THIRD EDITION

NINTH GRADE

CUBED3
Decoding. Language. Reading.

NLM READING
Narrative Langage Measures

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Benchmark Record Forms
Beginning of Year / Middle of Year / End of Year

School: _____ Name: _____

Teacher: _____ Date of Birth: _____ Grade: ____

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Luna Reyes adjusted her camera settings in the fading twilight of her grandmother's garden, which had long been a place of solace. As her grandmother's memory slipped away like petals from withering roses, Luna had promised to capture their family's story through photography. But her latest images were chaotic, like a sketch drawn with an unsteady hand.

Luna reviewed the pictures in frustration, her vision blurring with tears. She recalled from her photography class that shooting in low light requires balancing settings like shutter speed and aperture. A slower shutter speed exposes the camera's sensor to more light but may cause motion blur if the camera or subject moves.

Aperture refers to the size of the lens opening, which can alter brightness as well as depth. Determined to improve, Luna decided to focus on adjusting her camera settings. She spent the next morning carefully making changes, but despite their technical precision, the photos felt cold and lifeless, failing to reflect her grandmother's vibrant spirit that still flickered beneath the surface.

Discouraged, Luna decided to turn to her grandmother for guidance. As Luna showed her the images, her grandmother gently folded her weathered hands over Luna's, which trembled with fatigue, and said, "Pictures speak their own truth. The most beautiful photographs capture life as it is. Even these shaky old hands, tell a story worth sharing." Inspired, Luna let go of her pursuit of perfection and followed her grandmother into the garden, capturing moments of authenticity: her trembling hands nurturing the blooms and her radiant smile matched the glow of the fleeting sunlight.

When Luna reviewed the new shots, a sense of accomplishment washed over her. The images revealed the garden's fading beauty, wild and tangled, mirroring her grandmother's cherished yet faltering memories. The evening sun bathed the overgrown garden in light, which softened the decay and transformed it into a breathtaking scene.

That evening, she showed the pictures to her grandmother, whose eyes lit up with recognition as she traced the photos with trembling fingers that paused on each image. Luna realized true beauty lay in life's unpredictability, not perfection.

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Child Name/ID _____ Audio File _____ Examiner _____ Date _____

DECODING FLUENCY · ORAL READING

Place the passage in front of the student. **SAY: "Please read this out loud. Do your very best reading. I'll help you if you need it. When you're done, I might read some of the passage to you and then I will ask you to tell me the story."** Put a slash [/] through incorrect words (mispronunciations, substitutions, skipped words). If the student fails to read a word after 3 seconds, say the word and mark it incorrect. Self-corrections within 3 sec., repetitions, and insertions are not errors. If the student struggles significantly, you may finish reading after 1 minute, then administer the DDM after the retell and questions.

1	Luna Reyes adjusted her camera settings in the fading twilight of her grandmother's garden, which had long been	18
2	a place of solace. As her grandmother's memory slipped away like petals from withering roses, Luna had promised	36
3	to capture their family's story through photography. But her latest images were chaotic, like a sketch drawn	53
4	with an unsteady hand.	57
5	Luna reviewed the pictures in frustration, her vision blurring with tears. She recalled from her photography	73
6	class that shooting in low light requires balancing settings like shutter speed and aperture. A slower shutter	90
7	speed exposes the camera's sensor to more light but may cause motion blur if the camera or subject moves.	109
8	Aperture refers to the size of the lens opening, which can alter brightness as well as depth. Determined to	128
9	improve, Luna decided to focus on adjusting her camera settings. She spent the next morning carefully making	145
10	changes, but despite their technical precision, the photos felt cold and lifeless, failing to reflect her	161
11	grandmother's vibrant spirit that still flickered beneath the surface.	170
12	Discouraged, Luna decided to turn to her grandmother for guidance. As Luna showed her the images, her	187
13	grandmother gently folded her weathered hands over Luna's, which trembled with fatigue, and said, "Pictures	202
14	speak their own truth. The most beautiful photographs capture life as it is. Even these shaky old hands, tell	222
15	a story worth sharing." Inspired, Luna let go of her pursuit of perfection and followed her grandmother into the	240
16	garden, capturing moments of authenticity: her trembling hands nurturing the blooms and her radiant smile	255
17	matched the glow of the fleeting sunlight.	262
18	When Luna reviewed the new shots, a sense of accomplishment washed over her. The images revealed the garden's	280
19	fading beauty, wild and tangled, mirroring her grandmother's cherished yet faltering memories. The evening sun	295
20	bathed the overgrown garden in light, which softened the decay and transformed it into a breathtaking scene.	312
21	That evening, she showed the pictures to her grandmother, whose eyes lit up with recognition as she traced the	331
22	photos with trembling fingers that paused on each image. Luna realized true beauty lay in life's	347
23	unpredictability, not perfection.	350

CWPM
Words read in 1 min _____ – errors _____ = _____

ACCURACY
correct _____ ÷ total _____ = _____ %

PROSODY — *select one*

1. Primarily word-by-word reading. No meaningful syntax.
2. Primarily 2-word phrases. Awkward word groupings.
3. Primarily 3-to-4 word phrases. Mostly appropriate phrasing and syntax.
4. Meaningful phrases. Appropriate syntax. Expressive interpretation.

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NLM RETELL · NARRATIVE DISCOURSE COMPLEXITY (NDC)

NDC SCORE: /26

After the student reads the entire passage, take the student's copy away and **SAY: "Thank you for reading and listening. Now you tell me that story."** Score the retell for story grammar. Acceptable prompts (up to 3x): "Are you finished?" "It's OK. Just do your best." "I can't help you, but you can just tell the parts you remember."

Element	Score 2	Score 1	Score 0	Score
Character	Luna	a girl	she, her	2 1 0
Setting	taking photos in grandmother's garden	taking photos / in grandmother's garden	no location or activity	2 1 0
Problem (P)	images were blurry and chaotic	pictures were not good	no problem	2 1 0
Feeling	frustrated, disappointed	blurry vision, tears	no feeling or behavior	2 1 0
Plan (PL)	decided to adjust camera settings	wanted to fix pictures	no plan or internal thought	2 1 0
Attempt (A)	adjusted camera settings	fixed the camera	no attempt	2 1 0
Consequence (CP)	photos felt cold / lifeless	photos did not look right	no consequence	2 1 0
Feeling-2	discouraged	frowned	no feeling or behavior	2 1 0
Plan-2 (PL2)	decided to ask her grandmother for help	wanted help	no plan or internal thought	2 1 0
Attempt-2 (A2)	showed technical photos to grandmother / took photos focusing on authenticity	showed them to her / took more photos	no attempt	2 1 0
Consequence (C)	captured grandmother's beauty / spirit	got good pictures	no consequence	2 1 0
Ending (E)	grandmother recognized / responded emotionally	showed grandmother the photos	no ending	2 1 0
End Feeling	felt accomplished	liked the photos	no feeling or behavior	2 1 0

Score sentence complexity and vocabulary during retell and from audio recording.

SENTENCE COMPLEXITY (SC)

SC SCORE: /15

because / so that	1 1 1
when / while	1 1 1
after / before	1 1 1
since / however / although	1 1 1
(N) that / which / who	1 1 1

VOCABULARY COMPLEXITY (VC)

VC SCORE: /10

solace	1	chaotic	1
precision	1	authentic	1
pursuit	1	fleeting	1
faltering	1	vibrant	1
_____	1	_____	1

EXPOSITORY DISCOURSE COMPLEXITY (EDC)

EDC SCORE: /3

SAY: "Now I'm going to ask you some questions about the story. Just do your best to answer what you remember." If the student asks for clarification, the question may be asked a second time but not reworded. Circle each point or detail mentioned.

Tell me everything you learned from the passage about adjusting camera settings for low-light photography.	**Tier-3: aperture** / *lens opening affects brightness and depth*	1
	Tier-3: shutter speed / *slower speed exposes sensor to more light*	1
	General concept *(e.g., more light needs to enter the camera)*	1

THEME

SAY: "In one or two sentences, tell me the lesson or message of this passage."

- ◯ **Complete** states the lesson or message clearly and accurately.
- ◯ **Partial** hints at the message but stays vague or names a related idea rather than the central one.
- ◯ **Detail-only** retells events or names a character/action instead of stating a message.
- ◯ **Absent** no response, "I don't know," or off-topic.

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NLM QUESTIONS

VOCABULARY & MORPHOLOGICAL AWARENESS (VMA)

VMA SCORE: /8

precision — *accurate, exact*

1 **SAY: "What does *precision* mean?"** (1) (½) (0)

1: exact · accurate · exactly right · **½:** careful · doing it right · no mistakes · **0:** incorrect

2a **SAY: "What are the parts in *precision* that help you know what it means?"** *(precise, -sion)* (1) (0)

2b **If 2a is 0, teach and re-ask:** "The parts in *precision* are *precise* and *-sion*. Now, what do you think *precision* means?" (½) (0)

↳ *If the student names only the root or base, ask: "Can you explain what precision means?" Score the follow-up.*

2c **If 2b is 0, SAY: "The story says Luna needed to adjust the camera settings very carefully — the settings had technical *precision*. What does *precision* mean?"** (½) (0)

↳ If vague ("good"): "What else does *precision* mean?"

2d **If 2c is 0, SAY: "Does *precision* mean (a) exact, (b) complicated, or (c) noisy?"** (½) (0)

3a **SAY: "Make a new word out of *precise* by adding a prefix or suffix."** (1) (0)

3b **If a new word given, SAY: "Use _____ in a sentence."** (1) (0)

authenticity — *real, genuine*

1 **SAY: "What does *authenticity* mean?"** (1) (½) (0)

1: real · genuine · true to what something actually is · **½:** honest · not fake · truthful about people · **0:** incorrect

2a **SAY: "What are the parts in *authenticity* that help you know what it means?"** *(authentic, -ity)* (1) (0)

2b **If 2a is 0, teach and re-ask:** "The parts in *authenticity* are *authentic* and *-ity*. Now, what do you think *authenticity* means?" (½) (0)

↳ *If the student names only the root or base, ask: "Can you explain what authenticity means?" Score the follow-up.*

2c **If 2b is 0, SAY: "Luna let go of the pursuit of perfection and captured moments of *authenticity*, revealing the garden's fading beauty. What does *authenticity* mean?"** (½) (0)

↳ If vague ("nice"): "What else does *authenticity* mean?"

2d **If 2c is 0, SAY: "Does *authenticity* mean (a) being real or genuine, (b) being beautiful, or (c) being loud?"** (½) (0)

3a **SAY: "Make a new word out of *authentic* by adding a prefix or suffix."** (1) (0)

3b **If a new word given, SAY: "Use _____ in a sentence."** (1) (0)

INFERENTIAL REASONING & CRITICAL THINKING (IRCT)

IRCT SCORE: /6

Question	Proficient (2)	Emergent (1)	Not Yet Proficient (0)	Score
What might Luna's frustration about her first set of photos reveal about her personality?	She is a perfectionist / goal-oriented / determined to improve	She doesn't like to mess up / likes things perfect / names a personality trait	Does not name a personality trait / unrelated / no response	(2) (1) (0)
How does Luna's struggle with technical perfection reflect broader societal values about beauty and achievement?	Society is focused on perfection — for things to be beautiful, perfection must be achieved	Vague description of societal pressure for perfection	Unrelated / no response	(2) (1) (0)
What kind of relationship do you think the grandmother and Luna have? Why?	Close relationship — she asks for advice / wants to preserve her grandmother's memory	Close / good / they love each other	Unrelated / no response	(2) (1) (0)

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METACOGNITION (MC)

MC SCORE: /6

Question	Proficient (2)	Emergent (1)	Not Yet Proficient (0)	Score
1. Why do you think Luna initially focused so much on technical perfection?	She focused on technical perfection because she thought it would produce meaningful photos.	She thought technical skills matter most	Unrelated / no response.	2 1 0
2. Why do you think Luna's grandmother valued the imperfect photographs?	The photos captured real emotions and memories instead of perfect images.	She liked the pictures because they felt real	Unrelated / no response.	2 1 0
3. Why do you think the grandmother's advice affected Luna so strongly?	She helped Luna realize meaningful photos capture real life rather than perfection.	Her grandmother helped her feel better	Unrelated / no response.	2 1 0

NLM READING BENCHMARK – COMPOSITE SCORE

Reading Fluency **(CWPM)** = _____
Sentence Complexity **(SC)** = _____
Vocabulary Complexity **(VC)** = _____
Expository Discourse Complexity **(EDC)** = _____
Vocabulary & Morphological Awareness **(VMA)** = _____
Inferential Reasoning & Critical Thinking **(IRCT)** = _____
Metacognition **(MC)** = _____

COMPOSITE SCORE
(sum of raw scores above) [ ]

Cut point for academic concern:

High Risk: ≤ 77
Moderate Risk: 78-126
Low Risk: ≥ 127

.92 AUC / 94% Sensitivity / 82% Specificity

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DDM – DECODING INVENTORY (OPTIONAL)

DI SCORE: /88

Administer only if oral reading fluency was a concern. Display the appropriate Decoding Inventory page from the benchmark stimulus book.
SAY: "Please read these words. They are not real words." Point to the first word. Corrective prompt (1× max): "Remember, these are not real words."
HOW TO SCORE. Any acceptable sound counts as correct; underline the entire word if blended correctly; circle the bolded targets blended correctly (read as one syllable). Target correct = 1 point; whole word correct = 1 point. **Words in Black Box** = benchmark words; Words outside box = extended set.

TARGET: Closed Syllables

WHOLE WORDS BLENDED CORRECTLY = ☐ 6

min sal jom vun quin whav | fap deg gib les pag rud tus baf shil het wan kex zick chom thuz vill cass noff

TARGET: Vowel-Consonant-E

WHOLE WORDS BLENDED CORRECTLY = ☐ 6

naze gude mepe sule wonkide atane | jime tebe goke fene vome rame sove

TARGET: Basic Affixes

WHOLE WORDS BLENDED CORRECTLY = ☐ 6 CORRECT TARGETS = ☐ 6

hez**es** paf**ed** sen**est** bru**ful** tem**ness** **pre**miv | fot**ing** **un**ron **re**pog miv**er** dut**less** gip**ly**

TARGET: Vowel Teams

WHOLE WORDS BLENDED CORRECTLY = ☐ 6 CORRECT TARGETS = ☐ 7

f**ee**p n**ai**g t**ou**v k**ea**t h**ea**g g**ou**p**ai**k | z**ay** l**oa**k z**oo**n s**ou**d w**oo**k p**oi**g sh**aw** h**ie**b r**oe**f z**ow** b**ew**k p**au**k

TARGET: Vowel-R-Controlled

WHOLE WORDS BLENDED CORRECTLY = ☐ 6 CORRECT TARGETS = ☐ 7

kl**ar** n**er** f**oar**p m**our** l**are** l**ir**p**ar**g | t**or** w**ir** pl**oor** r**ar**k z**ai**r k**ear** z**ur** th**eer** gl**ier** s**earc** l**our**t v**our** sl**ore**

TARGET: Advanced Affixes

WHOLE WORDS BLENDED CORRECTLY = ☐ 6 CORRECT TARGETS = ☐ 6

mub**tion** **dis**cla gob**ic** mav**ible** gop**ture** gep**ous** | **bi**mog **tri**zom **non**plut zik**able** **mis**dut **trans**bub **uni**quin vi**rupt**

TARGET: Complex Vowels

WHOLE WORDS BLENDED CORRECTLY = ☐ 6 CORRECT TARGETS = ☐ 7

v**ind** n**ild** z**ough** k**eigh** gl**aught** k**ighdost** | v**ost** gr**old** f**igh** p**ight** w**ought** p**ough** kl**augh**

TARGET: Advanced Word Forms

WHOLE WORDS BLENDED CORRECTLY = ☐ 6 CORRECT TARGETS = ☐ 7

we**cent** sm**ink** l**omb** gli**stle** oh**ong** gr**ombacent** | bri**sm** gr**unk** m**ank** **gho**sl fu**tle**

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Maya Davis stepped up to the starting line of the regional distance qualifier, the race that would determine whether she earned a spot at the championship, having trained all season for this moment. When her teammate Harper jogged over and told her quietly to just run her race, the words settled over her like a steadying hand.

The starting signal fired, and Maya settled into her pace, her breathing controlled as she positioned herself in the middle of the pack. But several laps in, a sharp, twisting pain seized her right calf — a sudden, searing desperation spreading through her as the muscle locked tight beneath her skin. If she couldn't shake the cramp, the championship and months of strenuous preparation would slip through her fingers like sand.

"Keep moving, keep moving," she told herself, desperately trying to stretch the cramp out mid-stride. She remembered her athletic trainer explaining that muscle cramps occur when a muscle contracts involuntarily and cannot relax, typically caused by dehydration or a deficiency of electrolytes like sodium and potassium, which muscles require to regulate contraction and recovery.

Maya tried lengthening her stride to loosen the locked muscle, but the pain only tightened its grip. She slowed to an agonizing jog as the other runners pulled ahead, and a wave of despair washed over her like cold water rising. Harper appeared at the edge of the track and thrust a bottle toward her, shouting that her muscles were depleted and needed electrolytes immediately.

Maya grabbed the bottle without stopping, forcing down several gulps as she kept her legs moving. The cramp began to loosen, slowly at first, then enough for her to lengthen her pace. She wouldn't win — but she didn't need to. With one lap remaining, she surged forward, her legs burning but holding steady, and crossed the line in fourth place, just enough to qualify.

Harper found her at the finish line, and when their eyes met, no words were necessary. A quiet, profound relief moved through Maya as she understood what the race had required — not a flawless performance, but the refusal to let the pain have the last word.

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DECODING FLUENCY · ORAL READING

Place the passage in front of the student. **SAY: "Please read this out loud. Do your very best reading. I'll help you if you need it. When you're done, I might read some of the passage to you and then I will ask you to tell me the story."** Put a slash [/] through incorrect words (mispronunciations, substitutions, skipped words). If the student fails to read a word after 3 seconds, say the word and mark it incorrect. Self-corrections within 3 sec., repetitions, and insertions are not errors. If the student struggles significantly, you may finish reading after 1 minute, then administer the DDM after the retell and questions.

1	Maya Davis stepped up to the starting line of the regional distance qualifier, the race that would	17
2	determine whether she earned a spot at the championship, having trained all season for this moment.	33
3	When her teammate Harper jogged over and told her quietly to just run her race, the words settled	51
4	over her like a steadying hand.	57
5	The starting signal fired, and Maya settled into her pace, her breathing controlled as she positioned	73
6	herself in the middle of the pack. But several laps in, a sharp, twisting pain seized her right calf —	93
7	a sudden, searing desperation spreading through her as the muscle locked tight beneath her skin.	108
8	If she couldn't shake the cramp, the championship and months of strenuous preparation would	122
9	slip through her fingers like sand.	127
10	"Keep moving, keep moving," she told herself, desperately trying to stretch the cramp out mid-stride.	142
11	She remembered her athletic trainer explaining that muscle cramps occur when a muscle	154
12	contracts involuntarily and cannot relax, typically caused by dehydration or a deficiency of	167
13	electrolytes like sodium and potassium, which muscles require to regulate contraction and recovery.	180
14	Maya tried lengthening her stride to loosen the locked muscle, but the pain only tightened its grip.	198
15	She slowed to an agonizing jog as the other runners pulled ahead, and a wave of despair washed	216
16	over her like cold water rising. Harper appeared at the edge of the track and thrust a bottle toward	235
17	her, shouting that her muscles were depleted and needed electrolytes immediately.	246
18	Maya grabbed the bottle without stopping, forcing down several gulps as she kept her legs moving.	262
19	The cramp began to loosen, slowly at first, then enough for her to lengthen her pace. She wouldn't	280
20	win — but she didn't need to. With one lap remaining, she surged forward, her legs burning but	297
21	holding steady, and crossed the line in fourth place, just enough to qualify.	310
22	Harper found her at the finish line, and when their eyes met, no words were necessary. A quiet,	327
23	profound relief moved through Maya as she understood what the race had required — not a flawless	343
24	performance, but the refusal to let the pain have the last word.	356

CWPM
Words read in 1 min _____ – errors _____ = _____

ACCURACY
correct _____ ÷ total _____ = _____ %

PROSODY — *select one*

1. Primarily word-by-word reading. No meaningful syntax.
2. Primarily 2-word phrases. Awkward word groupings.
3. Primarily 3-to-4 word phrases. Mostly appropriate phrasing and syntax.
4. Meaningful phrases. Appropriate syntax. Expressive interpretation.

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NLM RETELL · NARRATIVE DISCOURSE COMPLEXITY (NDC)

NDC SCORE: /26

After the student reads the entire passage, take the student's copy away and **SAY: "Thank you for reading and listening. Now you tell me that story."** Score the retell for story grammar. Acceptable prompts (up to 3x): "Are you finished?" "It's OK. Just do your best." "I can't help you, but you can just tell the parts you remember."

Element	Score 2	Score 1	Score 0	Score
Character	Maya	a girl	she, her, or no name	2 1 0
Setting	at the regional distance qualifier; running the championship qualifying race	at a track meet / running a race	no location or activity	2 1 0
Problem (P)	sharp, twisting pain seized her right calf mid-race; muscle locked up	she got a cramp	no problem	2 1 0
Feeling	desperate / searing desperation spread through her	the muscle locked / sharp twisting pain seized her calf	no feeling or behavior	2 1 0
Plan (PL)	told herself to keep moving; thought to stretch the cramp out mid-stride	kept running	no plan or internal thought	2 1 0
Attempt (A)	tried lengthening her stride to loosen the locked muscle	changed how she was running	no attempt	2 1 0
Consequence (CP)	pain only tightened its grip; fell farther behind the pack	it hurt more / she fell behind	no consequence	2 1 0
Feeling-2	despairing / a wave of despair washed over her	slowed to an agonizing jog as others pulled ahead	no feeling or behavior	2 1 0
Plan-2 (PL2)	grabbed the bottle from Harper and kept moving	drank electrolytes / kept going	no plan or internal thought	2 1 0
Attempt-2 (A2)	forced down several gulps of electrolytes without stopping	drank the electrolytes / didn't stop running	no attempt	2 1 0
Consequence (C)	cramp loosened; lengthened her pace; crossed the line in fourth — just enough to qualify	the cramp went away / she qualified	no consequence	2 1 0
Ending (E)	Harper found her at the finish line; their eyes met and no words were needed	finished the race / found her teammate	no ending	2 1 0
End Feeling	relieved / a quiet, profound relief moved through her	refused to let the pain have the last word	no feeling or behavior	2 1 0

Score sentence complexity and vocabulary during retell and from audio recording.

SENTENCE COMPLEXITY (SC)

SC SCORE: /15

because / so that	1 1 1
when / while	1 1 1
after / before	1 1 1
since / however / although	1 1 1
(N) that / which / who	1 1 1

VOCABULARY COMPLEXITY (VC)

VC SCORE: /10

settled	1	strenuous	1
positioned	1	involuntarily	1
contracts	1	agonizing	1
surged	1	depleted	1
_____	1	_____	1

EXPOSITORY DISCOURSE COMPLEXITY (EDC)

EDC SCORE: /3

SAY: "Now I'm going to ask you some questions about the story. Just do your best to answer what you remember." If the student asks for clarification, the question may be asked a second time but not reworded. Circle each point or detail mentioned.

Tell me everything you learned from the passage about what causes muscle cramps.	**Tier-3: electrolytes** / *sodium and potassium regulate muscle contraction and recovery*	1
	Muscle contracts involuntarily and can't relax / *dehydration or loss of sodium and potassium*	1
	General concept *(e.g., not having enough water or the right nutrients causes cramps)*	1

THEME

SAY: "In one or two sentences, tell me the lesson or message of this passage."

- ◯ **Complete** states the lesson or message clearly and accurately.
- ◯ **Partial** hints at the message but stays vague or names a related idea rather than the central one.
- ◯ **Detail-only** retells events or names a character/action instead of stating a message.
- ◯ **Absent** no response, "I don't know," or off-topic.

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NLM QUESTIONS

VOCABULARY & MORPHOLOGICAL AWARENESS (VMA)

VMA SCORE: /8

dehydration — *loss of water from the body*

1 **SAY: "What does *dehydration* mean?"** (1) (½) (0)

1: loss of water · not enough fluids in the body · lack of water · **½:** being thirsty · drying out · needing water · **0:** incorrect

2a **SAY: "What are the parts in *dehydration* that help you know what it means?"** *(de-, hydrate)* (1) (0)

2b **If 2a is 0, teach and re-ask:** "The parts in *dehydration* are *de-* and *hydrate*. Now, what do you think *dehydration* means?" (½) (0)

↳ *If the student names only the root or base, ask: "Can you explain what dehydration means?" Score the follow-up.*

2c **If 2b is 0, SAY: "The story says muscle cramps are typically caused by *dehydration*. What does *dehydration* mean?"** (½) (0)

↳ If vague ("thirsty"): "What else does *dehydration* mean?"

2d **If 2c is 0, SAY: "Does *dehydration* mean (a) not having enough water in the body, (b) having too much water in the body, or (c) feeling cold?"** (½) (0)

3a **SAY: "Make a new word out of *hydrate* by adding a prefix or suffix."** (1) (0)

3b **If a new word given, SAY: "Use _____ in a sentence."** (1) (0)

involuntarily — *happening without being chosen*

1 **SAY: "What does *involuntarily* mean?"** (1) (½) (0)

1: without meaning to · not on purpose · not by choice · **½:** automatically · reflexively · without thinking · **0:** incorrect

2a **SAY: "What are the parts in *involuntarily* that help you know what it means?"** *(in-, voluntary)* (1) (0)

2b **If 2a is 0, teach and re-ask:** "The parts in *involuntarily* are *in-* and *voluntary*. Now, what do you think *involuntarily* means?" (½) (0)

↳ *If the student names only the root or base, ask: "Can you explain what involuntarily means?" Score the follow-up.*

2c **If 2b is 0, SAY: "The story says muscle cramps occur when a muscle contracts *involuntarily* and cannot relax. What does *involuntarily* mean?"** (½) (0)

↳ If vague ("wrong"): "What else does *involuntarily* mean?"

2d **If 2c is 0, SAY: "Does *involuntarily* mean (a) happening without being chosen, (b) happening because someone decided to do it, or (c) happening very quickly?"** (½) (0)

3a **SAY: "Make a new word out of *voluntary* by adding a prefix or suffix."** (1) (0)

3b **If a new word given, SAY: "Use _____ in a sentence."** (1) (0)

INFERENTIAL REASONING & CRITICAL THINKING (IRCT)

IRCT SCORE: /6

Question	Proficient (2)	Emergent (1)	Not Yet Proficient (0)	Score
What does Maya's decision to keep running despite the pain reveal about her character?	Exceptionally determined / can override physical pain with mental will / has internalized the goal so deeply it overrides self-protective instincts	She is tough / she doesn't give up / names a character trait	Does not name a character trait / unrelated / no response	(2) (1) (0)
How does the expository information about electrolytes explain why drinking from Harper's bottle helped Maya finish the race?	Muscles need electrolytes like sodium and potassium to contract and relax properly; replacing them allowed the muscle to release from its locked contraction and resume normal function	Electrolytes helped her muscle stop cramping	Unrelated / no response	(2) (1) (0)
What does the final exchange between Maya and Harper — where no words were needed — suggest about the nature of shared experience?	Some experiences bond people beyond what language can express; Harper knew what Maya had pushed through, and that understanding didn't require explanation — shared struggle creates communication deeper than words	They understood each other / they had been through it together	Unrelated / no response	(2) (1) (0)

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METACOGNITION (MC)

MC SCORE: /6

Question	Proficient (2)	Emergent (1)	Not Yet Proficient (0)	Score
1. Why do you think Harper's advice — "just run your race" — takes on a different meaning by the end of the story?	Harper's words at the start felt like encouragement; by the end they became a truth Maya had earned through her own struggle.	She finally understood what Harper meant	Unrelated / no response.	2 1 0
2. Why do you think Maya was able to recall her trainer's explanation about electrolytes at such a critical moment?	She learned the information deeply enough that it stayed accessible under stress; useful knowledge becomes automatic through learning.	She remembered what her trainer said	Unrelated / no response.	2 1 0
3. Why do you think Maya considered fourth place a success even though she didn't win?	Maya's real goal was to qualify, not to win — fourth place still achieved that goal.	She still qualified	Unrelated / no response.	2 1 0

NLM READING BENCHMARK – COMPOSITE SCORE

Reading Fluency **(CWPM)** = _____

Sentence Complexity **(SC)** = _____

Vocabulary Complexity **(VC)** = _____

Expository Discourse Complexity **(EDC)** = _____

Vocabulary & Morphological Awareness **(VMA)** = _____

Inferential Reasoning & Critical Thinking **(IRCT)** = _____

Metacognition **(MC)** = _____

COMPOSITE SCORE
(sum of raw scores above)

Cut point for academic concern:

High Risk: ≤ 77

Moderate Risk: 78-126

Low Risk: ≥ 127

.92 AUC / 94% Sensitivity / 82% Specificity

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DDM – DECODING INVENTORY (OPTIONAL)

DI SCORE: /88

Administer only if oral reading fluency was a concern. Display the appropriate Decoding Inventory page from the benchmark stimulus book.
SAY: "Please read these words. They are not real words." Point to the first word. Corrective prompt (1× max): "Remember, these are not real words."
HOW TO SCORE. Any acceptable sound counts as correct; underline the entire word if blended correctly; circle the bolded targets blended correctly (read as one syllable). Target correct = 1 point; whole word correct = 1 point. **Words in Black Box** = benchmark words; Words outside box = extended set.

TARGET: Closed Syllables

WHOLE WORDS BLENDED CORRECTLY = ☐ 6

min sal jom vun quin whav | fap deg gib les pag rud tus baf shil het wan kex zick chom thuz vill cass noff

TARGET: Vowel-Consonant-E

WHOLE WORDS BLENDED CORRECTLY = ☐ 6

naze gude mepe sule wonkide atane | jime tebe goke fene vome rame sove

TARGET: Basic Affixes

WHOLE WORDS BLENDED CORRECTLY = ☐ 6 CORRECT TARGETS = ☐ 6

hez**es** paf**ed** sen**est** bru**ful** tem**ness** **pre**miv | fot**ing** **un**ron **re**pog miv**er** dut**less** gip**ly**

TARGET: Vowel Teams

WHOLE WORDS BLENDED CORRECTLY = ☐ 6 CORRECT TARGETS = ☐ 7

f**ee**p n**ai**g t**ou**v k**ea**t h**ea**g g**ou**p**ai**k | z**ay** l**oa**k z**oo**n s**ou**d w**oo**k p**oi**g sh**aw** h**ie**b r**oe**f z**ow** b**ew**k p**au**k

TARGET: Vowel-R-Controlled

WHOLE WORDS BLENDED CORRECTLY = ☐ 6 CORRECT TARGETS = ☐ 7

kl**ar** n**er** f**oar**p m**our** l**are** l**ir**p**ar**g | t**or** w**ir** pl**oor** r**ar**k z**ai**r k**ear** z**ur** th**eer** gl**ier** s**earc** l**our**t v**our** sl**ore**

TARGET: Advanced Affixes

WHOLE WORDS BLENDED CORRECTLY = ☐ 6 CORRECT TARGETS = ☐ 6

mub**tion** **dis**cla gob**ic** mav**ible** gop**ture** gep**ous** | **bi**mog **tri**zom **non**plut zik**able** **mis**dut **trans**bub **uni**quin vi**rupt**

TARGET: Complex Vowels

WHOLE WORDS BLENDED CORRECTLY = ☐ 6 CORRECT TARGETS = ☐ 7

v**ind** n**ild** z**ough** k**eigh** gl**aught** k**ighdost** | v**ost** gr**old** f**igh** p**ight** w**ought** p**ough** kl**augh**

TARGET: Advanced Word Forms

WHOLE WORDS BLENDED CORRECTLY = ☐ 6 CORRECT TARGETS = ☐ 7

we**cent** sm**ink** l**omb** gli**stle** oh**ong** gr**ombacent** | bri**sm** gr**unk** m**ank** **gho**sl fu**tle**

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Marcus adjusted the bass levels on his mixing board as the gymnasium filled with students for the homecoming dance. It was his biggest stage yet — three hundred students packed shoulder to shoulder, the air reverberating with anticipation, and he had never felt more prepared.

Minutes into his set, the music began to sound distorted and warped, as though the speakers were struggling to contain the signal. A surge of alarm overtook Marcus as he recognized the unmistakable signs of a malfunction. If he couldn't resolve it before the crowd lost momentum, his reputation as a DJ and his shot at booking the spring formal would be finished.

He recalled from his audio engineering class that distortion occurs when speakers receive a signal of excessive amplitude. This happens when the signal exceeds the threshold the hardware is designed to accommodate, causing the sound wave to compress and flatten rather than reproduce the original accurately. Reducing the output level can sometimes restore clarity, so Marcus adjusted his gain settings methodically. Instead, the deterioration accelerated, and the speakers released a harsh screech before collapsing into a low, persistent hum.

Marcus stepped back from the board, a feeling of dread spreading through him as the silence ettled over the gymnasium like a held breath, and he could feel the restlessness rippling through the crowd. Jade appeared at his side, her expression taut with concern. She said quietly, "Something smells like it's burning near the amp — I don't think it's your settings."

His focus sharpened immediately. Marcus knelt behind the amplifier and traced each cable with methodical fingers until he discovered a cord fraying where it connected to the input. He extracted the damaged cable and reached for his backup, plugging it in with deliberate precision before slowly restoring the volume. The bass surged back, clean and resonant, and the crowd erupted with a force that reverberated through the gymnasium walls.

After the dance, as Marcus coiled the cables and packed his cases, he tucked the backup cord in last. He almost laughed, elated by how the night had ended — that spare three feet of cable had saved the entire night.

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Child Name/ID _____ Audio File _____ Examiner _____ Date _____

DECODING FLUENCY · ORAL READING

Place the passage in front of the student. **SAY: "Please read this out loud. Do your very best reading. I'll help you if you need it. When you're done, I might read some of the passage to you and then I will ask you to tell me the story."** Put a slash [/] through incorrect words (mispronunciations, substitutions, skipped words). If the student fails to read a word after 3 seconds, say the word and mark it incorrect. Self-corrections within 3 sec., repetitions, and insertions are not errors. If the student struggles significantly, you may finish reading after 1 minute, then administer the DDM after the retell and questions.

1	Marcus adjusted the bass levels on his mixing board as the gymnasium filled with students for the	17
2	homecoming dance. It was his biggest stage yet — three hundred students packed shoulder to shoulder, the	33
3	air reverberating with anticipation, and he had never felt more prepared.	44
4	Minutes into his set, the music began to sound distorted and warped, as though the speakers were	61
5	struggling to contain the signal. A surge of alarm overtook Marcus as he recognized the unmistakable	77
6	signs of a malfunction. If he couldn't resolve it before the crowd lost momentum, his reputation	93
7	as a DJ and his shot at booking the spring formal would be finished.	107
8	He recalled from his audio engineering class that distortion occurs when speakers receive a signal of excessive	124
9	amplitude. This happens when the signal exceeds the threshold the hardware is designed to accommodate, causing	140
10	the sound wave to compress and flatten rather than reproduce the original accurately. Reducing the	155
11	output level can sometimes restore clarity, so Marcus adjusted his gain settings methodically. Instead, the	170
12	deterioration accelerated, and the speakers released a harsh screech before collapsing into a low, persistent hum.	186
13	Marcus stepped back from the board, a feeling of dread spreading through him as the silence	202
14	settled over the gymnasium like a held breath, and he could feel the restlessness rippling through	218
15	the crowd. Jade appeared at his side, her expression taut with concern. She said quietly,	233
16	"Something smells like it's burning near the amp — I don't think it's your settings."	247
17	His focus sharpened immediately. Marcus knelt behind the amplifier and traced each cable with methodical fingers	263
18	until he discovered a cord fraying where it connected to the input. He extracted the damaged	279
19	cable and reached for his backup, plugging it in with deliberate precision before slowly restoring the	295
20	volume. The bass surged back, clean and resonant, and the crowd erupted with a force that	311
21	reverberated through the gymnasium walls.	316
22	After the dance, as Marcus coiled the cables and packed his cases, he tucked the backup	332
23	cord in last. He almost laughed, elated by how the night had ended — that spare three feet	349
24	of cable had saved the entire night.	356

CWPM

Words read in 1 min _____ – errors _____ = _____

ACCURACY

correct _____ ÷ total _____ = _____ %

PROSODY — *select one*

- (1) Primarily word-by-word reading. No meaningful syntax.
- (2) Primarily 2-word phrases. Awkward word groupings.
- (3) Primarily 3-to-4 word phrases. Mostly appropriate phrasing and syntax.
- (4) Meaningful phrases. Appropriate syntax. Expressive interpretation.

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NLM RETELL · NARRATIVE DISCOURSE COMPLEXITY (NDC)

NDC SCORE: /26

After the student reads the entire passage, take the student's copy away and **SAY: "Thank you for reading and listening. Now you tell me that story."** Score the retell for story grammar. Acceptable prompts (up to 3x): "Are you finished?" "It's OK. Just do your best." "I can't help you, but you can just tell the parts you remember."

Element	Score 2	Score 1	Score 0	Score
Character	Marcus	a boy	he, him, or no name	2 1 0
Setting	in the gymnasium, DJing the homecoming dance	at a school dance / DJing	no location or activity	2 1 0
Problem (P)	music became distorted and warped mid-set	the sound broke / something went wrong with the speakers	no problem	2 1 0
Feeling	alarmed / frightened	a surge of alarm overtook him / recognized signs of a malfunction	no feeling or behavior	2 1 0
Plan (PL)	knew distortion meant signal too strong; decided to reduce the gain settings	needed to fix the settings	no plan or internal thought	2 1 0
Attempt (A)	adjusted the gain settings on the mixing board	changed the settings	no attempt	2 1 0
Consequence (CP)	distortion worsened; speakers screeched then dropped to a low hum	it got worse / the music stopped	no consequence	2 1 0
Feeling-2	dread / anxious	a feeling of dread spread through him / silence like a held breath	no feeling or behavior	2 1 0
Plan-2 (PL2)	Jade noticed burning smell; Marcus traced cables and found a frayed cord	checked the equipment / found the real problem	no plan or internal thought	2 1 0
Attempt-2 (A2)	extracted the damaged cable and plugged in a backup cord	fixed the cord / plugged in a new one	no attempt	2 1 0
Consequence (C)	bass surged back, clean and resonant; crowd erupted	the music came back on / crowd cheered	no consequence	2 1 0
Ending (E)	packed up equipment; tucked the backup cord in last	finished packing / everything worked out	no ending	2 1 0
End Feeling	elated / proud / relieved / amused	tucked the backup cord in last / almost laughed	no feeling or behavior	2 1 0

Score sentence complexity and vocabulary during retell and from audio recording.

SENTENCE COMPLEXITY (SC)

SC SCORE: /15

because / so that	1 1 1
when / while	1 1 1
after / before	1 1 1
since / however / although	1 1 1
(N) that / which / who	1 1 1

VOCABULARY COMPLEXITY (VC)

VC SCORE: /10

malfunction	1	distorted	1
deterioration	1	methodical	1
precision	1	resonant	1
amplitude	1	reputation	1
_____	1	_____	1

EXPOSITORY DISCOURSE COMPLEXITY (EDC)

EDC SCORE: /3

SAY: "Now I'm going to ask you some questions about the story. Just do your best to answer what you remember." If the student asks for clarification, the question may be asked a second time but not reworded. Circle each point or detail mentioned.

Tell me everything you learned from the passage about how speakers produce distorted sound.	**Tier-3: distortion** / *signal exceeds hardware threshold*	1
	Sound wave compresses and flattens / *rather than reproducing the original*	1
	General concept *(e.g., too much signal makes the sound bad or crackly)*	1

THEME

SAY: "In one or two sentences, tell me the lesson or message of this passage."

- ◯ **Complete** states the lesson or message clearly and accurately.
- ◯ **Partial** hints at the message but stays vague or names a related idea rather than the central one.
- ◯ **Detail-only** retells events or names a character/action instead of stating a message.
- ◯ **Absent** no response, "I don't know," or off-topic.

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NLM QUESTIONS

VOCABULARY & MORPHOLOGICAL AWARENESS (VMA)

VMA SCORE: /8

malfunction — *failure to work correctly*

1 **SAY: "What does *malfunction* mean?"** (1) (½) (0)

1: not working right · a breakdown in how something works · failure to work correctly · **½:** broken · messed up · not on · **0:** incorrect

2a **SAY: "What are the parts in *malfunction* that help you know what it means?"** *(mal-, function)* (1) (0)

2b **If 2a is 0, teach and re-ask:** "The parts in *malfunction* are *mal-* and *function*. Now, what do you think *malfunction* means?" (½) (0)

↳ *If the student names only the root or base, ask: "Can you explain what malfunction means?" Score the follow-up.*

2c **If 2b is 0, SAY: "The story says the speaker showed unmistakable signs of a *malfunction*. What does *malfunction* mean?"** (½) (0)

↳ If vague ("broken"): "What else does *malfunction* mean?"

2d **If 2c is 0, SAY: "Does *malfunction* mean (a) not working the way it should, (b) working better than expected, or (c) being brand new?"** (½) (0)

3a **SAY: "Make a new word out of *function* by adding a prefix or suffix."** (1) (0)

3b **If a new word given, SAY: "Use _____ in a sentence."** (1) (0)

unmistakable — *impossible to confuse; obvious*

1 **SAY: "What does *unmistakable* mean?"** (1) (½) (0)

1: obvious · impossible to miss · clearly what it is · **½:** correct · no errors · not messing up · **0:** incorrect

2a **SAY: "What are the parts in *unmistakable* that help you know what it means?"** *(un-, mistake, -able)* (1) (0)

2b **If 2a is 0, teach and re-ask:** "The parts in *unmistakable* are *un-*, *mistake*, and *-able*. Now, what do you think *unmistakable* means?" (½) (0)

↳ *If the student names only the root or base, ask: "Can you explain what unmistakable means?" Score the follow-up.*

2c **If 2b is 0, SAY: "The story says the speaker showed *unmistakable* signs of a malfunction. What does *unmistakable* mean?"** (½) (0)

↳ If vague ("clear"): "What else does *unmistakable* mean?"

2d **If 2c is 0, SAY: "Does *unmistakable* mean (a) impossible to confuse or miss, (b) easy to overlook or misunderstand, or (c) very small?"** (½) (0)

3a **SAY: "Make a new word out of *mistake* by adding a prefix or suffix."** (1) (0)

3b **If a new word given, SAY: "Use _____ in a sentence."** (1) (0)

INFERENTIAL REASONING & CRITICAL THINKING (IRCT)

IRCT SCORE: /6

Question	Proficient (2)	Emergent (1)	Not Yet Proficient (0)	Score
What does Marcus's decision to lower the output signal — even though it didn't work — reveal about how he handles pressure?	He applies what he knows before panicking; he is methodical and tries a logical solution first even under stress	He stays calm / he tries to fix it	Unrelated / no response	(2) (1) (0)
Why do you think the passage takes time to explain how distortion works before showing what actually goes wrong with Marcus's equipment?	The explanation sets up what Marcus (and the reader) would expect the problem to be, so the actual cause — a burning cable — is more surprising and makes clear that the real issue isn't what the theory predicted	So you understand what he thought was wrong / so the ending is surprising	Unrelated / no response	(2) (1) (0)
What does this passage suggest about the difference between technical knowledge and real-world problem solving?	Technical knowledge gives you a starting point, but real situations can have unexpected causes; good problem solving means staying flexible when the first answer doesn't work	Knowing the theory isn't always enough / you have to think on your feet	Unrelated / no response	(2) (1) (0)

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METACOGNITION (MC)

MC SCORE: /6

Question	Proficient (2)	Emergent (1)	Not Yet Proficient (0)	Score
1. Why do you think Marcus immediately tried to fix the output signal before checking the physical equipment?	Marcus defaulted to what he had been taught about distortion, which was logical but incomplete.	He thought it was a settings problem because that's what he knew	Unrelated / no response.	2 1 0
2. Why do you think Jade noticed the burning smell before Marcus did?	Marcus was concentrated on the sound and his mixing board, so his attention narrowed to audio information; Jade was outside that focus and could take in other sensory cues.	Marcus was too focused on the settings	Unrelated / no response.	2 1 0
3. Why do you think Marcus made a point of tucking the backup cord in last when packing up?	The backup cord had been just spare gear before the night, but it saved the show, so Marcus now recognized it as one of his most important pieces of equipment.	The backup cord became important to him	Unrelated / no response.	2 1 0

NLM READING BENCHMARK – COMPOSITE SCORE

Reading Fluency **(CWPM)** = _____
Sentence Complexity **(SC)** = _____
Vocabulary Complexity **(VC)** = _____
Expository Discourse Complexity **(EDC)** = _____
Vocabulary & Morphological Awareness **(VMA)** = _____
Inferential Reasoning & Critical Thinking **(IRCT)** = _____
Metacognition **(MC)** = _____

COMPOSITE SCORE
(sum of raw scores above) [ ]

Cut point for academic concern:

High Risk: ≤ 77
Moderate Risk: 78-126
Low Risk: ≥ 127

.92 AUC / 94% Sensitivity / 82% Specificity

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DDM – DECODING INVENTORY (OPTIONAL)

DI SCORE: /88

Administer only if oral reading fluency was a concern. Display the appropriate Decoding Inventory page from the benchmark stimulus book.
SAY: "Please read these words. They are not real words." Point to the first word. Corrective prompt (1× max): "Remember, these are not real words."
HOW TO SCORE. Any acceptable sound counts as correct; underline the entire word if blended correctly; circle the bolded targets blended correctly (read as one syllable). Target correct = 1 point; whole word correct = 1 point. **Words in Black Box** = benchmark words; Words outside box = extended set.

TARGET: Closed Syllables

WHOLE WORDS BLENDED CORRECTLY = ☐ 6

min sal jom vun quin whav | fap deg gib les pag rud tus baf shil het wan kex zick chom thuz vill cass noff

TARGET: Vowel-Consonant-E

WHOLE WORDS BLENDED CORRECTLY = ☐ 6

naze gude mepe sule wonkide atane | jime tebe goke fene vome rame sove

TARGET: Basic Affixes

WHOLE WORDS BLENDED CORRECTLY = ☐ 6 CORRECT TARGETS = ☐ 6

hez**es** paf**ed** sen**est** bru**ful** tem**ness** **pre**miv | fot**ing** **un**ron **re**pog miv**er** dut**less** gip**ly**

TARGET: Vowel Teams

WHOLE WORDS BLENDED CORRECTLY = ☐ 6 CORRECT TARGETS = ☐ 7

f**ee**p n**ai**g t**ou**v k**ea**t h**ea**g g**ou**p**ai**k | z**ay** l**oa**k z**oo**n s**ou**d w**oo**k p**oi**g sh**aw** h**ie**b r**oe**f z**ow** b**ew**k p**au**k

TARGET: Vowel-R-Controlled

WHOLE WORDS BLENDED CORRECTLY = ☐ 6 CORRECT TARGETS = ☐ 7

kl**ar** n**er** f**oar**p m**our** l**are** l**irpar**g | t**or** w**ir** pl**oor** r**ar**k z**ai**r k**ear** z**ur** th**eer** gl**ier** s**earc** l**ourt** v**our** sl**ore**

TARGET: Advanced Affixes

WHOLE WORDS BLENDED CORRECTLY = ☐ 6 CORRECT TARGETS = ☐ 6

mub**tion** **dis**cla gob**ic** mav**ible** gop**ture** gep**ous** | **bi**mog **tri**zom **non**plut zik**able** **mis**dut **trans**bub **uni**quin vi**rupt**

TARGET: Complex Vowels

WHOLE WORDS BLENDED CORRECTLY = ☐ 6 CORRECT TARGETS = ☐ 7

v**ind** n**ild** z**ough** k**eigh** gl**aught** k**ighdost** | v**ost** gr**old** f**igh** p**ight** w**ought** p**ough** kl**augh**

TARGET: Advanced Word Forms

WHOLE WORDS BLENDED CORRECTLY = ☐ 6 CORRECT TARGETS = ☐ 7

we**cent** sm**ink** l**omb** gli**stle** oh**ong** gr**ombacent** | bri**sm** gr**unk** m**ank** **gho**sl fu**tle**

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