



**NEW ENGLAND  
COMMON ASSESSMENT PROGRAM**

**Released Items  
2006**

**Grade 8  
Writing**

# Writing—Session 1

- 1 What is the correct form of the underlined words below?

Icebergs is formed when moisture from the ocean rises up into Earth's atmosphere.

- A. were formed
  - B. is forming
  - C. are formed
  - D. were forming
- 2 Which sentence is punctuated correctly?
- A. "Juan said My family is planning to move at the end of the school year."
  - B. Juan said, My family is planning to move at the end of the school year.
  - C. Juan said "My family is planning to move at the end of the school year."
  - D. Juan said, "My family is planning to move at the end of the school year."

- 3 How should the underlined word in the sentence below be spelled?

Thank you for your assistence.

- A. assistence
  - B. assistience
  - C. assistince
  - D. assistance
- 4 What is the **best** way to combine the two sentences below?

The last performers took the stage. The auditorium was two-thirds empty.

- A. When the last performers took the stage, the auditorium was two-thirds empty.
- B. The auditorium was two-thirds empty, the last performers took the stage.
- C. Two-thirds empty was the auditorium when the last performers took the stage.
- D. The last performers took the stage, the auditorium was two-thirds empty.

- 5 Which word in the sentence below should be capitalized?

The citizens of the city of Atlanta and the officials of the zoo in Grant park were all delighted.

- A. citizens
- B. city
- C. officials
- D. park

- 6 Which edit is needed in this sentence?

I noticed that the ropes that attach the hammock to the tree were already wore out.

- A. Change *noticed* to **notice**.
- B. Change *attach* to **attaches**.
- C. Change *already* to **all ready**.
- D. Change *wore* to **worn**.

- 7 Where should a colon (:) be placed in the sentence below?

The planet Jupiter has many unusual features 63 moons, a ring like Saturn's, and a hurricane that has lasted for 400 years.

- A. after *Jupiter*
- B. after *has*
- C. after *features*
- D. after *hurricane*

- 8 Which edit is needed in the sentence below?

Because the gliders didn't have motors, the pilot's main intrest was learning to control a craft while flying.

- A. Change *motors* to **moters**.
- B. Change *main* to **mane**.
- C. Change *intrest* to **interest**.
- D. Change *while* to **wile**.

- 9 Which word in the sentence below should be capitalized?

My aunt called doctor Olson at his office to see if he was leaving in the winter.

- A. aunt
- B. doctor
- C. office
- D. winter

- 10 What is the **best** way to combine the three sentences below?

The Egyptians invented a water clock. The clock was a bowl with a small hole on the bottom. The bowl had markings on the side.

- A. A bowl that had a small hole in the bottom and that had markings on the side was the water clock the Egyptians invented.
- B. Inventing a water clock, the Egyptians had a bowl with a small hole on the bottom that had markings on the side.
- C. The Egyptians invented a water clock, and the clock was a bowl with a small hole on the bottom and it had markings on the side.
- D. The water clock that the Egyptians invented was a bowl with a small hole on the bottom and markings on the side.

**When writing responses to prompts 11, 12, and 13, remember to**

- **read the prompt carefully,**
- **develop a complete response to the prompt,**
- **proofread and edit your writing, and**
- **write only in the space provided.**

Students read a paragraph titled “Ketchup,” and then answered the questions that followed.

Due to copyright restrictions, we are unable to reprint the paragraph in this document. The author asks the reader to imagine his or her reaction if a waiter brought the eighteenth-century version of ketchup to the table. According to the paragraph, ketchup used to include nuts and vegetables rather than tomatoes.

“Ketchup” from *The Kid Who Invented the Trampoline* by Don Wulffson. Published by Dutton Children’s Books. Copyright © 2001 by Don Wulffson.

- 11 Write a paragraph that explains how the author captures the reader’s interest in this introduction. Use details from the introduction to support your response.
  
- 12 Think about the best book you have ever read or the best movie you have ever seen. Write a paragraph to persuade a friend to read the book or to watch the movie.

*For a class report, a student wrote this fact sheet about the way that useful land turns into desert. Read the fact sheet. Then write a response to the prompt that follows.*

## Deserts

**Definition of desertification:** Process by which land once good for farming or raising animals turns into desert. It is caused by human activities and changes in climate.

### Facts

- soil produces less, loses its covering of plants
- topsoil blown or washed away
- affects large parts of Africa, the United States, Latin America, Europe, and Asia
- affects a billion people in 110 countries worldwide

### Causes

- natural forces such as droughts or even floods
- human activity
- too much farming without care of soil
- too many animals grazing on the land—all plants get eaten and the soil gets packed down too much
- careless irrigation practices wash soil away
- cutting down forests to clear land for farming and for firewood—nothing left to hold soil in place

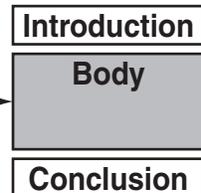
### Solutions

- planting new trees and shrubs
- more careful irrigation
- rotating crops and taking better care of the soil
- using better grazing practices
- protecting the environment

13 Write **one** paragraph of a report on desertification using information from the fact sheet. Your paragraph should describe **either**

- the causes of desertification, or
- the solutions for desertification.

The shaded area of the box shows which part of the report you should write. →



## Writing—Session 2

*The narrator of this passage is a student named Marisa. Read the passage and think about Marisa’s character traits. Then write a response to the prompt that follows.*

### Drawing Horses

*Cerelle Woods*

I’d give anything to draw horses the way Euphemia Tucker does. She draws them in the margins of spelling tests and on the back of her math homework. They’re always running wild and free, their manes swirling over the paper like clouds across the sky.

Euphemia’s horses look so real you can almost feel their breath on your face.

Luke Anderson, who sits next to me, says he can’t decide whether my horses look more like Great Danes or kitchen tables. He also calls me Messy. I prefer Marisa, which is my real name, to Missy, which is what everyone—except Luke—calls me. If I could draw like Euphemia, I’d sign all my pictures Marisa. Nobody messes with Euphemia’s name, not even Luke Anderson.

Today I sharpened my pencil and took a clean sheet of paper out of my desk. Then I closed my eyes and pictured one of Euphemia’s perfect horses rearing up and pawing the air with its sharp hooves. I could see it so clearly I was sure I’d be able to draw it this time.

I started with what I do best: a big, billowing mane. Next I roughed in most of the body and drew a long tail streaming out behind. It really wasn’t turning out half bad until I got to the front-legs-pawing-the-air part, which looked more like two macaroni noodles with tiny marshmallows for hooves.

I tried again, but the hooves still didn’t seem right, and rather than doing them over and over, I erased them and went on to the head. That was when I really ran into trouble.

First I drew some great donkey ears, followed by sheep ears, pig ears, kangaroo ears . . . everything except horse ears. I erased again and again until I had rubbed a hole in the paper. That was when Luke Anderson poked his nose over my shoulder.

“Hey, Messy,” he said. “What are you drawing? It looks like a *Trex* with a mohawk.”

I scratched a big X through my earless, macaroni-legged horse, wadded it up into a little ball, and stuffed it under the lid of my desk.

I was still upset when I got off the school bus this afternoon. I walked past the neighbors’ horses standing in the field next to our house. They’ve been in that field for as long as I can remember. Their stringy manes never float into the sky. Their ragged old tails hang straight down to the ground, and I’ve never seen them run. Every few minutes they stamp their feet to knock off the fire ants, which is how I know they’re alive.

Euphemia probably has her own herd of wild stallions. I bet they run right past her bedroom window.

I brooded about it all through dinner. After I'd helped clear the dishes, I sat down with a stack of typing paper and a freshly sharpened pencil. Without Luke Anderson there to pester me, I hoped I'd have better luck. I practiced a few horses' heads, trying to get the ears right. Then my mother walked by, carrying a basket of laundry.

"Nice dogs, Missy," she said. "Is that one a German shepherd?"

I slammed my pencil against the table, hard. My dad looked up from his magazine.

"Was it something I said?" Mama asked.

I tossed all the dog heads into the trash and walked outside. The sun had just sunk below the horizon, feathering the whole sky with pink and orange wisps. Everything looked special in that light, even the scraggly horses next door.

I dragged a lawn chair over to the fence and sat down to take a better look at them.

In this passage, Marisa shows several character traits. For example, she is both jealous and determined. Choose **one** of Marisa's character traits, and explain how the author develops that trait.

Use the questions in the box below to organize your writing. You can answer the questions **before** you write to plan your response or **after** you write to check your response. What you write in the **Student Answer Booklet** will be included as part of your score.

14 What is the focus/controlling idea of your response? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

15 What are the supporting details/references to text in your response? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

16 What is the conclusion to your response? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**When writing a response to prompt 17, remember to**

- **read the prompt carefully,**
- **develop a complete response to the prompt,**
- **proofread and edit your writing, and**
- **write only in the space provided.**

**17** Choose **one** of Marisa’s character traits, and explain how the author develops that trait.

# Acknowledgments

The New Hampshire, Vermont, and Rhode Island Departments of Education wish to acknowledge and credit the following authors and publishers for use of their work in the writing portion of the *New England Common Assessment Program—2006*.

“Ketchup” (p. 4) from *The Kid Who Invented the Trampoline* by Don Wulffson. Published by Dutton Children’s Books. Copyright © 2001 by Don Wulffson.

“Deserts” (p. 5). Copyright © 2004 by Measured Progress.

“Drawing Horses” (pp. 6–7) by Cerelle Woods as it appeared in *Highlights*, April 2000. Published by Highlights for Children. Copyright © 2000 by Highlights for Children.

## Grade 8 Writing Released Item Information

Released Item Number	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
Content Strand <sup>1</sup>	SC	IR	PW	RW	LR	LR	LR	LR									
GLE Code	7-9	7-9	7-9	7-1	7-9	7-9	7-9	7-9	7-9	7-1	7-3	7-8	7-8	7-3	7-3	7-3	7-3
Depth of Knowledge Code	1	1	1	2	1	1	1	1	1	2	2	2	3	3	3	3	3
Item Type <sup>2</sup>	MC	CR	CR	CR	SA	SA	SA	ER									
Answer Key	C	D	D	A	D	D	C	C	B	D							
Total Possible Points	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	4	4	4	1	1	1	12

<sup>1</sup>Content Strand: SC = Structures of Language & Writing Conventions. Short Responses — IR = Response to Informational Text, PW = Persuasive Writing, RW = Report Writing. Extended Response — LR = Response to Literary Text

<sup>2</sup>Item Type: MC = Multiple Choice, CR = Constructed Response, SA = Short Answer, ER = Writing Prompt