COMMON CORE

LANGUAGE ARTS WORKOUTS

Reading, Writing, Speaking, Listening, and Language Skills Practice

- Reading Literature
- Reading Informational Text
- Writing Opinion Pieces
- Writing Informative and Explanatory Texts
- Writing Narratives
- Drawing Evidence From Texts
- Discussions
- Standard English Grammar and Usage
- Using Language
- Figurative Language

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Introduction to the Teacher

The time has come to make our children’s reading, writing, and speaking education more rigorous. The Common Core State Standards were developed for this purpose. They guide educators and parents by outlining the skills students are expected to master at each grade level. The bar has been set high, but with a little help, students can meet the challenge.

*Common Core Language Arts Workouts, Grade 7* is designed to assist teachers and parents who are implementing the new requirements. It is filled with skills practice pages, critical-thinking tasks, and creative exercises that correspond to each standard for language arts.

Each day, students will work with a different grade-level-specific language arts skill. The brief exercises will challenge them to read, think, and speak with improved facility.

Every page contains at least one “workout.” The workouts vary according to the standard covered. Some are simple practice exercises. Others pose creative or analytical challenges. Certain pages invite further exploration. Suggested student projects include reports, speeches, discussions, and multimedia presentations.

The workout pages make great warm-up or assessment exercises. They can set the stage and teach the content covered by the standards. They can also be used to assess what students have learned after the content has been taught.

We hope that the ideas and exercises in this book will help you work more effectively with the Common Core State Standards. The series also includes books for Grade 6 and Grade 8. With your help, we are confident that students will develop increased language arts power and become more effective communicators!
Deliberate footsteps echoed in the stone corridor. They were approaching rapidly. Desperately, Sophia sought a place to conceal the talisman William had entrusted to her. The high-ceilinged room, lit by a solitary arched window, contained little furniture. A pair of heavy carved chairs sat astride a small chest.

A smaller chair sat before the loom which held her sister’s half-finished tapestry. Below the wooden frame, on the floor, sat a basket filled with skeins of colorful silk yarn.

The chest was too obvious. They would look there first. The footsteps stopped. The guards were just outside. Sophia slipped the brooch with its mysterious golden stone into the yarn basket just as one of the guards banged on the heavy oak door.

Commanding herself to remain calm, she settled into the chair in front of the loom and picked up a skein of blue silk.

She took a deep breath to steady herself. “What is it?” she asked.

1. What was the talisman? How do you know? ________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________

2. Were the people coming down the hallway probably friends or enemies?
   How do you know? ________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________

3. Was William a friend or an enemy? How do you know? ______________________
   ________________________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________

4. Does this story take place in the past, the present, or the future? How do you know?
   ________________________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________
READING LITERATURE – Analyzing a Poem

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.7.4: Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the impact of rhymes and other repetitions of sounds (e.g., alliteration) on a specific verse or stanza of a poem or section of a story or drama.

Directions: Read the following poem. Answer the questions.

The Cicada
She sits so still in that jacket of red
With a mandolin balanced across her knees.
There’s a lyrical tilt to her painted head,
And no one knows what the painter said
As he brushed in a background of misty trees.
She sits so still in her jacket of red.

Does she take that pose each time with dread?
Does the artist insist he paints what he sees?
There’s a lyrical tilt to her painted head.

Do they take a break for grapes and bread?
Does she yawn and stretch to restore her ease?
She sits so still in that jacket of red.

She doesn’t play, perhaps thinking instead
Of future listeners the painting will please.
There’s a lyrical tilt to her painted head.

A cicada, emerged from its years-long bed,
Rests on her shoulder, as light as a breeze.
She sits so still in her jacket of red.
There’s a lyrical tilt to her painted head.

1. This villanelle describes a painting by Jean-Baptiste Camille Corot. From clues provided in the poem, what does the painting depict? ____________________________________________

2. Which four words in the poem relate to music or something that creates sound?

3. Which two lines are repeated in the poem? Which one talks about the model? Which one talks about the painting? How does their repetition add to the meaning of the poem?

4. What is a cicada? How is it related to the poem? ____________________________________
READING LITERATURE – Analyzing a Poem’s Structure: The Sonnet

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.7.5: Analyze how a drama’s or poem’s form or structure (e.g., soliloquy, sonnet) contributes to its meaning

Directions: Read the following sample sonnet. Answer the questions.

On Writing Sonnets

When writing sonnets, poets count each beat.
Ta dah, te boom, sha bam, te dah, sha boom.
They parcel out each line with measured feet.
They weave their rhythms on a vacant loom.

When crafting sonnets, poets choose each rhyme.
The weft shifts left, the warp is still. The frame
Is form. It holds the threads of thought in time.
The end of every other line will name
A dip or lift, idea born or lost
Emerging from this textile grown far past
Expected lengths of woven words to cost
A preconception all its force. At last,
In two short lines, the weaver ties up all;
A finished tapestry in poetry’s hall.

1. What does this sonnet’s form contribute to its meaning? _____________________________

2. An *iamb* is a poetic foot. (tah DAH) How many iambics are there in each line of this verse?
   (Hint: see line 2) _______________________

3. A *quatrain* is a four-line stanza. How many quatrains are there in this Shakespearean sonnet? ___________________

4. A two-line poem or stanza is a *couplet*. Where is the couplet in this sonnet?
   _________________________________

5. In this poem, writing a sonnet is compared with another activity. What is it? Is this kind of comparison a simile or a metaphor? Why? _________________________________

6. What does *textile* mean? Why does it have an unusual meaning in this context?
   _________________________________

Challenge: Print out a Shakespearean sonnet you find online. Mark the quatrains, rhymes, and iambics. What do you notice about the couplet?
READING LITERATURE – Points of View: A Sample Play

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.7.6: Analyze how an author develops and contrasts the points of view of different characters or narrators in a text.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.7.7: Compare and contrast a written story, drama, or poem to its audio, filmed, staged, or multimedia version, analyzing the effects of techniques unique to each medium (e.g., lighting, sound, color, or camera focus and angles in a film).

Directions: Read the following scene. Answer the questions.

It is night in a forest clearing near Legend Lake Summer Camp. ABBY and SARAH enter.

ABBY: Shh! I hear someone coming.

SARAH: You and your imagination. I don’t know why I brought you along.

ABBY: I’m just persuasive, I guess.

SARAH: There’s nothing out there, Abby, just trees and bushes.

ABBY: Well, there isn’t now, but there was.

SARAH: Whatever. Just help me find my phone. If I don’t call Mom tonight, she’ll turn off my service.

SARAH and ABBY look for the phone on the ground under the trees. JACOB and RYAN enter. The girls do not see them.

JACOB: We’ve been wandering around for an hour and we haven’t even seen a mouse. Let’s go back to camp. I’m famished.

RYAN: On wildlife observation missions, patience is mandatory.

Answer the questions on your own paper.
1. Which character is frightened? Which one is hungry? Which one is scientific? Which one is social? How do you know?
2. Act out the play with friends. How is it different from the written version?
3. Write a paragraph comparing a poem, book, or story you have read to its film or television adaptation. How did the filmmaker use music, lighting, camera angles, and special effects to make the story more powerful?

Challenge: Read the beginning of “The Invisible Man” by H.G. Wells. <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/5230/5230-h/5230-h.htm> Watch the beginning of one of the film versions. How are they different? How does the filmmaker set the mood?
READING LITERATURE – Fiction vs. Nonfiction

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.7.9: Compare and contrast a fictional portrayal of a time, place, or character and a historical account of the same period as a means of understanding how authors of fiction use or alter history.

Directions: Read the following selections. Answer the questions.

Nonfiction:

The Great Depression was a period of severe hardship all over the world. It began with the crash of the stock market on Black Tuesday, October 29, 1929. The effects were devastating. More than 5,000 banks failed. Businesses cut back on orders, causing thousands of people to lose their jobs. More than a quarter of working adults were unemployed.

Fiction:

“But Ma, I don’t want to live with Aunt Kate,” Joe said.
“Keep your voice down,” his mother said, glancing into the living room. Pa hadn’t moved. Perhaps he was asleep.
“Your father feels bad enough. This is simply a matter of necessity,” she said.
Joe nodded. He didn’t want to antagonize her, and it was useless to resist the inevitable.
“Now go pack,” Ma said. “We’re leaving at sunup.”

1. What does the nonfiction selection include that is not covered in the fiction selection?

2. What does the fiction selection include that is not covered in the nonfiction selection?

3. Why is it easier for fiction writers to use dialogue? What does it add to a text?


Answer these questions on your own paper:
1. What facts does Longfellow change in his poem?
2. Why do you think more people remember the poem than the actual events of that night?
3. Why is this an important story in American history?
READING INFORMATIONAL TEXT – Textual Evidence and Central Ideas

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.7.1: Cite several pieces of textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.7.2: Determine two or more central ideas in a text and analyze their development over the course of the text; provide an objective summary of the text.

Directions: Read the following selection. Answer the questions.

Early Warning in Hawaii

It was seven in the morning on December 7. Private George E. Elliott, Junior and Private Third Class Specialist Joseph L. Lockhart were exhausted after their latest three-hour shift, but they decided to remain a little longer.

Private Elliott wanted an opportunity to practice using the monitoring equipment. He slid into the seat in front of the new SCR – 270 B Radio Direction Finder.

Suddenly, a mysterious blip appeared on the oscilloscope. When the peculiar signal persisted, the two observers in their trailer on Kahuku Point on Oahu called the Information Center at Fort Shafter.

Unfortunately, the officer on duty at the Center did not take their report seriously. If he had listened, the story of Pearl Harbor might have been different.

1. What job did Privates Elliott and Lockhart have? Which details in the text let you know?
   
2. Which man was probably new on the job? What makes you think so?
   
3. What is an oscilloscope? What is a blip? Use a dictionary to confirm your guess.
   
4. What year do you think this happened? What makes you think so?
   
5. What do you think happened next? What makes you think so?
   
Challenge: Online or in a textbook, read an account of the attack on Pearl Harbor. On your own paper, summarize the selection in a paragraph or two. State at least two central ideas along with supporting details. Does the author of the article have any opinion about the cause of the attack or its results? If so, what was it? Include a quotation or details from the text to support your answer.
READING INFORMATIONAL TEXT – Ideas, Individuals, and Influences

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.7.3: Analyze the interactions between individuals, events, and ideas in a text (e.g., how ideas influence individuals or events, or how individuals influence ideas or events).

Directions: Read the following selection and answer the questions.

Hannibal, Never a Friend to Rome

In the mid third century B.C., Rome and Carthage were rivals. Centered in North Africa, Carthage was a naval power. Its ships dominated the western Mediterranean. Rome did not have many ships. But its network of alliances was strengthening.

In 264 B.C., mounting tensions between the two powers led to war. Carthage was defeated. Its fighting ships were ruined, and Rome acquired Sicily.

Carthage needed resources. Hannibal’s father, Hamilcar, readied his army to invade Hispania. Hannibal, then only nine, begged to go. Before leaving Carthage, Hamilcar took him to a temple. He made the boy vow never to befriend the Romans.

In 218 B.C., long after his father’s death, Hannibal saw an opportunity to attack Rome. He gathered an unprecedented force. There were thousands of foot soldiers, horsemen, and even a troop of war elephants.

They crossed two formidable mountain ranges, the Pyrenees and the Alps. Though he lost much of his army on the trip, Hannibal almost succeeded. When he arrived in northern Italy, he surprised the Romans. With the help of unhappy northern Italian tribes, he won several battles. Unfortunately, he did not have the strength to attack the city of Rome.

Although, ultimately, Carthage lost the war, Hannibal is regarded as one of the greatest strategists in military history.

Answer these questions on another sheet of paper.

1. How did the loss of Sicily and the Carthaginian fleet affect Hamilcar?
2. How did Hannibal’s vow to his father affect his decision to attack Rome?
3. How did the difficulty of crossing the Alps affect the outcome of Hannibal’s campaign?

Challenge: Read an article about the Third Punic War online. What happened to Carthage? How might the world have been different if Hannibal had captured Rome?
READING INFORMATIONAL TEXT – Using Context Clues

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.7.4: Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative, connotative, and technical meanings; analyze the impact of a specific word choice on meaning and tone.

Directions: Read the following selection. Answer the questions.

The Spirit of St. Louis

In 1919, New York hotel owner Raymond Orteig offered a provocative challenge. He would pay $25,000 to the first pilot who made a nonstop flight between New York and Paris.

Flying machines were still relatively new and undependable in the years following World War I. Six fliers lost their lives preparing for an attempt to win Orteig's prize. Then a handsome young aviator named Charles Lindbergh made a bid.

With backing from Harry H. Knight, Harold M. Bixby, and Frank Robertson, he had a monoplane constructed. They dubbed it The Spirit of St. Louis. Lindbergh took off on May 20, 1927. His solo flight lasted 33 $\frac{1}{2}$ hours.

His daring feat made Charles Lindbergh the most celebrated man in the world. It also made the planet smaller.

1. In what way was the planet “smaller” after Lindbergh’s flight? ________________________________

2. What does nonstop mean? ________________________________

3. What does undependable mean? ________________________________

4. What does monoplane mean? ________________________________

5. What does backing mean in this text? ________________________________

6. What does fliers mean in this text? Which word in the text is a synonym? ________________________________

7. What does celebrated mean in this text? ________________________________

8. Which word in the text is a synonym for attempt? ________________________________

9. What does provocative mean in this text? ________________________________

10. The terms flying machines, fliers, and aviator are used in this selection. Which modern synonyms could have been used? Why do you think the author selected these outdated words instead?

______________________________
Using Text Structure to Improve Comprehension

Types of Text Structures

Many nonfiction articles and books are arranged using text structures.

The description structure enumerates the characteristics of a person, place, or event. The comparison structure compares two or more items or concepts. The problem and solution structure lays out a problem, along with steps taken to resolve it, while the cause and effect structure juxtaposes actions and their aftermaths. The sequence structure, common in history and biographical texts, emphasizes the chronological order of events.

1. Circle the headings that would not fit additional sections of this article.
   A. Differentiating Fact From Opinion
   B. Text Structure Signal Words
   C. 10 Popular Authors
   D. Text Structure Examples
   E. How Text Structure Improves Comprehension
   F. The Importance of Setting in Fiction

2. Explain your choices. ________________________________________________________________

3. What is the heading of the sample section? ____________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________

4. How do headings make an article easier to read? _______________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________

5. Which text structure does the sample article follow? ________________________________

Challenge: Examine a chapter from a geography, history, or science book. How could organizational signposts such as headings and text structure signal words help you to gather information or study for a test?
READING INFORMATIONAL TEXT – Finding the Author’s Point of View and the Author’s Purpose

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.7.6: Determine an author’s point of view or purpose in a text and analyze how the author distinguishes his or her position from that of others.

Directions: Follow the instructions in each section.

1. Circle the author’s point of view for each type of text.
   a. a biography first person second person third person
   b. an autobiography first person second person third person
   c. interview questions first person second person third person
   d. a chapter in a history text first person second person third person
   e. a diary or journal first person second person third person

2. Explain the difference between the first-person and the third-person point of view.

3. Circle the author’s purpose for each type of text.
   a. A book about the causes of World War II. entertain persuade inform
   b. An automobile advertisement in a magazine. entertain persuade inform
   c. A novel about a star quarterback entertain persuade inform
   d. A weather forecast in the local newspaper. entertain persuade inform

4. In what ways would an article about how to study differ from an article about why studying is important?

5. Read the following selection. Answer the questions.

   Many people believe that Henry Ford invented the modern automobile. However, that is not the case. Actually, most authorities agree that the credit belongs to the German inventor, Karl Benz. He received a patent for his Motorwagen in 1886.

   a. The selection is written from what point of view?
   b. What is the author’s purpose?
   c. Which two phrases does the author use to distinguish her position from that of others?

Challenge: CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.7.7: Compare and contrast a text to an audio, video, or multimedia version of the text, analyzing each medium’s portrayal of the subject (e.g., how the delivery of a speech affects the impact of the words).

   a. Listen to Franklin Delano Roosevelt’s speech “Americanism” on the American Memory site <memory.loc.gov>. Then read the text of the speech.
   b. What is the speaker’s purpose and point of view?
   c. How does the experience of listening to the speech differ from the experience of reading it?
READING INFORMATIONAL TEXT – Believe It or Not?
Evaluating Claims

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.7.8: Trace and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text, assessing whether the reasoning is sound and the evidence is relevant and sufficient to support the claims.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.7.9: Analyze how two or more authors writing about the same topic shape their presentations of key information by emphasizing different evidence or advancing different interpretations of facts.

Directions: Read the selection. Answer the questions.

The Injustices of School
by
A. Poor Student

Some people characterize me as belligerent when I suggest that students are being bamboozled by academic expectations.

First, the advantage of being punctual is highly overemphasized. Dawdling in the morning is absolutely essential, especially after a televised football game runs late the previous night.

Second, I am constantly perplexed when teachers harass me for not completing assignments on time. Life is long, and there's always so much to do.

Third, grades are unfair. My parents are often irate when they receive my report card. This is a formidable stumbling block for my social life, especially when, as a result of my poor marks, I am grounded.

1. Which three academic expectations disturb the writer of this essay?
   a. ___________________________ b. ___________________________ c. ___________________________

2. a. What reason does the writer offer for objecting to the first expectation? __________

   ___________________________________________________________

   b. Is this a legitimate reason? ___________________________

   c. Why or why not? __________________________________________

   ___________________________________________________________

3. Do you think this article is meant to be serious or humorous? __________________________
   Give a reason for your answer. __________________________________________

Challenge: Online or in a newspaper, read and analyze an opinion article. On your own paper, name the writer’s central point or points. What facts does the writer offer to support his or her ideas? Were his or her examples convincing? Why or why not?