



How Does ThinkCERCA Support Assessment Readiness?

ThinkCERCA prepares students for new state assessments, such as PARCC, Smarter Balanced, and ACT, as well as the new SAT by providing a scaffolded process that supports assessment practice, including constructed response for reading assessments. With ThinkCERCA, students learn to read analytically, make claims, support them with evidence from a text, explain their reasoning clearly, address counterarguments, and use discipline-specific language across content areas.

Reading Across Content Areas

Why This Matters

In order for students to write effective arguments, they must practice selecting and evaluating supporting evidence from complex texts across content areas. ThinkCERCA goes beyond highlighting and annotation tools by also providing students with differentiated, discipline-specific prompts that develop their close reading skills in four content areas and support evidence-based reading and higher-order thinking. Audio support, in-text vocabulary, and other scaffolds support growth for students at all levels of readiness.

EXAMPLE QUESTIONS FROM SMARTER BALANCED GRADE 8 ELA

A student is writing an argumentative research report for history class about choosing presidents' names for places or structures. Read the paragraph from the student's report and the directions that follow.

The Hoover Dam stands as a lasting memorial for the 31st President of the United States, Herbert Hoover. Completed in 1936, it was originally called the Boulder Dam but was later renamed for Hoover who was instrumental in having the dam built. The dam is located in the Colorado River and sits on the border of the states of Arizona and Nevada. The Hoover Dam is not the only structure or building to be named for a president. Many monuments, airports, federal buildings, schools, and streets are named after presidents. Some have suggested that this has led to a form of bias where some presidents are celebrated and others are easily forgotten. What these critics fail to realize is that the presidents who are honored are chosen based upon their contributions to the United States, including their political and charitable work. Without the support of presidents like Hoover, dams and other structures and projects that help people would not have been built. Naming places and structures after these presidents is the most appropriate way to honor their legacy and memory.

The student found a source. Read the source and click on **two** pieces of evidence that support the student's claim in her report.

"What Is in a Name: Understanding America's History" by Neva Chadston

National landmarks named after people, like the Hoover Dam, are important reminders of people's contributions to society. These structures may be owned by public entities like the government, or belong to private groups or organizations who are responsible for taking care of, and managing, a building, a structure, land, and/or property. Honoring someone by naming a landmark after that person reflects the work and contributions that person made during his or her lifetime. However, not everyone who has a structure named after him or her is famous or well-known. Some communities are known for honoring local people and families. Regardless of the reason why they were created, national landmarks are enjoyed by many.

The student found a source. Read the source and click on **two pieces of evidence that support the student's claim** in her report.

ThinkCERCA™ Lesson Alignment

SAMPLE CERCA SET

The Role of Machines
What are the positive and negative effects of technology?
English Language Arts • Informational Texts • Policy and Debate

Internet Speeds

Minilessons - Evidence

Grandmother's Robot

SAMPLE TEXT OVERVIEW (GRADE 8 ELA)

Typically, the machines we use in our daily lives are intended to make activities easier, from making a pot of coffee to transplanting a heart. New technology even allows machines to take over in stressful wartime situations. While many scientists encourage the increasing use of drones in war, others question whether machines lack the morality necessary to make quick decisions, often of life and death, in battle. Scientists are working to create machines capable of learning human morality, but some worry that a computer program isn't enough to truly mimic human ethics. Are machines capable of processing the moral quandaries?

EXAMPLE QUESTIONS FROM THINKCERCA

Can Machines Learn Morality?

By Randy Rieland
Smithsonian, February 8, 2013



When John Brennan, President Obama's choice to be the next head of the CIA, appeared before a Senate committee yesterday, one question **supplanted** all others at his confirmation hearing:

How are the decisions made to send killer **drones** after suspected terrorists?

As you analyze the text, you will be gathering evidence that will help you develop a response to the CERCA question:

Do machines have the ability to be moral?

Reread the article.

- Use aqua to highlight reasons machines might make better soldiers than humans when it comes to making ethical decisions. Add notes about what is concerning about this possibility.
- Use pink to highlight reasons why it might be dangerous to build machines that are responsible for making ethical decisions. Add notes about why these dangers might still be worth the risk.



Construct a Response

Why This Matters

As students construct responses to text-based questions across content areas, they must draft a claim, cite supporting evidence, and clearly explain their reasoning using terms specific to the discipline. Using ThinkCERCA's built-in, interactive Argument Builder and critical thinking processes, students can practice online interactions found on new assessments by dragging and dropping various arrangements of their argument as they draft and revise their responses. In addition, academic language stems, vocabulary support, and collaboration routines support English language development for English language learners.

EXAMPLE QUESTIONS FROM PARCC GRADE 4 ELA

Today you will read a story about a girl whose family is from India and a poem that expresses how the speaker faces frightening experiences. After you finish the task, you will write an essay about a theme in the story and the poem.

Read the story "Just Like Home." Then answer the questions.

Just Like Home

by Mathangi Subramanian

1 When the recess bell rang, Priya sighed and slowly hung up her smock. At her old school, she spent recess climbing the monkey bars and sharing secrets with her friends. Now she sat in the corner of the field and watched the other kids play without her.

Part

What is
Like Ho

A. c
 B. w
 C. d
 D. vi

Part

ThinkCERCA™ Lesson Alignment

SAMPLE CERCA SET

Conflict and Dominance
How do conflict and the struggle for dominance affect the human spirit?
English Language Arts • Literature • Overcoming Adversity

Learning How to Die

MAKING ARGUMENTS ABOUT POINT OF VIEW

Multiday Short Fiction: The Taste of Banzo's Sword

SAMPLE TEXT OVERVIEW (GRADE 4 ELA)

"The Taste of Banzo's Sword" is a Japanese folktale in which a young boy, Matajuro Jagyu, overcomes many obstacles in order to achieve his dream of becoming a sword master. Other people do not believe in him, but he believes in himself. Matajuro teaches readers the value of perseverance through his constant hard work. How does Matajuro prove his father and the famous sword master Banzo wrong?

EXAMPLE QUESTIONS FROM THINKCERCA

The Taste of Banzo's Sword

By Retold by Kate Walker
Cricket, October 2013

A Japanese Tale

Matajuro Jagyu had one dream: to be a famous **kend** father, who was known throughout all Japan. At an school and began the hard, daily kendo training.

How does Matajuro prove both his father and Banzo wrong?

[NEED HELP GETTING STARTED?](#)

Claim Write an opinion or position in response to the question.



Multi-text Comparative Analysis Across Content Areas

Why This Matters

ThinkCERCA provides opportunities for students to analyze and synthesize multiple texts, including primary source documents, scientific journals containing graphs and charts, as well as visual, audio, and video texts, in order to mirror both the standards and what is expected of them for success in college and career. Topics are aligned to new content standards to support seamless integration into curriculum.

EXAMPLE QUESTIONS FROM PARCC GRADE 11 ELA

You have studied three sources involving the establishment of American independence from Great Britain. The sources are:

- "Declaration of Independence," signed on July 4, 1776
- A passage from Patrick Henry's March 23, 1776, "Speech to the Second Virginia Convention"
- The video *From Subjects to Citizens*

An important idea presented in the sources involves the colonists' notions of the purpose of government. Write an essay in which you explore the perceptions of government's purpose presented in the sources. In writing your essay, consider how the authors of the two written documents describe the ideal relationship between a government and its people, and how they describe the actual relationship between the government of Great Britain and the colonists. Consider also the perspective presented in the video. Remember to use evidence from all three sources to support your ideas.

B I U [List Icons] [Link Icons]

ThinkCERCA™ Lesson Alignment

SAMPLE CERCA SET



The U.S. Constitution

How do certain elements of the United States Constitution reflect the issues faced by the new nation?

Social Studies • Informational Texts • Politics and Government



Minilessons

Introduction to Key Skills and Concepts



Minilesson - Structure and Organization
CCSS.CCRA.R.5

Assign To ▾

GRADES 3-5



Minilesson - Structure and Organization
CCSS.CCRA.R.5

Assign To ▾

GRADES 6-12

When the U.S. Constitution was first written, the writers were very clear about the process they wanted voters to follow when electing government officials. They created clear legislature of what should happen during elections, and also detailed the processes for resignation and impeachment. When President George Washington bid his post farewell, he called upon the American people to embrace their responsibilities when choosing their next elected official. Why was his farewell address important in ensuring the laws written in Article II of the Constitution would be followed?

EXAMPLE QUESTIONS FROM THINKCERCA

What are the characteristics of a good president according to the texts?

The Constitution of the United States

Article. II.

Section. 1.

The executive Power shall be vested in a President of the United States of America Term of four Years, and, together with the Vice President, chosen for the same Term

Each State shall appoint, in such Manner as the **Legislature** thereof may direct, whole Number of Senators and Representatives to which the State may be entitled

Representatives and Delegates in the House of Representatives shall be chosen in the manner prescribed in each State in the Constitution of the United States

The Electors in each State shall have the Qualifications requisite for Electors in the most numerous Branch of the State Legislature

President George Washington's Farewell Address

By George Washington
September 19, 1796





ACT Examples

You are going to write an **essay** to explain the qualities of a good friend.

Think about your best friend. Think about what makes this person a good friend.

Here are some questions to help you think about your essay and plan it:

- Who is this person, and what do you like to do together?
- Why is this friend important to you?
- What makes this person your best friend? Why not someone else?
- What kinds of things do all good friends have in common?

Now, write an essay in which you **describe** your best friend and **explain** the qualities of a good friend. Be sure to include reasons and details that help your reader understand what makes this person a good friend and what qualities all good friends have.

**ACT Aspire
Grade 4 Writing**

Supporting claims with evidence, explaining one's reasoning.

Explain what a line of symmetry is.

Explain why the dashed line drawn in the figure below is NOT a line of symmetry for the figure.



**ACT Aspire
Grades 9-10 Math**

Using words to explain mathematical terms, addressing counterarguments.

1000

A Lion in the Grass

Shortly after arriving in South Africa, my mother, sister, and I traveled north with our tour group toward the savannah for our first safari adventure. As our vehicle bounced along the dusty dirt roads, I

begin s

ostrich

I was h

This question refers to the essay as a whole.

Suppose the writer's goal had been to explain the job of a safari guide. Would this essay meet that goal?

- A. Yes, because the writer describes the skills the safari guide needs to search for and find animals to view.
- B. Yes, because the writer explains the steps the safari guide

**ACT Aspire
Grade 5 English**

Identifying and interpreting textual evidence.



SAT Examples

Prompt

As you read the passage below, consider how Dana Gioia uses

- evidence, such as facts or examples, to support claims.
- reasoning to develop ideas and to connect claims and evidence.
- stylistic or persuasive elements, such as word choice or appeals to emotion, to add power to the ideas

Write an essay in which you explain how Dana Gioia builds an argument to persuade his audience that the decline of reading in America will have a negative effect on society. In your essay, analyze how Gioia uses one or more of the features in the directions that precede the passage (or features of your own choice) to strengthen the logic and persuasiveness of his argument. Be sure that your analysis focuses on the most relevant features of the passage.

Your essay should not explain whether you agree with Gioia’s claims, but rather explain how Gioia builds an argument to persuade his audience.

New SATs Essay

Connecting claims with evidence, explaining one’s reasoning.



Select an Answer

Which claim about traffic congestion is supported by the graph?

- A New York City commuters spend less time annually delayed by traffic congestion than the average for very large cities.
- B Los Angeles commuters are delayed more hours annually by traffic congestion than are commuters in Washington, D.C.

New SATs Reading

Interpreting data; matching claims with evidence.

Questions 1-5 are based on the following passage.

This passage is adapted from Edith Wharton, *Ethan Frome*, originally published in 1911. Mattie Silver is Ethan’s household employee.

Line Mattie Silver had lived under E
 they met at supper he had frequ
 company were comparable to th
 keep time with his long stride, th
 5 had taken to the girl from the fir
 her, and she had smiled and wa
 Ethan!” as she jumped down wit
 over her slight person: “She don

Select an Answer

Which choice provides the best evidence for the answer to the previous question?

- A Lines 1–4 (“Mattie...farm”)
- B Lines 4–9 (“He had...anyhow”)
- C Lines 9–10 (“But it...hearth”)
- D Lines 11–13 (“She had...will”)

New SATs Reading

Matching claims with textual evidence.