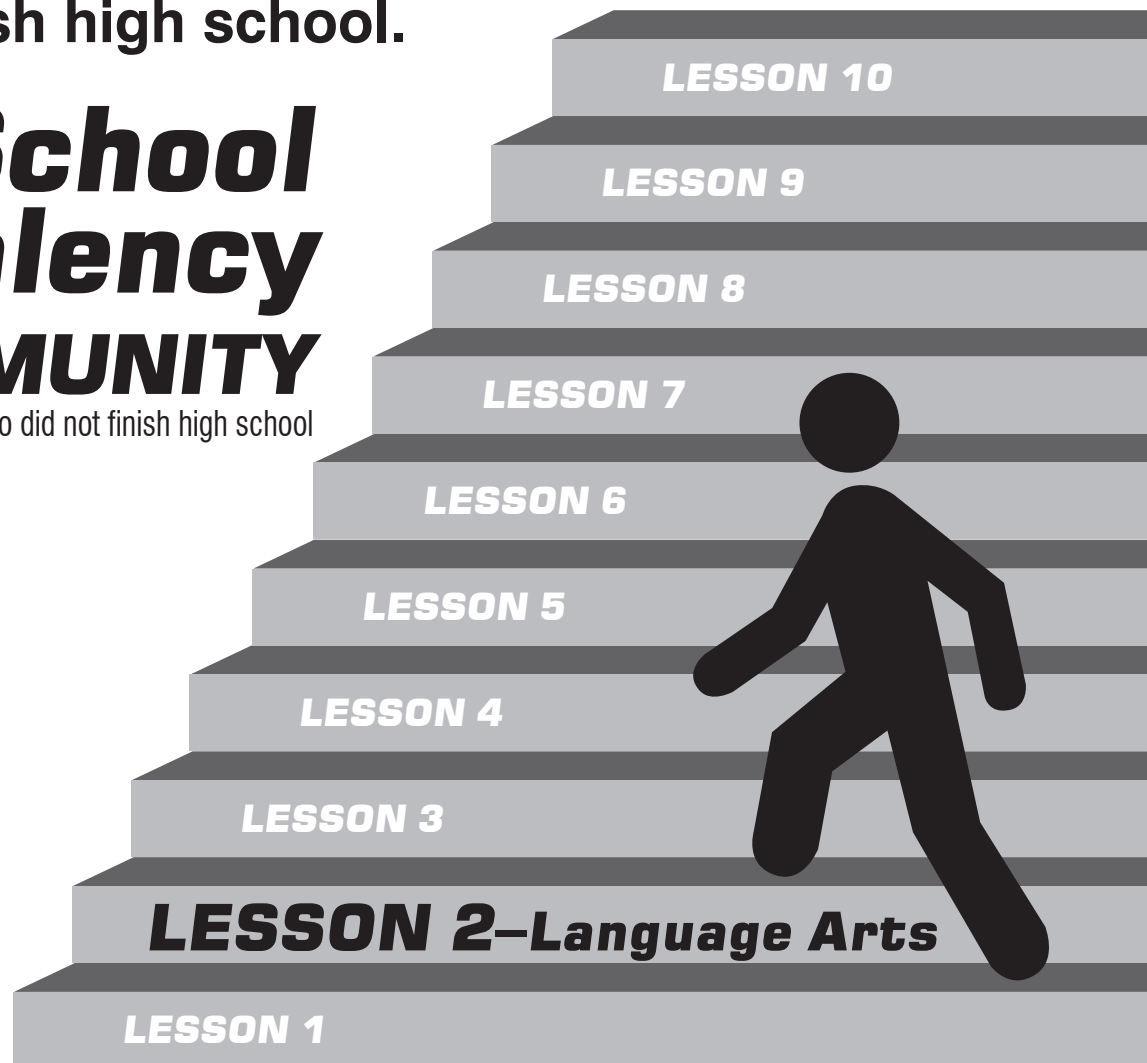


Steps to Success

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Second Step
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LESSON 2

Reasoning through Language Arts



The Reasoning through Language Arts test focuses on reading a passage closely and critically understanding a range of complex texts, with an emphasis on non-fiction. Test takers will need to analyze arguments and use evidence to express themselves clearly and fluently in writing. The test taker will also be evaluated on the correct use of basic grammar as they are asked to correct sentences found in reading passages.

Important Reading Strategies

Reading on the GED test will require more than recognizing the facts stated in a passage. You will have to look deeper into the passage to answer many of the questions. You will need to understand the main idea, infer ideas, and draw conclusions. Study these words and their definitions. Refer back to the definitions as you answer the questions that follow the reading passages.

Author's Purpose

The author's reason or goal for writing. Common purposes are to *entertain, inform, describe, explain or instruct, persuade, or create a mood*. Identifying the author's purpose helps a reader respond appropriately to a reading passage.

Vocabulary to Know

The Main Idea—The most important idea in a passage or paragraph.

Supporting Details—Gives you information about the main idea, such as who, what, when, where, how, and why. Supporting details include reasons, facts or statistics, examples, anecdotes, how-to steps, and expert testimony.

Inference—This means the reader uses facts that are stated to figure out a meaning that is not stated directly. For example, suppose the kids are playing in the living room while you fix dinner. If you hear a crash, you infer that they knocked something over.

Drawing Conclusions—The reader combines what he/she knows with what is read, to figure out what the text means.

Compare—Tell how things or ideas are alike. Words that signal comparing: also, likewise, and similarly.

Contrast—Tell how things or ideas are different. Words that signal contrast: although, however, in contrast, on the contrary, and on the other hand.

LESSON 2

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ASSIGNMENT 1

DIRECTIONS

Read the following passage and answer the questions that follow.

Circle your answer.

Author's Purpose

Have you ever wondered why authors write? Sometimes they are inspired to create stories. Other times they write to provide information about an interesting topic. Some authors write to convince us about something. Whatever the circumstances, authors have reasons for writing; this is called, the “author’s purpose.” The three most common types of author’s purpose are: to entertain, to inform, and to persuade.

Think about the last time a story made you laugh, cry, or tremble with fright. These types of stories are written with a particular purpose in mind: to entertain the reader. Authors write many kinds of stories to entertain, including humorous fiction, realistic fiction, fantasy, fairy tales, and fables. While fiction entertains, non-fiction has a different purpose.

Many non-fiction writings or texts are written with the purpose of giving information about an interesting topic. Authors who write to inform must research their subject to ensure that they convey accurate information to the reader. Some examples of texts that inform are encyclopedia entries, news articles, expository non-fiction books, and interviews. All of these types of writing give information about certain topics.

Sometimes authors write because they want to convince their readers about something. This is called argumentative, or persuasive, writing. Oftentimes, texts that are meant to persuade use specific techniques to make the reader care about the subject, and to think about it in a certain way. These techniques might be found in letters to the editor, argumentative essays, or persuasive speeches.

Next time you read a text, see if you can figure what the author is trying to tell you. It might be easier than you think. Just ask yourself: what is the author’s purpose?

1. Which of the following is *most likely* the title of a passage in which the author’s purpose is to entertain?
 - A. Why Dogs are Smarter than Cats
 - B. An Interview with J.K. Rowling
 - C. The Adventures of Waldo Wizard
 - D. An Argument for Shorter Classes
2. According to the passage, authors who write to inform want to
 - A. provide information about a certain topic
 - B. make the reader laugh, cry, or scream
 - C. convince the reader to do something
 - D. invite the reader to critique their work
3. The author’s purpose in writing this passage is
 - A. to persuade
 - B. to convince
 - C. to entertain
 - D. to inform
4. Based on its use in paragraph 3, it can be understood that the word *convey* belongs to which of the following word groups?
 - A. document, chronicle, note
 - B. communicate, pass on, relay
 - C. hide, obscure, cover
 - D. detect, locate, discover

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5. Imagine that Bill's favorite thing to read is the "Letters to the Editor" section of his local newspaper, in which readers submit letters to the editor that are intended to make the editor think about something in a certain way. Using the information in the passage, it can be understood that Bill likes to read passages whose authors' purpose is to
- A. encourage freedom of speech
 - B. argue or refute facts
 - C. convince others that there is a better way or different way of doing something.
 - D. question the accepted way of doing things
6. According to the passage, texts that are meant to persuade often
- A. do not get as much attention as texts that entertain or inform
 - B. are very entertaining because they convince readers to laugh
 - C. use specific techniques to make the reader care about the subject
 - D. require a lot of research in order to ensure accuracy of information

ASSIGNMENT 2

DIRECTIONS

Read the passage and answer the questions that follow. Circle your answer in the multiple choices. Use a separate sheet of paper for the writing.

Avalanche!

Most people know that an avalanche is a large mass of snow that detaches from a mountain-side and rushes down the slope, often at a very high speed. However, not everyone realizes that there are many different kinds of avalanches, with various causes and effects. Avalanches are

categorized based on whether the snow is wet or dry, and whether or not it is compacted. The four most common types are: dry snow, wet snow, wet slab, and dry slab.

The least dangerous type is a dry snow avalanche, which is made up of powdery snow. A dry snow avalanche most often occurs on steeper slopes during a snowstorm when the temperatures are below freezing. Despite the fact that they can reach speeds of up to 225 miles per hour, these avalanches tend to be small, and their snow is loose, not compacted, so they are less dangerous. Yet even a dry snow avalanche can cause harm under the right conditions.

A wet snow avalanche differs from a dry snow avalanche in that it consists of loose, partially melted snow and water. Wet snow avalanches generally occur during the springtime when temperatures are consistently above freezing and there is an abundance of both sunshine and rainfall. The warmer temperatures and the sun melt the outer layers of snow. The increased springtime rainfall saturates



Photo: www.noaa.gov/features/02_monitoring/avalanche.html

LESSON 2

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the snow with water, weakening the cohesive layers beneath the surface. The combination of these factors results in unstable conditions. Wet snow avalanches are the least common type of avalanche, and they are much slower than dry snow avalanches, typically traveling at speeds of only 10-20 miles per hour.

Like a wet snow avalanche, a wet slab avalanche most often occurs during the spring, due to melting snow and increased rainfall. The additional moisture weakens the bonds between the water molecules of the snow. Daytime melting and nighttime refreezing of the ice and snow create ideal conditions for a wet slab avalanche. This type of avalanche is the slowest, generally traveling at a speed of no more than 10 miles per hour. But because the snow is compacted, not loose, a wet slab avalanche is still quite dangerous even at this slow speed.

The last type, a dry slab avalanche, is the most dangerous of all. It occurs when substantial snowfall accumulates over a layer of existing snow in a very short period of time. The stress caused by the weight of the newly fallen snow can make the compacted layer underneath break away. This creates a dry slab avalanche, which travels at speeds of 60-80 miles per hour. Dry slab avalanches account for roughly 90% of all avalanche-related casualties annually.

Millions of avalanches happen around the world each year, the vast majority of which occur naturally. However, nearly all of the avalanches that result in fatalities are triggered by either the victim or someone in the victim's party. Each year, approximately 150 people become casualties of an avalanche. Sadly, most of these avalanche accidents are preventable. The first step in preventing avalanche related fatalities is to be better informed about the various types of avalanches and the conditions under which they occur.

You may need to refer back to the definitions that were given at the beginning of the lesson.

1. **The main purpose this passage is to**
 - A. communicate the dangers of avalanches
 - B. show how preventable an avalanche can be
 - C. describe the four basic types of avalanches
 - D. define what an avalanche is
2. **In *paragraph 2* the author writes, "Yet even a dry snow avalanche can cause harm under the right conditions." The purpose of this statement is to**
 - A. contradict a previous idea
 - B. support a later point
 - C. qualify an earlier statement
 - D. introduce a larger idea
3. **As used in *paragraph 3*, which is the best synonym for saturates?**
 - A. soaks
 - B. damages
 - C. covers
 - D. dehydrates
4. **According to the passage, the *main causes* of wet snow and wet slab avalanches are**
 - A. melting snow and increased rainfall
 - B. decreased rainfall and warmer temperatures
 - C. warmer temperatures and longer days
 - D. shorter nights and melting snow
5. **As used in *paragraph 4*, which is the best antonym for *ideal*?**
 - A. predictable
 - B. flawed
 - C. unstable
 - D. suitable

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6. Based on information in the passage, it can be *inferred* (look back at the definitions) that which of the following statements is true?
- A. Because it can travel at very high speeds, the dry snow avalanche is the most dangerous type.
 - B. All avalanches, whether they are traveling at 10 miles per hour or 225 miles per hour, can be very dangerous.
 - C. The speed at which an avalanche travels shares a direct correlation with the degree of danger it poses.
 - D. Most casualties occur from wet slab avalanches.
7. Based on information in the passage, it can be *inferred* that wet slab avalanches and dry slab avalanches are the only two types that
- A. consist of compacted snow
 - B. travel at higher speeds
 - C. occur at unexpected times of the year
 - D. result from below freezing temperatures
8. According to the passage, the avalanche capable of reaching the highest speed is
- A. dry snow avalanche
 - B. wet snow avalanche
 - C. wet slab avalanche
 - D. dry slab avalanche
9. The *main purpose* of the *final paragraph* is to
- A. state the precise number of avalanche related causalities that happen each year
 - B. describe how avalanches typically are triggered
 - C. illustrate how tragic it can be to lose a friend in an avalanche related incident
 - D. suggest a way in which readers can help prevent avalanche related accidents

LESSON 2

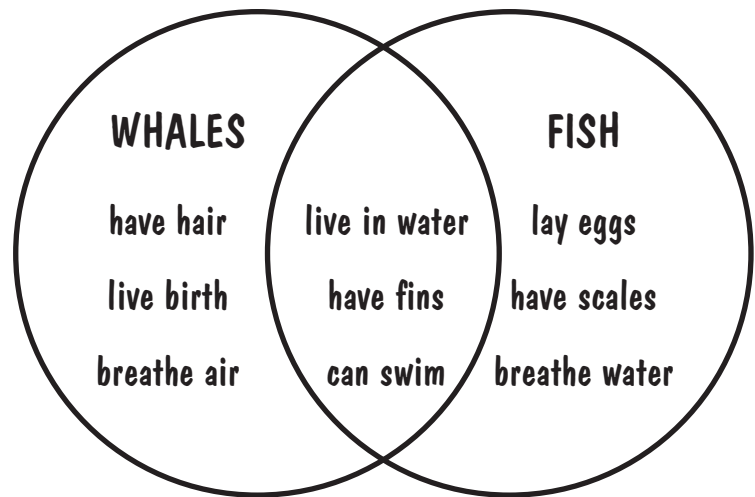
Reasoning through Language Arts



Venn Diagram

A **Venn Diagram** may help you organize your thoughts. Label one side Avalanche and the other side a natural disaster you chose. List similarities in the middle.

Look at the example. This is a comparison and contrast of whales and fish. The intersection of the circles shows the similarities.

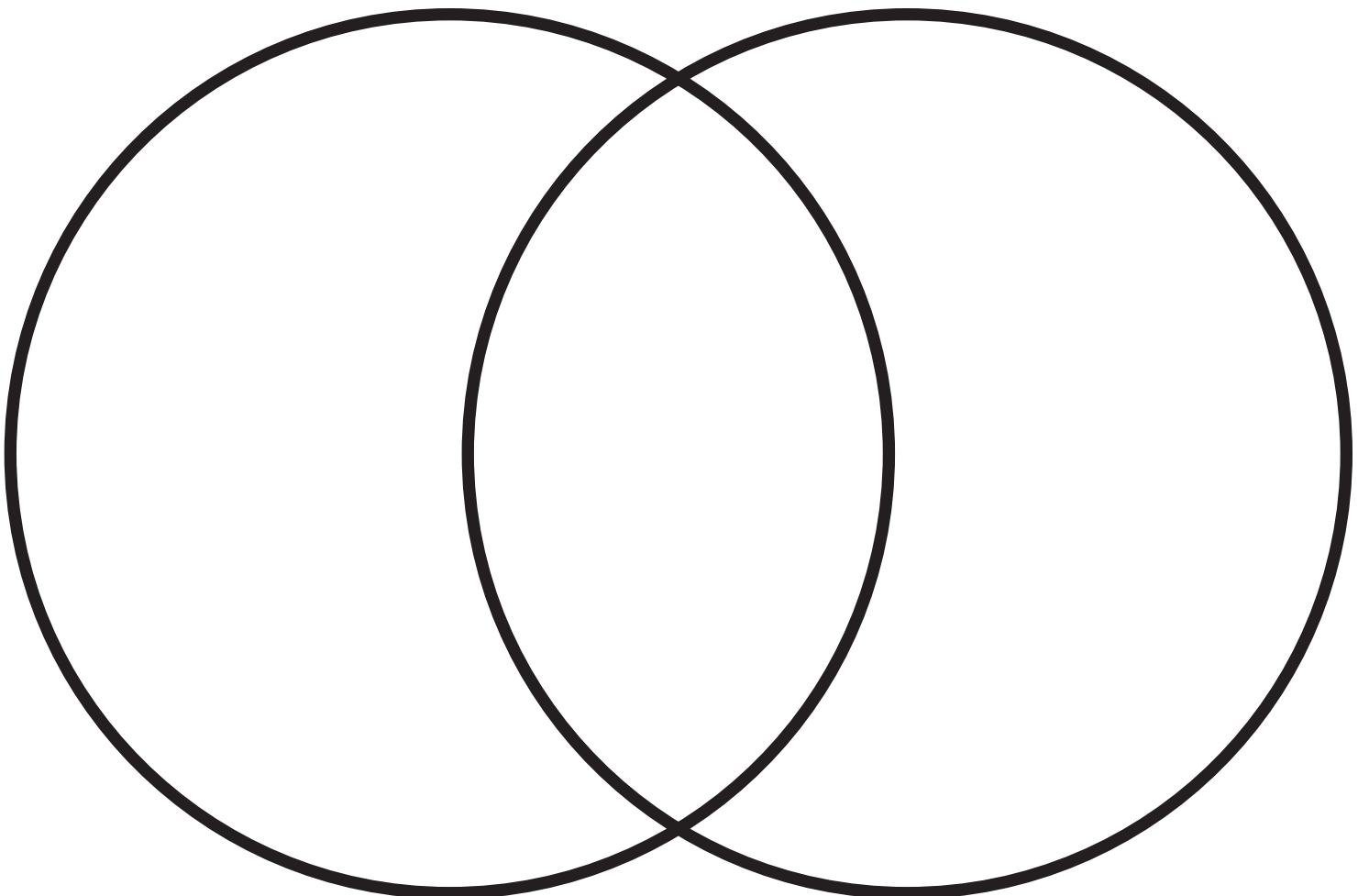


VENN DIAGRAM

Different

Same

Different



LESSON 2

Reasoning through Language Arts



DIRECTIONS

For questions 10 and 11, write your answers on a separate sheet of paper.

Write something down for all the questions (think on paper). This will help you complete the final assignment of three paragraphs. One paragraph to compare, one paragraph to contrast, and one paragraph that tells which disaster you think is worse (this is the conclusion).

Use the Venn diagram on the previous page to organize and write down your thoughts.

10. An avalanche is just one example of a natural disaster. Let's compare an avalanche with a natural disaster that has occurred during your life time:

- Think of a natural disaster that has occurred during your life time. (*For example: fire, flood, tornado, etc.*)
- Compare and contrast the two types of disaster. **Compare**—How are the two disasters alike? **Contrast**—how are the two disasters different? **Remember to use the diagram on the previous page to help organize your thoughts.**
- Which one is worse?
- Why?

11. Now that you have written down some thoughts, turn the thoughts into complete sentences.

- Write a paragraph that compares the two disasters. (*A paragraph is 3-5 sentences that have the same topic. The sentences in a paragraph give details that support the topic.*)
- Then write a paragraph that contrasts the two disasters. Look at the definitions of compare and contrast. Use some of the signal words (such as: also, likewise, although, in contrast, etc.) to help you with your response. **Please write your answer on a separate piece of paper.**

- Write a final paragraph that explains which disaster you think is worse.

ASSIGNMENT 3

Parts of Speech—Verbs

Every sentence must have a verb. To depict doable activities, writers use action verbs. To describe conditions, writers choose linking verbs.

DIRECTIONS

Read the paragraph and then underline the verbs in the following sentences.

Action Verbs

Example: Her baby cried all night.

- The wolf ran across the sand.
- Sit down.
- The dog barked at the man.

State of Being or Linking Verbs

Some common linking verbs are *is, am, are, was, were, be, being, been, seem, look, feel, appear*, and *become*. They do not show action. They just show that something exists.

DIRECTIONS

Underline the linking verbs in the following sentences.

Example: I am behind the door.

- My uncle is a pilot.
- The pie looks good.
- You seem upset.

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DIRECTIONS

Underline the verbs in these sentences and tell whether they are action verbs or linking verbs.

Example: The girl laughed loudly. **Action**

The house is large and drafty. **Linking**

7. Suddenly someone sneezed loudly.

8. There are holes in my shirt.

9. He appears happy.

10. The image appeared in the mirror.

Verb Phrase

Sometimes a verb can be more than one word. When a verb is more than one word, it is called a verb phrase. Verb phrases can be two, three, or four words. Verb phrases are made by using auxiliary or helping verbs.

Some of the helping verbs can be used alone as the main verb. **Is, am, are, was, and were** can be used alone as linking or state of being verbs. **Has, have, had, do, does, and did** always show action when used alone. **Be, being, and been** can be used with other verbs either to show action or state of being. The other helping verbs cannot be used alone but only as helping verbs.

Example: Selena is disobeying the speed limit.

DIRECTIONS

Underline the verb or verb phrases in the following sentences.

11. You are going to Seattle.
12. You have been resting too much.
13. We must be early.
14. I will be finished shortly.
15. She has too many friends.
16. You do beautiful work.
17. I was in Canada last week.
18. You are being very stubborn.

ASSIGNMENT 4

In addition to telling what something is or does, a verb also tells the time of the action. The time shown by a verb is called its **tense**.

There are three basic or simple tenses.

Present tense: Trish plays soccer on Wednesday.

Past tense: Trish played soccer on Wednesday.

Future Tense: Trish will play soccer on Wednesday.

Verbs can provide some information about whether an event is in the past, present, or future, but sometimes that is not enough. In those cases, other words, such as **before, yesterday** and **next week**, can help make your writing clear and provide clues for readers.

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DIRECTIONS

Write the correct tense of the verb in parentheses. Then underline any words that gave you a clue to the correct verb tense.

Example: (open) I will open my birthday gifts tomorrow.

1. (call) We _____ your daughter yesterday.
2. (wait) Stan _____ for his children every afternoon after school.
3. (move) The Rosellos _____ to Columbus two years ago.
4. (enjoy) I always _____ a good mystery book.
5. (work) Mrs. Haynes _____ on your furnace next week.
6. (happen) What _____ to you last night?
7. (demand) Today's consumers _____ higher-quality products than in the past.
8. (end) You _____ your study of the Constitution next Tuesday.
9. (own) Simon now _____ a car and a pickup truck.
10. (talk) We _____ about you for hours yesterday.

References

www.englishforeveryone.org
www.k12reader.com

