

Mississippi Academic Assessment Program (MAAP) Vocabulary Instruction and Assessment Guidance RL/RI.4 and L.4-6

This document is a teacher resource intended to help differentiate among the vocabulary standards in the Mississippi College- and Career-Readiness Standards (MS-CCRS) while teaching and assessing the standards. English Language Arts (ELA) Standard 4 in the Reading Literature (RL) and Reading Information (RI) strands, as well as Standards 4-6 in the Language strand of the MS-CCRS, all focus on vocabulary usage and development.

Using grade 6 as an example, standard RL.6.4 states:

RL.6.4-*Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the impact of a specific word choice on meaning and tone.*

Standard RI.6.4 states:

RI.6.4-*Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative, connotative, and technical meanings.*

Standard 4 in RL and RI asks students to be able to determine the meaning of the word or phrase as used in a text. Questions and items aligned to these standards ask students, “What does this word mean in this passage?” Students must be able to use the content of the text to determine the meaning of the tested word. Important to note: Prior knowledge should not be relied upon for this or any vocabulary standard in an assessment item.

On the other hand, Language standards 4-6 are listed below:

L.6.4- *Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases based on grade 6 reading and content, choosing flexibly from a range of strategies.*

L.6.5- *Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings.*

L.6.6- *Acquire and use accurately grade-appropriate, general academic and domain-specific words and phrases; gather vocabulary knowledge when considering a word or phrase important to comprehension or expression.*

Vocabulary standards in the Language strand of the MS-CCRS are not strictly asking for the meaning of a word; these standards are focused on the strategies used to determine word meaning. Context can be one of those strategies, but the bullets under L.4 and L.5 also include other strategies, such as “common, grade-appropriate Greek or Latin affixes,” or “relationships between particular words.” Questions and assessment items aligned to these standards will ask students about the strategy used to determine meaning.

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What should be clear is the overlap between these two sets of standards. This is due to the importance vocabulary plays in literacy instruction and overall student understanding of a text. Some questions or tasks that assess vocabulary skills may, in fact, align to both the Reading and Language standards.

The following items (all of which are items from MAAP practice tests) are examples of how the different vocabulary standards can be assessed on a standardized assessment such as the Mississippi Academic Assessment Program (MAAP). Please note the rationale after each item, explaining alignment of the item to the standard.

Item # 1

Aligned to RI.6.4 and L.6.6

Associated Text: “Diving in to Save our Underwater Cities”

What is a tropical cyclone as referenced in paragraph 3?

- A. a severe storm with strong winds*
- B. a rapid change in temperature
- C. a geographic area with harsh weather
- D. an underwater ecosystem of plants and animals

Rationale: This item asks students to define a domain-specific term. There is sufficient context surrounding “tropical cyclone” to allow students to determine the meaning of the tested phrase. The item does not require students to explain *how* they used a strategy but rather focuses only on the meaning of the word as determined after using a strategy. Finally, because the item tests student knowledge of the domain specific words, “tropical cyclone,” it also aligns to L.6.6.

Item # 2

Aligned to L.6.4 and L.6.6

Associated Text: Excerpt from *Treasure Island* by Robert Louis Stevenson

Read the excerpt from paragraphs 5-8

... as soon as I began to move in his direction he reappeared and took a step to meet me. Then he hesitated, drew back, came forward again, and at last, to my wonder and confusion, threw himself on his knees and held out his clasped hands in supplication.

At that I once more stopped.

“Who are you?” I asked.

“Ben Gunn,” he answered, and his voice sounded hoarse and awkward, like a rusty lock. “I’m poor Ben Gunn, I am; and I haven’t spoke with a soul these three years.”

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Which two phrases from these paragraphs help you understand the meaning of in supplication?

- A. "...took a step to meet me...."
- B. "...hesitated, drew back, came forward again,..."
- C. "...threw himself on his knees...."*
- D. "...held out his clasped hands...."*
- E. "...sounded hoarse and awkward,..."

Rationale: This item is asking students to show how they determine the meaning of the tested phrase. Students are directed to choose the context that helps them understand the tested word, and it focuses not on the meaning of the phrase but on how students determined the meaning. Again, for Language vocabulary standards L.4, L.5, and L.6, use of context is just one strategy that might be called on to determine meaning, as the standards outline several others. Finally, L.6.6 requires that students determine the meaning of general academic or domain-specific words or phrases. The phrase, "in supplication," is a general academic phrase, so this item also aligns to L.6.6.

Item #3

Aligned to RI.6.4, L.6.4.a, and L.6.6

Associated Text: "Diving in to Save our Underwater Cities"

Select the words that correctly complete the sentence.

In paragraph 1, the word undulating means,

flapping frantically
moving with a wavy motion*
swimming in a line
going quickly from place to place

which can be inferred from the phrase

"magical underwater city"
"teeming with colors and shapes"
"like party streamers"*
"darting from coral to coral"

Rationale: This item requires students to determine the meaning of the word. The first question in the item meets the expectations of RI.6.4. The second part of the item, which requires students to share the context that helps them determine the meaning of the phrase, focuses on the strategy. In this way, the item also meets the expectations of L.6.4.a, which requires students to use a strategy to determine meaning – in this case, using context. Finally, the item also aligns to L.6.6 because students are expected to determine the meaning of a general academic phrase.

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Item #4

Aligned to L.6.4.a and L.6.6

Associated Text: Excerpt from *Treasure Island* by Robert Louis Stevenson

Which two meanings of the word creature are used in this passage (paragraphs 2 and 15)?

- A. one controlled by another person or organization
- B. living being that seems strange or frightening*
- C. imaginary or fantastic being
- D. something created
- E. human being*

Rationale: This item requires students to use context from multiple paragraphs (2 and 15) to determine multiple ways the same word is used. Because students must use context to determine meaning, it aligns well to L.6.4.a. It also aligns well to L.6.6 because “creature” is a general academic word that will be seen in a variety of academic contexts and settings.