

Grade 4 / Case Study 1

→ ELA * SMARTER BALANCED PERFORMANCE TASK

Research Question 1 ITEM #2664

Source #1 discusses what some animals do to survive in their environment. Explain how the information in Source #2 adds to the reader's understanding of what some animals do to survive in their environment. Give **two** details from Source #2 to support your explanation.

Student Response ITEM #2664

Source #1

"Living cratures survive in all types of enverments. Some animals have bodies that help them live in the cold. Penguins have thick layers of fat or blubber to help them stay warm, but sometimes even that is not enough." That is what it states in source 1.

Source #2

"In addition to making living places, people & animals both build structures: bridges, dams, traps, & storage areas. These structures help people & animals survive." That is what it states in souse 2.

Analysis ITEM #2664

This response receives a score of 0 out of a possible 2 points. The student cites one piece of evidence from Source #2, but fails to provide an explanation about how this quotation serves as evidence of what some animals do to survive. The quotation selected is not a strong piece of evidence because it focuses on the similarities between people and animal survival needs. While the student cites Source #1, this information is irrelevant to the constructed response question.

The student might need support in understanding the instructions in the prompt, determining the best evidence to support the main idea, and providing explanation for specific evidence. This student demonstrates an understanding of how to cite sources but could use some support and practice in this area.

<p>Research Question 2 ITEM #2665</p>	<p>Which source would most likely be the most helpful in understanding how plants and animals work and live together to allow the place where they live to continue to grow? Explain why this source is most likely the most helpful. Use two details from the source to support your explanation.</p>
<p>Student Response ITEM #2665</p>	<p>Source 3 would be the most helpful because it states, "The plants and animals in an ecosystem need each other to survive. It is important that there is a balance among all things in an ecosystem. A small change in any part of an ecosystem can have a big effect." That helps me understand the plants and animal thing.</p>
<p>Analysis ITEM #2665</p>	<p>Although the student correctly identifies Source #3 as the most helpful source and provides a relevant detail from that source, this response receives a score of 0 out of a possible 2 points because the student does not provide an appropriate explanation and only includes one detail from the sources.</p> <p>As in the previous question, the student may need support in understanding the specific prompt, selecting evidence and providing an explanation for the evidence.</p>

Research Question 3
ITEM #2666

Click on the boxes to match each source with the idea or ideas that it supports. Some ideas may have more than one source selected.

Student Response
ITEM #2666

KEY
X = student response
✓ = correct response

	SOURCE #1 It's a Cold (Hot, Dry, Dark) Cruel World!	SOURCE #2 Animal Architects	SOURCE #3 Don't Step in that Ecosystem!
Some animals have developed special body features that help them survive in the place where they live.	X ✓		
Animals and plants living together is important for their survival.	X		X ✓
Animals create environments where they are protected from the weather and kept safe and comfortable.		✓	X

Analysis
ITEM #2666

The score for the matching table response is 0 out of 1 possible point. The student fails to correctly match all three sources with their corresponding main ideas.

The research questions are intended to provide scaffolding for the full write, and the students' performance on this item may indicate reading comprehension challenges with these texts. Additionally, incorrect matching could indicate that the student had a cursory understanding of the table and keyed on specific words like "animals" and "environments" instead of the overall main ideas in the texts.

Full Write * ITEM #2667

Full Write –
Student
Response

ITEM #2667

Where Animals Live

Animals live where they do to survive. Some animals live in their own climate & habitat to survive. In source 1, it states, “In the hot Sonoran Desert of Arizona, an owl lives in a nest that sits on a tall cactus. The cactus stems store water. Rain doesn’t fall often in the Sonoran Desert, but when it does, it falls quickly and heavily. Then the water quickly flows away. The cactus has roots that spread out only in. Below the surface of the soil. The roots are like a big sponge, soaking up rainwater fast. Now the cactus can store water months & the owl has a nice home high up in the cactus.” Also in source 2, it states, “Termites build 20-foot-high mounds out of dirt and their own saliva. These giant structures are like small apartment buildings. Besides living areas, these towers have food storage areas, nurseries for “baby” termites, a special chamber for the king and queen, and even gardens.” All in all, animals are unique, and need to survive how they need to, like the owl living in a cactus, and the termites, living in their saliva & dirt.

Analysis of
Full Write

ITEM #2667

Evidence and Elaboration: Score 2

This response does provide evidence from the text and cites the sources adequately, but the evidence included is weakly integrated and not aligned to the main idea of the text. The response provides minimal elaboration and while the vocabulary and style are generally appropriate, they are both limited by the minimal amount of original composition in the response.

Organization and Purpose: Score 1

The response begins with an ambiguous controlling idea, “animals live where they do to survive,” but the main idea in the response drifts, “animals are unique, and need to survey how they need to.” Because the student relies heavily on long passages from the text, the original writing is too brief to fully develop the main idea. While the student attempts some transitional strategies, for example “all in all,” they are limited and do not clarify relationships between ideas. The conclusion is weak and not directly aligned to the initial main idea.

Conventions: Score 2

The student incorporates adequate use of sentence formation and the response is largely free of errors. Sentences are complete and syntax is correct and appropriate for this grade level.

Overview of Student's Performance

Just as in the constructed response items, the student clearly demonstrates the ability to cite multiple sources appropriately, but continues to use quotes that aren't necessarily the most relevant evidence available from the sources. This suggests that the student had challenges identifying and crafting main ideas. The controlling idea in the full write is vague and not well aligned to the task, audience, and purpose of the piece. With a more focused main idea the student would be better positioned to cite evidence that strongly supports it.

The vocabulary the student used in the full write and constructed responses is generally appropriate, but it's also limited due to the fact that the elaboration is minimal. This student could enhance his or her scores and general writing abilities by improving his or her elaboration skills. The student relies too heavily on quotations to relay the main idea in all writing samples in the performance task. With instruction and practice in locating just-right pieces of evidence that are more focused and brief, this student could improve and lengthen the elaboration he or she started to include in the performance task responses.

The original writing produced by the student is short compared to the total length of the piece, and this contributes to a lower number of conventions errors overall. The student demonstrates fourth grade knowledge of punctuation, capitalization, and spelling. Yet, the sentences in the introduction and conclusion show the writer might benefit from instruction in grammar and sentence structure to improve conventions use and application. Instruction could focus on compound sentences and appositives.

The constructed response items in this performance task are designed to scaffold student thinking for the full write piece. Research Question 1 prompts students to find similarities between articles and requires them to synthesize information they read. The full write prompt likewise demands that students synthesize information from the articles in order to be successful. For Research Question 2, students need to compare articles and clearly understand the differences in the topics they address. The matching table in Research Question 3 further supports comprehension of the different articles by asking students to identify the main ideas in each. This knowledge helps students locate relevant evidence for the article they compose in the full write.

Next Steps

In general, this student demonstrates a need to practice deconstructing assessment questions and prompts as evidenced by the student not following directions completely in Research Question 1 or in Research Question 2. It is possible that misunderstandings of the directions led this student to leave out important, required information. For example, the student should note the number of citations or sources the question demands and the explanation necessary to completely answer the questions and address the prompt.

This student demonstrates a need to practice determining the main idea of texts he or she reads. One way to provide this practice is to help students summarize short articles by creating a "gist list" of phrases that describe the article's content, eliminating and combining them into three or four gist phrases, and crafting a main idea statement from the abbreviated list. The student could also practice matching teacher-created main idea statements to articles read in class. These two activities would provide valuable learning opportunities for the student and informative assessment information for the teacher.

When the student demonstrates improvement in identifying an author's main idea, instruction can proceed to an emphasis on the construction of a focused topic sentence and locating evidence that explicitly links to a main idea. This need emerged in both

constructed responses as well as in the matching table. One way the student could practice writing topic sentences is through peer conferencing. The student could work with a partner to evaluate one another's topic sentences against criteria created by the class. Students could also exchange drafts of informational articles and work to locate evidence that supports their partner's main idea. Writers benefit from analyzing the writing of others and in turn, gain perspective on their own work. The organizational elements of crafting concentrated topic sentences and connecting those sentences to evidence would help this student maintain a stronger focus throughout the full write and lead to greater clarity for the reader.

This student could also benefit from practice elaborating on evidence cited in ways that explain the importance and relevance to the main idea. Examples from mentor texts along with sentence frames are two supports that might accomplish this. In addition, opportunities to craft compound and complex sentences, such as those including appositives, would help advance this student toward proficiency and crafting stronger conclusions and more appropriate style.