

Grade 3 Informational Mini-Assessment

“Cactus Jam”

This grade 3 mini-assessment is based on a text about making jam from cactus fruit. This text is considered worthy of students’ time to read and also meets the expectations for text complexity at grade 3. Assessments aligned to the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) will employ quality, complex texts such as this one.

Questions aligned to the CCSS should be worthy of students’ time to answer and therefore do not focus on minor points of the texts. Questions also may address several standards within the same question because complex texts tend to yield rich assessment questions that call for deep analysis. In this mini-assessment there are selected-response questions that address the Reading Standards listed below and one constructed-response question that addresses the Writing Standards. There are also items that replicate how technology may be used on assessments, but in paper and pencil format.

We encourage educators to give students the time that they need to read closely, answer the questions, and write to the source. Although we know that it is helpful to have students complete the mini-assessment in one class period, we encourage educators to allow additional time as necessary.

The questions align to the following standards:

RI.3.1	Ask and answer questions to demonstrate understanding of a text, referring explicitly to the text as the basis for the answers.
RI.3.2	Determine the main idea of a text; recount the key details and explain how they support the main idea.
RI.3.3	Describe the relationship between a series of historical events, scientific ideas or concepts, or steps in technical procedures in a text, using language that pertains to time, sequence, and cause/effect.
RI.3.4	Determine the meaning of general academic and domain-specific words and phrases in a text relevant to a grade 3 topic or subject area.
RI.3.7	Use information gained from illustrations (e.g., maps, photographs) and the words in a text to demonstrate understanding of the text (e.g., where, when, why, and how key events occur).
RI.3.8	Describe the logical connection between particular sentences and paragraphs in a text (e.g., comparison, cause/effect, first/second/third in a sequence).
W.3.3	Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, descriptive details, and clear event sequences.

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The assessment questions in this document align with the CCSS and reflect the instructional shifts implied by the standards. To learn more about these topics, please go to the following link:

www.achievethecore.org

Grade 3 Mini-Assessment – “Cactus Jam”

Today you will read a passage about the Tohono O’odham Indians making jam from cactus fruit. You will then answer several questions based on the passage. I will be happy to answer questions about the directions, but I will not help you with the answers to any questions. You will notice as you answer the questions that some of the questions have two parts. You should answer Part A of the question before you answer Part B.

Take as long as you need to read and answer the questions. If you do not finish when class ends, come see me to discuss the ways you may have additional time.

Now read the passage and answer the questions. I encourage you to write notes in the margin as you read.

Cactus Jam

by Ruth J. Luhrs

- 1 Once a year, the Tohono O’odham Indians make jam from cactus fruit. The Tohono O’odham live in the Arizona desert, where the giant saguaro cactus grows.
- 2 In July, when the fruit is ripe, it splits open to show its bright red insides. Everyone gets ready to help make the jam.
- 3 Young women use long poles to knock the fruit down. A saguaro can be up to sixty feet tall, and its fruit grows at the top of the cactus and at the ends of its big arms.
- 4 Children try to catch the fruit in baskets as it falls. Plop, plop! The juicy red fruit is the same size and shape as a hen’s egg. It is full of tiny black seeds.
- 5 While the young women and children gather the fruit, the men make a camp. They build a shelter to protect everyone from the hot sun. Then they gather wood and light the fires.
- 6 The children bring their baskets of fruit to the shelter. There, the older women scrape the fruit out of its peel and put it into big cooking pots. They cook it over the fire for a long time. Then they pour the juice through a wire strainer to take out the seeds.



Young women knock the fruit off the cactus.



The saguaro fruit is the size of a hen egg.

- 7 Now, the juice must be cooked some more. When it is thick and sweet, the women pour it into clay jars to cool.
- 8 Finally the jam is ready, and it's time to feast. The people dance and sing. Children spread the cactus jam on bread and eat all they can hold.

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QUESTIONS

1. What is the difference between what young women do to make jam and what older women do to make jam?

- A. Young women help gather the cactus fruit; older women cook the fruit.
- B. Young women climb the cactus for the fruit; older women catch it below.
- C. Young women help gather wood for the fires; older women build the fires.
- D. Young women cook the fruit; older women spread it on bread to eat.

2. The passage shows that the process of making jam requires different tools. Each tool has a special purpose in the process. Next to the name of each tool below, in the column labeled “Purpose,” write the correct purpose from the “List of Possible Purposes.” Each tool should have only one purpose, and not all possible purposes will be used.

Tool	Purpose
Pole	
Basket	
Scraper	
Cooking pot	
Wire strainer	
Clay pot	

List of Possible Purposes
Takes the peel off
Protects from the sun
Stores the jam
Takes out seeds
Catches the fruit
Knocks the fruit down
Holds the fruit as it heats over the fire
Stirs the fruit

3. This question has two parts. First answer Part A and then answer Part B.

Part A: Why do the young women use poles that are long?

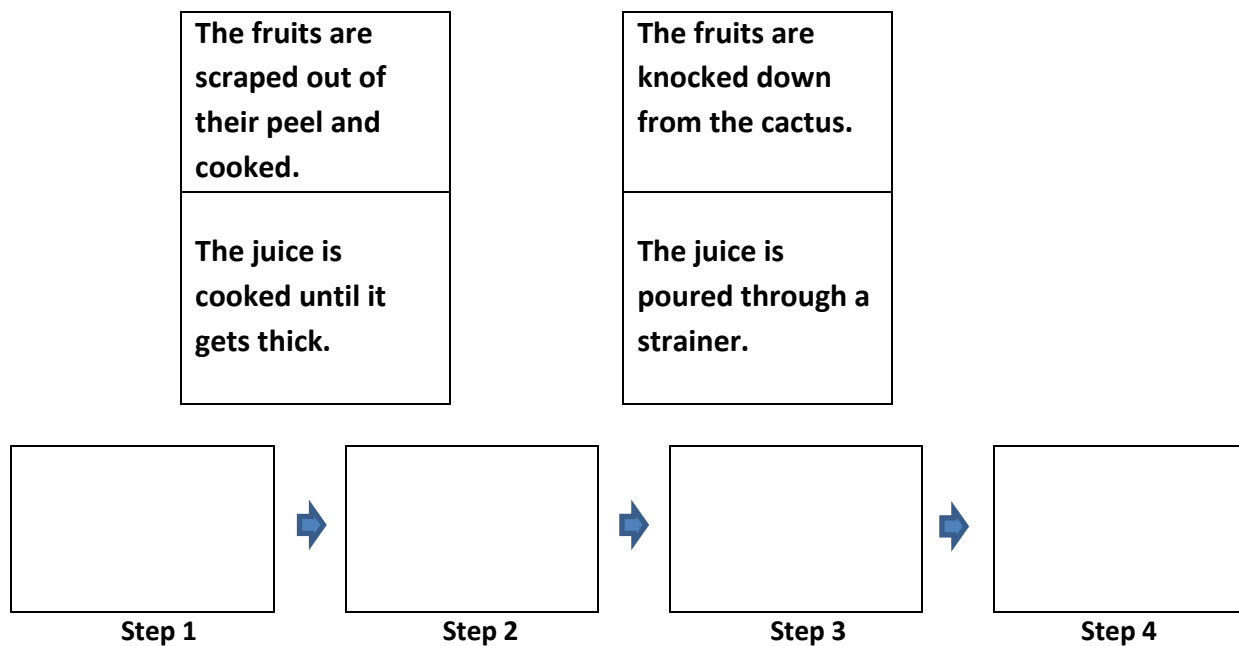
- A. to avoid getting too near the tall cactus plants
- B. to be able to reach the fruit high in the air
- C. to keep the children safe as they receive the fruit
- D. to stay out of the way of the fruit when it drops down

Part B: Which sentence from the passage tells the best reason for the correct answer in Part A?

- A. "The Tohono O'odham live in the Arizona desert, where the giant saguaro cactus grows."
- B. "Everyone gets ready to help make the jam."
- C. "A saguaro can be up to sixty feet tall, and its fruit grows at the top of the cactus and at the ends of its big arms."
- D. "Children try to catch the fruit in baskets as it falls."

4. The following question has two parts. Answer Part A and then answer Part B.

Part A: What are the steps for making jam? Write each step in the correct box to show the order of the steps for making jam.



Part B: What has to happen before Step 1 can start?

- A. The children have to take their baskets of fruit to the shelter.
- B. The fruit has to ripen and split open.
- C. The women have to take the seeds out of the fruit.
- D. The men have to build the fires for cooking.

5. What does the photograph of a saguaro fruit help the reader understand about making jam?
- A. The photograph shows that jam made from these fruits will be naturally sweet in flavor.
 - B. The photograph shows that the size of the fruits makes gathering them fun to do.
 - C. The photograph shows that gathering fruits is difficult because the fruits are stuck tightly to the plant.
 - D. The photograph shows that the fruits must be peeled because they have cactus spines on them.

6. The following question has two parts. Answer Part A and then answer Part B.

Part A: What is one of the main ideas in the passage?

- A. Groups of Tohono O’odham make jam by doing different jobs and working together.
- B. The Tohono O’odham make food from different plants they find in the desert.
- C. Groups of Tohono O’odham enjoy working outside in the summer.
- D. The Tohono O’odham enjoy having a special sweet treat at the end of a busy day.

Part B: Which three details from the passage best support the main idea in Part A?

- A. The Tohono O’odham live in the Arizona desert.
- B. The saguaro fruit grows at the top of the cactus and at the ends of its arms.
- C. The young women and children gather the fruit from the cactus plants.
- D. The men make a shelter and build fires for cooking.
- E. The older women scrape the fruit out of its peel, cook it, and strain it.
- F. The more it cooks, the thicker and sweeter the jam gets.
- G. When the jam is ready, children spread it on bread and eat all they can.

- 7. (Optional) Pretend that you are a member of the Tohono O’odham and live in the Arizona desert. Write a story about the day you helped make jam from the fruits of the saguaro. Start your story when you woke up in the morning and finish your story when you went to bed at night. Use information from the passage in your story, but you may make up details also. Use the lines on the next page to write your story.**

Your writing will be scored on how well you:

- **show that you understood the ideas in the passage.**
- **use ideas from the passage as part of your own story.**
- **use words and sentences to create images for the reader.**
- **use periods, capital letters, and correct grammar.**

Information for Teachers: Quantitative and Qualitative Analyses of the Text

Regular practice with complex texts is necessary to prepare students for college and career readiness, as outlined in Reading Standard 10. The text for this mini-assessment has been placed at grade 3, and the process used to determine the grade level placement is described below. “Appendix A to the Common Core” and the Supplement to Appendix A, “New Research on Text Complexity,” lay out a research-based process for selecting complex texts:

1. Place a text or excerpt within a **grade band** based on at least one¹ quantitative measure according to the research-based conversion table provided in the Supplement to Appendix A: “New Research on Text Complexity” (www.corestandards.org/resources).
2. Place a text at a **grade level** based on a qualitative analysis.

Quantitative Analysis

“Cactus Jam”	Quantitative Measure #1	Quantitative Measure #2
	Flesch-Kincaid: 3.3	Reading Maturity: 4.02

After gathering the quantitative measures, the next step is to place the quantitative scores in the Conversion Table found in the Supplement to Appendix A (www.corestandards.org/resources) and determine the **grade band** of the text.

Figure 1 reproduces the conversion table from the Supplement to Appendix A, showing how the initial results from the Flesch-Kincaid and Reading Maturity measures were converted to grade bands.

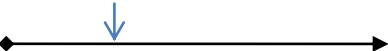

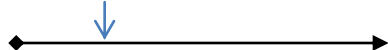


Figure 1: Updated Text Complexity Grade Bands and Associated Ranges from Multiple Measures⁷

Common Core Band	ATOS	Degrees of Reading Power®	Flesch-Kincaid ¹	The Lexile Framework®	Reading Maturity	SourceRater
2 nd – 3 rd	2.75 – 5.14	42 – 54	1.98 – 5.34	420 – 820	3.53 – 6.13	0.05 – 2.48
4 th – 5 th	4.97 – 7.03	52 – 60	4.51 – 7.73	740 – 1010	5.42 – 7.92	0.84 – 5.75
6 th – 8 th	7.00 – 9.98	57 – 67	6.51 – 10.34	925 – 1185	7.04 – 9.57	4.11 – 10.66
9 th – 10 th	9.67 – 12.01	62 – 72	8.32 – 12.12	1050 – 1335	8.41 – 10.81	9.02 – 13.93
11 th – CCR	11.20 – 14.10	67 – 74	10.34 – 14.2	1185 – 1385	9.57 – 12.00	12.30 – 14.50

Quantitative data shows that placement in grade 2 or 3 would be appropriate. To find the **grade level** of the text within the designated grade band, engage in a systematic analysis of the characteristics of the text. The characteristics that should be analyzed during a qualitative analysis can be found in Appendix A of the CCSS. (www.corestandards.org)

¹ For higher stakes tests, it is recommended that two corresponding text complexity measures be used to place a text in a grade band. When two measures are used, both placing the text in the same **band**, the results provide additional assurance that the text selected is appropriate for the band.

Qualitative Analysis of “Cactus Jam”

Category	Notes and comments on text, support for placement in this band	Where to place within the band?				
		Too low	Early to mid-2	Mid 2 to low 3	Mid to high 3	NOT suited to band
Structure: (both story structure or form of piece)	The structure of this text is chronological and therefore should be readily accessible to young readers.					
Language Clarity and Conventions (including vocabulary load)	Simple sentence structures are used throughout and there are many temporal words to help students understand the sequence of events. However, there are several academic and domain-specific vocabulary words that increase the complexity of this text.					
Knowledge Demands (life, content, cultural/literary)	Knowledge demands are low, as even if students don't know what jam is, it is described as something sweet to put on bread. The Indians and the cactus are sufficiently described so little prior knowledge is needed.					
Levels of Meaning (chiefly literary)/ Purpose (chiefly informational)	There is an explicit message and purpose and strong use of evidence, including steps in a process, cause and effect, and illustrations to aid understanding. However, there is also an implicit purpose, to show how a group that takes different roles and works together can achieve a common purpose.					
Overall placement: Grade 3	Justification Even though the structure is readily accessible and the knowledge demands are low, there is sufficient complexity in the vocabulary and the concepts in the process to make this text appropriate for the early part of grade 3.					

Question Annotations and Correct Answer and Distractor Rationales

Question Number	Correct Answer(s)		Standards	Rationales for Answer Options
1	A		RI.3.3, RI.3.1	<p>A. This is the correct answer. The response requires students to synthesize the information in paragraphs 3 and 6 to determine the different roles of the two groups.</p> <p>B. Although the passage indicates that there are people who try to catch the fruit, the children take this role, not the older women. The passage does not mention climbing the cactus.</p> <p>C. Although there are groups of people who gather wood and build the fires, these are not the young women or the older women.</p> <p>D. Although the role of cooking is described in the passage, the passage makes it clear that the older women do the cooking and everyone spreads the jam on bread.</p>
2	Tool	Purpose	RI.3.8, RI.3.4, RI.3.1	The purpose of each tool is stated in the text. One unused purpose, “Protects from the sun,” refers to the shelter built by the men. The other, “Stirs the fruit,” is not named in the passage.
	Pole	Knocks the fruit down		
	Basket	Catches the fruit		
	Scraper	Takes the peel off		
	Cooking pot	Holds the fruit as it heats over the fire		
	Wire strainer	Takes out seeds		
	Clay pot	Stores the jam		

3 Part A	B	RI.3.8, RI.3.1	<p>A. Although the photographs show spines on the cactus, the text does not mention that people avoid getting too close to the plants.</p> <p>B. This is the correct answer. The text and the first photograph indicate that the poles have to be long because the cactus grows high in the air.</p> <p>C. Although the text mentions that children try to catch the fruit as it falls, maintaining the safety of the children is not the purpose of the long poles.</p> <p>D. Although the young women need the long poles to make the fruit fall down, the purpose of the long poles is not to keep the young women at a safe distance from the falling fruit.</p>
3 Part B	C		<p>A. Although this quotation refers to the cactus plant as “giant,” this reference is not the best explanation for the use of long poles instead of short ones.</p> <p>B. Although this quotation implies that everyone in the group has a role to play in making the jam, this reference does not explain the use of long poles instead of short ones.</p> <p>C. This is the correct answer. The poles have to be long to reach high in the air because the saguaro cactus grows extremely tall and bears fruit at the top of the plant. Although catching the falling fruit is related to the long poles, it does not explain why the poles have to be long instead of short.</p>
4 Part A	<p>Step 1: The fruits are knocked down from the cactus.</p> <p>Step 2: The fruits are scraped out of their peels and cooked.</p> <p>Step 3: The juice is poured through a strainer.</p> <p>Step 4: The juice is cooked until it gets thick.</p>	RI.3.3, RI.3.1	<p>The order of the steps is delineated in the text; the first step is to get the fruits separated from the cactus; the second step is to peel the fruits and start cooking them; the third step is to remove the seeds from the partially cooked juice; and the final step is to cook the juice until it turns to jam.</p>

4 Part B	B		<p>A. Although the delivery of the baskets of fruit is an early part of the process, it is not the earliest requirement for the process to start. If the fruit is not ripe, the jam cannot be made.</p> <p>B. This is the correct answer. Unless the fruit ripens sufficiently, the process of making jam will not begin.</p> <p>C. Although taking the seeds out of the fruit is an important part of the process, it is not the earliest requirement for the process to start.</p> <p>D. Although the cooking fires are essential to the process of making jam, they are not the earliest requirement; the ripening of the fruit triggers the entire process.</p>
5	D	RI.3.7, RI.3.1	<p>A. Although the passage mentions that the jam is sweet, the photograph cannot show the sweetness of the cooked fruit.</p> <p>B. Although the caption of the photograph states that the fruits are about the size of a hen's egg, the photograph does not indicate whether or not gathering the fruit is an enjoyable chore.</p> <p>C. Although the photograph shows a fruit that is still attached to the cactus plant, the photograph cannot indicate whether or not detaching the fruit is difficult.</p> <p>D. This is the correct answer. The passage mentions that the fruit has to be scraped out of its peel, and the photograph shows that one reason for the scraping is that there are spines on the fruit.</p>
6 Part A	A	RI.3.2, RI.3.1	<p>A. This is the correct answer. The passage illustrates a group of people working together with clearly defined roles to reach a common goal.</p> <p>B. Although the Tohono O'odham make jam from a desert plant, the passage does not focus on different foods or different desert plants.</p> <p>C. Although the passage illustrates the Tohono O'odham working outside to make jam, this concept is not the central idea of the passage.</p> <p>D. Although the passage ends with the Tohono O'odham celebrating by eating jam at the end of the day, that idea is not the central focus of the text.</p>

6 Part B	C, D, E		<p>A. Although this fact is taken from the text, it does not support the central idea that the members of the group make jam by taking different roles and working together.</p> <p>B. Although the location of the fruit on the cactus plant is accurately indicated in this statement, it does not support the central idea that the members of the group make jam by working together in different roles.</p> <p>C. This is a correct answer. The fact that the young women and children together obtain the fruits for the jam supports the idea that the members of the group take different roles but work together for a common goal.</p> <p>D. This is a correct answer. The men’s roles making a shelter and building fires supports the idea that each group plays a role in working together for a common goal.</p> <p>E. This is a correct answer. This fact from the passage also shows a specific group with its own role, working with the other groups to achieve a goal that benefits the entire group.</p> <p>F. Although it is accurate that the jam becomes thicker and sweeter as it cooks, this fact does not support the central idea of the texts, that the various groups work together for a common goal.</p> <p>G. Although the text states that the children spread the jam on bread and eat all they can, this fact does not support the central idea of group members taking different roles to accomplish the goal of making jam.</p>
7	See bullets to the right for possible ideas that could be included in a top-score response.	W.3.3	<p>A good student response will include the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • one or more fictional characters, and/or a narrator, who are in the situation of making jam from cactus fruits as described in the text • an event sequence that reflects the events described in the text and adheres to the roles of different groups as indicated in the text • dialogue and descriptions of actions, thoughts, and feelings to develop experiences based on information in the text • temporal words and phrases that signal event order • a sense of closure

Additional resources for assessment and CCSS implementation

Shift 1 – Complexity: *Regular practice with complex text and its academic language*

- See Appendix B for examples of informational and literary complex texts
http://www.corestandards.org/assets/Appendix_B.pdf
- See the Text Complexity Collection on www.achievethecore.org

Shift 2 – Evidence: *Reading, writing, and speaking grounded in evidence from text, both literary and informational*

- See Close Reading Exemplars for ways to engage students in close reading on
<http://www.achievethecore.org/steal-these-tools/close-reading-exemplars>
- See the Basal Alignment Project for examples of text-dependent questions
<http://www.achievethecore.org/basal-alignment-project>

Shift 3 – Knowledge: *Building knowledge through content-rich nonfiction*

- See Appendix B for examples of informational and literary complex texts
http://www.corestandards.org/assets/Appendix_B.pdf