

# 2012-13 NAEP Training

## 8th Grade Reading Sample Items

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# 2012-13 NAEP Training

8th Grade Reading Sample Items

Part 1:  
Prior Year New York State Test Items

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# GRADE 8

## English Language Arts

### Actual New York State Test Item, 2009-10

#### Passage with written response items

### “Rufus” by C.W. Gusselle

#### Notes:

1. Readability: Lexile 720 (see Figure 3 from CCSS Appendix A below)
2. Total word count: 406
3. Average words per sentence: 11.2
4. Passage: Narrative; academic vocabulary is given with sufficient context to determine meaning (e.g., “negotiable” and preceding sentence)
5. Sample items are aligned to grade-level New York State Standards

Figure 3: Text Complexity Grade Bands and Associated Lexile Ranges (in Lexiles)

| Text Complexity Grade Band in the Standards | Old Lexile Ranges | Lexile Ranges Aligned to CCR expectations |
|---|-------------------|---|
| K-1   | N/A               | N/A                                       |
| 2-3   | 450-725           | 450-790                                   |
| 4-5   | 645-845           | 770-980                                   |
| 6-8   | 860-1010          | 955-1155                                  |
| 9-10  | 960-1115          | 1080-1305                                 |
| 11-CCR                                      | 1070-1220         | 1215-1355                                 |

Appendix A , Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts & Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects

# Rufus

by C.W. Gusewelle



The bird dog is lost again.

Not lost in the literal, physical sense. He's still around, and still a friend. But I have lost him as a useful working animal, which hunting dogs are supposed to be. It happened during this summer's spell of blistering heat when he discovered air conditioning.

The bedroom has a window unit. When the awful heat came, he immediately noticed the difference between the pleasant nights in his chair and the sweltering days outside. And it occurred to him he might correct this situation. Were not the cats in there and cool? Was not the old dog snoozing in the lap of air-conditioned comfort? Then why should he, a dog of real utility, provider of fowl for the family table, not have some of this luxury?

He pressed his hopeful face against the outer glass, but our hearts were hard. To present his case in a more dramatic way, he began sitting on a patio table, glaring in accusingly at eye level through a kitchen window. It yielded nothing, though. He remained outside.

So he learned to open the back door. That's right, *learned to open it himself!* One afternoon I looked up from my typewriter and there he was, indisputably inside, looking immensely pleased by his new competence. **As far as he's concerned, the case is closed.** He's in where it's cool, and it's not **negotiable**. He makes himself as small as possible and rarely moves.

The other day Katie called him, suggesting it might be time to trot outside on a sanitary errand. He didn't budge—just looked around the room to see if, by some coincidence, she might be speaking to another dog of the same name. So I called him, and he growled.

As you probably know, the main virtue of a fine bird dog, apart from a keen nose, is unquestioning obedience. The master's command is his highest law. Defiance is unthinkable. He is indifferent to the elements. If game is downed, he will endure any discomfort to find and bring it to hand. In a word, there is nothing a bird dog will not do for his master.

*Wrong!* This one will not even leave his chair in an air-conditioned room.

When he was chosen from his littermates several years ago, I was looking for a pup with intelligence and staying power. That's exactly what I got. Rufus is no fool. And he's staying cool.

**31**

In the passage “Rufus,” the author describes Rufus as having intelligence and staying power. Using details from the passage, complete the chart below with **one** example of Rufus’s intelligence and **one** example of his staying power.

| Quality Exhibited by Rufus | Example from the Passage |
|----------------------------|--------------------------|
| Intelligence               |                          |
| Staying Power              |                          |

***Go On***

**32**

The author of the passage says that he lost Rufus as a useful working animal during a summer heat spell. Explain why the author makes this comment about his dog. Use details from the passage to support your answer.

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# 2012-13 NAEP Training

8th Grade Reading Sample Items

Part 2:  
Common Core-aligned 2012-13 New  
York State Sample Items

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# GRADE 8

## English Language Arts

### Sample New York State Test Item, 2012-13

#### Passage with written response items

## “Story of My Life” by Helen Keller

#### Notes:

1. Readability: Lexile 980 (see Figure 3 from CCSS Appendix A below)
2. Total word count: 642
3. Average words per sentence: 17.1
4. Passage: Autobiographical/informational; language is sophisticated, employing complex metaphorical and figurative phrases with minimum context
5. Sample items are aligned to grade-level Common Core standards

Figure 3: Text Complexity Grade Bands and Associated Lexile Ranges (in Lexiles)

| Text Complexity Grade Band in the Standards | Old Lexile Ranges | Lexile Ranges Aligned to CCR expectations |
|---|-------------------|---|
| K-1   | N/A               | N/A                                       |
| 2-3   | 450-725           | 450-790                                   |
| 4-5   | 645-845           | 770-980                                   |
| 6-8   | 860-1010          | 955-1155                                  |
| 9-10  | 960-1115          | 1080-1305                                 |
| 11-CCR                                      | 1070-1220         | 1215-1355                                 |

Appendix A , Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts & Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects

## *Paired Passages*

### **Story of My Life**

*by Helen Keller*

The morning after my teacher came she led me into her room and gave me a doll. The little blind children at the Perkins Institution had sent it and Laura Bridgman had dressed it; but I did not know this until afterward. When I had played with it a little while, Miss Sullivan slowly spelled into my hand the word “d-o-l-l.” I  
5 was at once interested in this finger play and tried to imitate it. When I finally succeeded in making the letters correctly I was flushed with childish pleasure and pride. Running downstairs to my mother I held up my hand and made the letters for doll. I did not know that I was spelling a word or even that words existed; I was simply making my fingers go in monkey-like imitation. In the days that followed I  
10 learned to spell in this uncomprehending way a great many words, among them *pin, hat, cup* and a few verbs like *sit, stand* and *walk*. But my teacher had been with me several weeks before I understood that everything has a name.

One day, while I was playing with my new doll, Miss Sullivan put my big rag doll into my lap also, spelled “d-o-l-l” and tried to make me understand that “d-o-l-l”  
15 applied to both. Earlier in the day we had had a tussle over the words “m-u-g” and “w-a-t-e-r.” Miss Sullivan had tried to impress it upon me that “m-u-g” is *mug* and that “w-a-t-e-r” is *water*, but I persisted in confounding the two. In despair she had dropped the subject for the time, only to renew it at the first opportunity. I became impatient at her repeated attempts and, seizing the new doll, I dashed it upon the  
20 floor. I was keenly delighted when I felt the fragments of the broken doll at my feet. Neither sorrow nor regret followed my passionate outburst. I had not loved the doll. In the still, dark world in which I lived there was no strong sentiment of tenderness. I felt my teacher sweep the fragments to one side of the hearth, and I had a sense of satisfaction that the cause of my discomfort was removed. She brought me my hat,  
25 and I knew I was going out into the warm sunshine. This thought, if a wordless sensation may be called a thought, made me hop and skip with pleasure.

We walked down the path to the well-house, attracted by the fragrance of the honeysuckle with which it was covered. Some one was drawing water and my teacher placed my hand under the spout. As the cool stream gushed over one hand she spelled into the other the word water, first slowly, then rapidly. I stood still, my  
30 whole attention fixed upon the motions of her fingers. Suddenly I felt a misty consciousness as of something forgotten—a thrill of returning thought; and somehow the mystery of language was revealed to me. I knew then that “w-a-t-e-r” meant the wonderful cool something that was flowing over my hand. That living word awakened my soul, gave it light, hope, joy, set it free! There were barriers still, it is  
35 true, but barriers that could in time be swept away.

I left the well-house eager to learn. Everything had a name, and each name gave birth to a new thought. As we returned to the house every object which I touched seemed to **quiver** with life. That was because I saw everything with the

40 strange, new sight that had come to me. On entering the door I remembered the doll I had broken. I felt my way to the hearth and picked up the pieces. I tried vainly to put them together. Then my eyes filled with tears; for I realized what I had done, and for the first time I felt repentance and sorrow.

[www.gutenberg.org](http://www.gutenberg.org)

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**Words that may be defined for students are presented in bold.**

*Short Answer Constructed Response Questions for "Story of My Life"*

Closely reread the following sentences from lines 37–39 of the passage:

*"Everything had a name, and each name gave birth to a new thought. As we returned to the house every object which I touched seemed to quiver with life."*

How do these sentences reflect the author's changing relationship with language? Use **two** details from the passage to support your answer.

Write your answer in complete sentences.

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Describe how the author's attitude toward the doll symbolizes her changing attitude toward learning words throughout the story. Use **two** details from the passage to support your answer.

Write your answer in complete sentences.

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# 2012-13 NAEP Training

8th Grade Reading Sample Items

## Part 3: NAEP Sample Questions

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Lexile Level:  
1070

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Thousands of cane toads are wreaking havoc in Australia.

## ALIEN INVASION

In the 1930s, beetles with a sweet tooth gulped down a lot of sugarcane in Australia. Angry sugarcane farmers needed to do something quickly. Farmers in Hawaii gave them a tip: Cane toads like to munch on the beetles. Desperate Australian farmers imported a boxful of the fist-sized toads from Hawaii and let them loose.

Bad idea. Instead of chowing down on the beetles, cane toads gobbled anything they could swallow—pet food, garbage, honeybees, termites, snails, and mice.

The toads multiplied, spreading across the northern coast of Australia. Today toads are such a problem that a member of the Australian government recently suggested that citizens use golf clubs to whack the warty amphibians!

Australia isn't the only country dealing with unwelcome animal guests. In the United States, hundreds of invasive species pose a threat to the environment.

### The Aliens Are Coming

An invasive species is nonnative, or alien, to the ecosystem. An ecosystem is a group of plants, animals, and other living

organisms that live together in the same area. Although invasive species don't damage their own ecosystem, they can cause massive destruction when they invade another area.

For example, fingernail-sized zebra mussels hitchhiked from Russia to the Great Lakes in the water tanks of ships. When those ships landed in the United States, the zebra mussels began gobbling up food and oxygen, leaving nothing for other underwater creatures to eat.

They also irritated humans. Each year, a female zebra mussel can produce 30,000 to 1 million eggs. When those eggs hatch, the mussels clog pipes that provide drinking water to houses and schools.

A beetle called the emerald ash borer arrived in the United States from China in wood packing material carried aboard cargo ships or airplanes.

The adult emerald ash borer nibbles on the leaves of the ash tree. The larvae of the beetle, however, cause far more damage by chomping through the inner bark of ash trees. The insects destroy the tunnels that

allow water and nutrients to travel from the roots to the leaves. Emerald ash borers have killed 8 million to 10 million trees in Michigan, Ohio, and Indiana.

Another invasive species that is wreaking havoc is the snakehead fish.

Snakeheads arrived in the United States from Asia as exotic pets. When pet owners grew tired of the snakeheads, they threw the fish into nearby lakes and streams.

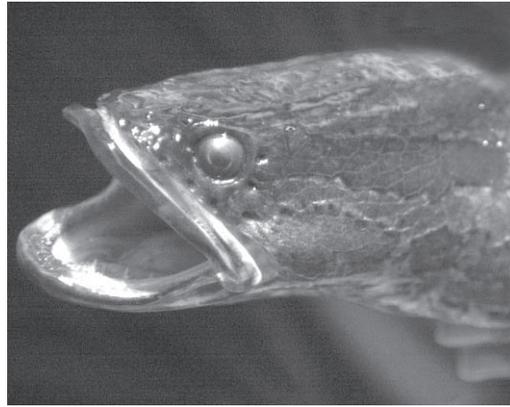
The snakehead fish now live in several states and can move over land from one body of water to another body. They dine greedily and can clear a pond of all its fish. The snakehead was recently spotted in a lake in Queens, N.Y., a part of New York City.

“The world has changed so much in the last 100 years,” Jodie A. Ellis, a scientist at Purdue University, told *Senior Edition*. “We are now able to share so many things with other countries, which is mostly a good thing. But there are costs, and one of those costs is the constant threat of invasive species.”

### **Why Should We Care?**

In addition to destroying an ecosystem, the devastation caused by invasive species can be costly. In the United States, the damage caused by the pesky critters is roughly \$137 billion per year.

“Our natural ecosystems are the primary sources of our food and drinking water,” Lisa Gould, a senior scientist at the Rhode



© Steve Ruark/AP Photo # 02090404582

**The snakehead fish kills native fish in many waterways in the United States.**

Island Natural History Survey, told *Senior Edition*. “Ecosystems help keep our air clean. They give us medicines and materials for our industries. Without them, we could not exist for long.”

### **Battling the Cane Toad**

Back in Australia, the government has devoted \$1 million to combating that country’s pesky toad problem. Scientists are researching what kinds of poisons can kill the creature.

Wildlife officials are also setting up traps to catch the toads, which are now hitchhiking across Australia in the backs of cars and trucks.

“We cannot tolerate a situation where cane toads are getting a free ride across the continent,” says one Australian official.

VC173972

“Alien Invasion” from *Weekly Reader Senior*, September 2005, copyright © 2005 by Weekly Reader Corporation. Special permission granted. All Rights Reserved.

# HOME ON THE RANGE

Forget about traveling to Africa to go on a safari. If some scientists have their way, people might be able to spot lions and elephants roaming the Great Plains of North America. The Great Plains lie in the center of North America, extending from the Mississippi River to the Rocky Mountains and from Canada to Texas.

A team of scientists recently proposed the bold plan to save endangered animals from extinction in Africa. Many animal habitats there are disappearing. A habitat is the place where a plant or an animal lives.

## Just “Plain” Smart

Supporters of the plan say that relocating the animals to the Great Plains would help restore the region’s biodiversity (the variety of different organisms found within a geographic region) closer to what it was before humans came along.

Most modern African animals never lived on the Great Plains. However, some other large animals, such as camels, saber-toothed cats, and mastodons, lived there thousands of years ago.

A mastodon was a furry, elephant-like creature with long tusks. Mastodons and other animals lived on the Great Plains until the last ice age ended, about



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10,000 years ago. An ice age is a period of time when sheets of ice covered Earth.

Supporters of the project also say that relocating large animals to vast parks in the Great Plains could save hundreds of species in Africa and Asia that now face extinction. They say the animals could be introduced gradually on private land. Eventually, fenced animal reserves could be opened to tourists.

## Bad Idea

Those against the plan argue that releasing different species into new environments can cause destruction. Cane toads, for example, brought to

Australia from Hawaii to control beetles in sugarcane fields, ate everything in sight. Cattle and sheep ranchers are also concerned that the wild animals might devour their herds.

Critics of the plan say that there are

already a lot of endangered animals that need protection in North America. Scientist Donald Grayson says, “Why introduce . . . camels and lions when there are North American species that could benefit from the same kind of effort?”

VC174003

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**Some people say the addition of elephants, lions, and other big game animals would make the Great Plains even greater.**

1. What is the central purpose of "Alien Invasion"?
  - A. To point out that invasive species come from many different countries
  - B. To argue that invasive species are a serious problem that must be solved
  - C. To describe the damage that invasive species cause in Australia
  - D. To suggest that invasive species can be stopped only with the government's help
  
2. "Alien Invasion" relies primarily on what form of evidence as support for its argument?
  - A. Quotations of famous scientists
  - B. Multiple definitions of invasive species
  - C. A series of examples of invasive species
  - D. Descriptions of different methods of control
  
3. According to "Alien Invasion," Australian farmers imported cane toads into Australia in order to
  - A. help save their native beetle populations
  - B. eat the sugarcane that was taking over their other crops
  - C. stop an alien species of beetle imported from Hawaii
  - D. eat beetles that were destroying sugarcane crops
  
4. Using what you read in "Alien Invasion," explain why people should be concerned about invasive species.

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5. What is the central purpose of "Home on the Range"?
  - A. To inform people about two opposing views
  - B. To convince people to take a particular point of view
  - C. To describe recent scientific discoveries
  - D. To challenge a common belief

6. Describe a similarity and a difference between the way the two articles approach the subject of invasive species. Support your answer with references to both of the articles.

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7. In "Alien Invasion," on page 4, an Australian official says, "We cannot **tolerate** a situation" where cane toads are traveling across the Australian continent. This means that the official thinks that Australians cannot
- A. find a solution to the problem posed by cane toads
  - B. understand why cane toads are such a problem
  - C. allow the cane toads to continue causing a problem
  - D. permit the cane toad problem to become well known
8. On page 5, when "Home on the Range" talks about **vast** parks in the Great Plains, this refers to parks that
- A. have mostly flat land
  - B. have protected sections
  - C. are owned by private citizens
  - D. are extremely large
9. According to "Home on the Range," some scientists think that moving African animals to the Great Plains would help improve the area's
- A. resistance to alien species
  - B. economy
  - C. biodiversity
  - D. research facilities

10. Explain why "Home on the Range" discusses animals that lived on the Great Plains thousands of years ago.

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11. Do you think "Alien Invasion" is an effective title for persuading readers of the article's point of view? Support your opinion with reference to the article.

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