

## NWEA MAP Common Core Sample Items

The progression of RIT in a Reading skill area might be viewed both in the context of the item complexity (DOK) and the asset/passage difficulty (Lexile, qualitative text complexity, etc.). It is the combination of these two different factors that shapes and builds the progression of a skill. Studying them both helps us trace and understand RIT progression.

NWEA's new common stimulus passages are developed using a combination of text complexity measures to generate a readability range or level. The difficulty, complexity, and targeted grade level of each reading item passage is gauged with quantitative readability scores like Lexile, as well as qualitative evaluations related to factors like knowledge demand, language conventionality, and text cohesion and clarity. The items that accompany the common stimulus may range in complexity (DOK 1-3) depending on the standard that is being assessed. Sometimes RIT may increase due to the cognitive complexity of the item; sometimes the difficulty of the text increases the RIT of what may appear to be a fairly literal, straightforward item. Both passage complexity (difficulty) and item cognitive complexity make up the full picture of a skill progression.

### Informational Text: Key Ideas and Details

This first set of examples illustrates how items in the informational text goal area might progress. The items cluster around the main ideas and details goal area and highlight standards like:

CCSS RI.1 Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.

CCSS. RI. 2. Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas.

At lower RIT levels, the items here ask the student to navigate a straightforward text and show comprehension of explicitly stated information.

### [10052650; RIT 195; RI.3.1; Key-C]

#### Read the paragraph.

Scallops and clams are both mollusks. A mollusk is a sea creature that has a hard shell but a soft body. Scallops and clams both feed by pulling water through their shells and sifting out tiny plants and animals. The scallop lies on the ocean floor in shallow water. A clam makes its home by burying deep into mud or sand.

#### How are scallops and clams different?

- 1. They have different ways of feeding.
- 2. Scallops and clams have different types of bodies.
- 3. Scallops live on the ocean floor; clams bury deep into mud or sand.
- 4. One is a clam, the other a mollusk.

[Item 10224950; RIT 191; RI.2.1: Key D]

Read the passage.

**Animals and their Homes**

The desert is hot and dry. It is home to many kinds of animals. Because it is dry, desert animals use very little water. To stay cool during the hot day, they do not move around very much. They look for cool places to stay out of the sun. Small animals dig holes into the dirt or crawl under rocks. Larger animals spend the day in caves. At night, the desert is cool. The animals move around more at night.

How do desert animals stay away from the hot sun?

- 1. They sleep at night.
- 2. They move very slowly.
- 3. They drink a lot of water.
- 4. They find shady and cool places.

Items that begin to ask the student to make logical inferences show the upward trend of RIT. This is an example of just one item presented in a common stimulus format.

[Item 10157250; Temp RIT 200; Example of an RI.3.1 item within a passage set; Key D]

Read the passage.

**The White-crowned Sparrow**

**1** Sparrows are small, common birds. They live in most parts of North America. There are many kinds of sparrows. These birds live in many different places, or habitats. Sparrows can live in the city or the country.

**What it Looks Like**

**2** The white-crowned sparrow is one kind of sparrow. It is easy to spot. This bird looks plain gray from far away. When seen up close, this bird has black and white stripes on its head. It also has a pale pink or yellow beak. Its chest is pale gray, and it has white bars on its wings. Its back is soft brown. The white-crowned sparrow's tail is long. The male and female birds look alike.

**Where They Live**

**3** White-crowned sparrows live in bushy areas. Look for these birds in woodlands and thickets, which are areas with lots of trees and bushes. They scratch the ground for food in nearby open areas.

**What They Eat**

**4** White-crowned sparrows eat many kinds of seeds, including sunflower seeds. They like grasses and grains, too. They eat some insects. They also like blackberries.

**How They Nest**

**5** These birds make nests in shrubs. They build them up to ten feet high. The female makes the nest with twigs. Then she lines the nest with soft grass and feathers. The female lays 3-7 light blue-green eggs. The eggs have brownish spots. It takes the eggs 11-14 days to hatch.

**How They Raise Young**

**6** After the eggs hatch, the female bird stays on the nest for 7-12 days. Both the males and females feed the young birds. Then the male sparrow keeps feeding the baby birds. The female starts to build another nest. She lays more eggs there.

**What Their Song Sounds Like**

**7** The song of this bird sounds like a whistle. It sounds like "Poor-wet-wetter-chee-zee."

**8** It is fun to watch for white-crowned sparrows. These birds are so common that they may live nearby. Their white and black heads make them easy to identify.

**The male white-crowned sparrow stays and feeds the birds while the female goes to build another nest.**

**Which sentence tells the most likely reason?**

- 1. Male sparrows are better at feeding young birds.
- 2. Female sparrows are better at making nests.
- 3. The male sparrow is the only one who can find seeds for the babies.
- 4. The female sparrow is the only one who can lay eggs in the nest.

[Item 836862; RI.1; RIT 212; Key B]

Read the paragraph.

Towering peaks of ice which float in the northern Atlantic Ocean make ships look like bathtub toys. Yet the tips are only a small portion of huge masses of ice called glaciers. Most of the glacier lies beneath the surface of the ocean. This hidden part forms a mass of ice seven times the size of the peak. Glaciers are enormous. They have been built up over centuries. Snowflakes that fell on the earth thousands of years ago form today's glaciers. The snow didn't melt. It stayed and was covered by still another snowfall. The weight of the new snow packed the old snowflakes into layers of ice. This continued century after century, creating glaciers. Sometimes a piece breaks off and falls into the sea. This piece is called an iceberg. Icebergs drift in the open water. Some ships have hit these drifting mountains of ice and have sunk.

According to the paragraph, which is true of glaciers?

- 1. New glaciers form from snowfall each year.
- 2. Icebergs are huge chunks of ice that come from glaciers.
- 3. Half of the glacier is above water and the other half is below.
- 4. The tip of the glacier is the most dangerous part for ships.

Items at the higher RITs will ask students to compare texts or synthesize information across texts. Inferences and conclusions may depend on the comparative relationships. Items which ask the student to recognize or provide textual citations which support inferences also become more prevalent as RITs increase.

[Item 10190330; RI.2; RIT 225; Key D]

Read the passages.

**On Cheerfulness**

I have always preferred cheerfulness to mirth. The latter I consider as an act, the former as a habit of the mind. Mirth is short and transient, cheerfulness fixed and permanent. Those are often raised into the greatest transports of mirth, who are subject to the greatest depressions of melancholy: on the contrary, cheerfulness, though it does not give the mind such an exquisite gladness, prevents us from falling into any depths of sorrow. Mirth is like a flash of lightning, that breaks through a gloom of clouds, and glitters for a moment; cheerfulness keeps up a kind of daylight in the mind, and fills it with a steady and perpetual serenity.

(from "On Cheerfulness" by Joseph Addison)

**After Laughter**

Recent research indicates that laughter may have a role to play in curing illnesses. Research scientists are not sure exactly which illnesses may benefit directly from laughter, but doctors recognize that patients often feel better and stronger after a good laugh. It is possible to document this effect: doctors measure the amount of stress in the body by checking the level of certain hormones and the number of cells that produce antibodies. While a patient is laughing, doctors also observe how the diaphragm and the abdominal muscles exercise and roll around. After laughter, these muscles—as well as muscles in the face and in the shoulders—experience a transition to a state of relaxation and a physical sense of release from tension. Many physicians believe that laughter is helpful, and what happens to the body after laughter may indicate a reduction in stress.

Based on the information in both passages, which conclusion can a reader draw about feelings?

- 1. Hormone levels reflect how much stress a person is feeling.
- 2. Comedians may be able to reduce stress by telling very good jokes.
- 3. Situations that seem amusing usually fade after we learn the facts.
- 4. A calm state of mind appears to reduce stress and have long-lasting benefits.

**Literary Text: Craft and Structure**

This set of items illustrates a progression within in the **Literary Text** goal area focusing on craft and structure.

RL.4 Interpret words and phrases as they are used in a text, including determining technical, connotative, and figurative meanings, and analyze how specific word choices shape meaning or tone.

Here, we can see a progression of both text complexity and of cognitive complexity of item design. Items in the lower RIT ask students for simple understanding and interpretation of literary texts. This poem provides the ability to engage and understand at a literal level, as well as providing appropriate poetic characteristics for the development level.

[10211480; RL.4; RIT 173; Key A]

**Read the poem.**

**A Wet Day**

Raindrops falling,  
Birds are calling.  
We should go inside.

Hats for wearing,  
Umbrellas for sharing.  
The sun has gone to hide!

**Which words from the poem tell about a sound?**

- 1. Birds are calling.
- 2. We should go inside.
- 3. Umbrellas for sharing.
- 4. The sun has gone to hide!

As the RIT increases, students engage in more sophisticated texts and are asked to not only understand or identify literary qualities, but interpret them.

**[Item 10181800; RIT 208; L.6.5.a; RL.4; Key B]**

**Read the passage.**

*The narrator, young David Balfour, has received a mysterious message telling him to go to a mansion called Shaws. As this passage begins, he has just arrived at the mansion.*

The night had begun to fall as I got close; and in three of the lower windows, which were very high up and narrow, and well barred, the changing light of a little fire began to glimmer. Was this the palace I had been coming to? Was it within these walls that I was to seek new friends and begin great fortunes? Why, in my father's house on Essen-Waterside, the fire and the bright lights would show a mile away, and the door open to a beggar's knock!

I came forward cautiously, and giving ear as I came, heard some one rattling with dishes, and a little dry, eager cough that came in fits; but there was no sound of speech, and not a dog barked.

The door, as well as I could see it in the dim light, was a great piece of wood all studded with nails; and I lifted my hand with a faint heart under my jacket, and knocked once. Then I stood and waited. The house had fallen into a dead silence; a whole minute passed away, and nothing stirred but the bats overhead. I knocked again, and hearkened again. By this time my ears had grown so accustomed to the quiet, that I could hear the ticking of the clock inside as it slowly counted out the seconds; but whoever was in that house kept deadly still, and must have held his breath.

(from Kidnapped by Robert Louis Stevenson)

**What does the narrator mean when he says he lifted his hand with a faint heart?**

- 1. He waited patiently.
- 2. He felt nervous and uncertain.
- 3. He could hear his heart beating.
- 4. He felt dizzy and like he might collapse.

Students at higher RITS will also be asked to analyze the literary qualities and then make judgments about the author's intent or to make inferences about the effect of an author's choice. They may be asked to apply their understanding at one point of a text to draw conclusions about the whole text or provide text support to support their logic.

**[Item 10181770; L.5.\*.a; RL.4; RIT 226; Key D]**

**Read the passage.**

*Several crew members and a correspondent (newspaper reporter) have recently escaped a shipwreck in a small boat and are adrift on the open sea.*

As the boat bounced from the top of each wave, the wind tore through the hair of the hatless men, and as the craft plopped her stern down again the spray splashed past them. The crest of each of these waves was a hill, from the top of which the men surveyed, for a moment, a broad tumultuous expanse, shining and wind-riven. It was probably splendid. It was probably glorious, this play of the free sea, wild with lights of emerald and white and amber.

"Bully good thing it's an on-shore wind," said the cook; "If not, where would we be? Wouldn't have a show."

"That's right," said the correspondent.

The busy oiler nodded his assent.

Then the captain, in the bow, chuckled in a way that expressed humor, contempt, tragedy, all in one. "Do you think We've got much of a show now, boys?" said he.

Whereupon the three were silent, save for a trifle of hemming and hawing. To express any particular optimism at this time they felt to be childish and stupid, but they all doubtless possessed this sense of the situation in their mind. A young man thinks doggedly at such times. On the other hand, the ethics of their condition was decidedly against any open suggestion of hopelessness. So they were silent.

(from "The Open Boat" by Stephen Crane)

**What does the phrase hemming and hawing help the reader understand about the men?**

- 1. They are mending the boat's ropes to help pass the time.
- 2. They are giggling softly and trying not to laugh out loud.
- 3. They are becoming ill because they have been out in the boat for so long.
- 4. They are muttering in a meaningless way because they don't know what to say.