



# Exemplar Grade 9 Reading Test Questions



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# Introduction

This booklet explains ACT® Aspire® Early High School Reading test questions by presenting, with their answer keys, sample questions aligned to each reporting category on the test. A key includes the question’s depth-of-knowledge (DOK) level,<sup>1</sup> an explanation of the task posed by each question, a thorough explanation of correct responses, ideas for improvement, and more. The exemplar test questions included here are representative of the range of content and types of questions found on the ACT Aspire Early High School Reading test. Educators can use this resource in several ways:

- Become familiar with ACT Aspire question types.
- See what typical questions in each ACT Aspire reporting category look like.
- Help reinforce or adjust teaching and learning objectives.
- Learn how ACT Aspire improvement idea statements can help students identify key skills they have not yet mastered.

Each ACT Aspire Reading assessment contains several passages, including literary narratives (prose fiction, memoirs, personal essays) and informational texts (social science, natural science). Within and across grade levels, the passages span a range of complexity levels in order to provide students, teachers, and parents with information about how well students understand texts of increasing difficulty. Students answer a series of selected-response (multiple-choice), technology-enhanced, and constructed-response questions that assess their abilities to recognize meaning in, reason logically about, and make connections between and among texts. ACT Aspire Reading questions operate at various DOK levels, or cognitive complexities, and reflect a range of difficulty appropriate for the grade level.

All levels of ACT Aspire Reading assessments include constructed-response tasks that measure the higher-order cognitive processes necessary for reading and understanding increasingly complex texts. Constructed-response tasks are scored according to rubrics that allow students to receive varying amounts of credit for responses that are correct or partially correct, enabling differentiation between multiple skill levels.

The types of constructed-response tasks in ACT Aspire Reading assessments include the following examples:

- Formulate a conclusion by making connections within a passage, and provide support using specific details from the text.

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<sup>1</sup> Norman L. Webb, “Depth-of-Knowledge Levels for Four Content Areas,” last modified March 28, 2002, <http://facstaff.wcer.wisc.edu/normw/All%20content%20areas%20%20DOK%20levels%2032802.doc>.

- Formulate a conclusion by making connections between a pair of passages, and provide support using specific details from both texts.
- Identify cause-and-effect relationships within a passage, and provide support using specific details from the text.
- Identify similarities and differences between the key ideas of paired passages, and provide support using specific details from both texts.

## Reporting Categories

ACT Aspire Reading tests assess skills in the following reporting categories, which are the same as the categories listed in the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) Reading strand and those found in the ACT College and Career Readiness Standards in Reading.

### Key Ideas and Details

These questions require students to read texts closely; to determine central ideas and themes and summarize information and ideas accurately; and to understand sequential, comparative, and cause-effect relationships.

### Craft and Structure

These questions require students to determine word and phrase meanings and analyze an author's word choice rhetorically; to analyze text structure; and to understand purpose and point of view.

### Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

These questions require students to understand how arguments are constructed and to make connections to prior knowledge and between and among texts.

## Improvement Ideas

ACT Aspire includes simple improvement ideas at the reporting category (skill) level on student and parent reports. These improvement ideas are provided for the lowest performing skill for each subject tested. The skills are always ordered from highest performing to lowest performing based on the percentage of points correct. If the percentages for two or more skills are tied, the skill with the lower number of total points is displayed first.

Keep in mind that the order of skills listed on reports may not always be exemplary of where to focus learning. For example, the skills in which a student performed within the ACT Readiness Range may not always be listed first, and the skills in which a student did not perform within the ACT Readiness Range may not always be listed last. Also, keep in mind the total number of points possible in each skill when interpreting the percentage correct.

There are two levels of improvement idea statements (low and high) for ACT Aspire summative reporting. Low statements are given on the report if the student's lowest skill score is below the ACT Readiness Range for that particular skill. High statements are given on the report if the student's lowest skill score is at or above the ACT Readiness Range for that particular skill.

# Answer Key

This section presents a reading passage and the sequence number, grade, question type, DOK level, alignment to the ACT Aspire reporting categories, and correct response for each question. Each question is accompanied by an explanation of the question and the correct response as well as improvement idea statements for ACT Aspire Reading.

## Passage: “Words from the Master”

### Words from the Master

**LITERARY NARRATIVE:** This passage is an original work of fiction.

School ended for the day, and as usual, Lincoln and Jared headed for Lincoln’s favorite haunt: that famous delicatessen in New York City frequented by many Broadway celebrities. The boys found their favorite booth and plopped down. Lincoln opened his music composition notebook and began writing lines of music, while Jared twirled a football on his index finger. French fries were the order of the day, and when they arrived, the boys dived in.

“Hey, Linc, you know what I think?” Jared started in. A resigned smile crossed Lincoln’s face; he knew what was coming. “Every Tuesday it’s the same thing. You pull out that book and start scribbling.” Jared gestured at Lincoln’s notebook. “Then you go home and practice guitar and piano and probably write more music. Dude, you gotta get a life!”

“You’re a broken record, man,” Lincoln responded good-naturedly. “By ‘get a life,’ you mean play sports, right? So, for the thousandth time, sports are your thing; this is my thing. I want to write music—I have to write music.”

Jared studied his friend for a moment. “Yeah, I get that,” he said. There was a brief silence, and then Jared, gobbling French fries, quickly went back to his noisy teasing. “But come on, Linc, who are these people? Some of them look wicked old,” Jared teased while motioning to the hundreds of photographs lining the deli’s legendary “wall of fame.” Jared picked up his football again, pointed to it, and exclaimed, “This is where the action is, pal.”

Glancing around at the photos, Lincoln reached across and punched Jared lightly on the

arm. “Get over yourself,” he said. “You know who these people are. They made Broadway. These people are legends, so show a little respect.”

Jared looked around, feigning boredom. “Now if it was photos of the great football players that would be different. Then I’d get it,” he declared. “You know, if you’re so determined to write music, you need to go where the money is, man. Start a rock ‘n’ roll band and write the songs.” An idea formed and he offered, “Hey, I’m good at organizing my team out on the field, and they love me as their captain—I could be your manager.”

Lincoln turned his attention once again to his music. He didn’t look up, but he was grinning. “Yeah, out of the goodness of your heart, right?” he laughed. “Sorry, but no. And don’t worry, I’ll do fine writing my kind of music. You won’t be laughing when my first musical opens on Broadway. Hey, I’ll even send you free tickets.”

Neither boy noticed as the man sitting at the table behind them rose to leave. As he passed them, he paused and looked down at Lincoln’s notebook for a moment or two.

“Not bad, kid,” he said to Lincoln. “Keep at it.” Then he walked away.

“Who was that guy?” asked Jared.

Lincoln, stunned at what had just happened, stared intently at the man exiting the delicatessen. “THAT was Sir Abner Owings,” he breathed. “You know, only The Most Famous Broadway Composer Alive!”

Jared looked at Lincoln with new eyes, shouting, “And he liked your music, man; you’re gonna be famous!”

## Question 1

## Words from the Master

LITERARY NARRATIVE: This passage is an original work of fiction.

School ended for the day, and as usual, Lincoln and Jared headed for Lincoln's favorite haunt: that famous delicatessen in New York City frequented by many Broadway celebrities. The boys found their favorite booth and plopped down. Lincoln opened his music composition notebook and began writing lines of music, while Jared twirled a football on his index finger. French fries were the order of the day, and when they arrived, the boys dived in.

"Hey, Linc, you know what I think?" Jared started in. A resigned smile crossed Lincoln's face; he knew what was coming. "Every Tuesday it's the same thing. You pull out that book and start scribbling." Jared gestured at Lincoln's notebook. "Then you go home and practice guitar and piano and probably write more music. Dude, you gotta get a life!"

"You're a broken record, man," Lincoln responded good-naturedly. "By 'get a life,' you mean play sports, right? So, for the thousandth time, sports are your thing, this is my thing. I want to write music—I have to write music."

Jared studied his friend for a moment. "Yeah, I get that," he said. There was a brief silence, and then Jared, gobbling French fries, quickly went back to

Why does Lincoln most likely enjoy spending time at the delicatessen?

- A. He often sees Sir Abner Owings eating there.
- B. He hopes to be hired by a Broadway composer.
- C. He likes the after-school tradition of meeting Jared there.
- D. He wants to share the same environment as Broadway composers.

Sequence	Grade	Question type	DOK level	Reporting category	Correct response
1	EHS	Selected response	2	Key Ideas and Details	D

This selected-response question requires students to understand a cause-and-effect relationship (aligns with the Common Core State Standards College and Career Readiness anchor standard [CCRA] R.3). To answer the question, students must carefully read the passage and identify the correct reason Lincoln enjoys spending time at the delicatessen.

### Correct Response

Only answer option D identifies a reason supported by the passage that Lincoln enjoys spending time in the delicatessen ("He wants to share the same environment as Broadway composers"). All other answer options contain information that is not supported by the passage.

### Improvement Idea Statements

Reporting category	Grade	Low statement (scored below ACT Readiness Range)	High statement (scored at or above ACT Readiness Range)
Key Ideas and Details	EHS	Read a variety of grade-level texts, focusing on informational texts. Work on reading closely, determining main ideas/themes, and identifying sequences and relationships (comparative, cause/effect).	Read increasingly complex texts from a variety of genres. Work on making and supporting reasonable inferences and on identifying and inferring main ideas, themes, sequences, and relationships.

## Question 2

## Words from the Master

LITERARY NARRATIVE: This passage is an original work of fiction.

School ended for the day, and as usual, Lincoln and Jared headed for Lincoln's favorite haunt: that famous delicatessen in New York City frequented by many Broadway celebrities. The boys found their favorite booth and plopped down. Lincoln opened his music composition notebook and began writing lines of music, while Jared twirled a football on his index finger. French fries were the order of the day, and when they arrived, the boys dived in.

"Hey, Linc, you know what I think?" Jared started in. A resigned smile crossed Lincoln's face; he knew what was coming. "Every Tuesday it's the same thing. You pull out that book and start scribbling." Jared gestured at Lincoln's notebook. "Then you go home and practice guitar and piano and probably write more music. Dude, you gotta get a life!"

"You're a broken record, man," Lincoln responded good-naturedly. "By 'get a life,' you mean play sports, right? So, for the thousandth time, sports are your thing; this is my thing. I want to write music—I have to write music."

Jared studied his friend for a moment. "Yeah, I get that," he said. There was a brief silence, and then Jared, gobbling French fries, quickly went back to

What is the most likely purpose of the highlighted description of Jared playing with a football?

- A. To illustrate Jared's personal interests
- B. To demonstrate Jared's sense of humor
- C. To show that Jared wants to leave the delicatessen
- D. To reveal that Jared is not interested in the conversation

Sequence	Grade	Question type	DOK level	Reporting category	Correct response
2	EHS	Selected response	3	Craft and Structure	A

This selected-response question requires students to analyze the rhetorical role of a part of the text (aligns with CCRA R.5). To answer the question, students must read the entire highlighted sentence carefully, determine its purpose within the context of the passage, and distinguish this purpose from functions that are subordinate or for which no text support exists.

### Correct Response

Only answer option A accurately describes the main purpose of the highlighted sentence ("To illustrate Jared's personal interests"). The other answer options reference plausible rhetorical roles, but none describe the main purpose of the highlighted description.

### Improvement Idea Statements

Reporting category	Grade	Low statement (scored below ACT Readiness Range)	High statement (scored at or above ACT Readiness Range)
Craft and Structure	EHS	As you read, consider the purpose of texts and parts of texts. Also analyze how texts are organized, how authors use point of view, and how authors use words and phrases.	Read complex texts from a variety of genres. Analyze how parts of texts relate to the whole and how an author uses point of view and word choice to advance his or her purpose.

## Question 3

**Words from the Master**

**LITERARY NARRATIVE:** This passage is an original work of fiction.

School ended for the day, and as usual, Lincoln and Jared headed for Lincoln's favorite haunt, that famous delicatessen in New York City frequented by many Broadway celebrities. The boys found their favorite booth and plopped down. Lincoln opened his music composition notebook and began writing lines of music, while Jared twirled a football on his index finger. French fries were the order of the day, and when they arrived, the boys dived in.

"Hey, Linc, you know what I think?" Jared started in. A resigned smile crossed Lincoln's face; he knew what was coming. "Every Tuesday it's the same thing. You pull out that book and start scribbling." Jared gestured at Lincoln's notebook. "Then you go home and practice guitar and piano and probably write more music. Dude, you gotta get a life!"

"You're a broken record, man," Lincoln responded good-naturedly. "By 'get a life,' you mean play sports, right? So, for the thousandth time, sports are your thing, this is my thing. I want to write music—I have to write music."

Jared studied his friend for a moment. "Yeah, I get that," he said. There was a brief silence, and then Jared, gobbling French fries, quickly went back to

Think about the passage "Words from the Master" as you read the following selection.

**What Might Have Been**

The air in the sold-out theater buzzed with quiet, palpable anticipation. R. G. Plumb's musical adaptation of Dana Berry's *High Flyers* was the hottest ticket on Broadway, and I'd been on the waiting list for months. Still, I felt out of sync with the crowd around me. I wasn't disappointed that Marty had canceled. He didn't really like theater, and as much as I enjoyed his company, I could focus better by myself.

I imagined the cast backstage. Were they nervous? I had been, even with the bit parts and chorus work that I'd done, even in front of smaller audiences than this one. Not nervous about my singing—I'd always known I could sing—but nervous

This question has 4 parts. You must enter your answer for each part in the box provided. Read all parts before answering.

**Part A**

Explain one difference between the Broadway dreams of Lincoln in "Words from the Master" and the narrator in "What Might Have Been."

450

**Part B**

Give one detail from the passage "Words from the Master" to support your answer to Part A.

450

**Part C**

Give one detail from the selection "What Might Have Been" to support your answer to Part A.

450

**Part D**

Give one detail from either the passage or the selection to support your answer to Part A.

450



Sequence	Grade	Question type	DOK level	Reporting category	Correct response
3	EHS	Constructed response	3	Integration of Knowledge and Ideas	See sample student responses.

This constructed-response task requires students to make connections between information and ideas in two texts (aligns with CCRA R.9). Specifically, this task requires students to determine how the Broadway dreams of Lincoln in “Words from the Master” are different from those of the narrator in “What Might Have Been.” Students must read both the passage and the selection carefully, compare the information provided in the two texts, and determine how the dreams of these two characters are different. Students must then construct a written response identifying this difference, citing evidence from both texts to support their answer.

### Improvement Idea Statements

Reporting category	Grade	Low statement (scored below ACT Readiness Range)	High statement (scored at or above ACT Readiness Range)
Integration of Knowledge and Ideas	EHS	As you read, analyze how authors present their arguments. Also read multiple texts with similar topics or similar themes and analyze connections between and among these texts.	Read complex texts from a variety of genres. Analyze how authors present arguments, focusing on strengths and weaknesses. Also, look for connections between and among related texts.

### Scoring Framework

Claim	Evidence
An interpretive statement that explains how the Broadway dreams of Lincoln in “Words from the Master” are different from those of the narrator in “What Might Have Been” (1 point)	A detail from the passage that supports the claim (1 point)
	A detail from the selection that supports the claim (1 point)
	A detail from the passage or selection that supports the claim (1 point)

**Sample Student Response—Score Point 4****Part A**

Explain one difference between the Broadway dreams of Lincoln in the passage “Words from the Master” and the narrator in the selection “What Might Have Been.”

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Their dreams are different because Lincoln is a “creative type,” so he wants to contribute in a creative way. The narrator in “What Might Have Been” is more of a “helper type,” so he wants to help raise money for Broadway productions.

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**Part B**

Give one detail from the passage “**Words from the Master**” to support your answer to Part A.

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Lincoln tells his friend Jared that when his first musical opens, he’ll send him tickets, which shows that writing Broadway musicals is his dream.

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**Part C**

Give one detail from the selection “**What Might Have Been**” to support your answer to Part A.

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The narrator was relieved when the internship at the Wayne Foundation turned into a full-time job.

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**Part D**

Give one detail from **either** the passage or the selection to support your answer to Part A.

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The narrator from “What Might Have Been” thinks about how nervous he got during shows (for example, about remembering lines), which explains why the Wayne Foundation is a better fit for him, really.

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**Scoring Rationale**

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- 4** This response earns Score Point 4.
- An acceptable claim is offered in Part A.
  - An acceptable piece of evidence from the passage “Words from the Master” is offered in Part B.
  - An acceptable piece of evidence from the selection “What Might Have Been” is offered in Part C.
  - An acceptable piece of evidence from the selection “What Might Have Been” is offered in Part D.
-

### Sample Student Response—Score Point 3

#### Part A

Explain one difference between the Broadway dreams of Lincoln in the passage “Words from the Master” and the narrator in the selection “What Might Have Been.”

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The Broadway dreams of Lincoln are about the future. The Broadway dreams of the narrator from “What Might Have Been” are in the past, and they show how dreams can change.

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#### Part B

Give one detail from the passage “**Words from the Master**” to support your answer to Part A.

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Sir Abner Owings is this famous composer. When he says “Keep at it,” Lincoln gets all excited. Lincoln’s reaction shows how much he is thinking about the future when he, too, will be a great composer.

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#### Part C

Give one detail from the selection “**What Might Have Been**” to support your answer to Part A.

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The title shows that the narrator was at a crossroads. To be an actor, or not to be an actor. She was relieved to work at the Wayne Foundation because acting made her nervous. But she wonders what would have happened if she had taken the other fork in the road.

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#### Part D

Give one detail from **either** the passage or the selection to support your answer to Part A.

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Like I said, Lincoln is all about the future, and the other one is all about the past.

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### Scoring Rationale

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- 3** This response earns Score Point 3.
- An acceptable claim is offered in Part A.
  - An acceptable piece of evidence from the passage “Words from the Master” is offered in Part B.
  - An acceptable piece of evidence from the selection “What Might Have Been” is offered in Part C.
  - This response does not earn credit for Part D because it is not evidence from either the passage or the selection; it is a restatement of the claim.
  - Please note that a student may also receive Score Point 3 if evidence is offered in Parts B, C, and D without a claim as long as a claim is implied (see Scoring Guideline v.)
  - Please note that a student may also receive Score Point 3 if an acceptable claim is offered in Part A and acceptable evidence from the passage is offered in two additional parts.
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## Sample Student Response—Score Point 2

### Part A

Explain one difference between the Broadway dreams of Lincoln in the passage “Words from the Master” and the narrator in the selection “What Might Have Been.”

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Lincoln’s dreams are extremely firm—he has no doubts at all. But the narrator from the selection was less sure about what she wanted to do.

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### Part B

Give one detail from the passage “**Words from the Master**” to support your answer to Part A.

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“So, for the thousandth time, sports are your thing; this is my thing. I want to write music—I have to write music.”

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### Part C

Give one detail from the selection “**What Might Have Been**” to support your answer to Part A.

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Wayne Foundation

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### Part D

Give one detail from **either** the passage or the selection to support your answer to Part A.

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## Scoring Rationale

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- 2 This response earns Score Point 2.
- An acceptable claim is offered in Part A.
  - An acceptable piece of evidence from the passage “Words from the Master” is offered in Part B.
  - This response does not receive credit for Part C because it is insufficient. The response does not support the idea that the narrator is “less sure about what she wanted to do.”
  - This response does not receive credit for Part D because no response is offered.
  - Please note that a student may also receive Score Point 2 if evidence is offered without a claim as long as a claim is implied (see Scoring Guideline v.)
  - Please note that a student may also receive Score Point 2 if an acceptable claim is offered in Part A and acceptable evidence from the selection “What Might Have Been” is offered in Part C or evidence from the passage or selection is offered in part D.
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**Sample Student Response—Score Point 1****Part A**

Explain one difference between the Broadway dreams of Lincoln in the passage “Words from the Master” and the narrator in the selection “What Might Have Been.”

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**Part B**

Give one detail from the passage “**Words from the Master**” to support your answer to Part A.

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**Part C**

Give one detail from the selection “**What Might Have Been**” to support your answer to Part A.

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The narrator thinks about how things worked out good because when he was acting he got nervous a lot.

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**Part D**

Give one detail from **either** the passage or the selection to support your answer to Part A.

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I think the Wayne Foundation probably gives money to Broadway.

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**Scoring Rationale**

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- 1 This response earns Score Point 1.
- An acceptable piece of evidence from the selection “What Might Have Been” is offered in Part C.
  - This response does not earn credit for Part A because no claim is offered.
  - This response does not earn credit for Part B because no evidence from the passage is offered.
  - This response does not earn credit for Part D because the information does not support a claim of difference between the passage and the selection.
  - Please note that a response may earn Score Point 1 if a claim is offered in Part A.
  - Please note that a response may earn Score Point 1 if evidence from the passage “Words from the Master” is offered in Parts B or D.
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**Sample Student Response—Score Point 0****Part A**

Explain one difference between the Broadway dreams of Lincoln in the passage “Words from the Master” and the narrator in the selection “What Might Have Been.”

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Both dream of being famous on Broadway.

**Part B**

Give one detail from the passage “**Words from the Master**” to support your answer to Part A.

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“You won’t be laughing when my first musical opens on Broadway. Hey, I’ll even send you free tickets.”

**Part C**

Give one detail from the selection “**What Might Have Been**” to support your answer to Part A.

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The narrator wants to be a famous singer because “I’d always known I could sing.”

**Part D**

Give one detail from **either** the passage or the selection to support your answer to Part A.

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Lincoln already has his picture in the delicatessen.

**Scoring Rationale**

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- 0** This response earns Score Point 0.
- This response does not earn credit for Part A because it offers a similarity, not a difference.
  - This response does not earn credit for Part B because it supports an unacceptable claim (see Scoring Guideline x.)
  - This response does not earn credit for Part C because it misunderstands the author’s purpose for including that detail and because it supports an unacceptable claim.
  - This response does not earn credit for Part D because it is not supported by the text.
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## Scoring Guidelines

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- i. A credible claim is an interpretive statement based on evidence from the text.
  - ii. Creditable evidence may be verbatim, paraphrased, or a logical inference based on information from the text.
  - iii. Credit may be given to an otherwise insufficient claim if the student offers accurate and appropriate evidence.
  - iv. Credible evidence must indicate a logical connection to the claim.
  - v. Some students may offer evidence that implies a claim. In this case, a point is awarded for each textual detail but not for the implied claim. The maximum score for a response that offers two or more pieces of evidence but no claim is Score Point 3.
  - vi. The maximum score for a response that offers more than one claim but no evidence is Score Point 1.
  - vii. If a response gives the same answer or support twice using different words, it does not earn additional credit.
  - viii. Responses do not have to be in complete sentences or paragraphs. Even a one- or two-word response can receive a point.
  - ix. Extraneous material in a response, as long as it doesn't contradict the appropriate response, is not taken into consideration when assigning a score.
  - x. When a response offers an incorrect claim, evidence is not credible, even if this evidence is listed among the acceptable responses.
  - xi. Each part of the response must be entered in the correct box. Each part can receive a maximum of 1 point, even if multiple pieces of evidence are offered in the same box.
-