

*A Tale of Two Tests;
or
Is the Grade 11 Literacy Exam
The Right Tale to be Wagging the Dog?*

The Brown Chair in English Literacy
UNIVERSITY OF ARKANSAS

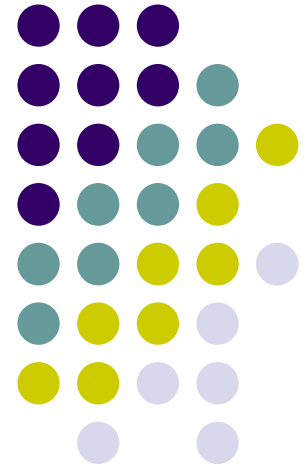


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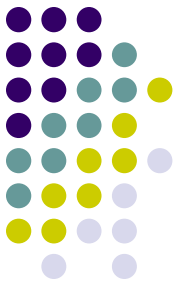
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Differences in Readability, Part I:



Arkansas Grade 11 Literacy vs. ACT Reading

- Three randomly selected 100-word passages from “Excerpts from *The Signers*” on the 2008 Grade 11 Literacy Exam have a mean of 5.6 sentences and 150.3 syllables per 100 words, yielding a 9th-grade readability level on the Fry Readability Graph.
- Three randomly selected 100-word passages from the “Japanese *tansu*” text on the sample Reading test at ACT.com have a mean of 4.3 sentences and 174 syllables per 100 words, yielding a readability level in the third band of “college” on the Fry Readability Graph.

Differences in Readability, Part II:

Arkansas Grade 11 Literacy vs. ACT Reading



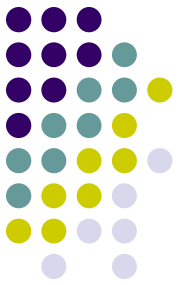
- In the selected passages from “Excerpt from *The Signers*” reading, 54% of the grammatical subjects of t-units refer to actual people, 36% refer to collectives of people or abstract ideas, and 10% are pronouns or expletives.
- In the selected passages from the “Japanese *tansu*” reading, none of the grammatical subjects of t-units refer to actual people, 31% refer to physical objects, 42% refer to collectives of people or abstract ideas, and 26% are pronouns or expletives.

Two types of multiple-choice questions that standardized tests use to measure reading



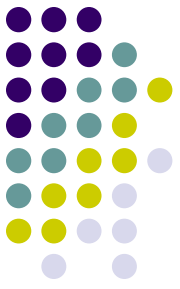
- **“Reproduction of knowledge” questions:** the answer is given somewhere in the passage students must read.
- **“Construction of knowledge” questions:** the student must infer, interpret, analyze, synthesize, and/or evaluate information in order to answer the question.

What percentage of each type of question does a student encounter on these tests?




- 2005 ACTAAP Grade 11 Literacy Exam: 46% Construction, 54% Reproduction
- Practice ACT Reading from *The Real ACT*: 62.5% Construction, 37.5% Reproduction

A Modest Proposal

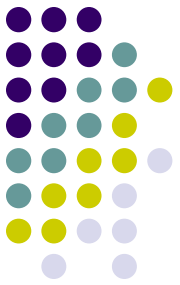


In a state where education professionals and the public are striving to get more students prepared for success in college and in the workforce, why not incorporate the ACT plus Writing *and* the ACT Work Keys examinations in the state's NCLB tests? (N.B. Scores on the ACT can be interpreted either as norm-referenced or criterion referenced.)



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