Grade 5 Literary Nonfiction Mini-Assessment – "Marco Polo"

This grade 5 mini-assessment is based on two excerpts from previously published books for children on the topic of Marco Polo. These texts are considered to be texts worthy of students' time to read and also meet the expectations for text complexity at grade 5. Assessments aligned to the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) will employ texts such as these.

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 test items that call for deep analysis. In this Mini-Assessment there are seven questions that address the Reading Standards below, and one constructed-response question that addresses Reading, Writing, and Language standards. We encourage educators to give students the time that they need to read closely and write to sources. While 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.5.1	Quote accurately from a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text.
RI.5.2	Determine two or more main ideas of a text and explain how they are supported by key details; summarize the text.
RI.5.3	Explain the relationships or interactions between two or more individuals, events, ideas, or concepts in a historical, scientific, or technical text based on specific information in the text.
RI.5.4	Determine the meaning of general academic and domain-specific words and phrases in a text relevant to a grade 5 topic or subject area.
RI.5.5	Compare and contrast the overall structure (e.g., chronology, comparison, cause/effect, problem/solution) of events, ideas, concepts, or information in two or more texts.
RI.5.6	Analyze multiple accounts of the same event or topic, noting important similarities and differences in the point of view they represent.
RI.5.7	Draw on information from multiple print or digital sources, demonstrating the ability to locate an answer to a question quickly or to solve a problem efficiently.
RI.5.8	Explain how an author uses reasons and evidence to support particular points in a text, identifying which reasons and evidence support which point(s).
RI.5.9	Integrate information from several texts on the same topic in order to write or speak about the subject knowledgeably.
W.5.1	Write opinion pieces on topics or texts, supporting a point of view with reasons and information.
W.5.4.	Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development and organization are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.
W.5.7	Conduct short research projects that use several sources to build knowledge through investigation of different aspects of a topic.
W.5.8	Recall relevant information from experiences or gather relevant information from print and digital sources; summarize or paraphrase information in notes and finished work, and provide a list of sources.
W.5.9	Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.
L.5.1	Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking.
L.5.2	Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling when writing.
L.5.3	Use knowledge of language and its conventions when writing, speaking, reading, or listening.

Contents

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 5 Mini-Assessment – "Marco Polo" Pair

Today you will read two texts about Marco Polo. You will then answer several questions. 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 need to answer Part A of the question before you answer Part B, but you may go back to Part A if you wish.

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 "*Who Was Marco Polo?*" and *"The Adventures of Marco Polo"* and answer the questions. I encourage you to write notes in the margin as you read the passages.

Text 1: excerpt from Chapter 11 of

Who Was Marco Polo?

By Joan Holub

Introduction: *Marco Polo lived in Italy more than seven hundred and fifty years ago. He is famous for traveling to China and back (more than 11,000 miles) and recording his adventures in a book. He said he spent many years with Kublai Khan, a powerful ruler in that part of the world. Marco Polo's book became a source of trouble for him, and people have argued about it since it was written.*

TEACHERS: Due to copyright issues, for access to Text 1 either obtain a copy of the book cited below (note there are multiple versions published so you need the specific version cited) OR send us an email and we will provide a PDF you can print, as we do have print rights.

If you obtain your own copy of the book, the excerpt starts on page 96 with the sentence, "Most historians think Marco Polo did go to China . . ." and label that paragraph as "1." Number each of the following paragraphs, ending with the last paragraph of the excerpt being the paragraph on page 98 that starts with, "Marco Polo was sixty-nine years old. . ." This will result in a 12-paragraph excerpt.

Text 2: from

Adventures of Marco Polo

by Russell Freedman

Introduction: *This excerpt points out issues that people continue to argue about, even hundreds of years after Polo's book was published.*

1   These skeptics1 question Marco's silence about many things in the China of his own era. Why, they ask, does he never mention the Great Wall? Why doesn't he say a single word about chopsticks or tea . . .?

2   Marco's defenders point out that the Great Wall as we know it today, with its sides and parapets2 built out of brick and stone, wasn't all that great in Marco's time. That wall wasn't built until more than two centuries later. Marco may have seen the remains of a less impressive earthen wall, built 1400 years before he reached China. By the time he arrived, most of that original wall had fallen down.

3   Then why doesn't he mention chopsticks? As an aide to Kublai Khan, Marco spent much of his time with the Mongols, Persians, and other foreigners who made up the Khan's court. When eating with them, he probably used a knife to slice meat at the table, thereby disgusting the Chinese, who confined such acts to the kitchen. And he must have eaten everything else with his hands, rather than chopsticks, according to Mongol custom.

4   As for tea, Marco spent most of his time in North and Central China, where teahouses had not yet become common. And as a traveler from Italy, famous for its wines, he may not have had much interest in tea. He does mention, and often praises, many kinds of Chinese wines and spirits made from rice, wheat, grapes, plums, dates, and palm-tree sap…

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[1] skeptics - people who doubt that something is true
[2] parapet - a section raised above the main wall built for protection

QUESTIONS

1. **The following question has two parts. Answer part A and then answer part B.**
    Part A: In paragraph 4 of Text 1: *Who Was Marco Polo?,* **the author states that an exaggeration became known as a "marco polo." What is the meaning of the word** *exaggeration***?**

    A. a misunderstanding of factual information
    B. a long journey completed over several years
    C. an individual who does exciting and interesting things
    D. a statement that things are bigger or better than they are

    Part B: Which <u>two</u> phrases from paragraphs 3 and 4 of Text 1 best help the reader determine the meaning of *exaggeration***?**

    A. "didn't know much"
    B. "strange lands"
    C. "too incredible"
    D. "the nickname"
    E. "another phrase"
    F. "wild stories"
    G. "make the crowds laugh"

2. **The following question has two parts. Answer part A and then answer part B.**

    Part A: Based on Text 1, what inference can be made about the importance of historical documents in relation to Marco Polo's book?

    A. Marco Polo used historical documents to make his book accurate.
    B. Historical documents provide information people can use to decide if Marco Polo was telling the truth.
    C. Historical documents helped Marco Polo and other explorers of his time travel to new places.
    D. Marco Polo's purpose for writing a book was to provide Kublai Khan with historical documents.

    Part B: Circle the paragraph in Text 1 that provides evidence for the correct answer to Part A above.

3. Text 1 gives reasons that Marco Polo may have been truthful in his book and also gives reasons that he may not have been truthful. The headings in the chart below list these two different ideas. Complete each row of the chart by writing facts and details from Text 1 to support each idea. The first row has been done for you.

Evidence from the text that Marco Polo may have told the truth in his book	Evidence from the text that Marco Polo may not have told the truth in his book
"But a list of his belongings around the time of death suggests that he did leave behind one of Kublai Khan's gold tablets."	"He said the Chinese city of Hangchow had twelve thousand bridges, but it had far fewer."

4. In the excerpt from Text 2: *Adventures of Marco Polo*, the author mentions one piece of actual evidence from Polo's book that may prove Marco actually did spend time in China. Circle the sentence in Text 2 that best supports the author's claim that Polo was telling the truth about his visit to China.

5. In paragraph 1 of Text 2, what is the meaning of the word "mention"?

   A. question
   B. believe
   C. think about
   D. talk about

6. **Which statement best summarizes the authors' points of view in the two texts?**

   A. The author of Text 1 feels strongly that Polo exaggerated his claims, while the author of Text 2 is confident that Polo was being truthful.
   B. The author of Text 1 implies that Polo's book was meant to be a work of fiction, while the author of Text 2 implies the book is factual.
   C. Both authors explain why Polo's books may seem inaccurate but may actually provide proof of his claims.
   D. Both authors are doubtful that Polo took a trip to China, much less experienced what he claims in his book.

7. **Which sentence describes the <u>overall</u> structures of the two texts?**

   A. Text 1 introduces Polo and then follows the events of his life chronologically until his death, and Text 2 discusses time periods in Polo's life that Text 1 didn't cover.
   B. Text 1 poses a question and then presents evidence to help the reader determine the answer, and Text 2 lists more evidence for the reader to consider, explaining why Polo didn't mention certain events.
   C. Text 1 poses a question, offers a strong opinion about Polo, and then supports the opinion through evidence, and Text 2 begins by presenting a list of specific examples and ends by summarizing the author's opinion on the topic.
   D. Text 1 poses a question regarding Polo and then presents evidence to help the reader determine the answer, Text 2 starts with the same question and offers conflicting evidence to Text 1.

Writing Prompt:

8.   Write an essay in which you provide an opinion that either Marco Polo told the truth in his book or that Marco Polo made up his stories. Be sure to use information from the texts to support your opinion. Write your essay on the lines below.

   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.**

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Information for Teachers: Quantitative and Qualitative Analyses of the Texts

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 one[3] 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 data for:	**Quantitative Measure #1**	**Quantitative Measure #2**
Text 1*: Who Was Marco Polo?* (noted in orange below)	Flesch-Kincaid: 6.3	Lexile: 800
Text 2: *The Adventures of Marco Polo* (noted in blue below)	Flesch-Kincaid: 7.3	Lexile: 1000

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-Kinkaid and Reading Maturity measures were converted to grade bands.

Figure 1: Updated Text Complexity Grade Bands and Associated Ranges from Multiple Measures[7]

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

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[3] 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.

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)

Qualitative Analysis	Text 1: *Who Was Marco Polo?*	Where to place within the band?				
Category	**Notes and comments on text, support for placement in this band**	Early - mid 4	end 4- early 5	Mid 5	End 5	**NOT suited to band**
Structure: (both story structure or form of piece)	The informational text presents a question in the first paragraph and then provides evidence to help determine what the answer is to the question. It's moderately complex in that two opposing views are presented: Polo was or was not telling the truth.			↓ (← ─────── →)		
Language Clarity and Conventions (including vocabulary load)	Most of the vocabulary is either on grade level or well explained through the use of context, though there are many proper nouns that might present a challenge for some students. The majority of sentences are simple or compound.		↓ (← ─────── →)			
Knowledge Demands (life, content, cultural/literary)	The text presents a moderate demand on knowledge. Even if a student has never heard of Polo, he or she is provided with enough information within the text to discover who he was and what he is known for. However, students must know that travel was limited and trying during Polo's era.			↓ (← ─────── →)		
Levels of Meaning/ Purpose	The purpose of the text is to establish who Polo was, what he claimed, and what evidence is present to determine if what he claim is true. This singular purpose helps make the text accessible, even to lower students.		↓ (← ─────── →)			
Overall placement: Grade 5	**Justification** **As supported by both the quantitative data and this analysis, this text is appropriately complex for Grade 5 students. It is paired with a text that is on the high end of both methods of analysis, so it is acceptable that this text is moderately complex for Grade 5.**				↓ (← ─────── →)	

Qualitative Analysis	Text 2: *The Adventures of Marco Polo*	Where to place within the band?				
Category	**Notes and comments on text, support for placement in this band**	Early - mid 4	end 4- early 5	Mid 5	End 5	**NOT suited to band**
Structure: (both story structure or form of piece)	The structure of the text is slightly complex, as the information is given primarily in a question and answer format, with the relationship between each question and the main idea fairly clear.	←―――	↓ ――――→			
Language Clarity and Conventions (including vocabulary load)	The language features are very complex for the grade level, as the text uses some challenging vocabulary and a variety of sentence structures, including many complex sentences.	←―――	―――	―――	↓ →	
Knowledge Demands (life, content, cultural/literary)	The knowledge demands are very complex, as readers may be unfamiliar with the Great Wall, Mongols, teahouses, palm-tree sap, etc.	←―――	―――	―――	↓ →	
Levels of Meaning/ Purpose	The purpose of this text is very complex for the grade level; the purpose is implied in the first sentence, when the author mentions skeptics, but the student does not find out until the next paragraph that the author intends to counter several arguments given by skeptics and then present evidence that Polo made the trip.	←―――	―――	―――	↓ →	
Overall placement: Grade 5	**Justification** **This text is well suited for Grade 5. Overall it is of high complexity, but still accessible to Grade 5 students. Reading the first text in this pair provides students with some much needed background on Polo**	←―――	―――	―――	↓ →	

Question Annotations: Correct Answer and Distractor Rationales

Question Number	Correct Answer(s)	Standards	Rationales for Answer Choices
1 Part A	D	RI.5.4, RI.5.1	**A.** "A misunderstanding of factual information" implies there is some confusion on the part of the listener/reader, but an exaggeration is an act on the part of the speaker/writer that shows he or she is deliberately not telling the whole truth. **B.** "A long journey taken over several years" describes Polo's trip rather than his possible stretching of the truth. **C.** "An individual who does exciting and interesting things" describes Polo's life rather than the possibility he didn't tell the truth. **D.** This is the correct answer. "A statement that things are bigger or better than they are" is the definition of the word "exaggeration." When one makes an exaggeration, one is misrepresenting what really happened, or exaggerating.
1 Part B	C and F		**A.** "Didn't know much" does not help explain exaggeration. In the context of these paragraphs, the term is used to describe the people of the world at the time, not Polo or his possible exaggerations. **B.** "Strange lands" does not help explain exaggeration. It tells where Polo most likely traveled and how his stories originated. **C.** This is a correct answer. The term "too incredible" is used to describe Polo's stories and to explain that they didn't see believable. Instead, they seem to be exaggerations. **D.** "The nickname" does not help explain exaggeration. The term introduces that Marco earned such a reputation for his exaggerations that he earned a negative nickname that made fun of him. **E.** "Another phrase" does not help explain exaggeration. The term introduces the fact that exaggeration is a phrase but does not help explain what that phrase means. **F.** This is a correct answer. "Wild stories" helps the reader know that exaggerations involve claims that may be overstated or "wild." **G.** "Make the crowds laugh" does not help explain exaggeration. The term describes the effect of some exaggerations rather than defining what the word means.

Question Number	Correct Answer(s)	Standards	Rationales for Answer Choices
2 Part A	B	RI.5.3, RI.5.1	**A.** Marco Polo did not cite historical documents to make his book accurate. Instead, the book served as a historical record for later explorers. **B.** This is the correct answer. The author states that historical documents of the time Polo was supposedly exploring China help researchers decide if Polo was being truthful. **C.** The author does not imply that Polo and other explorers of his time used existing historical documents to help them travel. Polo, instead, used the knowledge previously gathered by his father's experiences. **D.** Although Polo may have recorded some history for the Khan while Polo worked for the ruler, he wrote his book later after returning home so he could document his story, not to provide the Khan with historical documents.
2 Part B	Paragraph 9		Paragraph 9 supports the inference that historical documents from China prove that Polo's name was mentioned, so this may prove that his claim of working for the Khan is true.
3	See right column	RI.5.8, RI.5.2, RI.5.1	<table><tr><th>Evidence from the text that Marco Polo may have told the truth in his book</th><th>Evidence from the text that Marco Polo may not have told the truth in his book</th></tr><tr><td>**POSSIBLE ANSWER:** People also wonder why his book doesn't mention the Chinese custom of tea drinking. This may be because tea was most popular in southern China. Marco spent most of his time in northern China. **Rationale:** The author offers this evidence to explain that just because Polo doesn't mention tea doesn't mean he was lying.</td><td>**POSSIBLE ANSWER:** But there wasn't enough food near the battlefield for so many troops, nor enough grass to feed that many horses. **Rationale:** The author offers this as evidence that Polo had to be exaggerating about the number of soldiers and horses he recorded.</td></tr><tr><td>**POSSIBLE ANSWER:** As he was dying, his friends begged him to confess the truth and say that he'd been lying. He refused. His answer to them is now famous. He told them, "I never told half of what I saw." **Rationale**: The author offers this fact as evidence that Polo, even when dying, stood by his book. Therefore, he may have been being truthful in his account.</td><td>**POSSIBLE ANSWER:** When he died he didn't leave his family a great fortune. That makes his stories about going to China seem false. **Rationale:** The author implies that if Polo was being honest about the jewels he supposedly brought back from China, he would have had money to leave to his family when he died. But because he didn't leave them a fortune, he may not have been telling the truth.</td></tr></table>

Question Number	Correct Answer(s)	Standards	Rationales for Answer Choices
			POSSIBLE ANSWER: Today, some people wonder why he didn't write about the Great Wall of China in his book. Maybe it didn't amaze him. Much of it had been destroyed by the 1200s. It was rebuilt and lengthened when the Ming family ruled China from 1368 to 1644. **Rationale:** The author offers this evidence that just because Polo didn't mention the Great Wall doesn't mean he wasn't in China, it's just that the wall wasn't all that great at the time he visited.	**POSSIBLE ANSWER:** He claimed there were magicians in Kublai Khan's empire who could make glasses of wine fly. He said they could change day into night and could also turn a sunny day into a rainy one. **Rationale:** The author offers this as evidence that because these things cannot really happen, Polo wasn't being totally truthful in his book. **POSSIBLE ANSWER:** Marco wrote that he was the governor of a Chinese city name Yang-chou for three years. Yet he never described his job. **Rationale:** The author offers this as evidence that Polo may not have been truthful because if he was governor, surely he would have told more about the position as he wrote his book.
4	"He does mention, and often praises, many kinds of Chinese wines and spirits made from rice, wheat, grapes, plums, dates, and palm-tree sap."	RI.5.8	The author includes this sentence as proof that perhaps Polo was being truthful about his time in China. Polo most likely would not have known about the Chinese wines and spirits made from different kinds of produce unless he'd actually been there.
5	D	RI.5.8, RI.5.1	A. The word "question" means "doubt." It does not provide a clue to the meaning of "mention," which means "speak of" or "refer briefly to." B. The word "believe" means "think something is true" It does not mean "mention." C. The words "think about" do not provide a clue to the meaning of "mention," which means "speak of" or "refer briefly to." D. This is the correct answer. "Mention" in this text means "talk about."

Question Number	Correct Answer(s)	Standards	Rationales for Answer Choices
6	C	RI.5.9, RI.5.7, RI.5.6, RI.5.2, RI.5.1	**A.** This statement is incorrect in that neither author really makes a strong statement about Polo's truthfulness. **B.** This statement is incorrect in that the author of *"Who Was Marco Polo?"* does not imply that Polo intended the book to be a work of fiction. **C.** This statement is the correct answer. Both authors mention that in some regards the book may seem inaccurate, but they each offer reasons for these inaccuracies as proof of his claims. **D.** This statement is incorrect in that neither author expresses doubt that Polo went to China.
7	B	RI.5.5, RI.5.7 RI.5.1	**A.** Although both texts mention some events in Polo's life, chronological order is not the underlying organizational structure of either**.** **B.** This is the correct answer. Text 1 presents the question of Polo's truthfulness and presents evidence without offering a definitive answers, and Text 2 then adds more evidence to consider. **C.** Although Text 1 poses a question, the author does not offer a strong opinion, nor does Text 2 end with a summary of the author's opinion. **D.** Although Text 1 poses a question and presents evidence to help the reader form an opinion of the answer, Text 2 starts with different, more precise, questions.
8	See right column	W.5.9, W.5.8, W.5.7, W.5.4, W.5.1, RI.5.9, RI.5.7, RI.5.6, RI.5.3, RI.5.1, L.5.3, L.5.2, L.5.1	SEE SAMPLE TOP-SCORE RESPONSE (http://achievethecore.org/content/upload/Student%20Response_Marco%20Polo_5MA.pdf)

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

Sample Scoring Rubric for Text-Based Writing Prompts:

http://achievethecore.org/content/upload/Scoring_Rubric_for_Text-Based_Writing_Prompts.pdf