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Public Schools of North Carolina
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Division of Accountability Services/North Carolina Testing Program

Sample Constructed Response Items

Grade 7 Reading



A Nation Divided

Crossing the Border

Although the U.S. Post Office Department officially ended mail traffic across the border on August 26, 1861, mail continued to be carried between North and South. Express companies carried much of the mail through “flag-of-truce” ships.

Because Union forces began blockading Southern ports in April 1861, mail was often carried on blockade runners or routed through foreign posts. Southern mail going overseas was carried through the Union blockade by ships sailing from Cuba, Bermuda, and other islands in the West Indies to Charleston, South Carolina; Wilmington, North Carolina; and several Southern ports on the Gulf of Mexico. Because the Confederacy did not have postal treaties with foreign governments, letters were carried as private “ship” mail. They were charged the inland rates plus two cents, which was paid to the ship’s master.

The handstamped “ship” marking indicated receipt of the letter from a private vessel. Letters carried through the Union blockade paid postage twice. The first was U.S. postage, which paid overland postage once the letter was deposited into the U.S. Mail. The second charge came from the ship’s master, who placed the letters into federal mailboxes.

The Confederate Postal System

The Confederate States of America (CSA) formed their own Post Office Department on February 21, 1861. John H. Reagan was named as the service’s postmaster general. In all, Reagan placed 8,535 of the nation’s 28,586 post offices under Confederate control and sought assistance from Southern sympathizers in the U.S. Post Office Department. Reagan tried to bring not just employees from the Federal system into his, but also all that they could bring in the way of maps, reports, forms, and plans that would build and strengthen the new service.

At first, all postal business was conducted with U.S. money and postage stamps. The first Confederate stamps were not available until October 1861. Most printers capable of doing the work were in the Northern states. Until Confederate stamps became available, some local postmasters created and sold their own provisional stamps or marked mail “paid” by hand.

The first Confederate stamps were printed by the Richmond, Virginia, lithography firm, Hoyer & Ludwig, which had no background in stamp printing. The first official issue was a 5-cent green stamp bearing the portrait of CSA President Jefferson Davis, making him



the first living president to appear on a postage stamp. Because of the low quality of their stamps, Hoyer & Ludwig lost the contract. The internationally known London, England, printing firm of Thomas De La Rue & Co. prepared plates and stamps for the CSA until a Southern firm was found to take over the work. That firm, Archer & Daly, began producing stamps in 1863.

Old stocks of U.S. stamped envelopes and ordinary envelopes were imprinted to indicate that the enclosed correspondence was official business of the Confederate Post Office Department. Such mail required no postage when properly endorsed. Other Confederate government departments, minor offices and bureaus, army headquarters, military divisions, and individual states used imprinted envelopes for official correspondence, but were required to pay postage.

As Union troops regained Southern territories, federal mail service began to be restored. By the end of 1865, almost 500 routes had been restored. By November 1, 1866, almost half of the post offices in the South had been returned to federal service.

John Reagan, traveling with Jefferson Davis, was arrested on May 8, 1865, and imprisoned at Ft. Warren in Boston Harbor. Reagan was pardoned and released from prison almost two years later. He returned to his home state of Texas. He eventually made it back to Congress, where he became chairman of the Committee on Post Offices and Post Roads.

Adversity Covers

As the war continued, the Union blockade proved critical in restricting goods from entering and leaving the Confederacy. Southerners faced increasing shortages of supplies, including paper and envelopes. Writers began to use whatever was handy as letter-writing paper and envelopes. These items are known by philatelists* as "adversity covers."

11

Letters and envelopes were fashioned from the backs of ledger sheets, printed circulars, blank pages in books, maps, and even wallpaper. Some writers reused envelopes by turning them inside out. Any blank or partially blank piece of paper could be pressed into service as an envelope.

***philatelists:** people who collect stamps as a hobby



Soldiers' Mail

For many soldiers, the Civil War was their first extended absence from home. Their letters often included references both to the loneliness of life and the horrors of the conflict. Letters from home were always welcome relief in a soldier's day. Families were not the only ones eager for word from their loved ones at war. For the first time, newspaper publishers could rely on soldiers' letters for first-person depictions of battles.

Because they were often on the move, soldiers' mail service was irregular at best. While letters might find them easily when they were camped for extended periods, when on the march, units could travel for weeks without receiving their mail.

The postal service acknowledged that many soldiers did not carry stamps with them and permitted them to send letters without stamps. A soldier's envelope had to bear his name, rank, and unit. Such mail was marked "postage due," and the amount indicated was collected from the addressee.

Prisoner-of-War Mail

Confederate and Union prisoners were allowed to exchange mail through flag-of-truce ships.

Confederate and Union prisoner-of-war letters were exchanged at designated points. These letters usually were enclosed within an inner, unsealed envelope that bore enemy stamps or was sent postage due. The outer cover was destroyed after the contents were censored, as indicated by proper markings and endorsements on the envelope carrying the letter to its destination.

Patriotic Covers

Illustrated stationery reveals the strong emotions generated by the Civil War. In the North, envelopes bearing patriotic illustrations appeared even before hostilities broke out. Soon after the war began, Southern stationers quickly marketed patriotic envelopes picturing flags, cannons, political leaders, slogans, soldiers, and caricatures, among other war-related themes.

"A Nation Divided" from *Binding the Nation* at the National Postal Museum, Smithsonian Institution. Courtesy of the National Postal Museum. http://www.postalmuseum.si.edu/exhibits/2a_binding.html (accessed October 17, 2010).

**SAMPLE CONSTRUCTED RESPONSE ITEMS
GRADE 7 READING**



Grade 7: A Nation Divided

Standard: RI.7.4

Depth of Knowledge (DOK): Strategic Thinking

Achievement Level Descriptor (ALD): 4

CR Item: Explain how the phrase “pressed into service” in paragraph 11 impacts the meaning of the text. Provide one or more quotes from the text to support your answer.

A large rectangular box containing 15 horizontal lines for writing. A large, light gray watermark reading "SAMPLE" is oriented diagonally across the box.



Rubric:

- 2
 - Response correctly explains how the phrase impacts the meaning of the text
 - Response provides one or more appropriate quotes from the text as support
- 1
 - Response correctly explains how the phrase impacts the meaning of the text
 - Response provides an inappropriate quote from the text or lacks a quote from the text
- 0
 - Response incorrectly explains how the phrase impacts the meaning of the text
 - Response is unable to provide an appropriate quote for an incorrect answer

Answers:

Possible correct effects of the phrase “pressed into service” on the meaning of the text are:

- It shows the importance of mail for communication on the part of the soldiers, their families, and the public.
- It shows that any type of paper or scraps of paper were used as stationery. People did not have regular paper to write letters or envelopes to send them in.

Plausible text support for the first effect: *It shows the importance of mail for communication on the part of the soldiers, their families, and the public.*

- “Writers began to use whatever was handy as letter-writing paper and envelopes.”
- “Their letters often included references both to the loneliness of life and the horrors of the conflict.”
- “Letters from home were always welcome relief in a soldier’s day.”
- “Families were not the only ones eager for word from their loved ones at war.”
- “newspaper publishers could rely on soldiers’ letters for first-person depictions of battles.”

SAMPLE CONSTRUCTED RESPONSE ITEMS GRADE 7 READING



Plausible text support for the second effect: *It shows that any type of paper or scraps of paper were used as stationery. People did not have regular paper to write letters or envelopes to send them in.*

- “Southerners faced increasing shortages of supplies, including paper and envelopes.
- “Writers began to use whatever was handy as letter-writing paper and envelopes. These items are known by philatelists as ‘adversity covers.’ ”
- “Letters and envelopes were fashioned from the backs of ledger sheets, printed circulars, blank pages in books, maps, and even wallpaper.”
- “Some writers reused envelopes by turning them inside out.”

Sample Student Response: Score point 2 (Correct answer and Correct support)

Correct answer—The student response should state (in their own words) an effect of the phrase “pressed into service” on the meaning of the text (see Answers list).

Correct support— The student response must provide one appropriate quote in order to meet score point 2. It may include additional quotes from the text to support their answer (see Answers list).

EXAMPLE: The phrase “pressed into service” describes how paper was in short supply, which made it hard for people to send mail during wartime. One quote that supports this idea is “Writers began to use whatever was handy as letter-writing paper and envelopes.”



Sample Student Response: Score point 1 (Correct answer and No support)

Correct answer—The student response should state (in their own words) an effect of the phrase “pressed into service” on the meaning of the text (see Answers list).

No support—The student response lacks one correct quote. It uses an incorrect quote (not shown on Answers list) or does not include a quote from the text to support their answer.

EXAMPLE: The phrase “pressed into service” shows that mail service was important for sending information. Soldiers would use anything available to write letters and send them home to loved ones.

Sample Student Response: Score point 0 (Incorrect answer and Support does not matter)

Incorrect answer—The student response states an incorrect effect of the phrase “pressed into service” on the meaning of the text (not shown on Answers list).

Irrelevant support—The student response is unable to support an incorrect answer (even if a correct quote is provided).

EXAMPLE: The phrase “pressed into service” means that men were forced to join the army and fight in the war. A quote that shows this is “Letters from home were always welcome relief in a soldier’s day.”



Adapted from “Mr. Harold”

“Well, there does not appear to be much to laugh at tonight,” said a voice at his elbow, and turning round John saw that a man, apparently a traveler, in even shabbier clothes than his own, had come up noiselessly over the snow. “Also,” continued the newcomer, “it would be possible to find a warmer and more comfortable seat than that mile-stone.”

“I was waiting opposite the gates, trying to make up my mind whether I would go in or not,” answered the boy, “and I was laughing because I did not think it would make any real difference whether I went in or stayed outside.”

“That depends, I suppose, on what you want there! If I might ask, what is it?”

“I want the squire to give my mother a little time to get together her rent; but since Mr. Harold ran away, ten years ago today, the squire has never been the same man. That nearly broke his heart, and now he takes no interest in anything; he has turned us all over to an agent, who does just what he likes with us.”

“Then Mr. Harold was—”

“His son. My father said he would have run away too if he had been Mr. Harold, though the squire wasn’t as bad in those days.”

“And who was your father?”

“Peter Green, the carpenter.”

“Well, Peter Green’s son,” said the stranger, with an odd laugh, “if you will go in and see the squire, and come out and tell me in what sort of temper he is, I will give you my last shilling,” and he spun a coin in the air. “You must go in by the front door, and I will wait for you in the drive.”

“Right you are,” said the boy, jumping off the mile-stone. “I’ll risk it for a shilling.”

Side by side they tramped up the snowy drive till they saw the light shining through the glass in the front door. Then the traveler drew aside, and John went boldly up the steps. The clang of the bell had scarcely died away before the door was opened by an elderly butler.

“Can I see the squire?” asked John, in as brave a voice as he could muster.

“Show him in at once, Williams; show him in at once,” called out an impatient voice at the back of the hall.



The butler stepped back. "I don't think, sir," he said, "that this is the gentleman you are expecting."

"How do you know what gentleman I am expecting? Show him in at once, I tell you."

"You'd better come straight in," said the butler, shrugging his shoulders. He led the way across the hall, and ushered John into a comfortably furnished library. An old gentleman was sitting by the fire, enveloped in rugs. He leaned forward and peered into John's face. Then he fell back wearily into his cushions. "Dear, dear! Another disappointment," he groaned. "Take him away, Williams."

But John, having penetrated into the lion's den, did not mean to be dismissed so easily.

"Please, sir," he began, hurriedly, "I want to know whether you will give my mother a little longer to pay her rent. We have had a very hard time. Mr. Tucker is going to turn us out."

"You must go and see Mr. Tucker about that," answered the old man, indifferently. "I leave all such matters to him; or, stay," he added, "I am expecting Mr. Harold tonight. You can come in and see him about it next week if you like."

Then John remembered that he had heard that on the anniversary of his son's departure the old man always expected him to return, and he understood why he had been shown in so hurriedly.

"But, please, sir," he pleaded, "won't you write me a line for Mr. Tucker, in case Mr. Harold missed the train or anything?"

The old man put up his hands feebly. "Take him away, Williams," he said, annoyed. "I can't be worried, or I shall be too tired to speak to Mr. Harold when he comes. Do whatever you think Mr. Harold would like."

John followed the butler out of the room, and half an hour later he went down the steps triumphantly. In his pocket was a paper which the butler had written out and persuaded the squire to sign, stating that Mrs. Green was on no account to be turned out of her cottage without Mr. Harold's express orders. He found the traveler waiting for him, and told his story joyfully, declining to accept the proffered shilling in return.

24

The traveler listened attentively, and drew himself together at the end. "I think I will risk it," he said, huskily. Then he turned to John: "Look here, young man, you will find it to



your advantage to say nothing about tonight, whatever news you may hear in the village tomorrow. See?"

"You aren't going to hurt the squire?" asked John, anxiously.

"I hope not, but you will probably understand tomorrow," and the shabby figure strode away up the drive.

The next day the villagers were electrified by the news that Mr. Harold had returned at last.

That is many years ago now, and John Green, the head gardener at the manor house, sometimes wonders, as he watches the care with which the present squire selects an orchid for his buttonhole, whether the traveler who spoke to him on that snowy December night was not the figure of a dream.

SAMPLE



Rubric:

- 2
- Response makes a correct inference about the visitor
 - Response provides one or more appropriate quotes from the selection to support the inference
- 1
- Response makes a correct inference about the visitor
 - Response provides an inappropriate quote from the selection or lacks a quote to support the inference
- 0
- Response makes an incorrect inference about the visitor
 - Response is unable to provide an appropriate quote for an incorrect answer

Sample Student Response: Score point 2 (Correct answer and Correct support)

Correct answer—The student response should state (in their own words) that the visitor is Mr. Harold. He is hesitant to visit his father (the squire) after returning to his village when so much time has passed.

Correct support— The student response must provide one correct quote in order to meet score point 2. It should include one or more of these quotes from the selection:

- “The traveler listened attentively, and drew himself together at the end. ‘I think I will risk it,’ he said, huskily.”
- “‘Look here, young man, you will find it to your advantage to say nothing about tonight, whatever news you may hear in the village tomorrow.’
- “ ‘I hope not, but you will probably understand tomorrow,’ and the shabby figure strode away up the drive.”
- “The next day the villagers were electrified by the news that Mr. Harold had returned at last.”

EXAMPLE: An inference that can be made is that the visitor is Mr. Harold, and he is nervous about seeing his father. A quote that shows this is “ ‘I hope not, but you will probably understand tomorrow,’ and the shabby figure strode away up the drive.”



Sample Student Response: Score point 1 (Correct answer and No support)

Correct answer— The student response should state (in their own words) that the visitor is Mr. Harold. He is hesitant to visit his father (the squire) after returning to his village when so much time has passed.

No support—The student response lacks one correct quote. It uses an incorrect quote or does not include a quote from the selection to support their answer.

EXAMPLE: The visitor is the squire’s son, Mr. Harold. He has come back after staying away a long time.

Sample Student Response: Score point 0 (Incorrect answer and Support does not matter)

Incorrect answer—The student response makes an incorrect statement about the visitor.

Irrelevant support—The student response is unable to support an incorrect answer (even if a correct quote is provided).

EXAMPLE: The visitor is trying to protect the squire from Mr. Harold. A quote that shows this is “The next day the villagers were electrified by the news that Mr. Harold had returned at last.”