

MCAS ELA – Teaching/Study Guide

MCAS questions are based on the **Massachusetts Anchor Standards for Reading**, which are broken down into three broad categories, shown below.

Key Ideas and Details—

“...paying close attention to what the author has written....determine main ideas or themes, draw conclusions about which ideas are important...” The Key Ideas and Details standards “provide the foundation for understanding.”*

What students must be able to do (the learning standards):

- **Read closely** to determine what a text states and make **logical inferences** from it
- **Cite textual evidence** to support conclusions drawn from the text
- **Determine central ideas or themes** and **analyze their development**
- **Summarize** the key supporting details and ideas
- **Analyze** how and why individuals, events and ideas **develop and interact** over the course of a text.

Examples of questions from the practice test that assess these skills:

- How does _____ (i.e. paragraph 3) contribute to the **development** of the passage? (text structure)
- **What conclusion can be drawn** from _____ (the sentences)?
- **What idea** is presented in both passages?
- **Which details best support** the answer to the previous question?
- **Which details provide evidence that** _____?
- **Which detail from the article best supports the claim** in the above sentence?
- **What do the above lines show about** the speaker?
- Based on the excerpt what does **the speaker** believe is **most important**?
- Put these statements from the text **in order to create a summary**.
- What do these three quotes suggest about the character?

Craft and Structure—

“Skillful readers analyze how an author chooses words and uses text organization to support an argument, express a point of view...”

What students must be able to do (the standards):

- **Interpret** words and phrases for **technical, connotative and figurative** meanings
- Analyze how word choices **shape meaning and tone**
- **Analyze text structure**, including how sentences, paragraphs and larger **portions relate to each other** and the whole

- **Assess how point of view or purpose shapes** the content and style

Examples of questions assessing these skills:

- Which statement best describes the **irony** expressed in (line, paragraph, passage...)
- What literary technique is used in the sentence?
- Which statement describes **how the authors present** their information
- Based on the above sentences, what does the word, _____ mean? (**identifying words in context**)
- What is the **connotation** for this word?
- What is the **main purpose** of both articles (or what is the purpose of a specific phrase, paragraph, etc)?
- What **type of evidence** is used in paragraph ____ (expert opinions, historical statistics, personal anecdotes...)
- **Which detail from the passage best** helps the reader understand the phrase, “ _____?”
- What is the **purpose of** the dashes within the sentences?
- Which of the following quotations **create the effect of** vulnerability
- Which word best describes the **tone** of the passage?
- What does the _____ (sentence, use of the word, passage...) **mainly imply?**
- **What does the repetition of the word, “ _____” emphasize?**

Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

Recognize and describe **relationships among texts and other forms of media**. Specifically, students must be able to “**compare differing points of view and approaches, discriminate fact from opinion** and make **judgments about the value of authors’ reasoning**, use of evidence and conclusions.” *

What students must be able to do (the standards):

- **Integrate and evaluate content** presented in **diverse media and formats**, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words.
- **Delineate and evaluate the argument** and specific claims in a text, including the validity of the reasoning as well as the relevance and sufficiency of the evidence.
- **Analyze how two or more texts address similar themes** or topics in order to build knowledge or to compare the approaches the authors take.

Examples of questions assessing these skills:

- Which statement describes the major difference between the **authors’ purposes?**
- Which sentence below makes the same **point** as the excerpt?
- Identify whether any of **the following claims are supported in the article(s)**

Essay Responses:

4 formal essays, one of which is “matrix” (experimental, doesn’t count)

Format—narrative, informational or argumentative--

5,000 characters max on the computer version of the test, two sheets of paper for the paper version

Test Prep Priorities:

Review question terms and stems, including those above from the practice test.

Review narrative elements, especially: point of view, tone, mood, theme/claim/thesis, symbol, irony, metaphor, simile, personification

Rhetoric/analysis and evaluation of an argument. See the Purdue Online Writing Lab packet I gave you.

Review:

- the three text types (and associated genres),
- formal essay structure
- Rules of grammar/conventions-- especially sentence structure, commonly confused words, subject-verb agreement

*Source: Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.

[http://www.doe.mass.edu/frameworks/ela/2017-06QRG-AnchorStandards.pdf#search=%22quick reference guide Massachusetts anchor standards for reading%22](http://www.doe.mass.edu/frameworks/ela/2017-06QRG-AnchorStandards.pdf#search=%22quick%20reference%20guide%20Massachusetts%20anchor%20standards%20for%20reading%22)

