

## Reading DOK Levels

In language arts, four DOK levels were used to judge both reading and writing objectives and assessment tasks. The reading levels are based on Valencia and Wixson (2000, pp. 909-935). The writing levels were developed by Marshá Horton, Sharon O'Neal, and Phoebe Winter.

*Reading Level 1.* Level 1 requires students to receive or recite facts or to use simple skills or abilities. Oral reading that does not include analysis of the text, as well as basic comprehension of a text, is included. Items require only a shallow understanding of the text presented and often consist of verbatim recall from text, slight paraphrasing of specific details from the text, or simple understanding of a single word or phrase. Some examples that represent, but do not constitute all of, Level 1 performance are:

- Support ideas by reference to verbatim or only slightly paraphrased details from the text.
- Use a dictionary to find the meanings of words.
- Recognize figurative language in a reading passage.

*Reading Level 2.* Level 2 includes the engagement of some mental processing beyond recalling or reproducing a response; it requires both comprehension and subsequent processing of text or portions of text. Inter-sentence analysis of inference is required. Some important concepts are covered, but not in a complex way. Standards and items at this level may include words such as summarize, interpret, infer, classify, organize, collect, display, compare, and determine whether fact or opinion. Literal main ideas are stressed. A Level 2 assessment item may require students to apply skills and concepts that are covered in Level 1. However, items require closer understanding of text, possibly through the item's paraphrasing of both the question and the answer. Some examples that represent, but do not constitute all of, Level 2 performance are:

- Use context cues to identify the meaning of unfamiliar words, phrases, and expressions that could otherwise have multiple meanings.
- Predict a logical outcome based on information in a reading selection.
- Identify and summarize the major events in a narrative.

*Reading Level 3.* Deep knowledge becomes a greater focus at Level 3. Students are encouraged to go beyond the text; however, they are still required to show understanding of the ideas in the text. Students may be encouraged to explain, generalize, or connect ideas. Standards and items at Level 3 involve reasoning and planning. Students must be able to support their thinking. Items may involve abstract theme identification, inference across an entire passage, or students' application of prior knowledge. Items may also involve more superficial connections between texts. Some examples that represent, but do not constitute all of, Level 3 performance are:

- Explain or recognize how the author's purpose affects the interpretation of a reading selection.

- Summarize information from multiple sources to address a specific topic.
- Analyze and describe the characteristics of various types of literature.

*Reading Level 4.* Higher-order thinking is central and knowledge is deep at Level 4. The standard or assessment item at this level will probably be an extended activity, with extended time provided for completing it. The extended time period is not a distinguishing factor if the required work is only repetitive and does not require the application of significant conceptual understanding and higher-order thinking. Students take information from at least one passage of a text and are asked to apply this information to a new task. They may also be asked to develop hypotheses and perform complex analyses of the connections among texts. Some examples that represent, but do not constitute all of, Level 4 performance are:

- Analyze and synthesize information from multiple sources.
- Examine and explain alternative perspectives across a variety of sources.
- Describe and illustrate how common themes are found across texts from different cultures.

### **Writing DOK Levels**

*Writing Level 1.* Level 1 requires the student to write or recite simple facts. The focus of this writing or recitation is not on complex synthesis or analysis, but on basic ideas. The students are asked to list ideas or words, as in a brainstorming activity, prior to written composition; are engaged in a simple spelling or vocabulary assessment; or are asked to write simple sentences. Students are expected to write, speak, and edit using the conventions of Standard English. This includes using appropriate grammar, punctuation, capitalization, and spelling. Students demonstrate a basic understanding and appropriate use of such reference materials as a dictionary, thesaurus, or Web site. Some examples that represent, but do not constitute all of, Level 1 performance are:

- Use punctuation marks correctly.
- Identify Standard English grammatical structures, including the correct use of verb tenses.

*Writing Level 2.* Level 2 requires some mental processing. At this level, students are engaged in first-draft writing or brief extemporaneous speaking for a limited number of purposes and audiences. Students are expected to begin connecting ideas, using a simple organizational structure. For example, students may be engaged in note-taking, outlining, or simple summaries. Text may be limited to one paragraph. Some examples that represent, but do not constitute all of, Level 2 performance are:

- Construct or edit compound or complex sentences, with attention to correct use of phrases and clauses.
- Use simple organizational strategies to structure written work.
- Write summaries that contain the main idea of the reading selection and pertinent details.

*Writing Level 3.* Level 3 requires some higher-level mental processing. Students are engaged in developing compositions that include multiple paragraphs. These compositions may include complex sentence structure and may demonstrate some synthesis and analysis. Students show awareness of their audience and purpose through focus, organization, and the use of appropriate compositional elements. The use of appropriate compositional elements includes such things as addressing chronological order in a narrative, or including supporting facts and details in an informational report. At this stage, students are engaged in editing and revising to improve the quality of the composition. Some examples that represent, but do not constitute all of, Level 3 performance are:

- Support ideas with details and examples.
- Use voice appropriate to the purpose and audience.
- Edit writing to produce a logical progression of ideas.

*Writing Level 4.* Higher-level thinking is central to Level 4. The standard at this level is a multi-paragraph composition that demonstrates the ability to synthesize and analyze complex ideas or themes. There is evidence of a deep awareness of purpose and audience. For example, informational papers include hypotheses and supporting evidence. Students are expected to create compositions that demonstrate a distinct voice and that stimulate the reader or listener to consider new perspectives on the addressed ideas and themes. An example that represents, but does not constitute all of, Level 4 performance is:

- Write an analysis of two selections, identifying the common theme and generating a purpose that is appropriate for both.

## **Examples Applied to Objectives and Assessment Items**

### **i. Sample Language Arts Objectives**

Use the language arts DOK levels on the previous pages to determine the DOK levels for the following five sample objectives. When you are finished, turn the page to see whether you agree with the way we coded these objectives! After this, try using the DOK levels on the sample language arts items in part ii.

Objective 1. Identify cause and effect, and understand main idea and purpose implied by text.

Objective 2. Recall elements and details of story structure, such as sequence of events, character, plot, and setting.

Objective 3. Evaluate the relative accuracy and usefulness of information from different sources.

Objective 4. Apply knowledge of grammar and usage, including, but not limited to, parts of speech, punctuation marks, sentence structure, verb tense, and clauses and phrases.

Objective 5. Locate, gather, analyze and evaluate written information for the purpose of drafting a reasoned report that supports and appropriately illustrates references and conclusions drawn from research.

### DOK Levels of the Sample Language Arts Objectives

Objective 1. Level 2. Students demonstrate their ability to do more than simply recall an explicitly stated main point. Here, students show basic reasoning skills (generally, understanding why something happens, or summarizing the main points) as they select a statement that best captures the informational emphasis of the article.

Objective 2. Level 1. Students recall specific information from the text.

Objective 3. Level 3. Students must understand a variety of kinds of texts, make inferences across entire passages, and demonstrate the ability to evaluate information according to various criteria. Students must be able to support their thinking.

Objective 4. Level 2. While using correct punctuation is generally a Level 1 activity, correct usage of clauses and phrases is a more complex activity. The range of activities for this objective then makes it a Level 2.

Objective 5. Level 4. Students must gather and analyze information over time, reasoning and supporting their conclusions. The prolonged nature of this research project, given its focus on higher-level analysis, make it a Level 4 objective.

### ii. Sample Language Arts Items

Now try coding some sample assessment items using the reading DOK levels. Most reading assessment items correspond with reading passages, and so there is one reading passage and sample test items here for each of two grade levels. After you are finished coding the items for both passages, read our “answers” on the following page.

Grade 4

**The River**  
by Yetti Frenkel

1 "Sh," whispered Elisa. "I think she's coming!"

2 Elisa and Cory stifled their giggles and crouched behind the pine tree. Peeping out through the snow-covered branches, the children held their breath and listened for the tinkle of Minnie's collar as the old dog tried to find their hiding place. It was usually the hound's favorite game, but today the only sounds the children heard were the wind whistling softly across the frozen snow and ice cracking on the river.

3 Cory shivered with cold. "I wonder where she is," he said. "I hope she isn't off chasing a deer."

4 Elisa snorted. "Minnie's too lame for that. I bet she went home to wait where it's nice and warm."

5 Cory looked doubtful. "She wouldn't go home without us," he said. "Maybe she got ahead, and we didn't notice. Let's go to the bridge and see if she's there."

6 They started down the trail at a quick pace, glad to be moving again. The bare branches of the trees rattled forlornly as they tramped through the frozen snow.

7 Elisa struggled hard to keep up with her older brother. "Wouldn't it be easier to walk on the ice on the river?" she called to him.

8 Cory slowed his pace and waited for her to catch up. "It's too dangerous," he said. "The water is still flowing underneath, and the ice is thin. We might fall through." He held out a mittened hand. "I'll help you."

9 "No, thanks," said Elisa stubbornly. "I can keep up." But she was secretly glad when Cory walked beside her until they reached the bridge.

10 The old wooden bridge spanned the widest part of the river. In summer they often came here to fish or lie in the sun, but now it was a desolate, wind-swept place. They could hear the water gurgling softly beneath the ice as they looked out over the railing, hoping to glimpse Minnie walking along the bank.

11 Cory cupped his hands to his mouth and called, "Minnie, Min-nie!" His voice echoed back to him from the lonely woods. "I don't see her, Elisa. Do you?" he asked.

12 Just then Elisa gave a startled cry, and Cory turned sharply to see Minnie ten feet from shore. The old dog had fallen through the ice and was paddling in desperate circles.

13 "Hang on, Minnie, I'm coming!" Cory cried, racing toward the river. Elisa was already ahead of him, pulling off her coat, scarf, and mittens, ready to plunge in and save her dog. Blinded by tears, she stumbled out onto the ice.

14 Cory caught up with her and pulled her back. "Do you want to drown yourself?" he shouted. His face was white as he held out the warm clothes she'd dropped. "Put these back on and let me think of something." He looked grimly at the river.

15 Elisa sobbed as she struggled into her coat. "You can save her, can't you, Cory? She won't die, will she?"

16 "Of course not," he said, wishing he felt as confident as he was trying to sound.

17 The sight of her masters had given Minnie new hope, and she managed to get her front paws up on the ice. She scratched and clawed frantically at the slippery surface, but her hind legs were too arthritic to be of much help. For a moment her frightened brown eyes met Cory's, then she slipped back into the icy water and began wearily swimming once more.

18 Cory searched the bank until he found a long, twisted branch. Holding it firmly, he maneuvered the end until he had it hooked under Minnie's collar. "C'mon, girl," he said to the tired dog. She heaved her front paws onto the ice and struggled desperately while he tried to help her by pulling on the branch. But frost and moisture had made the wood brittle, and it snapped almost immediately. Once more Minnie struck out swimming, but now her head was barely above the surface of the water.

19 A terrible thought crossed Cory's mind - Minnie was going to drown before their eyes. It's not fair, he thought. Why doesn't someone come along to help us? He scanned the woods for a game warden or hunter, but saw no one. The woods were dark and silent, waiting. "I don't know what to do," he said, frightened.

20 "I know what to do," cried Elisa. "I'm going to help her!"

21 Once again Cory grabbed his sister's arm to prevent her from going out onto the ice. She bit and kicked at him like a small fury as tears of frustration ran down her cheeks.

22 "Listen to me!" yelled Cory. "I thought of something, but I need your help." Elisa wiped the tears from her face. "I'm going to lie down on the ice and try to crawl to Minnie. You lie down behind me and hold my ankles. Don't let go, no matter what, and don't stand up. Understand?" Elisa nodded, sniffing.

23 Cory lay on the ice so that his weight would be distributed more evenly and there would be less chance of breaking through. He felt Elisa's hands close around his ankles. As he inched his way forward, he could hear the water rushing beneath the ice. A few feet in front of him was the deep green hole where the dog had broken through. Cory's heart pounded with fear, but he bit his lip and kept going. At last he reached the edge of

the hole and threw his arms around Minnie's neck. It felt reassuring to have a hold on her, but he soon realized that there was little else he could do. The ice was slippery, and every time he tried to pull her out, he began to slide forward himself.

24 "Have you got her?" called Elisa anxiously.

25 "Yes," Cory yelled over his shoulder, "but I can't" - Before he could explain, he found himself being pulled back across the ice with Minnie in his arms. He looked around in amazement, expecting to see a big man with a broad grin standing behind him, but there was only his sturdy little sister, laughing and crawling over the ice to throw her arms around the shivering dog. "How did you ever do that?" cried Cory. "You're not that strong!" Then as Minnie, tail wagging wildly, began to lick his face, he saw what had happened.

26 Elisa had put her wool coat down on the ice to protect her from the cold. The warmth of her body lying on the top of it had made the wool fibers stick firmly to the ice so that when she pulled on Cory's legs, he slipped across the surface to her as easily as a cork popping from a bottle.

27 Cory grinned in admiration. "You sure are one smart little sister!" he said, tousling her hair. He took off his plaid shirt and dried Minnie with it. "It's a good thing we were all together today," he said to the old dog softly as he rubbed her lopsided ears. She wagged her tail in agreement, and the three hurried toward the warmth of home without looking back.

(Includes NAEP-Released Test Items)

1. How might the story have ended differently if Elisa had not put her wool coat on the ice? Explain why.

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2. The main problem Cory faced was

- A) convincing Elisa to keep her coat on
- B) finding a good hiding place from Minnie
- C) getting across the ice with Elisa before dark
- D) pulling Minnie out of the icy waters

3. In paragraph 3, Cory hoped that Minnie had not
  - A) fallen in the river
  - B) gotten lost in the forest
  - C) gone off to chase a deer
  - D) returned to the house
  
4. Which of the following statements would the author be most likely to agree with?
  - A) He who fears something gives it power over him.
  - B) Two minds are better than one.
  - C) Older means wiser.
  - D) Great minds think alike.
  
5. In paragraph 19, Cory became upset at the thought that
  - A) Minnie had run away
  - B) his parents would be upset with him for not going straight home
  - C) Elisa was in danger
  - D) Minnie could drown
  
6. When Cory found out what had happened to Minnie, he
  - A) blamed Elisa for not watching Minnie
  - B) told Elisa not to try to get Minnie by herself
  - C) sent Elisa home to get help for Minnie
  - D) warned Elisa that Minnie might die.
  
7. Which of the following is an antonym for 'crouched' in the first paragraph?
  - A) squatted
  - B) searched
  - C) leaped
  - D) accepted
  
8. This story could best be described as a
  - A) modern-day fairy tale
  - B) mystery with a moral
  - C) real-life adventure
  - D) science-fiction piece



9. Which of the following is not a problem Cory faced in the passage?

- A) preventing Elisa from going out onto the ice
- B) helping Elisa look for Minnie
- C) pulling Minnie out of the icy water
- D) getting across the ice with Elisa before dark

10. The purpose of this story might most closely be described as

- A) Challenging the idea that brothers and sisters always fight
- B) Describing an unexpected struggle one family encountered
- C) Proving that dogs are 'a man's best friend'
- D) Identifying the danger of walking on thin ice

Grade 10

**My Watch**  
**An Instructive Little Tale**  
by Mark Twain

1 My beautiful new watch had run eighteen months without losing or gaining, and without breaking any part of its machinery or stopping. I had come to believe it infallible in its judgments about the time of day, and to consider its anatomy imperishable. But at last, one night, I let it run down. I grieved about it as if it were a recognized messenger and forerunner of calamity. But by and by I cheered up, set the watch by guess.

2 Next day I stepped into the chief jeweler's to set it by the exact time, and the head of the establishment took it out of my hand and proceeded to set it for me. Then he said, "She is four minutes slow—regulator wants pushing up."

3 I tried to stop him—tried to make him understand that the watch kept perfect time. But no; all this human cabbage could see was that the watch was four minutes slow, and the regulator *must* be pushed up a little; and so, while I danced around him in anguish, and implored him to let the watch alone, he calmly and cruelly did the shameful deed.

4 My watch began to gain. It gained faster and faster day by day. Within the week it sickened to a raging fever, and its pulse went up to a hundred and fifty in the shade. At the end of two months it had left all the timepieces of the town far in the rear, and was a fraction over thirteen days ahead of the almanac. It was away into November enjoying the snow, while the October leaves were still turning. It hurried up house rent, bills payable, and such things, in such a ruinous way that I could not abide it. I took it to the watchmaker to be regulated.

5 After being cleaned and oiled, and regulated, my watch slowed down to that degree that it ticked like a tolling bell. I began to be left by trains, I failed all appointments, I got to missing my dinner. I went to a watchmaker again.

6 He took the watch all to pieces while I waited, and then said the barrel was "swelled." He said he could reduce it in three days. After this the watch averaged well, but nothing more. For half a day it would go like the very mischief, and keep up such a barking and wheezing and whooping and sneezing and snorting, that I could not hear myself think for the disturbance; and as long as it held out there was not a watch in the land that stood any chance against it. But the rest of the day it would keep on slowing down and fooling along until all the clocks it had left behind caught up again. So at last, at the end of twenty-four hours, it would trot up to the judges' stand all right and just in time. It would show a fair and square average, and no man could say it had done more or less than its duty. But a correct average is only a mild virtue in a watch, and I took this instrument to another watchmaker.

7 He said the king-bolt was broken. He repaired the king-bolt, but what the watch gained in one way it lost in another. It would run awhile and then stop awhile, and then run awhile again, and so on, using its own discretion about the intervals. And every time it went off it kicked back like a musket. I padded my breast for a few days, but finally took the watch to another watchmaker.

8 He picked it all to pieces, and turned the ruin over and over under his glass; and then he said there appeared to be something the matter with the hair-trigger. He fixed it, and gave it a fresh start. It did well now, except that always at ten minutes to ten the hands would shut together like a pair of scissors, and from that time forth they would travel together. The oldest man in the world could not make head or tail of the time of day by such a watch, and so I went again to have the thing repaired.

9 This person said that the crystal had got bent, and that the mainspring was not straight. He also remarked that part of the works needed half-soling. He made these things all right, and then my timepiece performed unexceptionably, save that now and then, after working along quietly for nearly eight hours, everything inside would let go all of a sudden and begin to buzz like a bee, and the hands would straightway begin to spin round and round so fast that their individuality was lost completely, and they simply seemed a delicate spider's web over the face of the watch. She would reel off the next twenty-four hours in six or seven minutes, and then stop with a bang.

10 I went with a heavy heart to one more watchmaker, and looked on while he took her to pieces. Then I prepared to cross-question him rigidly, for this thing was getting serious. The watch had cost two hundred dollars originally, and I seemed to have paid out two or three thousand for repairs.

11 While I waited and looked on I presently recognized in this watchmaker an old acquaintance—a steamboat engineer of other days, and not a good engineer, either. He examined all the parts carefully, just as the other watchmakers had done, and then delivered his verdict with the same confidence of manner.

12 He said: “She makes too much steam—you want to hang the monkey-wrench on the safety-valve!”

13 My uncle William used to say that a good horse was a good horse until it had run away once, and that a good watch was a good watch until the repairers got a chance at it.

(includes California Released Test Items)

11) Which of the following words would be the best substitution for the word ‘infallible’ in the first paragraph?

- A reliable
- B uncertain
- C disloyal
- D hardy

12. In the last paragraph, the narrator references what his uncle William said in order to show that

- A the narrator will pay more money for his next watch.
- B watches are as difficult to maintain as horses.
- C the narrator is ready to quit trying to have the watch fixed.
- D the narrator’s uncle has also tried to fix the watch.

13. The narrator’s tone in paragraph 10 can best be described as

- A) regretful
- B) confused
- C) hopeful
- D) nervous

14. What literary device is the narrator using when he says, “Within the week it sickened to a raging fever, and its pulse went up to a hundred and fifty in the shade”?

- A repetition
- B symbolism
- C irony
- D personification

15. Throughout this passage, the narrator references periods of time in order to

- A identify the historical period in which the narrator lived.
- B justify the narrator’s lack of timeliness.
- C illustrate the narrator’s desire to learn watch repair.
- D emphasize the magnitude of the narrator’s ordeal.

16. One of the main ideas expressed in the passage is that

- A it is important to use the proper tools when doing repairs
- B some problems are made worse with tampering
- C prevention is the key to solving most problems
- D watches contain a lot of hidden parts

17. One indication that this was *not* written in recent times is the comparison of the watch to a

- A bee
- B musket.
- C spider's web.
- D phonograph

18. Consider the following sentence:

I had come to believe it infallible in its judgments about the time of day, and to consider its anatomy imperishable.

If the narrator were to delete this sentence, the essay would primarily lose

- A specific descriptive material
- B an understatement of important information
- C detail providing a logical transition
- D foreshadowing of conflict

19. The narrator refers to a former acquaintance in order to

- A explain why the narrator asked an acquaintance to repair the watch
- B offer important background about the narrator's life
- C give an example of how much repairers charge
- D question that watchmaker's skill

20. Which of the following would the narrator be most likely to agree with?

- A People don't fix watches like they used to.
- B It's not important to know the exact time.
- C Family members sometimes offer good advice.
- D It's a bad idea to try to get things repaired.

DOK Levels for the Language Arts Sample Assessment Items

Grade 4

- 1) Level 3. This item requires comprehending the text, reasoning, and supporting thinking.
- 2) Level 2. This item requires comprehension of the text in order to identify a main point.
- 3) Level 1. This item asks students to refer to a particular detail in the text.
- 4) Level 3. Students must connect ideas and make an inference about the author's position.
- 5) Level 1. This item asks the reader to recall a detail from a specific paragraph.
- 6) Level 2. This item requires students to comprehend the general ideas and sequence of the text, and to identify main points in the narrative.
- 7) Level 1. This item asks students to demonstrate knowledge of grade-level appropriate vocabulary.
- 8) Level 2. This item requires students to generally comprehend the article in order to identify the type of literary form with which the story corresponds. While the item refers to characteristics of various literary forms (as in Level 3), finding the correct answer does not require students to analyze or describe with deeper knowledge either the story itself or the literary forms.
- 9) Level 1. This item requires verbatim recall from the text.
- 10) Level 3. This item requires an understanding of the text that includes recognizing the author's purpose in telling the story.

Grade 10

- 11) Level 2. The reader must use context clues to determine the intended meaning of a word.
- 12) Level 3. This item asks readers to make an inference about the narrator's purpose in the last paragraph, based on the tone and examples in the article.
- 13) Level 2. The reader is asked to comprehend the tone of the article, making an inference from only that paragraph.

- 14) Level 1. This item asks the reader to recognize or identify figurative language/types of literary devices.
- 15) Level 3. The reader is asked to determine the author's purpose.
- 16) Level 2. The reader is asked to determine the main idea.
- 17) Level 3. The reader is asked to go beyond the text while still understanding ideas in the text. The reader must recognize when and how literary devices are used in the story to compare the watch to other objects and must draw on outside knowledge about which objects are in contemporary use.
- 18) Level 3. This item requires a higher level of reasoning as readers must consider both the author's purpose and how the story might change without the sentence.
- 19) Level 2. \_\_\_\_\_
- 20) Level 3. This item requires readers to show understanding of the text in order to generalize about the narrator's sentiments beyond the text.