



Assessment Example

Academic Readiness Assessment Example

The academic readiness assessment is a crucial part of how we determine whether the Academy will be a good fit for assessing students, and we have designed this example and the corresponding FAQs to help candidates better understand the process.

Please note that the example you are about to view is not an actual assessment in current circulation; rather, it consists of a set of exercises that are on par with what we currently use and a body of explanations that are meant to add transparency to the process.



This slideshow is meant to address some common questions such as...

- Is my child academically ready for admission into the Academy?
- Can I get a feel for how he/she might do on this assessment?
- I know that success on the academic readiness assessment is a crucial part of admission...but what does the assessment actually involve?
- I think my child might be a good fit for the Academy, but I am not sure if this is the right time for us to request a place in the assessment pool. Traveling is expensive, and I would hate to sign up before my child is ready. Should we wait a year or act now?

FAQs Concerning Assessment



FAQ #1

How is an assessment scored?

- Math (30 points)
- Science Reasoning (30 points)
- Language Proficiency (10 points)
- Critical Reading, Academic Discussion, and Abstract Thinking (25 points)
 - Skills: ability to make logical inferences, think abstractly, read critically, etc. (rated both before and after instruction has been given)
- Written Expression (25 points)
 - Skills: control of conventions, logical and efficient sentences, word choice, clarity of expression, etc.
- Affective Traits (25 Points)
 - Skills: social-emotional orientation toward schoolwork, remaining on task, receptivity to instruction, active listening, conscientiousness toward work, attention to detail, following directions, etc.

FAQ #1 - Scoring continued...

- We look for prospective students to score an 80% or better, but we also accept students who score 70% or better if the rest of their application is strong (teacher recommendations, grades, IQ scores, etc.).
- Any student who does not score high enough to be admitted is welcome to apply again the next year. It is not unusual (though certainly not guaranteed) for students to get in on their second try.
- If a young student does well, but is not quite ready yet, we will offer a deferral. We'll accept the student for the year after next with the caveat that they continue their current rate of academic growth. Students who are offered a deferral do not have to reassess the following year.
- We have multiple raters scoring every application, and if two raters come up with scores that are different by more than a couple points, we bring in more raters and discuss that applicant in depth, looking at all of information in their application.

FAQ #2

The Academy has been characterized as a “writing across the curriculum” school. Does this mean the assessment is primarily a writing test?

- The scoring rubric awards **120 points** for math, science, language proficiency, critical reading, critical thinking, academic discussion, and affect. The portion of the assessment dedicated purely to written expression comprises **25 points**.
- However, the assessment day does include a lot of writing because this is the best way for us to be able to assess critical thinking skills, reading skills, etc.
- Also, writing is an important aspect of Academy curriculum because we associate academic challenge with the opportunity for students to present understanding in their own words. The readiness assessment has been designed to accurately reflect Academy curriculum and, thus, written expression is proportionately reflected.

FAQ #3

Even if the scoring process keeps written expression proportionate with other academic strengths, it still seems like students who have not had good writing instruction might be unfairly disadvantaged relative to those who have. Is this true?

Among our pool of applicants, it has been extremely rare to find students who have received effective writing instruction in exposition or argument. Probably less than 2% of our total pool of applicants demonstrate prior access to this kind of instruction. This fact reflects trends in public and private education that value creative writing over expository writing, and it essentially places all of our applicants on a level playing field. Moreover, we have normed our assessment expectations based on the idea that most students have not had this type of instruction.

FAQ #4

What does the website mean by “curriculum-based measurement,” and how do you decide which material will be used on the assessment?

The majority of the materials used at assessment have come directly from our own curriculum. In selecting the material from our curriculum, we use the following guidelines:

- We look critically at potential assessment items to be sure that they were extremely effective when we used them in our classrooms.
- We only utilize material that has met with universal success when it was presented to our current students so that expectations are crafted in a fair and consistent manner.
- We opt for materials that will offer the maximum amount of accessibility to applicants who vary widely in terms of academic experience and maturity.

Overview of Components in Assessment



Assessment Schedule

8 a.m.-11:20 a.m.

- Read a short story and respond to questions about it
- Discuss the story and receive instruction for the longer written responses
- Snack and break
- Write a rough draft of the paragraph responses (*with assistance*)
- Critical reading test

11:20 a.m. – 12 p.m. Lunch Break

12 p.m.-4 p.m. (*students go home whenever they are done with their work*)

- Math assessment
- Outside break
- Respond to the feedback given on the rough drafts and create final drafts (*with assistance*)
- Science reasoning test

Scheduling Tip: Students who are able to attend the “early bird” option the evening before assessment can typically finish the critical reading test and the science reasoning test that evening. This will shorten the next day and give those students a more relaxed experience.

Math Test

- We will start students with a test for whatever level of math they took the previous year (since they will not yet have completed the current year's instruction). Prospective students are welcome to request higher or lower levels of exams during assessment.
- For assessment purposes, we have the following math exams: pre-algebra, Algebra I, Algebra II, geometry, and pre-calculus. If a student is working at a higher level than this, we'll figure out their placement after acceptance. We offer on-site courses which range from Algebra I through Calc III, and provide access to university math courses for students to proceed beyond this range.
- Because the goal of assessment is simply to make decisions about admission rather than placement, we only require that students achieve adequate scores to begin with a math course that will allow for appropriate progress toward a timely high school graduation.

Critical Reading Test

- This portion of the assessment is very similar to exercises that may be found in practice books published for ACT or SAT preparation.
- We use reading tests that have been given to new Academy students and norm our raw score conversions on a curve that has been created from these testing results. We take age into consideration and adjust all scores to reflect equitable expectations for each age group.
- The critical reading test includes passages from social science, science, and other subjects that exemplify the minimum reading comprehension level necessary to begin Academy coursework.

Science Reasoning Test

- This exam consists of scientific reasoning skills as applied to a variety of content. It covers logical deduction more than content knowledge for any specific area of science.
- It also includes a bit of graphing and an open-ended question about designing a valid scientific experiment.
- Like the critical reading exam, this test has been normed on actual Academy students during the first few weeks of fall semester each year. We also take age into consideration and adjust all scores to reflect equitable expectations for each age group.

Additional Measures of Critical Reading, Critical Thinking, Academic Discussion, and Written Expression

- The next several slides exemplify the larger lesson component of assessment in which students receive direct instruction, participate in a whole class discussion, receive feedback, and are given opportunities to improve their work.
- The material presented here comes directly from our curriculum and meets our criteria for inclusion on an assessment. The instructions provided are also direct reflections of how we administer this portion of the assessment.
- It would be a good idea for applicants to go through the next set of slides, read the story, write responses to the questions, discuss the story, and then write their paragraph responses. It would be especially helpful for a reader to provide written feedback on this writing. Students can then revise their work. Drafting, receiving feedback, and revising written work are important in both assessment and Academy classes.

Introductory Instructional Remarks

- Assessment is not like a normal test. Tasks are not timed, and on many of them, you may ask for help. There is a lot to do today, so you will need to be focused and work hard, but you may work at your own pace throughout most of the day.
- Just like in our actual classes, you will receive a great deal of feedback to help you improve your work. Please accept the feedback as our way of helping you...not criticizing you. Published writers always work with editors; substantially revising your work is part of the process of writing.
- We are looking at not only your academic skills but also your behavior, attitude, work ethic, and ability to follow directions. We look for solid effort and the willingness to ask for help—we want you to take responsibility for producing the very best work you are able to generate.

Reading “Come on, Wagon” and Writing First Responses

- Read "Come on, Wagon," by Zenna Henderson
- Please note that this story meets all of our criteria for a real assessment except for the length. In actual assessments, we use much shorter texts to allow students more work time.
- Log on to your computer (we provide laptops), open Microsoft Word, and then open the file called “First Response to ‘Come on, Wagon.’”
- Respond to the questions as thoughtfully, thoroughly, and clearly as you can. When you are done, save your work, and we’ll help you print it. When everyone has answered these questions, we’ll begin the discussion.



Written Response Questions

1. Why did Thaddeus “outgrow” his telekinetic abilities? What role did the adult characters play in this “growth”?
2. The following lines from the story form a very clear message:
 - “Every time you teach a kid something, you teach him a hundred things that are impossible because that one thing is so” (1).
 - “Adolescence ends lots more than it begins” (1).
 - “I prayed silently, *Don’t let him be too old. O God, don’t let him be too old*” (5).

What point is the author making with these statements?

3. Explain the irony in the line near the end of the story when Thaddeus says, “But I can’t! You can’t just make a tractor do something. You gotta run it.”

Discussing the Story

- You may want to take notes during this discussion. After the discussion, you'll be writing 2-3 paragraphs analyzing the characters in the story, and using some of the ideas that come up during the discussion will help you write these responses.
- Academic discussions are a large component of most Academy classes. Today's discussion is meant to help you think deeply about the story, and it is a chance for you to show us thoughtful reflection. We are looking for active participation: show that you are listening, speak when you have something to add, don't repeat what others have already said, and use ideas from the discussion to help you write a thoughtful essay.

More Questions to Discuss and Consider

- Why does the narrator say he doesn't like kids? Does his behavior in the story support that declaration or not?
- At the bottom of page two, the narrator talks about a “side trip to the South Pacific where even I learned that there are some grown-up impossibilities that are not always absolute.” What does this mean, and why does it matter?
- After Clyde's death, the narrator says, “Thaddeus started to bawl, not from grief but bewilderment. He knew I was put out with him, and he didn't know why” (6). What do you think about this statement? Do you think Thaddeus knew or didn't know what the narrator wanted of him? Why, or why not?

Additional Questions to Discuss and Consider

The characters in “Come on, Wagon” appear to have different ideas about conformity. How do each of the following characters seem to feel about conformity vs. exceptionality:

- The narrator
- Jean (the mother)
- The grandfather
- Thaddeus when he’s younger
- Thaddeus when he’s older

What do you think the author’s main message regarding conformity is? Which of these ideas are facts from the story and which are inferences? (*We talk about making good inferences here.*)

Analytical Writing

- You will not be writing a traditional essay. Rather, you will be writing 2-3 well-written, very thoughtful paragraphs. *(This requirement will vary based on the candidate's age and degree of academic experience.)*
- Your writing will likely be between 1.5 and 3 pages, double-spaced.
- The next few slides will explain exactly what you need to do.

Paragraph One

Introduce and summarize the story:

- Include the title, author, and most important information needed to understand the tale.
- A summary is not a line-by-line retelling of the story. To write a summary, explain only the most important parts of the story in order to tell the reader about the tale without retelling the whole story itself. Imagine you are explaining what this text is about to person who hasn't ever read it. The trick is to make sure you cover everything that is important but to not bore the reader with every little detail.
- On the other hand, make sure you include all of the important information so the summary is clear and complete. A summary should not include any analysis or opinions...just explain the story. Then, when you're done writing, reread what you have written and make sure you've followed the directions here.

Paragraph Two

Explain what message this story portrays about conformity:

- How do the adults in the story feel about conformity? How does Thaddeus initially respond to adult expectations of conformity, and why/how do his responses change toward the end of the story?
- Write about your inference regarding conformity in this story, making sure your idea is thoughtful and well explained. Your job is to convince the reader that your point of view is valid.
- Find sections of the text that support your ideas—you may either quote the sections directly or you may paraphrase them. Right after each quote or paraphrased section, explain exactly **how** that part of the story supports *your* analysis. This is where you explain to the reader **why** you believe your interpretation is legitimate.

Paragraph Three

Explain what message this story portrays about growing up:

- The narrator is the main character who reflects on growing up. What is his core belief about this? How do you know?
- Like the last paragraph, this one is asking you to analyze rather than summarize. Make inferences and support those ideas with the text. Explain your thinking carefully, and convince your reader that your reasoning is valid.

When you're done writing...

Go back through your essay and read it over making sure that:

- all your sentences make sense, are written clearly, and are organized logically
- you've used one or two quotes and integrated them smoothly
- you've avoided using personal pronouns like "I" and "you"
- your word choice is interesting and accurate
- you have transitions between ideas
- you've used correct punctuation and grammar (including keeping your verb tenses consistent)
- you've explained all your ideas thoughtfully and thoroughly

