated savings at the time was about \$25 million per year.
- 4      Sadly, those savings could not last forever, since changes in the price of metals impacts the cost of making coins. Switching to zinc was not a permanent way to keep costs low because zinc prices have fluctuated over the years. Zinc costs soared in 2011, and at that time, it cost 2.41 cents to make each penny. Thanks to a recent drop in demand, zinc prices have fallen. Despite the **fluctuations**, nobody predicts the price of zinc will ever drop so low that a penny costs what it is worth to make.

### The Problem with Pennies

- 5      The U.S. government spent around \$39 million in 2015 to make pennies, which leads some taxpayers to believe that eliminating pennies would save millions of dollars and have minimal impact. Of course, others disagree, worrying that prices would go up without pennies. For example, they argue that a \$7.99 shirt would cost \$8.00 if pennies disappeared.
- 6      However, those in favor of eliminating the penny believe that the impact on prices would be slight. If a price did not end in a zero or a five, it could be rounded down rather than up. A pair of socks costing \$2.01, for example, would likely be rounded down to \$2.00. Ultimately, penny-eliminators argue that small increases and decreases in prices would balance each other out.
- 7      Other anti-penny advocates point out that making pennies has an environmental cost. Measured against the potential for environmental harm, they argue, the cost of a penny far exceeds 1.5 cents. Mining copper and zinc requires large amounts of energy. The mining process also produces greenhouse gases. Moreover, purifying zinc and covering it in copper creates dangerous **toxins**.

## ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS - ITEM TYPE SAMPLER

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### A Case for Keeping the Penny

- 8 Despite arguments against pennies, many Americans want to keep them around. A poll from 2014 found that 43% of the people who participated would be unhappy to see pennies disappear, and 71% said they pick up pennies when they see them on the ground.
- 9 Some penny supporters believe that losing the penny would indeed have costly consequences. Consider again the argument about rounding prices up or down. Would the prices really balance out? Or would businesses simply raise all prices that did not end in a five or a zero? The answer is unclear. Maybe that pair of socks costing \$2.01 would be rounded up to \$2.05 instead of down to \$2.00.
- 10 Yet another concern is the fact that some charities successfully raise money one penny at a time. One person dropping unwanted change into a box for a charitable organization might not add up to very much, but when millions of people drop millions of pennies into these boxes, some charities see real results. One organization announced in 2009 that it had raised \$150 million this way.

### Solving the Penny Problem

- 11 Facing some of the same challenges as the United States, Canada stopped making pennies in 2013. To prepare for the change, the Canadian government explained how things would work in a post-penny world. As long as old pennies still circulated, businesses could decide whether to accept them, and the government made a set of guidelines to help businesses figure out fair ways to round prices up or down.
- 12 So, will Americans do the same? Is the end of the penny inevitable? Not necessarily. So far, Congress has no plans to eliminate pennies. The penny is safe, at least for now.

### The Cost of Money

Types of U.S. Currency	How many cents is it worth?	How many cents did it cost to produce in 2016?
Penny	1	1.5
Nickel	5	6.32
Dime	10	3.08
Quarter	25	7.63
\$1 bill	100	5.4
\$20 bill	2000	12.2

5. **Read the sentence from the passage.**

“Moreover, purifying zinc and covering it in copper creates dangerous **toxins**.”

How would the meaning of the sentence be different if the word **toxins** were replaced with its synonym **germs**?

- A. It would suggest that the process creates illnesses, not poison.
- B. It would suggest that the process has too many costs associated with it.
- C. It would suggest that the process is harmful, mainly to the environment.
- D. It would suggest that the process is not as problematic as some once thought.

6. **This question has two parts. Answer Part A, and then answer Part B.**

**Part A**

**Read this sentence from the passage.**

“Despite the **fluctuations**, nobody predicts the price of zinc will ever drop so low that a penny costs what it is worth to make.”

What is the meaning of **fluctuations** in this sentence?

- A. construction
- B. value
- C. variations
- D. weight

**Part B**

Which clue from the passage helps readers determine the meaning of the word in Part A?

- A. Zinc is a type of metal.
- B. Zinc goes up and down in price.
- C. Pennies are lightweight because of zinc.
- D. Pennies cost more to make than they are worth.



## ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS - ITEM TYPE SAMPLER

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7. How does the organizational pattern used in the section titled **The Problem with Pennies** MOST expand the main topic?
- A. It shows the process for eliminating pennies over a period of time.
  - B. It shows the effects of greenhouse gases created by the production of pennies.
  - C. It shows the different viewpoints about how eliminating pennies will affect prices.
  - D. It shows the plan the U.S. government has to solve environmental concerns around pennies.
8. What BEST describes the author's tone at the end of the passage?
- A. triumphant that the United States is keeping the penny
  - B. realistic that a decision about the penny is not happening soon
  - C. disappointed that no decision has been made about the penny's future
  - D. cautious that the United States will copy Canada's decision to eliminate the penny
9. Why is the heading **A Case for Keeping the Penny** inaccurate for the section of text it introduces?
- A. The section contains more than one argument.
  - B. The section tells how Canada got rid of the penny.
  - C. The section describes how much money the penny is worth.
  - D. The section compares and contrasts the different money costs in the United States.

10. Which details support the author's claim that the answer to how much a penny costs is complicated? Select **all** that apply.
- A. Canada stopped making pennies in 2013.
  - B. The metal used to make pennies varies in cost.
  - C. Making pennies takes a toll on the environment.
  - D. Businesses would raise prices without the penny.
  - E. Pennies cost no less to make than other types of coins.
11. Based on information in the passage, how are pennies and nickels similar?
- A. Both may be eliminated.
  - B. Both are made out of zinc and copper.
  - C. Both cost more to make than they are worth.
  - D. Both can be found in currency in other countries.
12. Based on the chart, which type of U.S. currency could start a debate over its value in the same way the penny has?
- A. nickel
  - B. dime
  - C. quarter
  - D. \$1 bill

### Feeling Like Home

- 1 The plane landed on the tarmac at the airport after an uneventful flight from San Juan. As they taxied to the gate, Mateo looked out the window at the **alien** landscape. He soaked it in with his eyes, both eager and nervous to see his new home.
- 2 Uncle Damien met them at the baggage claim area and drove them to what was now home. The street in Queens where Uncle Damien parked was adjacent to the elevated train tracks. Mateo thought they only had subways in New York City, but obviously by looking at this overhead train system, he realized he was wrong. As they got out of the car, the train rumbled and shook the earth as it careened past the station. Mateo thought to himself, “How are we ever going to sleep at night to this? It is certainly nothing like the soothing sound of the ocean.”
- 3 Uncle Damien lived on the fifth floor of the building, which meant they had to walk up five flights of stairs to get there. Luckily for them, Uncle Damien had offered them a place to stay. The apartment had two small bedrooms and a rather large living room where Uncle Damien had set up a big curtain to separate it into two different sections.
- 4 “That side is where you two will bunk.” He pointed to the bunk beds on one side of the curtain and motioned for Mateo and his younger brother Pedro to put down their bags. “Then, Ferdinand and Maria, this is your room,” he showed Mama and Papa to the apartment’s larger bedroom.
- 5 That night after they were settled, Uncle Damien showed them around the neighborhood. Tall brick buildings lined both sides of the street. Underneath the elevated train were shops, restaurants, and street vendors selling their wares. Mateo did have to admit that some of this did feel familiar—the smell of the food, the types of articles sold by the vendors, the music trailing out the apartment windows all felt like home.
- 6 “Just about everyone who lives in this area came from Puerto Rico at some point, or their families did,” Uncle Damien explained as they ate at one of Uncle Damien’s favorite Puerto Rican restaurants just a few doors down from their building. “In fact, some people like to call this Little San Juan. You can find Little Colombia, Little India, Little Santiago, Little Italy, Chinatown, and all kinds of other micro-neighborhoods in New York City. It is a fascinating place. I think you will grow to love it.” Mateo listened **skeptically**.
- 7 As Mateo tried to go to sleep on the bottom bunk later that night, he felt miserable. After one plane flight, everything in his life was new. A million questions flew through his mind: How would he ever fit in here? It was so different. There was no ocean, no palm trees, no sandy beaches. Would the people here be nice to him? Would he be able to make any friends?

- 8 The next morning seemed to come in a flash, and Mateo hardly even felt like he slept at all. The train, the noise, the anxiety of the move—it had all taken its toll on any kind of restful sleep that Mateo could hope for. At least there was one constant in Mateo’s life: Mama always made breakfast every morning, no matter what.
- 9 “You look nice, Mateo,” Mama said as Mateo walked into the kitchen in his best clothes for school. “You nervous about today?”
- 10 “A little,” Mateo replied, not wanting to worry his mama. “I think it will be okay,” he said boldly, more trying to convince himself than anything else. He grabbed a plate and dished up a serving of tortilla Española and fried plantains.
- 11 To Mateo, the walk to school through the thick crowds of commuters seemed to go by even faster than his restless night. Before he knew it, he was walking into the two-story brick building on the corner of Jackson and 9th. As he walked down the hall of his new high school, he felt completely out of place. It wasn’t anything like his school back home, but how could it be?
- 12 Mateo leaned up against one of the brick walls and looked down at his schedule for the day’s classes. As he did, he heard a familiar voice call out his name. Mateo immediately spun around in disbelief, and there standing in the crowded hallway of this New York City school was one of Mateo’s old friends from seventh grade, Jorge.
- 13 Jorge looked equally surprised. “I had no idea you were moving here!” he exclaimed. “I mean, what are the chances you would not only move here, but that we would end up in the same school again, especially in a city with millions of people? Follow me, I can show you where your classes are. This place can be a little confusing.”
- 14 As Mateo walked side by side with Jorge down the hallway, he felt as if he had just been transported back in time to his life far across the ocean. Even in this very different place, he suddenly felt home all around him and could almost hear the familiar calls of birds, smell the fresh flowers, and feel the salty sea on his skin.
- 15 Maybe, just maybe, this new home will not be so bad after all, Mateo mused to himself. This new world, complete with his long-lost friend, had begun looking better already.

**13. Read paragraph 1 of the story.**

“The plane landed on the tarmac at the airport after an uneventful flight from San Juan. As they taxied to the gate, Mateo looked out the window at the **alien** landscape. He soaked it in with his eyes, both eager and nervous to see his new home.”

Why would the author have Mateo describe the landscape as **alien**?

- A. to show he had landed on a new planet
- B. to show he was looking at a dark, scary place
- C. to show he was reading a science fiction novel
- D. to show he had landed in a new, unfamiliar place

**14. What is the MAIN theme of the passage?**

- A. City life is fast-paced.
- B. Change can be difficult.
- C. Food can provide comfort.
- D. Heritage is dependent on location.

**15. Read the sentences from the story.**

“‘It is a fascinating place. I think you will grow to love it.’ Mateo listened **skeptically**.”

Based on the context, what is the meaning of **skeptically**?

- A. angrily
- B. doubtfully
- C. excitedly
- D. fearfully

16. Which words from the story demonstrate Mateo experiencing character-versus-self conflict? Select **all** that apply.

- A. eager
- B. familiar
- C. nervous
- D. skeptically
- E. fascinating

17. What was the author's purpose for writing this piece?

- A. to persuade the reader to move to New York City
- B. to describe how San Juan is better than New York City
- C. to inform the reader about how people move to new places
- D. to entertain the reader with a story about a boy adapting to change

18. Why does Mateo compare life in New York City to his life in San Juan?

- A. Mateo has recently arrived in a new city.
- B. Mateo has conflicting feelings about moving.
- C. Mateo thinks New York City is better than San Juan.
- D. Mateo does not understand why his family left San Juan.

## ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS - ITEM TYPE SAMPLER

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19. Which pieces of evidence from the text show that Mateo is anxious about living in New York City? Select **all** that apply.

- A. He soaked it in with his eyes, both eager and nervous to see his new home.
- B. Mateo thought they only had subways in New York City, but obviously by looking at this overhead train system, he realized he was wrong.
- C. Mateo thought to himself, “How are we ever going to sleep at night to this? It is certainly nothing like the soothing sound of the ocean.”
- D. Mateo did have to admit that some of this did feel familiar—the smell of the food, the types of articles sold by the vendors, the music trailing out the apartment windows all felt like home.
- E. A million questions flew through his mind: How would he ever fit in here? It was so different.
- F. Even in this very different place, he suddenly felt home all around him and could almost hear the familiar calls of birds, smell the fresh flowers, and feel the salty sea on his skin.

20. Read this selection from the story.

“At least there was one constant in Mateo’s life: Mama always made breakfast every morning, no matter what.

“‘You look nice, Mateo,’ Mama said as Mateo walked into the kitchen in his best clothes for school. ‘You nervous about today?’

“‘A little,’ Mateo replied, not wanting to worry his mama. ‘I think it will be okay,’ he said boldly, more trying to convince himself than anything else. **He grabbed a plate and dished up a serving of tortilla Española and fried plantains.**”

Why does the author have Mateo specifically mention the items he has for breakfast?

- A. to show Mateo’s cultural heritage
- B. to show that Mateo dislikes his mother
- C. to show that Mateo is extremely hungry
- D. to show that Mateo is excited about his first day at a new school.

**NSCAS Growth Grade 8  
Item Type Sampler Answer Key  
English Language Arts**



Sequence	Key	Points
1.	D, E	2
	D or E	1
2.	B	1
3.	D, E	2
	D or E	1
4.	A	1
5.	A	1
6.	Part A: C Part B: B	2
	Part A Only	1
7.	C	1
8.	B	1
9.	A	1
10.	B, C	2
	B or C	1
11.	C	1
12.	A	1
13.	D	1
14.	B	1
15.	B	1
16.	C, D	2
	C or D	1
17.	D	1
18.	B	1
19.	A, C, E	2
	Any combination of A, C, or E.	1
20.	A	1