

TEXAS ASSESSMENT OF KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS (TAKS)

BLUEPRINT FOR GRADES 3-8 READING

| Selections may be narratives, expository pieces, or mixed pieces, which combine two types of writing. Paired pieces may be used beginning at Grade 4. | Grade 3 | Grade 4 | Grade 5 | Grade 6 | Grade 7 | Grade 8 |
|---|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Objective 1—basic understanding | 15 | 15 | 13 | 13 | 12 | 12 |
| Objective 2—literary elements | 7 | 8 | 8 | 8 | 10 | 10 |
| Objective 3—analysis using reading strategies | 6 | 7 | 8 | 8 | 10 | 10 |
| Objective 4—analysis using critical thinking skills | 8 | 10 | 13 | 13 | 16 | 16 |
| Total number of items | 36 | 40 | 42 | 42 | 48 | 48 |

Curriculum Rationale

Objective 1: Basic Understanding

Objective 1 items assess students' basic, or literal, understanding of written texts. For young readers at Grades 3 and 4, these items are weighted more heavily than items from the other three objectives because understanding the basic meaning of various types of texts is the focus of much of the instruction at third and fourth grade. Though students' basic understanding of texts continues to be important at the upper grades (5-8), students at these grade levels are also expected to develop their critical-thinking skills. For this reason, the number of Objective 1 items begins to decrease beginning at Grade 5.

Objective 2: Knowledge of Literary Elements

Objective 2 items assess students' knowledge and understanding of literary elements. At all grade levels, there are only two to three TEKS student expectations that are eligible for testing under Objective 2. In addition, Objective 2 may be assessed only when a reading selection is a narrative or contains literary elements. For these reasons, the number of Objective 2 items that can be placed on a single test is limited. At Grades 7 and 8, however, the number of Objective 2 items increases slightly because seventh and eighth grade students become more capable of understanding how literary elements shape a narrative and contribute to its meaning. Students at these grade levels are therefore prepared to answer questions about literary elements that have greater depth and breadth than the questions students are asked in Grades 3-6.

Objective 3: Analysis Using a Variety of Strategies

Objective 3 items assess students' ability to use reading strategies to help them analyze different types of written texts. Although there are a significant number of TEKS student expectations eligible for testing under Objective 3 (except at Grade 3, which has only four student expectations), understanding how to use reading strategies is not an end in itself. Rather, the ultimate goal for all readers is to be able to think critically about what they read. Using specific strategies helps "guide" readers through a text, but strategies alone do not ensure critical thinking. Therefore, across all grade levels (3-8), Objective 3 items are weighted less heavily than Objective 4 items so that more emphasis is placed on Objective 4. This emphasis reflects the importance of critical thinking in reading.

Objective 4: Analysis Using Critical Thinking Skills

Objective 4 items assess students' ability to apply critical-thinking skills to analyze various types of written texts. This is the ultimate goal for all readers: to think critically about what they read. For young readers, though, this is a developing skill, which is the reason Objective 4 is given less weight at Grades 3 and 4 and Objective 1 (basic understanding) is given more weight. As students in Grades 5 and 6 master the ability to read for the basic meaning of a text, they are more capable of using their developing critical-thinking skills to analyze what they read; therefore, equal weight is given to both Objective 4 items and Objective 1 items at these grade levels. As students progress to Grades 7 and 8, their ability to think critically is also expected to progress; therefore, at these grade levels, Objective 4 is weighted more heavily than any other objective.