

The purpose of these practice test materials is to orient teachers and students to the types of passages and prompts on FSA tests. Each spring, students in grades 4–10 are administered one text-based writing prompt for the FSA English Language Arts test. Students will respond to either an informative/explanatory prompt or to an opinion/argumentation prompt. An example of a text-based writing prompt for each grade is available for practice. To familiarize students with the response formats, teachers may encourage students to practice with each type of prompt within a grade band.

The following FSA ELA Writing Practice Tests are available on the FSA portal as shown below:

Elementary Grade Band

Grade 4 - Informative/Explanatory

Grade 5 - Opinion

Middle Grade Band

Grade 6 - Informative/Explanatory

Grade 7 - Argumentation

Grade 8 - Informative/Explanatory

High School Grade Band

Grade 9 - Argumentation

Grade 10 - Informative/Explanatory

The practice test is not intended to guide classroom instruction.

To offer students a variety of texts on the FSA ELA Writing tests, authentic and copyrighted stories, poems, and articles appear as they were originally published, as requested by the publisher and/or author. While these real-world examples do not always adhere to strict style conventions and/or grammar rules, inconsistencies among passages should not detract from students' ability to understand and answer questions about the texts.

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Read the “The Wild Among Us” passage set.

The Wild Among Us

Source 1: The Howl Next Door

by Julie McPartland

- 1 Ahhh-eeee-oooo! Coyotes are famous for their howl. People often think of coyote howls as a sound far off in the wild mountains or open plains. They imagine sitting by a fire and listening to nighttime conversations between the wild canines in the distance. That high-pitched cry is not always so far away, though. More and more, coyotes are found in or near cities.
- 2 In recent years, the animals have even moved into parks in New York City. No, coyotes are not swinging on swings and playing in sandboxes. Although coyotes live in the parks, most people will never see them up close. Coyotes, like many wild animals, are naturally cautious around humans. One urban park ranger says that she has only seen five coyotes face-to-face in thirteen years. However, using special cameras that watch the parks at night, people observe the coyotes playing and running. The coyotes do not know the cameras are there, so they act naturally. Park rangers, scientists, and others are learning about the behavior of the new residents.
- 3 Not everyone’s opinion is positive, though. Some people fear the idea of the coyotes in the parks. However, park rangers have no plans to remove the wild coyotes. Instead, the park officials are working on educating people. They say there is little reason to fear the animals as long as humans let them remain wild. People should remember not to feed the coyotes. If a coyote links humans with food, the animal may begin to lose its fear of humans and become a nuisance.
- 4 There are many New Yorkers, including urban park rangers, who are happy about the new coyotes in the neighborhood. If coyotes live there, it is because the parks have become cleaner and safer environments. Coyotes like the parks for the same reasons people do. One benefit of coyotes in cities is that they hunt and eat common pests like mice and rats. The rangers hope people continue to learn about how to live with these new neighbors and their well-known howl.

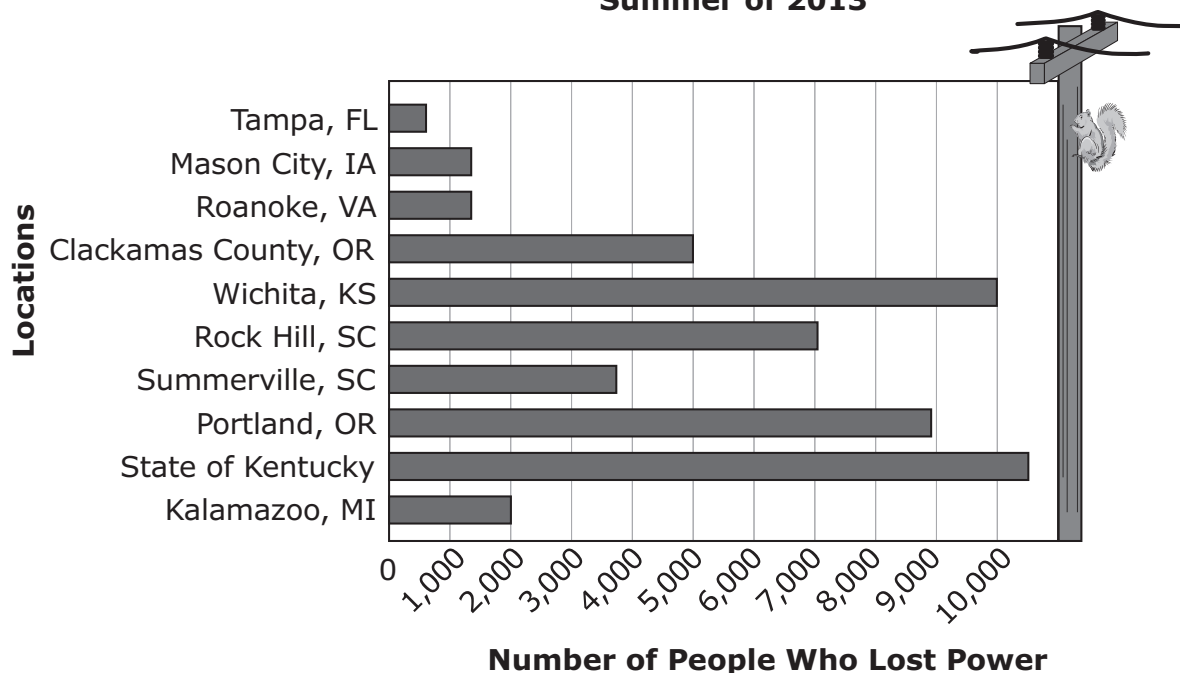
“The Howl Next Door” by Julie McPartland. Written for educational purposes.

Source 2: Power Chewers

by Karl Szymas

- 5 A flash of a bushy tail, a speedy furry chase, the sudden stop—a squirrel hangs upside down on the underside of a large branch, listening. He uses his strong claws to defy gravity and, if we remain still, we can watch as he scampers further up the tree. A squirrel is such a common sight in many cities that most of us do not stop to think about them. One of the squirrel’s most powerful traits is also one of its most troubling secrets. Squirrels’ teeth never stop growing.
- 6 There is an expression “long in the tooth,” meaning old. Does this mean squirrels go around with long, long teeth as they age? Not a chance. They use their teeth constantly, grinding them down. As omnivores, squirrels like to chew on nuts, berries, and insects. Sometimes they end up chewing on other things. This constant chewing can cause cities to power down.
- 7 A squirrel’s need to chew, combined with its ability to go almost anywhere and its desire to stay safe, leads it to go inside transformers. A transformer is a large box where electrical wiring is kept. A squirrel goes into a transformer for the same reason it goes into a hole in a tree. It wants to be safe. Also, the top of a transformer box is a perfect spot for a squirrel to spread out and lie in the sun or shade. The platform even provides room for a squirrel to launch itself onto a power line, another place for it to chew on wires. Unfortunately, when squirrels keep their teeth busy with wires, neighborhoods and cities lose power. This sometimes causes the lights to go out in hundreds or thousands of homes. It is pretty incredible to think that one little scampering squirrel could affect the lives of so many people.

**A Few of 50 Power Outages Caused By Squirrels,
Summer of 2013**



"Power Chewers" by Karl Szymas. Written for educational purposes. Information in graphic taken from "Squirrel Power" by Jon Mooallem, *New York Times*, August 31, 2013.

Source 3: Pigeons and People

by Nicole Wilson

- 8 Look up in any major city and you may spot a pigeon perched on the ledge of a building. Tall buildings have only been common in cities for a few hundred years. Where did pigeons hang out before that? Many pigeons living in cities today are descendants of rock doves. Rock doves originally made their homes in steep cliffs that bordered the ocean. Tall buildings resemble those steep cliffs, so it makes sense that pigeons have made themselves at home there. Some city dwellers see them as loud pests, cooing and causing a mess. Pigeon droppings spoil the beauty of buildings, cars, and statues. However, people may be the main reason pigeons came to cities in the first place.
- 9 People and pigeons have a long history. Because pigeons are mild-mannered, they have been used as pets and helpers to humans for nearly 5,000 years. Pigeons were brought into cities as sources of food and for fun and practical uses. They are used to living among

people. They are friendly and fly in flocks of between twenty and thirty birds. The birds often rely on people for food, eating almost anything people offer them. The hope for food is one reason groups of pigeons gather in crowded areas. Many people feed them, so the birds keep coming back.

- 10 Some pigeons are particularly special to people because they can be trained as messengers. Homing or carrier pigeons will find their way home from distant places. People use this skill by writing notes and attaching them to the homing pigeon's leg. Then, the pigeon will fly the note to a desired location. During World Wars I and II, pigeons helped armies communicate. In fact, in World War II a pigeon named G.I. Joe received a medal for his bravery. He had carried an important message to British troops when other communication systems went down. In World War I, another pigeon saved the lives of 194 American soldiers. The soldiers were surrounded by the enemy and could not tell anyone where they were. They sent a pigeon named Cher Ami, who delivered their location to friendly troops. Today, there is a service in Texas that uses carrier pigeons to send birthday and other messages.

"Pigeons and People" by Nicole Wilson. Written for educational purposes.

Writing Prompt

Write an informative essay about the effects wild animals and humans have on each other when they live in the same area. Use information from the passages in your essay.

Manage your time carefully so that you can

- read the passages;
- plan your response;
- write your response; and
- revise and edit your response.

Be sure to include

- an introduction;
- information from the passages as support; and
- a conclusion that is related to the information presented.

Your response should be in the form of a multiparagraph essay. Write your response in the space provided.

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