

ELA/Literacy Item Development Checklist

In general, items will:

- align to the heart of more than one K-12 Academic Standard
- include language from the ELP and K-12 standards when possible
- require complex, analytical thinking and close reading rather than surface reading and understanding
- include precise and accurate claims, inferences and generalizations
- focus on important aspects of the text and be worth answering
- provide evidence to support the claims
- avoid bias
- convey a clearly defined task in concise and direct language
- use a variety of approaches
- pose the central idea in the stem rather than in the answer choices
- provide specific directions
- require no background knowledge
- not be answerable by reading other items in set

- elicit evidence(s) aligned with at least one reading standard

EBSR items will:

- measure Reading Standard 1 and at least one other standard
- have multiple parts
- include four answer choices for one correct response, six answer choices for two correct responses, and seven answer choices for three correct responses
- allow students to earn partial credit, where possible
- avoid “not” and qualifiers (e.g. best, most)
- place answer choices that are quotations or paraphrased textual evidence in the order they appear in the passage
- include answer choices that are accurate/relevant/from the passage
- include plausible distractors
- have a clear and logical relationship evident between Parts A and B (and C if applicable)
- include distractors in Part B that are plausibly linked to one or more distractors in Part A (not a one-to-one match, but at least a slight connection)

Vocabulary items will:

- target Tier 2 academic vocabulary (words that are used widely across academic subjects and are important for students to know)
- have distractors in the same part of speech as assessed word (when individual words are assessed)
- have syntactically plausible distractors

Water Means Life

Have you ever been to the desert? The desert is a dry, harsh world where it is hard to find water. However, there is water in the desert, and it is an important part of life in this amazing place.

The Sonoran Desert is located in two U.S. states—Arizona and California—and part of Mexico. This desert receives an average of less than ten inches of rain a year, but the western part of the desert receives only two inches of rain annually! During the winter, water also arrives in the form of snow, which falls in the high mountains. In the spring, the snow melts, sending water rushing to the desert below.

If enough rain and snow fall in the autumn and winter, flowers will bloom in the spring. Spring rains bring summer flowers. These flowers include colorful poppies, lupines, and owl clover. In years with heavy rains, more flowers will carpet the earth. Less rainfall means that fewer flowers will grow the following year.

About 2,500 different plant types make their home in the Sonoran Desert. The most common is the cactus. To survive in the desert, cacti must make the most of the little water available. Cacti have long, shallow roots that can find the tiniest bit of water in the ground. These roots suck up the rainwater that soaks into the earth. The plants store the water in their thick stems; a large cactus can store up to 43 gallons of water. Storing water allows the plants to live for

weeks after a rainfall. The most common cacti in the Sonoran Desert are the giant saguaro cactus and the smaller teddy bear cholla, chain fruit cholla, and barrel cactus.

A tree called the ocotillo can also be found in the Sonoran Desert. It has adapted to the dry, hot climate in a special way. After every rainfall, the tree grows new leaves, which die and fall off when the climate becomes dry. This means the ocotillo does not have to send water into its leaves. Instead, it can store water in its roots and trunks. This trick helps the tree survive. Other desert trees include the desert ironwood, the mesquite, and the palo verde.

Just as plants depend on water to survive, so do animals depend on plants. Many desert animals use plants for food and shelter. Birds nest in the trunk of a cactus or in the branches of a tree. Mice and other small mammals dig underground homes called burrows in the roots of trees. Trees provide shade where reptiles, such as lizards, and mammals, such as desert foxes, can cool off. Some animals also eat tree leaves. The water in these plants helps the animals survive.

Nothing on earth can live without water. In the desert, just as in any other habitat, plants and animals need water to survive. For all living creatures, water means life.