

North Carolina End-of-Course Test of English I

What are the purposes of the NC Testing Program?

The North Carolina end-of-course tests are required by General Statute 115C-174.10 as a component of the North Carolina Annual Testing Program. As stated, the purposes of North Carolina state-mandated tests are “(i) to assure that all high school graduates possess those minimum skills and that knowledge thought necessary to function as a member of society; (ii) to provide a means of identifying strengths and weaknesses in the education process in order to improve instructional delivery; and (iii) to establish additional means for making the education system at the State, local, and school levels accountable to the public for results.” This English I end-of-course test is one component of the North Carolina Testing Program.

At the LEA level, each student’s English I end-of-course assessment results are included in the student’s permanent records and high school transcript. LEAs shall use results from the assessment as at least twenty-five percent (25%) of the student’s final grade in the course. At the state level, student scores from the English I assessment are used in the computation of school growth and performance composites for the ABCs. At the federal level, English I results are used to meet the *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001* (NCLB) high school test requirements in reading.

According to the State Board of Education (SBE) policy HSP-N-004 (16 NCAC 6D. 0503) students entering the ninth grade for the first time in 2006-07 and beyond are required to meet new exit standards. To meet graduation exit standards, students are required to perform at Achievement Level III (with one standard error of measurement) or above on the English I assessment and four other designated end-of-course assessments.

What is measured by the test?

The English I end-of-course test assesses the goals for English I described in the *North Carolina Standard Course of Study*. The test consists of two separate sections: composition and textual analysis. The composition section, part 1, contains four student draft papers with five to eight associated questions for each, for a total of 28 questions. The student draft papers represent expressive, informational, argumentative, or critical text modes of writing. Students are asked to read the student drafts and respond to related questions about editing and composition.

The textual analysis section, part 2, contains seven literary selections and 52 questions. The selections include poetry; informational, fictional, or expressive nonfiction texts; and either an argumentative or critical text. Each selection is followed by six to nine associated questions. The students are asked to answer related questions in which they must analyze the text for general comprehension as well as author’s craft and strategies.

Table 1: North Carolina End-of-Course Test of English I Measured Content

Goal	Description of Goal
1	The learner will express reflections and reactions to print and nonprint text and personal experiences
2	The learner will explain meaning, describe processes, and answer research questions to inform an audience.
3	The learner will examine argumentation and develop informed opinions.
4	The learner will create and use standards to critique communication.
5	The learner will demonstrate understanding of various literary genres, concepts, elements, and terms.
6	The learner will apply conventions of grammar and language usage.

How is the test administered? A multiple-choice test, the North Carolina End-of-Course Test of English I has 56 operational items and 24 embedded field-test items for a total of 80 items. The embedded field-test items are not included in the student score. The test is administered within a fixed block of time, not to exceed four hours, within the last ten days (traditional) or five days (semester) of the course. Multiple equivalent forms are administered in each classroom to provide information for curriculum evaluation and planning. Test scores are aggregated at the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction to fulfill the state and federal reporting requirements for the accountability systems and the state assessment systems.

How was the test developed? The reading selections were chosen by North Carolina English I language arts educators to reflect the variety of reading done by students as described in the curriculum for English I and to ensure accessibility to a majority of students. The selections chosen are ones that would generally be read by students, would be interesting to the students, and have appropriate content for a reading comprehension test at grade 9. The questions for each selection were written and reviewed by trained North Carolina teachers and educators during the 2004-2005 school year and were field-tested in the 2005-2006 school year. Each field-test question was administered to approximately 1,200 students from randomly selected schools across the state. The English I test was implemented statewide for the first time in the fall of 2006.

What kinds of scores do students receive on the test? The scores on the North Carolina End-of-Course Test of English I are reported as scale scores. Each student's scale score is converted to one of the four achievement level categories (shown below) to provide an interpretation of student performance relative to the English I *Standard Course of Study*. In addition, student scores are reported as percentile ranks, which are generated from a statewide distribution of students who took the test during 2006-07, the first operational year.

Table 2: Achievement Levels for the North Carolina End-of-Course Test of English I

Level I	Level II	Level III	Level IV
Less than or equal to 137	138-145	146-156	Greater than or equal to 157

Level I Achievement Level Descriptor

Students performing at this level do not have sufficient mastery of knowledge and skills of the course to be successful at a more advanced level in the content area.

Students performing at Achievement Level I demonstrate the need to develop the composition and reading comprehension skills required in the English I North Carolina *Standard Course of Study*. Students inconsistently identify and correct rudimentary language convention errors (such as incorrect verb usage, end punctuation errors, double negatives, capitalization errors, and non-standard verb forms). Students show little to no evidence of reading skills and strategies required to comprehend a variety of ninth-grade-level expressive, informational, argumentative, critical, and literary texts.

Level II Achievement Level Descriptor

Students performing at this level demonstrate inconsistent mastery of knowledge and skills of the course and are minimally prepared to be successful at a more advanced level in the content area.

Students performing at Achievement Level II demonstrate inconsistent application of the composition and reading skills required in the English I North Carolina *Standard Course of Study*. Students inconsistently apply knowledge of grammar and language usage to identify and correct language convention errors in spelling, punctuation, and simple sentence structure. Students show an initial understanding of basic literary devices and elements (such as symbolism, plot structure, and figurative language). Students may also inconsistently apply strategies such as determining the

meaning of unfamiliar vocabulary through context clues and identifying the main idea and supporting details. Students show inconsistent literal comprehension of a variety of ninth-grade-level expressive, informational, argumentative, critical, and other literary texts.

Level III Achievement Level Descriptor

Students performing at this level consistently demonstrate mastery of the course subject matter and skills and are well prepared for a more advanced level in the content area.

Students performing at Achievement Level III typically demonstrate composition and reading comprehension skills required by the English I North Carolina *Standard Course of Study*. Students typically demonstrate an understanding of conventional written expression by editing sentences for correctness, clarity, and style. Students can infer, generalize, draw conclusions, and make connections between texts. Students can analyze the impact of details and literary elements and devices (such as characterization, dialect, imagery, symbolism, main idea, purpose, context, and figurative language) on the work as a whole. Students are typically able to comprehend and analyze a variety of ninth-grade-level expressive, informational, argumentative, critical, and other literary texts.

Level IV Achievement Level Descriptor

Students performing at this level consistently perform in a superior manner clearly beyond that required to be proficient in the course subject matter and skills and are very well prepared for a more advanced level in the content area.

Students performing at Level IV demonstrate a strong command of the composition and reading comprehension skills required by the English I North Carolina *Standard Course of Study*. Students consistently demonstrate an understanding of conventional written expression by editing various sentence types for correctness, clarity, and style. By inferring, generalizing, drawing conclusions, and making connections between texts, students comprehend with breadth and depth a variety of ninth-grade-level texts. Students can analyze the impact of details and more complex literary elements and devices (such as style, diction, and tone) on the work as a whole. Students can analyze and evaluate purpose, audience, context, and elements of communication particular to expressive, informational, critical, argumentative, and other literary texts.

Sample Items

On the following pages are samples of the types of items that appear on the North Carolina End-of-Course Test of English I. The objective indicates the curriculum objective the item is designed to assess. The thinking skill corresponds to the level of thinking the item requires as defined by the thinking skills taxonomy adapted from *Dimensions of Thinking* by Robert J. Marzano et al. A description of the Thinking Skills used in the North Carolina Testing Program and additional sample items can be found on the NCDPI web site at www.ncpublicschools.org/accountability/testing

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Read this selection about a Peace Corps volunteer and answer the questions that follow.

Only in the Peace Corps

by Rachel Peña

There you are sitting on the side of a muddy Paraguayan road, waiting for a bus, when you bite into a broccoli-filled tortilla and realize that you've made a difference.

Tranquilo. All 32 of you will fit on this 15-passenger bus.

Tranquilo. You'll learn Spanish and Guarani in 90 days.

Tranquilo. This isn't even close to as hot as it gets here.

Be *tranquilo*. Be patient. Relax. Take it easy.

I had come to Paraguay with big plans. I had goals. I had an agenda. I had very specifically defined how I would measure my success. I had trouble being *Tranquilo*.

Perhaps it's part of growing up in America, perhaps, it's just me, but patience was a virtue I'd always had trouble understanding. And now, as I prepared for my Peace Corps service in Paraguay, I was becoming more confused than ever. I thought we were here to help. I thought we were here to make a difference. I didn't think we were here to relax.

And yet, every time I turned around: *Tranquilo.* You'll learn Spanish and Guarani in the next 14 days.

Tranquilo. It gets much hotter than this.

Tranquilo. Tranquilo. Tranquilo.

I can't tell you how many times I heard that word during the three months of training. From trainers, from bus drivers, from my host family. In cafes, in the market, in the health center. And always, it was delivered with a calmness and a smile. In a manner that someone of little patience, like myself, could all too easily mistake for smugness.

At the end of the three months I couldn't wait to get to my site. At last, I could get started. I could begin doing all the things that I had told myself I would accomplish.

My assignment was rural health education. The job involved a variety of basic, but important work. I visited schools to teach children about the importance of brushing their teeth and eating healthy foods. I worked with women to educate them about the dangers of cervical cancer. I worked with a Paraguayan nurse to organize and run PAP* campaigns. I also started a community garden with some teachers and their students. I joined other Peace Corps Volunteers and local Paraguayans to build sanitary latrines. I worked with the community to help establish a health clinic.

I was doing stuff. I was accomplishing things, but I couldn't help but feel I could be doing more. If it wasn't for *tranquilo*.

Tranquilo. The supplies will get here.

Tranquilo. The pigs don't know that they are supposed to stay out of the garden.

Tranquilo. It's not that hot.

The work I was most proud of, and the best times I spent in Paraguay, involved the Mothers Club which I helped form soon after I reached my village. Once a week, we would meet at a different mother's house or sometimes at the river to do laundry and bathe while we talked and learned from one another. Those women soon became my family. They warmly welcomed me into their homes, where they treated me as a daughter, a sister, a granddaughter, and a friend.

Naturally, I always had an agenda for our club meetings. A topic for discussion. A list of things I wanted to accomplish. We would talk about ways to improve nutrition

***Papanicolaou:** test to detect cervical cancer

and their diets, breast feeding, pregnancy, vaccinations, child survival, first aid, and just about anything else that was related to keeping moms and their kids healthy.

And, of course, my goal was to do more than simply talk with the women. I wanted to see results.

Tranquilo. Things cannot change overnight.

Tranquilo. More people will show up for your next workshop.

Tranquilo. We can talk about that later. Let's have some tea first.

I wanted to see that my community had the lowest rate of cervical cancer in all of Paraguay. I wanted the Ministry of Health to single out my village as the only community in Paraguay with absolutely no intestinal parasites. I wanted every family to change their diets completely to include vegetables like broccoli, which grew like crazy in the community, but none of the mothers knew how to prepare. And I wanted all this now.

Tranquilo. You are trying too hard.

Tranquilo. You will learn Spanish and Guarani yet.

Tranquilo. It gets much hotter.

Every week I would remind my friends in the Mothers Club about, among other things, the many wonderful qualities of broccoli. Its nutritional value and its ease of preparation. Yet, for all my efforts, I felt I was getting nowhere.

One day, about a year into my service, I was waiting for a bus to Asuncion in front of my neighbor's house. It had rained a few days

earlier and the roads were still muddy so it looked as though the bus might never arrive. I paced back and forth and mumbled to myself.

Tranquilo. The bus will be here soon.

I paced back and forth some more.

Tranquilo. I told myself, the bus will be here soon.

Finally, frustrated, I sat down heavily on the ground. A short while later I looked up to see little Maria Brizuela, the daughter of one of the women in my Mothers Club.

Tranquilo. The bus will be here soon, she said.

I managed a slight smile and noticed that she was holding a plate of tortillas that her mother had sent. She sat down next to me and handed me one.

③④ I took one bite and all my delusions of grandeur slipped away. I let go of my timeline and my rigid agenda. Suddenly the heat and the disappointments and the pigs in my garden and the times when nobody showed up for a workshop and the crowded buses and the total frustration with the slower pace were all worth it.

Maria Brizuela's mother had put broccoli in her tortillas.

Maria explained that her mother was cooking broccoli in lots of different foods. She said that her father was even learning to like it.

After a while, Maria returned down the dirt road, and I returned to waiting for the bus.

Tranquilo, I said to myself, it doesn't matter if the bus ever comes.

"Only in the Peace Corps" by Rachel Peña at www.peacecorps.gov.

1. Which of the following **best** describes Rachel’s approach to her work in Paraguay?

- A realistic but uninspired
- B cautious and thorough
- C determined but impatient
- D relaxed and respectful

2. Based on the selection, what does the word *tranquilo* mean?

- A calm
- B strong
- C satisfied
- D realistic

3. Which **best** explains why the author includes the following statement at the beginning of the selection?

“There you are sitting on the side of a muddy Paraguayan road, waiting for a bus, when you bite into a broccoli-filled tortilla and realize that you’ve made a difference.”

- A to describe the location of her Peace Corps assignment
- B to emphasize the difficult conditions she faced in Paraguay
- C to establish the fact that she hoped to improve nutrition in Paraguay
- D to emphasize the significance of the experience she is about to describe

4. What does the phrase “delusions of grandeur” refer to in paragraph 34?

- A Rachel’s hopes for the future
- B Rachel’s basic self-confidence
- C Rachel’s inflated sense of self-importance
- D Rachel’s feelings of anger

5. How did the experience at the bus stop **most likely** affect Rachel's remaining work in Paraguay?

- A She became even more determined to reach all her goals.
- B She put all her efforts into convincing people to include broccoli in their diet.
- C She tried to remember that meaningful change occurs gradually.
- D She continued to think the people's relaxed attitude was her greatest obstacle.

6. Which conflict is **most closely** related to the theme of this selection?

- A Rachel vs. the hot climate
- B Rachel vs. her own attitude
- C Rachel vs. the Peace Corps
- D Rachel vs. the Mothers Club

7. What does the repetition of the word *tranquilo* throughout the selection emphasize about Rachel?

- A her knowledge of Spanish
- B her effort to learn Guarani
- C her impatience with Paraguayan culture
- D her lack of effectiveness in Paraguay

End of Set

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Read this student rough draft and answer the questions that follow.

To Whom it May Concern:

(1) I was recently in your Home Supply Store in Appleton, and I purchased a Neat 'n' Clean hand vacuum. (2) It was almost \$30.00 including tax. (3) I was sure I would be pleased with this nice looking Neat 'n' Clean when I purchased it. (4) I bought this item as a gift for my mother. (5) She needed something like this item to clean out the inside of her car. (6) When I brought the item home, I knew I had the perfect gift.

(7) I wrapped it, a week later on December 15th, being that I purchased this on December 8th, I gave it to her for her 40th birthday. (8) The box had not been tampered with on the outside when I bought it. (9) She immediately fell in love with this present. (10) I knew that's what she wanted, and I knew I had bought the perfect gift. (11) She even called her sister, bragging about what she got.

(12) The following Saturday morning she opened it up and was very pleased with it's looks. (13) She got out the owner's manual and read step by step how it worked. (14) She plugged it in, turned it on, and it came on. (15) However, there was a slight problem; it would not suction nothing. (16) We, my father and I both took a look at it, and it did the same thing for us. (17) We all together got out the owner's manual and read it together. (18) My dad got out his tools, took it apart and worked on it, but still once it was put back together it did not work properly.

(19) In the owner's manual it had listed all the parts that should be with it, and they are all there. (20) I am returning it, enclosed in the same box it was purchased in, sealed with tape, and the receipt from where I purchased it. (21) Please send me another one that works properly or the exact amount of money I purchased it for.

(22) Again, the product should have worked properly from the start. (23) I am not asking for a whole lot, but I would like to have it replaced. (24) If you do as I asked I will be greatly satisfied with your company. (25) Thanks for your time and effort in this situation.

Thanks again,

Terry Wall

1. What change should be made to correct sentence 12?
- A change *up* to *up*,
 - B change *very* to *real*
 - C change *pleased* to *please*
 - D change *it's* to *its*
2. What change should be made to correct sentence 15?
- A change *However*, to *However*
 - B change *there was* to *there is*
 - C change *problem; it* to *problem, it*
 - D change *nothing* to *anything*
3. What change should be made to correct sentence 16?
- A change *We*, to *We*
 - B change *father* to *father*,
 - C change *I* to *I*,
 - D change *both* to *both*;
4. Which of the following is a run-on?
- A (1) I was recently in your Home Supply Store in Appleton, and I purchased a Neat 'n' Clean hand vacuum.
 - B (7) I wrapped it, a week later on December 15th, being that I purchased this on December 8th, I gave it to her for her 40th birthday.
 - C (11) She even called her sister, bragging about what she got.
 - D (18) My dad got out his tools, took it apart and worked on it, but still once it was put back together it did not work properly.
5. How could sentences 4 and 5 *best* be combined to enhance clarity and coherence?
- A I bought this item as a gift for my mother, who needed something like this to clean the inside of her car.
 - B I bought this item as a gift for my mother, she needed something like this to clean the inside of her car.
 - C A gift for my mother, she needed something like this to clean the inside of her car.
 - D My mother, she needed something like this to clean the inside of her car.

6. How could sentence 17 **best** be written to improve clarity and reduce repetition?
- A We thought for a while, and then we all decided to get out the owner’s manual and read it together.
 - B The owner’s manual—all together, we got it out and read it.
 - C We got out the owner’s manual and read it together.
 - D All together, we got out the owner’s manual and read it together.
7. Which of the following pieces of information is **most helpful** in supporting the writer’s request for a replacement?
- A The writer knew she had the perfect gift for her mother.
 - B The writer gave the hand vacuum to her mother for her fortieth birthday.
 - C The vacuum had no suction.
 - D The writer and her father read the owner’s manual together.

End of Set

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Answers to English I Textual Analysis and Composition Sample Items

Passage Title	Question Number	Correct Answer	Thinking Skill	Objective Number
Only in the Peace Corps	1	C	Analyzing	5.01
Only in the Peace Corps	2	A	Analyzing	6.01
Only in the Peace Corps	3	D	Analyzing	4.02
Only in the Peace Corps	4	C	Analyzing	6.01
Only in the Peace Corps	5	C	Generating	5.01
Only in the Peace Corps	6	B	Analyzing	5.01
Only in the Peace Corps	7	C	Analyzing	1.01

Passage Title	Question Number	Correct Answer	Thinking Skill	Objective Number
Neat 'n' Clean Hand Vacuum	1	D	Knowledge	6.02
Neat 'n' Clean Hand Vacuum	2	D	Applying	6.02
Neat 'n' Clean Hand Vacuum	3	C	Applying	6.02
Neat 'n' Clean Hand Vacuum	4	B	Applying	6.01
Neat 'n' Clean Hand Vacuum	5	A	Organizing	6.01
Neat 'n' Clean Hand Vacuum	6	C	Organizing	6.01
Neat 'n' Clean Hand Vacuum	7	C	Evaluating	3.01

