

Grade 8 Sample Items

Task Generation Model: 8A.3 Literary Analysis Task – Effect of Dialogue or Events**Sample Texts for Grade 8: “The Golden Touch” by Nathaniel Hawthorne and “The Story of the Man Who Did not Wish to Die” by Yei Theodora Ozaki**

The Literature Task plays an important role in honing students’ ability to read a text closely, a skill that research reveals as the most significant factor differentiating college-ready from non-college-ready readers. This task will ask students to carefully consider literature worthy of a close study and compose an essay. A complete Literary Analysis Task (LAT) for 8th Grade contains seven items, with six items that are Evidence-Based Selected Response (EBSR) items and one Prose Constructed Response (PCR) item. Students will read a purpose setting statement for the task and then read the first passage. After answering EBSR items, the students will read a second passage and answer additional EBSR items. Finally, the students will respond to the PCR item.

This literary analysis task aligns with standards: RL.8.1, RL.8.2, RL.8.3, RL.8.5, W.8.2, W.8.4, W.8.9, L.8.1, L.8.2, L.8.3, L.8.4

SAMPLE

Today you will read excerpts from two stories about characters who make choices. The first excerpt is from the fairy tale “The Story of the Man Who Did not Wish to Die” by Yei Theodora Ozaki, and the second excerpt is from the story “The Golden Touch” by Nathaniel Hawthorne. As you read these excerpts, you will answer questions and think about how the texts reveal theme and character. After you read, you will write an essay about the excerpts.

Read the excerpt from “The Story of the Man Who Did not Wish to Die” and answer the questions.

1 (Sentaro) had wished to escape from dying. He had come to the land of Perpetual Life with great relief and joy, only to find that the inhabitants themselves, doomed never to die, would consider it bliss to find death.

2 What he had hitherto considered poison these people ate as good food, and all the things to which he had been accustomed as food they rejected. Whenever any merchants from other countries arrived, the rich people rushed to them eager to buy poisons. These they swallowed eagerly, hoping for death to come so that they might go to Paradise.

3 But what were deadly poisons in other lands were without effect in this strange place, and people who swallowed them with the hope of dying, only found that in a short time they felt better in health instead of worse.

4 Vainly they tried to imagine what death could be like. The wealthy would have given all their money and all their goods if they could but shorten their lives to two or three hundred years even. Without any change to live on forever seemed to this people wearisome and sad.

5 In the chemist shops there was a drug which was in constant demand, because after using it for a hundred years, it was supposed to turn the hair slightly gray and to bring about disorders of the stomach.

6 Sentaro was astonished to find that the poisonous globe-fish was served up in restaurants as a delectable dish, and hawkers in the streets went about selling sauces made of Spanish flies. He never saw any one ill after eating these horrible things, nor did he ever see any one with as much as a cold.

7 Sentaro was delighted. He said to himself that he would never grow tired of living, and that he considered it profane to wish for death. He was the only happy man on the island. For his part he wished to live thousands of years and to enjoy life. He set himself up in business, and for the present never even dreamed of going back to his native land.

8 As years went by, however, things did not go as smoothly as at first. He had heavy losses in business, and several times some affairs went wrong with his neighbors. This caused him great annoyance.

9 Time passed like the flight of an arrow for him, for he was busy from morning till night. Three hundred years went by in this monotonous way, and then at last he began to grow tired of life in this country, and he longed to see his own land and his old home. However long he lived here, life would always be the same, so was it not foolish and wearisome to stay on here forever?



SAMPLE

10 Sentaro, in his wish to escape from the country of Perpetual Life, recollected Jofuku, who
had helped him before when he was wishing to escape from death—and he prayed to the saint
to bring him back to his own land again.

11 No sooner did he pray than the paper crane popped out of his pocket. Sentaro was amazed
to see that it had remained undamaged after all these years. Once more the bird grew and grew
till it was large enough for him to mount it. As he did so, the bird spread its wings and flew,
swiftly out across the sea in the direction of Japan.

12 Such was the willfulness of the man's nature that he looked back and regretted all he had
left behind. He tried to stop the bird in vain. The crane held on its way for thousands of miles
across the ocean.

13 Then a storm came on, and the wonderful paper crane got damp, crumpled up, and fell into
the sea. Sentaro fell with it. Very much frightened at the thought of being drowned, he cried out
loudly to Jofuku to save him. He looked round, but there was no ship in sight. He swallowed a
quantity of sea-water, which only increased his miserable plight. While he was thus struggling to
keep himself afloat, he saw a monstrous shark swimming towards him. As it came nearer it
opened its huge mouth ready to devour him. Sentaro was all but paralyzed with fear now that he
felt his end so near, and screamed out as loudly as ever he could to Jofuku to come and rescue
him.

14 Lo, and behold, Sentaro was awakened by his own screams, to find that during his long
prayer he had fallen asleep before the shrine, and that all his extraordinary and frightful
adventures had been only a wild dream. He was in a cold perspiration with fright, and utterly
bewildered.

15 Suddenly a bright light came towards him, and in the light stood a messenger. The
messenger held a book in his hand, and spoke to Sentaro:

16 "I am sent to you by Jofuku, who in answer to your prayer, has permitted you in a dream to
see the land of Perpetual Life. But you grew weary of living there, and begged to be allowed to
return to your native land so that you might die. Jofuku, so that he might try you, allowed you to
drop into the sea, and then sent a shark to swallow you up. Your desire for death was not real,
for even at that moment you cried out loudly and shouted for help."

17 "It is also vain for you to wish to become a hermit, or to find the Elixir of Life. These things
are not for such as you—your life is not austere enough. It is best for you to go back to your
paternal home, and to live a good and industrious life. Never neglect to keep the anniversaries
of your ancestors, and make it your duty to provide for your children's future." Thus will you live
to a good old age and be happy, but give up the vain desire to escape death, for no man can do
that, and by this time you have surely found out that even when selfish desires are granted they
do not bring happiness."

18 "In this book I give you there are many precepts good for you to know—if you study them,
you will be guided in the way I have pointed out to you."

19 The angel disappeared as soon as he had finished speaking, and Sentaro took the lesson
to heart. With the book in his hand he returned to his old home, and giving up all his old vain
wishes, tried to live a good and useful life and to observe the lessons taught him in the book,
and he and his house prospered henceforth.

SAMPLE

1. Part A: What is the meaning of the word **plight** as it is used in paragraph 13?

- A. deep concern
- B. dangerous situation
- C. long journey
- D. extreme sadness

Part B: Which phrase from the text **best** helps clarify the meaning of **plight**?

- A. “thus struggling to keep himself afloat”
- B. “awakened by his own screams”
- C. “the wonderful paper crane got damp”
- D. “regretted all he had left behind”

2. Part A: In the excerpt from “The Story of the Man Who Did not Wish to Die,” what does the following line reveal about Sentaro?

“For his part he wished to live thousands of years and enjoy life.”

- A. that he is only concerned about himself
- B. that he does not have a sense of reality
- C. that he is ungrateful for the life that he has
- D. that he is not ready to face death

Part B: Which quotation provides the best evidence for Part A?

- A. “. . .and then at last he began to grow tired of life in this country. . .”
- B. “(Sentaro) had wished to escape from dying.”
- C. “. . .he prayed to the saint to bring him back to his own land again.”
- D. “. . .and for the present never even dreamed of going back to his native land.”

SAMPLE

3. Create a summary of the excerpt from “The Story of The Man Who Did Not Wish To Die” by putting four statements from the list in chronological order into the table titled “Summary.” Write the correct letter in the box. Note that not all statements will be used.
- A. Sentaro finds the paper crane in his pocket after many years.
 - B. Sentaro thinks he will drown in the sea or be swallowed by a shark.
 - C. Sentaro wakes up from his prayer only to realize he has been dreaming and changes his life.
 - D. Sentaro is amazed when he learns that a poisonous fish is served as an enjoyable meal at restaurants.
 - E. Sentaro prays to Jofuku to take him back to his country.
 - F. Sentaro grows weary of living on the island for 300 years and wants to go back to his homeland.
 - G. Sentaro thinks that he will live joyfully on the island of Perpetual Life.
 - H. Sentaro sets up a business because he thinks he will never go back to his homeland.
 - I. Sentaro wants to flee death and live a long life, so he goes to the Island of Perpetual Life.

Summary
1.
2.
3.
4.

SAMPLE

Now read the introduction and excerpt from the story "The Golden Touch" by Nathaniel Hawthorne. Then answer the questions.

Introduction

In this story, King Midas spends much of his time gazing at his treasures in his palace basement. One day, a stranger who seems to possess supernatural powers appears in Midas' treasure room.

"The Golden Touch"

1 And, truly, my dear little folks, did you ever hear of such a pitiable case in all your lives? Here was literally the richest breakfast that could be set before a king, and its very richness made it absolutely good for nothing. The poorest labourer, sitting down to his crust of bread and cup of water, was far better off than King Midas, whose delicate food was really worth its weight in gold. And what was to be done? Already, at breakfast, Midas was excessively hungry. Would he be less so by dinner-time? And how ravenous would be his appetite for supper, which must undoubtedly consist of the same sort of indigestible dishes as those now before him! How many days, think you, would he survive a continuance of this rich fare?

2 These reflections so troubled wise King Midas that he began to doubt whether, after all, riches are the one desirable thing in the world, or even the most desirable. But this was only a passing thought. So fascinated was Midas with the glitter of the yellow metal that he would still have refused to give up the Golden Touch for so paltry a consideration as a breakfast. Just imagine what a price for one meal's victuals! It would have been the same as paying millions and millions of money (and as many millions more as would take forever to reckon up) for some fried trout, an egg, a potato, a hot cake, and a cup of coffee!

3 "It would be quite too dear," thought Midas.

4 Nevertheless, so great was his hunger, and the perplexity of his situation, that he again groaned aloud, and very grievously too. Our pretty Marygold could endure it no longer. She sat, a moment, gazing at her father, and trying, with all the might of her little wits, to find out what was the matter with him. Then, with a sweet and sorrowful impulse to comfort him, she started from her chair, and, running to Midas, threw her arms affectionately about his knees. He bent down and kissed her. He felt that his little daughter's love was worth a thousand times more than he had gained by the Golden Touch.

5 "My precious, precious Marygold!" cried he. But Marygold made no answer.

6 Alas, what had he done? How fatal was the gift which the stranger bestowed! The moment the lips of Midas touched Marygold's forehead, a change had taken place. Her sweet, rosy face, so full of affection as it had been, assumed a glittering yellow colour, with yellow tear-drops congealing on her cheeks. Her beautiful brown ringlets took the same tint. Her soft and tender little form grew hard and inflexible within her father's encircling arms. Oh, terrible misfortune! The victim of his insatiable desire for wealth, little Marygold was a human child no longer, but a golden statue!

SAMPLE

4. Part A: In paragraph 1 of the excerpt from “The Golden Touch,” Midas is described as **ravenous**. What is the meaning of **ravenous** as it is used in this paragraph?

- A. desperate
- B. satisfied
- C. anxious
- D. starving

Part B: Which phrase from the text **best** helps clarify the meaning of **ravenous**?

- A. “how many days”
- B. “weight in gold”
- C. “appetite for supper”
- D. “what was to be done”

5. Part A: Which statement correctly shows a difference between the structures of the excerpts from “The Story of the Man Who Did not Wish to Die” and “The Golden Touch?”

- A. “The Story of the Man Who Did not Wish to Die” begins with the most important event, while “The Golden Touch” ends with the most important event.
- B. “The Story of the Man Who Did not Wish to Die” ends with a character’s internal conflict, while “The Golden Touch” begins with a character’s internal conflict.
- C. “The Story of the Man Who Did not Wish to Die” ends with a lesson learned, while “The Golden Touch” ends with a tragedy.
- D. “The Story of the Man Who Did not Wish to Die” begins with the main character’s loss, while “The Golden Touch” begins with the main character’s gain.

Part B: Select **one** detail from the list below from “The Story of the Man Who Did not Wish to Die” and **one** detail “The Golden Touch” that **best** support the answer in part A.

- A. “He had come to the land of Perpetual Life with great relief and joy. . . .” (“The Story of the Man Who Did not Wish to Die,” paragraph 1)
- B. “. . . and all the things to which he had been accustomed as food they rejected.” (“The Story of the Man Who Did not Wish to Die,” paragraph 2)
- C. “. . . and giving up all his old vain wishes, tried to live a good and useful life. . . .” (“The Story of the Man Who Did not Wish to Die,” paragraph 19)
- D. “These reflections so troubled wise King Midas that he began to doubt. . . .” (“The Golden Touch,” paragraph 2)
- E. “Her soft and tender little form grew hard and inflexible...” (“The Golden Touch,” paragraph 6)
- F. “Here was literally the richest breakfast that could be set before a king. . . .” (“The Golden Touch,” paragraph 1)

SAMPLE

6. Part A: Which statement **best** reflects a theme of the excerpt from “The Golden Touch?”

- A. Wealth triggers unhappiness and dissatisfaction.
- B. Greed leads to personal destruction and loss.
- C. What is valuable is not appreciated until it is gone.
- D. A selfish choice increases the chance of a dismal outcome.

Part B: Which detail **best** supports the answer in Part A?

- A. “The victim of his insatiable desire for wealth, little Marygold was a human child no longer, but a golden statue!”
- B. “The poorest labourer, sitting down to his crust of bread and cup of water, was far better off than King Midas. . .”
- C. “He felt that his little daughter’s love was worth a thousand times more than he had gained by the Golden Touch.”
- D. “And, truly, my dear little folks, did you ever hear of such a pitiable case in all your lives?”

7. You have read excerpts from two stories that focus on characters who make choices. These excerpts are from:

- “The Golden Touch” by Nathaniel Hawthorne
- “The Story of the Man Who Did not Wish to Die” by Yei Theodora Ozaki

Consider how the main character in each excerpt reacts to the incidents that occur, and write an essay in which you analyze how each character’s thoughts and actions reveal aspects of his personality.

You do not need to compare and contrast the characters from the two texts. You may consider each one separately. Be sure to include evidence from each excerpt to support your analysis and understanding.