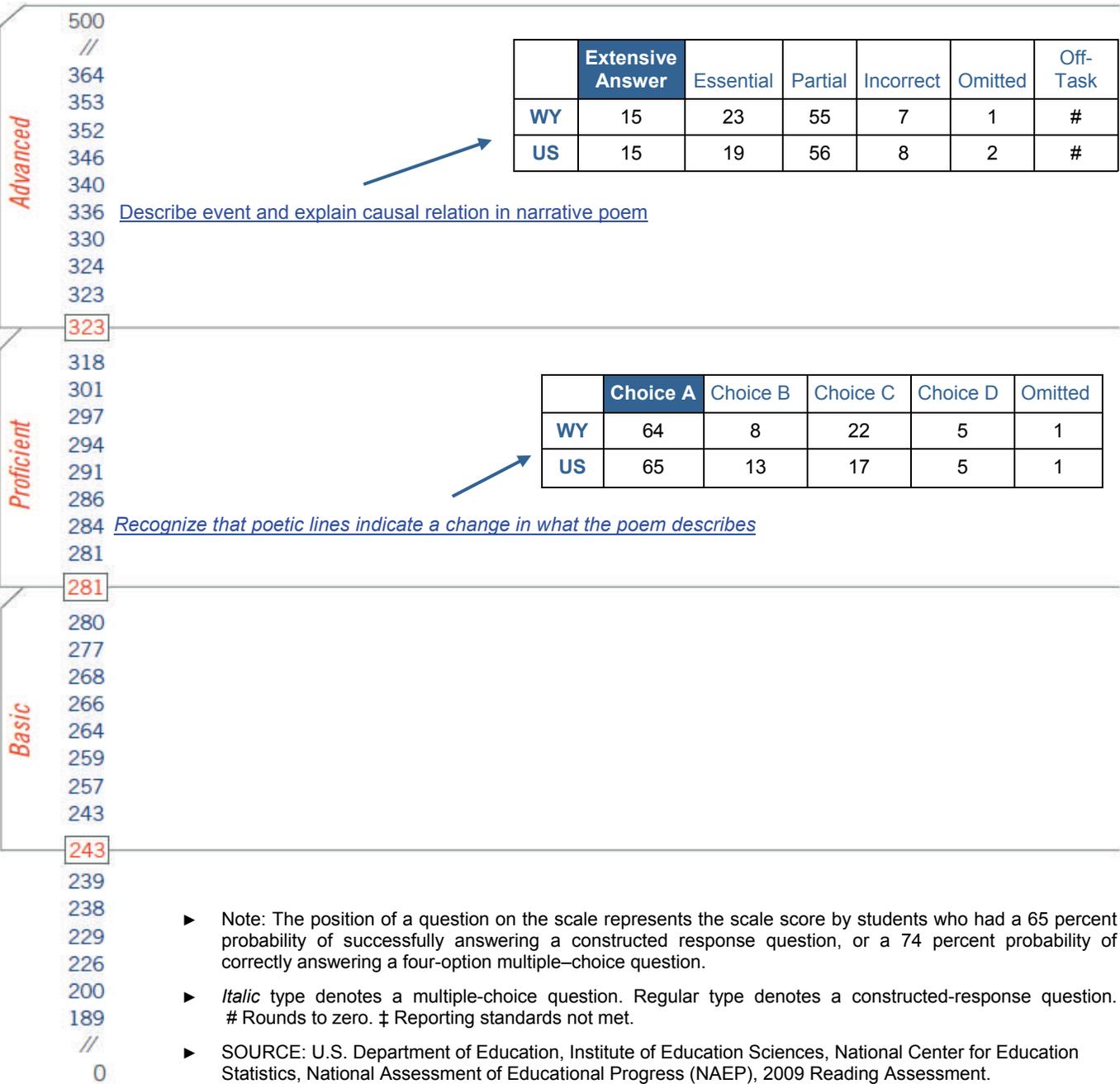


Grade 8 Report

Item Map and Performance Snapshot

The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) uses both multiple choice and constructed-response test items to assess eighth graders' skills in two reading areas: Literary Texts and Informational Texts. Scale scores range from 0 to 500, wherein a 243 denotes NAEP's *Basic* achievement benchmark (i.e., approximately a "grade level" performance); 281 reflects *Proficient* results or competency on challenging material, and 323 is considered to be *Advanced*.

Wyoming and the Nation — Performance on Test Items



Released Test Item Snapshot

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Describe event and explain causal relation in narrative poem

Alligator Poem

by Mary Oliver

I knelt down
at the edge of the water,
and if the white birds standing
in the tops of the trees whistled any warning
I didn't understand,
I drank up to the very moment it came
crashing toward me,
its tail flailing
like a bundle of swords,
slashing the grass,
and the inside of its cradle-shaped mouth
gaping,
and rimmed with teeth—
and that's how I almost died
of foolishness
in beautiful Florida.
But I didn't.
I leaped aside, and fell,
and it streamed past me, crushing everything in its path
as it swept down to the water
and threw itself in,
and, in the end,
this isn't a poem about foolishness
but about how I rose from the ground
and saw the world as if for the second time,
the way it really is.
The water, that circle of shattered glass,
healed itself with a slow whisper
and lay back
with the back-lit light of polished steel,
and the birds, in the endless waterfalls of the trees,
shook open the snowy pleats of their wings, and drifted away
while, for a keepsake, and to steady myself,
I reached out,
I picked the wild flowers from the grass around me—
blue stars
and blood-red trumpets
on long green stems—
for hours in my trembling hands they glittered
like fire.

This test item measures eighth-graders' performance in interpreting a first-person narrative poem.

- ▶ Student responses to this question were rated using four scoring levels—Extensive, Essential, Partial, and Unsatisfactory/Incorrect.
- ▶ Scoring criteria for Extensive, Essential, and Partial responses are shown below.

SAMPLE QUESTION:

Describe what happens to the speaker of the poem and explain what this experience makes the speaker realize.

Extensive response:

The speaker is drinking water from a river, and an alligator came up behind the speaker at full speed, but the speaker jumped out of the way just in time. Then she looked around at the area and realized that although nature can be deadly, it is also beautiful.

Essential response:

The speaker is attacked by an alligator and barely survives, so after that the speaker starts seeing the world in a better way.

Describe event and explain causal relation in narrative poem:
Scoring guide

Extensive	Described both what happens to the speaker in the poem <i>and</i> interpreted what the speaker realizes from the experience.
Essential	Described what happens to the speaker and generalized about what the speaker realizes, or interpreted what the speaker realizes without describing what happen to her.
Partial	Either described something that happens in the poem, or provided text-based generalizations about the speaker.

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SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 2009 Reading Assessment.

Released Test Item Snapshot

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Recognize that poetic lines indicate a change in what the poem describes

Alligator Poem

by Mary Oliver

This test item measures fourth-graders' recognition of how two lines function within the poem to shift the emphasis of the content.

I knelt down
at the edge of the water,
and if the white birds standing
in the tops of the trees whistled any warning
I didn't understand,
I drank up to the very moment it came
crashing toward me,
its tail flailing
like a bundle of swords,
slashing the grass,
and the inside of its cradle-shaped mouth
gaping,
and rimmed with teeth—
and that's how I almost died
of foolishness
in beautiful Florida.
But I didn't.
I leaped aside, and fell,
and it streamed past me, crushing everything in its path
as it swept down to the water
and threw itself in,
and, in the end,
this isn't a poem about foolishness
but about how I rose from the ground
and saw the world as if for the second time,
the way it really is.
The water, that circle of shattered glass,
healed itself with a slow whisper
and lay back
with the back-lit light of polished steel,
and the birds, in the endless waterfalls of the trees,
shook open the snowy pleats of their wings, and drifted away
while, for a keepsake, and to steady myself,
I reached out,
I picked the wild flowers from the grass around me—
blue stars
and blood-red trumpets
on long green stems—
for hours in my trembling hands they glittered
like fire.

SAMPLE QUESTION:

On page 3, the speaker says:

“and, in the end,
this isn't a poem about foolishness”

What is the purpose of these lines in
relation to the rest of the poem?

- A To signal a turning point in the poem
- B To emphasize the speaker's confusion
- C To focus the reader on the first part of the poem
- D To show the speaker was embarrassed

	Choice A	Choice B	Choice C	Choice D	Omitted
WY	64	8	22	5	1
US	65	13	17	5	1

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