



Reading Informational Texts:

Nonfiction Passages and Exercises Based on the Common Core State Standards

Sample



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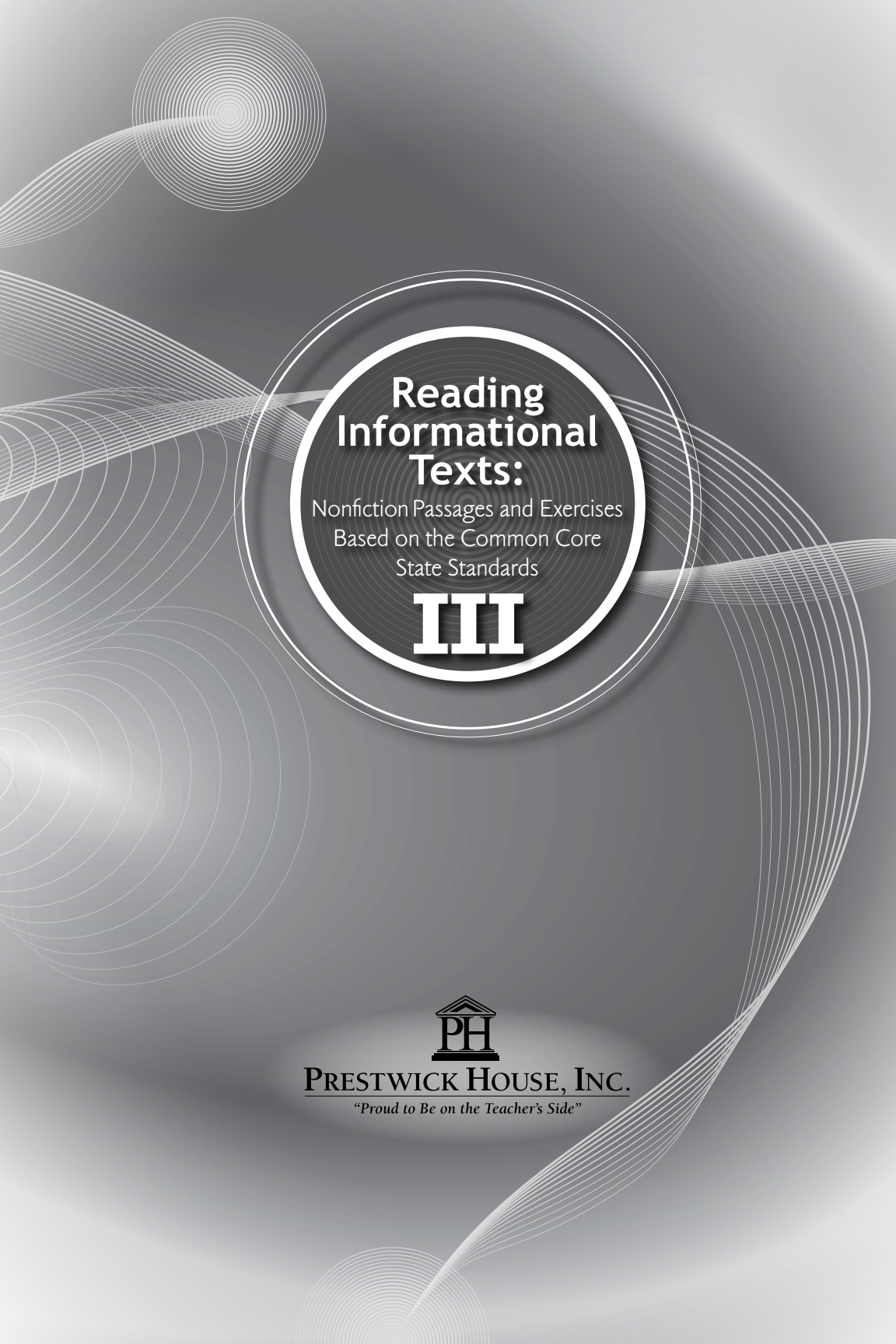
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II



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II

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2009 Inaugural Address

My fellow citizens: I stand here today humbled by the task before us, grateful for the trust you've bestowed, mindful of the sacrifices borne by our ancestors.

I thank President Bush for his service to our nation—as well as the generosity and cooperation he has shown throughout this transition.

Forty-four Americans have now taken the presidential oath. The words have been spoken during rising tides of **prosperity** and the still waters of peace. Yet, every so often, the oath is taken amidst gathering clouds and raging storms. At these moments, America has carried on not simply because of the skill or vision of those in high office, but because we, the people, have remained faithful to the ideals of our **forebears** and true to our founding documents.

So it has been; so it must be with this generation of Americans.

That we are in the midst of crisis is now well understood. Our nation is at war against a far-reaching network of violence and hatred. Our economy is badly weakened, a consequence of greed and irresponsibility on the part of some, but also our collective failure to make hard choices and prepare the nation for a new age. Homes have been lost, jobs shed, businesses shuttered. Our health care is too costly, our schools fail too many—and each day brings further evidence that the ways we use energy strengthen our **adversaries** and threaten our planet.

These are the indicators of crisis, subject to data and statistics. Less measurable, but no less profound, is a **sapping** of confidence across our land; a nagging fear that America's decline is inevitable, that the next generation must lower its sights.

Today I say to you that the challenges we face are real. They are serious and they are many. They will not be met easily or in a short span of time. But know this, America: They will be met.

On this day, we gather because we have chosen hope over fear, unity of purpose over conflict and **discord**. On this day, we come to proclaim an end to the petty grievances and false promises, the **recriminations** and

The first sentence of this address incorporates two different rhetorical devices: asyndeton and parallelism.

Asyndeton: joining parts of a sentence in series without using conjunctions

Parallelism: the repetition of similarly constructed phrases, clauses, or sentences within a short section of writing

Note the metaphor Obama uses. What elements are being compared?

Metaphor: a comparison of two things that are basically dissimilar in which one is described in terms of the other

This sentence would more traditionally be worded, "It is well understood that we are in the midst of crisis." That order puts the most important word—"crisis"—at the end. This sentence's structure deemphasizes the term "crisis."

Obama directly addresses America's citizens through apostrophe.

Apostrophe: directly addressing a person, place, thing, or abstraction, living, dead, or absent from the work

This is the first of the main points Obama makes: despite America's recent "sapping of confidence," its future greatness is assured.



EXERCISES

Short-Answer Questions

Answer each of the following questions in a few sentences, based on the text you have just read. Briefly explain each of your answers.

1. Look up the following words in a dictionary: petty, recriminations, and dogma. What do they mean? What connects them and how are they also different? When Obama uses these words, to what is he referring?

2. Obama says, "For us, they packed up their few worldly possessions and traveled across oceans in search of a new life. For us, they toiled in sweatshops, and settled the West, endured the lash of the whip, and plowed the hard earth. For us, they fought and died in places like Concord and Gettysburg, Normandy and Khe Sahn." How is his point made? Who does he mean by "us"? To what incidents is he referring? What is the point he is trying to make in this section?



INTRODUCTION

The Gettysburg Address

On November 19, 1863, Abraham Lincoln, the sixteenth president of the United States, began what was to be his most famous speech with the words “four score and seven years ago.”

President Lincoln was in the midst of the American Civil War and the Union’s mission to free the slaves in the Southern states. After Lincoln released the Emancipation Proclamation, which called for the slaves to be freed in ten of the eleven Confederate states, the Union won the Battle of Gettysburg in July of 1863. It was, however, the bloodiest battle of the Civil War, with casualties in the tens of thousands on both sides. In November, Lincoln traveled to Gettysburg to deliver this address as part of the dedication of the Soldiers’ National Cemetery.

Abraham Lincoln

Abraham Lincoln was born in 1809, in a small log cabin in Kentucky. He was elected to his first public office in 1834, when he joined the Illinois legislature as a Whig. Lincoln served several terms in the Illinois House of Representatives before being elected to the US House of Representatives, where he co-authored a bill to abolish slavery in the District of Columbia.

In 1858, the Republican Party nominated Lincoln for an office in the US Senate. Lincoln delivered his famous “House Divided Speech” during his Senate campaign.

In 1860, Lincoln became the first Republican to be elected president of the United States. Shortly after the election, South Carolina led the Southern states in seceding from the Union. Seven of these states then adopted a constitution and declared themselves a sovereign nation, the Confederate States of America. Four additional states would later join them. President James Buchanan and President-elect Lincoln refused to recognize the Confederacy, declaring secession illegal. On April 12, 1861, the American Civil War began.

In 1863, Lincoln released the Emancipation Proclamation, which declared freedom to the slaves of ten Southern states not under the Union’s control. The Union won the Battle of Gettysburg in July of 1863, and Lincoln delivered the Gettysburg Address in November of that year.

In 1865, the Civil War ended and slaves throughout the nation were freed. On April 14 of that year, however, Lincoln was assassinated at Ford’s Theatre by John Wilkes Booth.



Essay Question

Identify a literary device that is included in the Gettysburg Address. Evaluate how the passage's language affects the overall tone of the work.

Roosevelt catalogs the wars and conflicts in which America has been involved in the past as a point of comparison for the current conflict.

In his mention of Versailles, Roosevelt refers to the peace treaty that ended World War I; many of its provisions punished Germany greatly for that war, and numerous historians blame the treaty for the rise of Hitler.

Munich is a city in Germany in which Neville Chamberlain, England's prime minister, essentially "pacified" Hitler by pledging British non-interference in Germany's annexation of the Sudetenland.

This phrasing recalls the Old Testament: God is often said to have "set His face against" Israel.

Rhetorically, how does Roosevelt make the point that the situation is serious and urgent?

This quotation is from Article II, Section 3 of the Constitution.

real threat against our future or against the future of any other American nation.

Except in the Maximilian interlude in Mexico, no foreign power sought to establish itself in this hemisphere. And the strength of the British fleet in the Atlantic has been a friendly strength; it is still a friendly strength.

Even when the World War broke out in 1914, it seemed to contain only small threat of danger to our own American future. But as time went on, as we remember, the American people began to visualize what the downfall of democratic nations might mean to our own democracy.

We need not overemphasize imperfections in the peace of Versailles. We need not harp on failure of the democracies to deal with problems of world reconstruction. We should remember that the peace of 1919 was far less unjust than the kind of **pacification** which began even before Munich, and which is being carried on under the new order of tyranny that seeks to spread over every continent today. The American people have unalterably set their faces against that **tyranny**.

I suppose that every realist knows that the democratic way of life is at this moment being directly **assailed** in every part of the world—assailed either by arms or by secret spreading of poisonous **propaganda** by those who seek to destroy unity and promote **discord** in nations that are still at peace. During 16 long months this assault has blotted out the whole pattern of democratic life in an appalling number of independent nations, great and small. And the assailants are still on the march, threatening other nations, great and small.

Therefore, as your President, performing my constitutional duty to "give to the Congress information of the state of the union," I find it unhappily necessary to report that the future and the safety of our country and of our democracy are overwhelmingly involved in events far beyond our borders.

Armed defense of democratic existence is now being **gallantly** waged in four continents. If that defense fails, all the population and all the resources of Europe and Asia, and Africa and Austral-Asia will be dominated by conquerors. And let us remember that the total of those populations in those four continents, the total of those



VOCABULARY

Note: All definitions are based on the context in which the term is used in this reading selection.

acquiesce: to consent to or comply reluctantly, but without protest

antithesis: a direct opposite

appeasement: the act of making concessions to an enemy

armament: military weapons and equipment

assailed: attacked; assaulted

disarmament: the reduction of weapons or military forces

discord: disagreement

foothold: a secure position from which progress can be made; a foundation

gallantly: bravely; with spirit

immunity: protection from being harmed

innumerable: too many to be counted

oppression: cruelty through excessive authority; suppression

pacification: the act of forcibly suppressing a population

partisanship: an inclination to favor one group, view, or opinion over alternatives

propaganda: information used to promote a certain idea and discredit another

treachery: a deceptive action or manner; betrayal

tyranny: cruel and excessive power; unrestrained governmental rule

unprecedented: without any previous occurrence; unknown

vindicate: to justify; to prove to have been right or correct

Justice Black begins by explaining what happened in Gideon's original trial. Here, the word "petitioner" refers to Gideon.

What does the word "counsel" mean in this context? How is this definition different from the common usage?

"The Defendant" also refers to Gideon.

The main point of this court opinion will be to declare whether a defendant's right to have a lawyer during a federal trial is also a guaranteed right in a state trial.

US Supreme Court Majority Opinion in the Case of *Gideon v. Wainwright*

MR. JUSTICE BLACK delivered the opinion of the Court.

▶ **Petitioner** was charged in a Florida state court with having broken and entered a poolroom with intent to commit a **misdemeanor**. This offense is a **felony** under Florida law. Appearing in court without funds and without a lawyer, petitioner asked the court to appoint **counsel** for him, whereupon the following **colloquy** took place:

The **Court**: "Mr. Gideon, I am sorry, but I cannot appoint Counsel to represent you in this case. Under the laws of the State of Florida, the only time the Court can appoint **Counsel** to represent a **Defendant** is when that person is charged with a **capital offense**. I am sorry, but I will have to deny your request to appoint Counsel to defend you in this case."

▶ The Defendant: "The United States Supreme Court says I am entitled to be represented by Counsel."

Put to trial before a jury, Gideon conducted his defense about as well as could be expected from a **layman**. He made an opening statement to the jury, cross-examined the State's witnesses, presented witnesses in his own defense, declined to testify himself, and made a short argument "emphasizing his innocence to the charge contained in the Information filed in this case." The jury returned a **verdict** of guilty, and petitioner was sentenced to serve five years in the state prison. Later, petitioner filed in the Florida Supreme Court this **habeas corpus** petition attacking his **conviction** and **sentence** on the ground that the trial court's refusal to appoint counsel for him denied him rights "guaranteed by the Constitution and the Bill of Rights by the United States Government." Treating the petition for **habeas corpus** as properly before it, the State Supreme Court, "upon consideration thereof" but without an opinion, denied all relief. Since 1942, when *Betts v. Brady* was decided by a divided Court, the problem of a defendant's federal constitutional right to counsel in a state court has been a