

VIRGINIA STANDARDS OF LEARNING

# EOC INTEGRATED READING AND WRITING

2024 English Standards of Learning

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## Practice Item Set

### **Property of the Virginia Department of Education**

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**Directions: Read the selection and answer the questions that follow.**

## **The Dust Bowl and the Great Plains**

- 1 In the 1930s a severe drought hit the Great Plains in the middle of the United States. The landscape in parts of several states, including Oklahoma, Texas, Kansas, Colorado, and New Mexico, became cracked and hard. The once rich farmland withered away, and when the dust came, it changed the lives of everyone who lived there. A journalist referred to this part of the country as “the dust bowl of the continent” after witnessing the devastated land. The name stuck. The drought and dust conditions lasted for nearly ten harrowing years.

### **Unfortunate Circumstances**

- 2 The Dust Bowl began in 1931, after the start of the Great Depression. During this time, the Great Plains was plagued by frequent and severe dust storms that devastated crops and made homes unlivable. Although drought conditions contributed significantly to the Dust Bowl, humans were also responsible. Human actions that led up to the Dust Bowl had started many years earlier.
- 3 In 1862 Abraham Lincoln signed the Homestead Act into law. The Homestead Act redistributed public lands to private citizens. Each citizen who qualified was entitled to up to 160 acres of land for a small fee. Those who acquired a plot of land were required to live on it and farm it. These minimal requirements led to many new and inexperienced farmers working the land. Many grasslands, which were natural and important to the habitat, were replaced with corn and other crops. As a result, the quality of the soil quickly suffered from overplowing and overuse. Inexperienced farmers also allowed their cattle to overgraze the land, further affecting the natural environment. And when drought conditions descended on the region, the farms failed.
- 4 Farmers were devastated by the loss of crops and profit. The federal government then took action to lessen the financial hardship. In 1933 the Emergency Farm Mortgage Act gave over \$200 million in aid to farmers facing foreclosure and loss of their farmlands. By 1937 it was reported that over 20 percent of families living in the region were receiving emergency financial aid.
- 5 In addition to providing financial support, Congress established the Soil Conservation Service in 1935. Farmers were trained in sustainable farming practices that reduced soil erosion. Techniques included building terraces around crop areas to prevent soil runoff and rotating crops to help maintain

nutrient balance in the soil. Farmers were paid to replace some crops with soil-conserving crops and grasses to help prevent erosion.

### **Home Life on the Great Plains**

- 6 During a dust storm, dirt and wind combined to create massive walls of dust that sometimes extended a mile wide and as much as a mile and a half high. The dust walls traveled across the plains, covering towns and farms under complete darkness in what became known as “black blizzards.” Historical records of people who lived through the Dust Bowl give insight into how life changed under the drought and constant dust. When dust storms blew through towns, some drivers could be stuck on the side of the road for hours, waiting for it to be safe to travel again. Locals reported dust drifts that reached rooftops, preventing them from entering their homes. Homes were impossible to keep clean, and the constant circulation of dust particles caused respiratory ailments. But the real damage of the Dust Bowl was to the farmland. Improved farming practices and the return of seasonal rain brought an end to the drought in 1941. By then, more than 100 million acres of farmland had been destroyed. Many people left their homes and headed west in record numbers.



Library of Congress

**Soil blown by Dust Bowl winds settled in large drifts.**

## **Heading West for Work**

- 7 The impact of the Dust Bowl extended beyond the Great Plains, to California. In desperate need of work and a safe place to live, more than a quarter of the population of states affected by the Dust Bowl moved west to California. This is considered the largest migration in American history.
- 8 Unfortunately, those displaced from the Great Plains did not always find a warm welcome when they arrived in California. People living in already overcrowded California communities were not happy to see the droves of people arriving from the Dust Bowl, and life for those who did settle in California was not easy.
- 9 Many people found work picking cotton and grapes on corporate-owned farms in the San Joaquin Valley. The work was grueling, and workers were paid by the quantity they picked rather than for the amount of time they worked. Working conditions were so poor that in October 1933, workers from the Cannery and Agricultural Workers Industrial Union (CAWIU) went on strike, resulting in workers receiving a modest raise.
- 10 Over time, some of the migrant workers managed to become more settled in California. Many left farming altogether and worked in factories and offices instead. They eventually built homes in communities with other migrant workers. Those who had remained on their farms in the Great Plains did so with lessons learned from the hardest times. In the 1950s, when another drought hit the region, many of the farmers fared much better.
- 11 In the 1930s, the Dust Bowl devastated farmland, as well as the lives of many who lived in the Great Plains. However, many important changes to farming practices resulted from this challenging time. The lessons learned from the Dust Bowl must be the voice of the past that continues to inform the actions of the future.

**1 Which sentence from the selection best supports the author’s claim in paragraph 1 that the Dust Bowl affected the lives of everyone in the Great Plains?**

- A** As a result, the quality of the soil quickly suffered from overplowing and overuse.
- B** The federal government then took action to lessen the financial hardship.
- C** Many people left their homes and headed west in record numbers.
- D** However, many important changes to farming practices resulted from this challenging time.

**2 Read these sentences from paragraph 3.**

**The Homestead Act redistributed public lands to private citizens. Each citizen who qualified was entitled to up to 160 acres of land for a small fee. Those who acquired a plot of land were required to live on it and farm it. These minimal requirements led to many new and inexperienced farmers working the land.**

**These sentences suggest the author most likely believes that the Homestead Act —**

- F** failed to achieve the land redistribution it set out to accomplish
- G** lacked sufficient requirements for those who benefited from it
- H** provided too much acreage in an effort to redistribute land quickly
- J** required people to try unproven and harmful farming methods

**3 Read this sentence from paragraph 6.**

**But the real damage of the Dust Bowl was to the farmland.**

**The purpose of this opinion is most likely to —**

- A** create the impression that historians disagree
- B** shift the discussion from one type of impact to another
- C** introduce the point at which recovery began
- D** dismiss the importance of the effects on humans

**4 The author includes imagery in paragraph 6 in order to —**

- F** explain how drought conditions in the Dust Bowl led to dust storms
- G** describe the actions people took to deal with the Dust Bowl
- H** reveal how the Dust Bowl created particular health problems
- J** convey the extent to which the Dust Bowl affected the lives of people

**5 Read this sentence from paragraph 11.**

**The lessons learned from the Dust Bowl must be the voice of the past that continues to inform the actions of the future.**

**The author uses figurative language in this sentence most likely to —**

- A** emphasize that the Dust Bowl is a historical event that is worthy of study
- B** connect the Dust Bowl to the actions and practices that led to tragedy
- C** reveal that many people remain unaware of the realities of the Dust Bowl
- D** encourage sympathy for those people who lived through the Dust Bowl

**Read the information and respond to the prompt.**

**The selection explains that “although drought conditions contributed significantly to the Dust Bowl, humans were also responsible.” While new farmers were not responsible for weather conditions, their lack of experience and knowledge of farming practices contributed to the disaster.**

**How can a lack of experience or knowledge contribute to harmful effects or a negative outcome? Explain a situation and include ideas about what, if anything, could have been done differently. Support your analysis with specific reasons and evidence from the selection, your own experience, or both.**

## CHECKLIST FOR WRITERS

- \_\_\_\_\_ I planned my response before writing.
  
- \_\_\_\_\_ I revised my response to be sure that
  - \_\_\_\_\_ the introduction to my response is interesting and prepares the reader for the topic;
  - \_\_\_\_\_ my thesis is supported with specific information and examples that illustrate my central idea, purpose, or position;
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  - \_\_\_\_\_ my word choice develops my purpose, voice, and tone; and
  - \_\_\_\_\_ the closure to my response brings my ideas together without restating them.
  
- \_\_\_\_\_ I edited my response to be sure that
  - \_\_\_\_\_ standard grammar is used;
  - \_\_\_\_\_ words are spelled correctly and capitalized when appropriate;
  - \_\_\_\_\_ sentences are constructed and punctuated correctly; and
  - \_\_\_\_\_ paragraphs are clearly indicated.
  
- \_\_\_\_\_ I reviewed my response to be certain that it accurately reflects my intentions.

**Directions: Read the selection and answer the questions that follow.**

## **The Dust Bowl and the Great Plains**

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- 11 In the 1930s, the Dust Bowl devastated farmland, as well as the lives of many who lived in the Great Plains. However, many important changes to farming practices resulted from this challenging time. The lessons learned from the Dust Bowl must be the voice of the past that continues to inform the actions of the future.

**1 Which statement is the best paraphrase of paragraph 2?**

- A** The Dust Bowl, which was part of the Great Depression, brought severe dust storms to the Great Plains, created drought conditions, and made humans behave more responsibly in the years after 1931.
- B** The Dust Bowl, a period in history that began in 1931, featured frequent storms in the Great Plains, damage to crops and homes, and changes to human behavior.
- C** The Dust Bowl, which began in 1931, had several causes, including dust storms in the Great Plains, drought conditions, and human activities that had led to the Great Depression.
- D** The Dust Bowl, a period of time during which dust storms ruined crops and homes in the Great Plains, began in 1931 and was caused by drought and ongoing human activities.

**2 The author uses irony in paragraphs 3–5 most likely to —**

- F** indicate that the government had more concern for its policies than for the success of individuals
- G** show that the government could have taught farmers sustainable methods from the beginning
- H** suggest that the government contributed to an issue affecting individuals that it then tried to fix
- J** reveal that the government paid farmers to replace crops that otherwise could have made money

**3 The details in paragraph 6 convey the author’s credibility by suggesting that the author —**

- A** consulted primary source materials
- B** has experienced a dust storm
- C** knows the health impacts of dust
- D** uses common terminology

**4 The “Heading West for Work” section focuses mostly on the —**

- F** response to the arrival of Dust Bowl migrants to California
- G** reasons Dust Bowl migrants moved to California
- H** experiences of Dust Bowl migrants in California
- J** type of work done by Dust Bowl migrants in California

**5 The author’s purpose for writing this selection is most likely to —**

- A** examine the causes and effects of the Dust Bowl
- B** reveal why the Dust Bowl required a government response
- C** explain how workers received a raise during the Dust Bowl
- D** describe the impact of the Dust Bowl on homes

**Go to the next  
page and continue  
working.**

**Read the information and respond to the prompt.**

**The selection discusses persistence in several groups affected by the Dust Bowl, including those who stayed behind and those who moved to other places.**

**When is it important to show persistence? Describe a situation when it is best to remain persistent after making a choice. Support your analysis with reasons and evidence from the selection, your own knowledge and experience, or both.**

## CHECKLIST FOR WRITERS

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**EOC Integrated Reading and Writing  
Practice Item Set Spring 2025  
Answer Key**

<b>Sequence Number</b>	<b>Correct Answer</b>	<b>Reporting Category</b>	<b>Reporting Category Description</b>
1	C	002	Demonstrate comprehension of informational texts and use vocabulary development and word analysis strategies
2	G	002	Demonstrate comprehension of informational texts and use vocabulary development and word analysis strategies
3	B	002	Demonstrate comprehension of informational texts and use vocabulary development and word analysis strategies
4	J	002	Demonstrate comprehension of informational texts and use vocabulary development and word analysis strategies
5	A	002	Demonstrate comprehension of informational texts and use vocabulary development and word analysis strategies
1	D	002	Demonstrate comprehension of informational texts and use vocabulary development and word analysis strategies
2	H	002	Demonstrate comprehension of informational texts and use vocabulary development and word analysis strategies
3	A	002	Demonstrate comprehension of informational texts and use vocabulary development and word analysis strategies
4	H	002	Demonstrate comprehension of informational texts and use vocabulary development and word analysis strategies
5	A	002	Demonstrate comprehension of informational texts and use vocabulary development and word analysis strategies



