

MCAS Sample Student Work and Scoring Guide Grade 7 English Language Arts Practice Test

Question 13: Essay

Reporting Categories: Language and Writing

Standard: [L.PK-12.1](#) – Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking.

Standard: [L.PK-12.2](#) – Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling when writing.

Standard: [L.PK-12.3](#) – Apply knowledge of language to understand how language functions in different contexts, to make effective choices for meaning or style, and to comprehend more fully when reading or listening.

Standard: [W.PK-12.2](#) – Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.

Standard: [W.PK-12.4](#) – Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

This item can be found in the grade 7 practice test on the [MCAS Resource Center](#).

Essay Prompt

For this question, you will write an essay based on the passages. The essay should be about four to five paragraphs in length. Be sure to:

- Include a central idea.
- Use evidence from the passages to support the central idea.
- Use correct grammar, spelling, and punctuation.

Based on the passages, write an essay that compares how Roy in *Hoot* **and** the girls in *Strange Birds* demonstrate dedication to a cause. Use evidence from **both** passages to develop your essay.

Continue to the following page to see the scoring guides for this question. Sample student responses begin on page 3. The annotations that appear above each sample response describe elements of the response that contributed to its score for Idea Development and Standard English Conventions.

Scoring Guide for Idea Development

Select a score point in the table below to view the sample student response.

Score*	Description
5A 5B	- Central idea is insightful and fully developed - Skillful selection and explanation of evidence and/or details - Skillful and/or subtle organization - Rich expression of ideas - Full awareness of the task and mode
4	- Central idea is clear and well-developed - Effective selection and explanation of evidence and/or details - Effective organization - Clear expression of ideas - Full awareness of the task and mode
3	- Central idea is general and moderately developed - Appropriate selection and explanation of evidence and/or details - Moderate organization - Adequate expression of ideas - Sufficient awareness of the task and mode
2	- Central idea may be present and is somewhat developed - Limited selection and explanation of evidence and/or details - Limited organization - Basic expression of ideas - Partial awareness of the task and mode
1	- Central idea is not developed - Insufficient evidence and/or details - Minimal organization - Poor expression of ideas - Minimal awareness of the task and mode
0	The response shows evidence the student has read the text, but does not address the question or incorrectly responds to the question.

Scoring Guide for Standard English Conventions

Select a score point in the table below to view the sample student response.

Score*	Description
3A 3B 3C 3D	- Consistent control of a variety of sentence structures relative to length of essay - Consistent control of grammar, usage, and mechanics relative to complexity and/or length of essay
2	- Mostly consistent control of sentence structures relative to length of essay - Mostly consistent control of grammar, usage, and mechanics relative to complexity and/or length of essay
1	- Little control and/or no variety in sentence structure and/or - Little control of grammar, usage, and mechanics relative to complexity and/or insufficient length
0	Sentences are formed incorrectly with no control of grammar, usage, and mechanics and/or insufficient length

*In both Scoring Guides, letters are used to distinguish between sample student responses that earned the same score (e.g., 5A and 5B).

Idea Development—Score Point 5A

The essay is fully developed and effectively explains how Roy in *Hoot* and the girls in *Strange Birds* demonstrate dedication to the cause of protecting birds by “showing determination, sharing the cause, and getting more involved.” The essay provides detailed examples from both passages along with an analysis of the characters’ dedication: “[Roy] is determined to stand up to a huge business in front of a ton of people, because [he] believes and is determined to do the right thing.” The essay is skillfully organized and well structured, with a clear and logical progression. The expression of ideas is rich, with the writing consistently conveying the characters’ dedication and the significance of their actions: “This quote shows the determination the four girls have to stop a local social group from wearing real life peacock feathers in their hats.” There is full awareness of the task and mode.

Standard English Conventions—Score Point 3A

The essay shows consistent control of standard English conventions relative to the length of the essay. The sentences are varied and complex, contributing to the overall readability and effectiveness of the writing: “This section of the passage demonstrates that the group is dedicated to getting more involved, even if it means going undercover.” Minor errors in spelling and mechanics do not interfere with meaning.

Birds are incredibly important. They are a huge part of the circle of life. In both *Hoot* by Carl Hiaasen and *Strange Birds* by Celia C. Pérez making sure that birds are protected and not in danger is a very large part of the passages. Both, *Hoot* by Carl Hiaasen and *Strange Birds* by Celia C. Pérez, demonstrate dedication to a cause by showing determination, sharing the cause, and getting more involved.

In both *Hoot* by Carl Hiaasen, and *Strange Birds* by Celia C. Pérez, demonstrate dedication to a cause by showing determination. In *Hoot* by Carl Hiaasen, the main character says talking to his classmates and teacher, " 'So tomorrow at lunch,' Roy continued, 'I'm going out there to . . . well, just because I want the Mother Paula's people to know that somebody in Coconut Cove cares about those birds.' " This quote demonstrates determination by Roy being determined to stand up for what he believes in. He is determined to stand up to a huge business in front of a ton of people, because he believes and is determined to do the right thing. In, *Strange Birds* by Celia C. Pérez, one of the main characters, Lane, says, " 'So, let's figure out a way to convince people that it's wrong to keep using the hat,' Lane said." This quote shows the determination the four girls have to stop a local social group from wearing real life peacock feathers in their hats. The group is determined to stop this from happening, so much so that they are trying to find a way to prevent it from happening. This all shows how both passages demonstrate dedication to a cause by showing determination.

In *Hoot* by Carl Hiaasen, and *Strange Birds* by Celia C. Pérez, both passages demonstrating dedication to a cause by sharing the cause with others. In *Strange Birds* by Celia C. Pérez, the text states, " 'We can make stickers,' Lane said. 'Like street artists do. No one would have to know who made them.' ... 'We put a message on them and stick them up everywhere,' Lane said. 'To raise awareness about the feathered hat and the mistreatment of birds.' " This quote shows that the girls want to share what is happening with others, and try to get help to prevent it. In the quote they came up with the idea to put up stickers everywhere to raise awareness. Showing dedication to a cause. In the passage *Hoot* by Carl Hiaasen, Roy demonstrates dedication when he shares the problem with the class mates. It states, " 'Even when I found out where they're going to build it—that big empty lot at the corner of Woodbury and East Oriole—I didn't see anything wrong with the idea,' Roy said. 'Then one day a friend of mine took me out there and showed me something that changed my mind totally'... 'It was an owl,' Roy went on, 'about this tall.' " This quote shows how Roy is trying to get other to help and learn about what is happening. He is demonstrating dedication because he is trying to get people to realize what is happening and try to make a stand.

In both passages, *Hoot* by Carl Hiaasen, and *Strange Birds* by Celia C. Pérez, demonstrate dedication to a cause by getting more involved. In *Strange Birds* by Celia C. Pérez, the group gets more involved by going undercover. In the passages it says, " 'Hey, Cat,' Ofelia said. 'When do the Floras meet?' 'Thursdays at two,' Cat said. 'Why?' 'Because I'm going undercover,' Ofelia declared. She wrote the day and time in her notebook." This section of the passage demonstrates that the group is dedicated to getting more involved, even if that means going undercover. In the passage *Hoot* by Carl Hiaasen, Roy is talking to his class about what is happening to with the new pancake house, telling them about the owls. Roy says, " 'I didn't see anything wrong with the idea... Then one day a friend of mine took me out there and showed me something that changed my mind totally... It was an owl... They're called 'burrowing' owls because they actually live underground... in old holes made by tortoises and armadillos. Turns out that a couple of owl families hang out on that land at Woodbury and East Oriole. They made their nests in the dens and that's where they raise their babies.' " This shows that Roy has gotten more involved with what is going on, even reached the burrowing owls. Roy went to the land with his friend to investigate what is happening. Demonstrating dedication to the cause.

Both passages, *Hoot* by Carl Hiaasen and *Strange Birds* by Celia C. Pérez, demonstrate dedication to a cause by showing determination to help the animals in need, sharing the cause with others by making posters and stickers, and also talking to many people about what is happening, and getting more involved with the problem, by truly trying to figure out what is happening.

Idea Development—Score Point 5B

The essay effectively explores how Roy in *Hoot* and the girls in *Strange Birds* demonstrate dedication to their respective causes “in different and similar ways.” The central idea, that Roy and the girls “both wanted to stop a problem and needed a solution,” is insightful and fully developed. The selection and explanation of detailed evidence from both passages are skillful, as in this example: “According to ‘Hoot’ by Carl Hiaasen, ‘Instead he held up the newspaper and pointed to the torn page where the Mother Paula’s advertisement had been.’ This evidence shows that Roy choose to talk about the fact that owls are having their home taken away instead of a topic in the newspaper.” Organization is skillful, with a logical progression of ideas that outlines the differences in how the characters demonstrate dedication to a cause before discussing their similarities. The essay effectively conveys the characters’ dedication and the significance of their actions. There is full awareness of the task and mode.

Standard English Conventions—Score Point 3B

The essay shows consistent control of a variety of sentence structures. The sentences are varied, contributing to the overall readability and effectiveness of the essay. There is consistent control of grammar, usage, and mechanics relative to the length and complexity of the essay, though there are instances of awkward phrasing, as in the following example: “This reasoning shows they tried to prevent people from using birds hats to prevent more harm.” There are minor spelling errors (e.g., “similar” “awarness”), but they do not interfere with meaning.

Roy and the girls in Strange birds both had a goal. They both wanted to stop a problem and needed a solution. Roy was mostly on his own but the girls in Strange birds worked thoghether to solve their problem. They solved their problem in different and simillar ways.

It all started one morning were Roy saw that in the back of his father's newspaper, Mother Paula was building her pancake resturant over owls home. Roy knew it was wrong so he wanted to do something about it. One way Roy tried to help the owls was by spreading awarness. According to "Hoot" by Carl Hiaasen, "Instead he held up the newspaper and pointed to the torn page where the Mother Paula's advertisement had been." This evidence shows that Roy choose to talk about the fact that owls are having their homes taken away instead of a topic in the newspaper. Roy demonstrated his dedication to this cause by also explaining to the class that the acts arent legal. According to "Hoot" by Carl Hiaasen, "Excitedly Roy explained that the burrowing owls were protected by state and federal laws." This reasoning shows that Roy proved his statment and how harnming birds or disturbing active burrow are illegal. Roy also demonstrated dedication to the cause by arguing about it. According to "Hoot" by Carl Hiaasen, "okay, I know we're just talking about a few puny little owls, and I know everybody is crazy about Mother Paula's pancakes, but what's happening out there is just plain wrong." This evidence proves that Roy tried to atleast fight for the birds by arguing about it and explaining to people that its wrong to take away owls home.

The girls from Strange Birds had a problem and wanted to stop it. One way they tried to prevent this problem was by spreading awarness. According to "Strange Birds" by Ceila C. Perez, "We put a message on them and stick them up everywhere. To raise awarness about the feathered hat and the mistreatment of birds." This evidence shows that spreading awarness allowed more people to see this problem and possibly try to reduce it while proving that they have dedication to this cause. Another way the girls in Strange Birds showed demonstration to this cause was by boycotting. According to "Strange Birds" by Ceila C. Perez, "They organized boycotts and sent out flyers and are really the reason why the Migratory Bird Treaty Act even exists." This evidence shows that they showed dedication to this cause by spreading the news and awarness of why this problem exist. The girls from Strange Bird showed dedication to this cause by preventing people from hurting birds. According to "Strange Birds" by Ceila C. Perez, "So, let's figure out a way to convince people that it's wrong to keep using the hat." This reasoning shows they tried to prevent people from using birds hats to prevent more harm.

Both Roy and the girls in Strange Birds showed dedication to their cause. Both of their problems were also simillar since they were trying to prevent harm or loss of birds. One way they did this in a simillar way was by spreading awarness or the message. Roy did this by expaling to his class that Mother Paula's pancakes were also taking away the home of birds. The girls in Strange Birds did this by making flyers and boycotting to prevent harm. For example, According to "Hoot" by Carl Hiaasen, "Then one day a freind of mine took me out there and showed me something that changed my mind totally." This evidence shows that Roy explain the class how Mother Paula's pancakes had a problem behind it and tried spreading the awarness to his class. The girls in Strange Birds also spread awarness by trying to prevent people from wearing feathered hats or from harming birds. According to "Strange Birds" by Celia C. Perez, "Why don't we do both?, stickers and a letter to the editor." This evidence proves that they tried spreading awarness with stickers and letters to stop bird harm.

In conclusion, both Roy and the girls in Strange Birds demonstrated dedications to their cause and both tried to spread awarness. They both did it for simillar causes in some different ways. In the end they were able to spread awarness and prevent the problem from getting worse.

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Idea Development—Score Point 4

The central idea of the essay is clear and well-developed. The essay effectively discusses how both Roy in *Hoot* and the girls in *Strange Birds* show dedication to the cause of protecting the birds, although they differ in that “Roy. . . is going to face the conflict in person while the girls . . . have a more organized plan to convince the Floras into stopping.” The selection and explanation of evidence are effective. The essay includes relevant quotations from both passages to support the discussion of the characters’ dedication. For example, “‘Excitedly Roy explained that the burrowing owls were protected by state and federal laws, and that it was illegal to harm the birds or disturb active burrows without getting special government permits.’ This quote also shows how Roy researched about the cause and how dedicated he is.” The organization is effective and follows a logical structure. There is a clear expression of ideas and full awareness of the task and mode.

Standard English Conventions—Score Point 3C

The essay demonstrates consistent control of grammar, usage, and mechanics relative to the length and complexity of the essay. There are a few minor errors in spelling and agreement; however, the essay shows consistent control of sentence structures: “Third, one of the girls, Ofelia, has the plan to go undercover.” Another example demonstrates similar control: “In *Hoot*, Roy also takes inspiration from famous people who made history.” The sentences are varied and well constructed, contributing to the overall effectiveness of the writing.

Although both the girls in *Strange Birds* and Roy in *Hoot* demonstrates dedication to a cause they both have different plans to accomplish them. Roy in *Hoot* is going to face the conflict in person while the girls in *Strange Birds* have a more organized plan to convince the Floras into stopping.

Roy in *Hoot* demonstrates his dedication to a cause by trying to convince others. In Roy's History class the students have to bring a topic for a current events discussion. Roy talked about the burrow owls that might be killed when making the pancake house to bring more attention to the conflict. This shows dedication because as being the new kid it is hard to talk about a situation no one else has talked about while the girls in *Strange Birds* are in a group making it easier to convince others. Another way Roy demonstrates dedication is how he is going to go to the pancake house in person to educate Mother Paula's people about the owls while in *Strange Birds* the girls are not going directly to the conflict and find a different way. Roy also claims how what Mother Paula's people are doing is illegal. In paragraph 46 Mr. Ryan, the history teacher, explains to Roy how it is dangerous to make serious allegations but Roy replies "Excitedly Roy explained that the burrowing owls were protected by state and federal laws, and that it was illegal to harm the birds or disturb active burrows without getting special government permits." This quote also shows how Roy researched about the cause and how dedicated he is.

The girls in *Strange Birds* demonstrate dedication by making organized plans in a group to try and stop the local social group, the Floras. While both Roy went straight to the source without an organized plan. The girls have three plans to stop the Floras. First, is to make stickers and flyers to bring more attention to the cause like how Roy did in his history class but Roy made more of a presentation. Second, the girls plan to write a letter to the editor of the *Sabal Palms Sun*, which is a newspaper, this shows the girls' dedication and how they are taking the time to contact someone. Third, one of the girls, Ofelia, has the plan to go undercover. She states that she needs more information for the letter. Then in paragraph 54 she remembers about Nellie Bly. "She remembered reading about Nellie Bly, a journalist who was famous for going undercover to investigate and expose abuses of mentally ill patients in 1887" (paragraph 54) This quote shows how dedicated Ofelia is and how she is inspired. In *Hoot*, Roy also takes inspiration from famous people who made history. This shows dedication and will to do something for the world even if it is something small.

While both Roy in *Hoot* and the girls in *Strange Birds* show lots of dedication to the cause by bringing attention to the conflict and by making a plan they are also different in some ways. Roy might work alone and is going to stand up directly to the people of Mother Paula and the mayor. In *Strange Birds* the girls are going to make stickers and plans to get information for a letter they are writing to the editor of an article by going undercover. This shows how both Roy and the girls demonstrate dedication they do it in two different ways to accomplish their goals.

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Idea Development—Score Point 3

The central idea of the essay is moderately developed. The essay discusses how both Roy in *Hoot* and the girls in *Strange Birds* show dedication to the cause of saving animals, though the analysis of how they accomplish that is sometimes general: “This shows his dedication towards the problem with the pancake house.” Evidence from both passages is selected and explained appropriately but could be more specific: “Next, the girls show dedication when they try to find ideas how to stop the problem.” Despite some repetitive transitions between ideas, such as “Next,” and “This shows,” the essay follows a logical structure and demonstrates moderate organization. There is sufficient awareness of the task and mode.

Standard English Conventions—Score Point 3D

The essay shows consistent control of standard English conventions. There are few errors and varied sentence structures are used: “Roy, who wants to help some owls, needs to stand up to the adults by himself.” Grammar, usage, and mechanics are consistently controlled relative to the length and complexity of the essay; minor misspellings (“endangerment,” “memebbers”) do not interfere with meaning.

Wildlife endangerment is a problem worldwide. In the stories, there are some kids who want to help with that. Roy, who wants to help some owls, needs to stand up to the adults by himself. A club of four girls, Lane, Ofelia, Cat, and Aster, are helping the peacocks who are being plucked up for feather hats. Based on the passages, Roy in *Hoot* and the girls in *Strange Birds* demonstrate dedication to a cause.

Roy demonstrates dedication to a cause. He demonstrates it when he sees the newspaper story. For example, “Roy could tell she felt sorry for him because of the news about the pancake house. She thought the owls were doomed, but Roy wasn't ready to give up hope”(Hiaasen 18). As the text states, Roy was not ready to give up the owls. This shows his dedication towards the problem with the pancake house. Next, He demonstrates dedication when he tells the class he is going to protest at the place. The text states, “‘So tomorrow at lunch,’ Roy continued, ‘I’m going out there to . . . well, just because I want the Mother Paula’s people to know that somebody in Coconut Cove cares about those birds’”(Hiaasen 50). This shows he is dedicated to the problem. He is willing to get out of school with a note from his parents just to talk to Mother Paula about the owls. He also specified it will be during lunch, which says he would give up his own lunch just to save the owls.

The girls demonstrate dedication to a cause. The girls show dedication when they do all the ceremony stuff they planned to be official memebbers of the group. For example, “Oath sworn and space protected,” Lane announced. “We are officialy a troop” . . . “You made badges?” Ofelia asked, pinning hers to her backpack. “This feels so official”(Pérez 3,8). This shows that they are dedicated to the club. They even made their own badges and swore an oath to protect the peacocks. Next, the girls show dedication when they try to find ideas how to stop the problem. The text states, ““Hey, Cat,” Ofelia said. “When do the Floras meet?” “Thursdays at two,” Cat said. “Why?” “Because I’m going undercover,” Ofelia declared. She wrote the day and time in her notebook”(Pérez 55-57). This shows Ofelia is extremely dedicated the the club. She is risking getting in trouble just to find hidden information and stop the Floras acts.

In conclusion, Roy in *Hoot* and the girls in *Strange Birds* demonstrates dedication to a cause with their talent to think about solutions to the problems they have.

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Idea Development—Score Point 2

The central idea is present and somewhat developed in the essay: "In the passage 'Hoot', by Carl Hiaasen, and 'Strange Birds' by Celia C. Perez, both characters demonstrate dedication to their cause by coming up with a smart plan." The essay proceeds to discuss the dedication of the characters in both passages, but the selection of evidence is limited and explanations are brief: "This shows exactly how determined Roy is to help the birds in need." Organization is limited, with somewhat formulaic transitions between ideas ("Additionally," "Adding on to this,"). The expression of ideas is basic, and the essay partially addresses the task and mode.

Standard English Conventions—Score Point 2

The essay shows mostly consistent control of sentence structures relative to the length of the writing. The sentences are generally correct, though there is some repetition and awkward phrasing: "This peacock would severely help their cause and give the people a visual of how beatiful these creatures are, and how they do not deserve to be mistreated." The essay demonstrates mostly consistent control of grammar, usage, and mechanics relative to its length and complexity. A variety of errors are present but do not significantly interfere with overall meaning.

In the passage "Hoot", by Carl Hiaasen, and "Strange Birds" by Celia C. Perez, both characters demonstrate dedication to their cause by coming up with a smart plan. In the first passage, Roy is making the situation known, and in the second passage, the girls are writing a letter to an editor and making poster stickers.

In "Hoot", Roy stated with determination, "So tommorow at lunch, I am going out their to...well, just because I want the Mother Paula's people to know that somebody in Coconut Cove cares about those birds" (Hiaasen 50). This shows exactly how determined Roy is to help the birds in need.

Additionally, the group of girls in "Strange Birds" also demonstrate dedication by orginizing ideas to stop the Floras, from using peacock feathered hats. "Stickers and a letter to the editor" (Perez 49). This represents their will to make a change because they strongly believe that using peacock feathers is harmful and cruel to peacocks. Adding on to this, Lane created a huge poster of a peacock to help their statement: "Lane explained how she drew and painted the peacock across a few newspaper spreads, cut out the image, then made wheat paste to stick the bird to the wall" (Perez 17). This peacock would severely help their cause and give the people a visual of how beatiful these creatures are, and how they do not deserve to be mistreated.

In conclusion, both kids from the passages demonstrated dedication to a cause by making big movements that would hopefully make a change.

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Idea Development—Score Point 1

The central idea of the response is not developed. The response contains brief statements about how Roy in *Hoot* and the girls in *Strange Birds* demonstrate dedication to a cause, but these statements are not supported or developed. Evidence from the passages is insufficient: “In *Strange Birds*, they need to work together to stop the Floras from wearing hats that contain real peacock feathers.” The ideas are poorly expressed, and the response is minimally organized. There is minimal awareness of the task and mode.

Standard English Conventions—Score Point 1

The response contains relatively few errors but is too brief to demonstrate more than minimal control of standard English conventions.

In the stories *Hoot* and *Strange Birds* demonstrate dedication to a cause. In *Strange Birds*, they need to work together to stop the Floras from wearing hats that contain real peacock feathers. To make this more difficult, they need to find a way to figure this out before the Miss Floras contest starts. In *Hoot* there is a young boy that finds out there is a new construction project for a restaurant that is putting owls in danger. When he is at school, he informs his class so they can find a way to help save the owls.

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Idea Development—Score Point 0

The response is a restatement of the prompt but does not answer the question. The single sentence does not provide specific details or evidence to support an explanation of how Roy in *Hoot* and the girls in *Strange Birds* show dedication to a cause.

Standard English Conventions—Score Point 0

The response is of insufficient length to demonstrate control of standard English conventions.

In both text they were both working hard to demonstarte dedication to a cause.

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