

# Components of an Assessment Task

A PASS assessment task consists of five components: abstract, prompt, directions, procedure, and scoring rubric. Each of these components is described below.

## **Abstract**

This is a brief description of the assessment task. It states generally what learning by a student the task is designed to assess, and it summarizes what students do to perform the task.

## **Prompt**

This is the stimulus material given to students at the time of assessment, which they must use while carrying out the assessment task. The purpose of the prompt is twofold. First, it activates prior knowledge that would be useful to a student performing the assessment task. Second, it provides students with information or a tool to be used while performing the task. A prompt could be presented through various media, e.g., print, auditory, or visual. Prompts might also take various forms, e.g., reading, graphic, motion picture, recording, map, template, data set, etc. When possible, the actual prompt or prompts should be included. If that is not feasible, a thorough description of the prompt(s) should be furnished.

## **Directions to Students**

These are instructions actually provided to students to guide them in carrying out the task. The directions should tell students what they are expected to produce, which procedures to follow in carrying out the task, and what parameters have been set for them, e.g. time limits, place to work, materials provided or available, and opportunities to consult with others while working. These directions should be included exactly as they would be given to students at the time they are directed to perform the assessment task. They should include a very clear statement of the product students are expected to generate as a result of performing the assessment

task as well as the criteria that will be used to gauge the quality of student work, i.e., the scoring rubric. It is the students being assessed who are the audience for these directions.

## **Procedures**

These are steps the teacher will follow in administering the assessment. What will be done by the teacher to enable students to perform the task? How will the teacher prepare for the assessment to occur? What arrangements will be made? What materials will be assembled? How will data be gathered to evaluate students' performance? The steps to be followed by the teacher in conducting the assessment should be listed, and each step should be briefly elaborated. These procedures should be written so that another teacher, new to the assessment task, can carry them out.

## **Scoring Rubric**

Each benchmark being assessed by the task should be identified in the scoring rubric so that assessment is carefully aligned with curriculum. There should be a four-point scale for scoring each benchmark. A score of 2 indicates the minimal criteria necessary to meet a benchmark. Scores of 3 and 4 indicate that progressively more demanding criteria that are necessary to exceed a benchmark have been met. A score of 1 indicates that progress has been made toward meeting a benchmark, but that it has not yet been met. Criteria for assigning each of the four scores for every benchmark being assessed should be clearly stated in the rubric. These criteria should specify "how good is good enough" for a particular score to be assigned. The scoring rubric can be laid out as a grid with the score points of the scale across the horizontal axis and the benchmarks down the vertical axis. Each cell of the grid contains the criteria for assigning a particular score to a single benchmark. Students should receive a separate score for each benchmark. The separate scores could be combined or weighted to compute a general score (grade) for the entire task.

# Scoring Rubrics for Assessment Task Standards

## General Rules for Scoring

The seven standards for assessment tasks are considered equally important. Each standard is scored on a three-point or four-point numeric scale. The descriptions which follow for scores on each standard constitute the minimal criteria for that score. Scoring should follow these general rules:

- If in doubt between two scores, make the decision by asking whether the minimal conditions of the higher score have been met. If not, use the lower score.
- In determining scores for each standard, consider only the evidence in the written description of the assessment task.
- Scores should take into account what students can reasonably be expected to do at the grade level.
- The seven standards for assessment tasks are considered equally important. Some of them are scored on a three-point numeric scale and others on a four-point scale with 1 being low and 3 or 4 being high.
- Scores across standards should not be summed or averaged. Rather, each standard should be considered individually.

## Scoring Rubrics

### Standard 1. Organization of Information

*The task asks students to organize, synthesize, interpret, explain or evaluate complex information in addressing a concept, problem, or issue.*

Consider the extent to which the task asks the student to organize, interpret, evaluate, or synthesize complex information, rather than to retrieve or to reproduce isolated fragments of knowledge or to repeatedly apply previously learned algorithms and procedures. To score high, the task should call for interpretation of nuances of a topic that go deeper than surface exposure or familiarity.

- 3 = high
- 2 = moderate
- 1 = low

When students are asked to gather information for reports that indicates some selectivity and organizing beyond

mechanical copying, but are not asked for interpretation, evaluation, or synthesis, assign a score of 2.

### Standard 2. Consideration of Alternatives

*The task asks students to consider alternative solutions, strategies, perspectives, or points of view in addressing a concept, problem or issue.*

To what extent does success in the task require consideration of alternative solutions, strategies, perspectives, or points of view? To score high, the task should clearly involve students in considering alternatives, either through explicit presentation of the alternatives or through an activity that cannot be successfully completed without examination of alternatives implicit in the work. It is not necessary that students' final conclusions include the listing or weighing of alternatives, but this could be an impressive indicator that it was an expectation of the task.

- 3 = high
- 2 = moderate
- 1 = low

### Standard 3. Disciplinary Content

*The task asks students to show understanding of or use ideas, theories, or perspectives considered central to a social studies discipline.*

To what extent does the task promote students' understanding of and thinking about ideas, theories, or perspectives considered seminal or critical within a social studies discipline or recognized interdisciplinary field?

- 3 = Success in the task clearly requires understanding of concepts, ideas, or theories central in a discipline.
- 2 = Success in the task seems to require understanding of concepts, ideas, or theories central in a discipline, but the task does not make these very explicit.
- 1 = Success in the task can be achieved with a very superficial (or even without any) understanding of concepts, ideas, or theories central to any social studies discipline.

**Standard 4. Disciplinary Process**

*The task asks students to use methods of inquiry, research, or communication characteristic of a social studies discipline.*

To what extent does the task lead students to use methods of inquiry, research, communication, and discourse characteristic of a social studies discipline? Some powerful processes of inquiry may not be linked uniquely to any particular discipline (e.g., interpreting graphs), but they will be valued here if the task calls for their use in ways similar to important uses within the discipline.

3 = Success in the task requires the use of methods of inquiry or discourse important to the conduct of a discipline, e.g., interpreting primary sources, conducting a survey, making a map, or plotting economic data.

2 = Success in the task requires use of methods of inquiry or discourse not central to the conduct of a discipline.

1 = Success in the task can be achieved without use of any specific methods of inquiry or discourse.

**Standard 5. Elaborated Communication**

*The task asks students to elaborate on their understanding, explanations, or conclusions through extended speaking or writing.*

This standard is intended to measure the extent to which a task requires the use of language by students to elaborate on their ideas and conclusions through extended writing or speaking characteristic of a discipline. The task for this standard is scored on a four-point scale.

**4 = Analysis/Persuasion**

The task calls for extended written or oral explanation of a solution to a problem, a conclusion or generalization drawn from inquiry, or a position on an issue. Examples include attempts to argue, convince, or persuade and to develop or test hypotheses.

**3 = Report/Summary**

The task calls for an account of a particular event or series of events ("This is what happened."), a generalized narrative, a description of a recurrent pattern of events, or steps in a procedure or path followed to solve a problem ("This is what happens," "This is the way it is done.").

**2 = Short-answer Exercise**

The task requires little more than presenting a result or stating an answer in only one or two brief sentences to questions of a short-answer exercise.

**1 = Multiple Choice/Fill-in-the-blank**

Students are expected to answer multiple choice or fill-in-the-blank exercises with less than a sentence.

**Standard 6. Problem Connected to the World Beyond the Classroom**

*The task asks students to address a concept, problem or issue that is similar to one that they have encountered or are likely to encounter in civic life beyond the classroom.*

To what extent does the task present students with a question, issue, or problem that they have actually encountered, or are likely to encounter, in their civic lives beyond school?

Certain kinds of school knowledge may be considered valuable as cultural capital or cultural literacy needed in social, civic, or vocational situations beyond the classroom (e.g., knowing how a bill becomes a law or how to compute interest on an investment). However, the demands of a task for culturally valued, "basic" knowledge are not counted here unless the task requires applying knowledge to a specific civic problem likely to be encountered beyond the classroom.

When students are allowed to choose a topic of interest to them, this might also indicate likely applications of knowledge beyond the instructional setting. But tasks that allow student choice do not necessarily connect to issues beyond the classroom. To score high on this standard, it must be clear that the question, issue, or problem which students confront resembles one that students have encountered, or are likely to encounter, in civic life beyond school.

3 = The question, issue, or problem clearly resembles one that students have encountered, or are likely to encounter, in civic life beyond school. The resemblance is so clear that teacher explanation is not necessary for most students to grasp it.

2 = The question, issue, or problem bears some resemblance to real world social experiences of the students, but the connections are not immediately apparent. The connections would be reasonably clear if explained by the teacher, but the task need not include such explanations to be rated 2.

1 = The problem has virtually no resemblance to questions, issues, or problems that students have encountered, or are likely to encounter, beyond school. Even if the teacher tried to show the connections, it would be difficult to make a persuasive argument.

**Standard 7. Audience Beyond the Classroom**

*The task asks students to communicate their knowledge, present a product or performance, or take some action for an audience beyond the teacher, classroom, and school building.*

Authenticity increases when students complete the task with the intention of communicating their knowledge to an audience beyond the teacher and when they actually communicate with that audience. Such communication can include informing others, trying to persuade others,

performing, and taking other actions beyond the classroom. This refers not to the process of working on the task, but to the nature of the student's product.

The task for this standard is scored on a four-point scale.

4 = Final product is presented to an audience beyond the school.

3 = Final product is presented to an audience beyond the classroom, but within the school.

2 = Final product is presented to peers within the classroom.

1 = Final product is presented only to the teacher.



# **COURSE TITLE: The Eastern World**

**GRADE LEVEL:** Seventh Grade

**UNIT:** China

## **Abstract**

This task is designed to assess students' understanding of major differences between the political and economic systems of China and the United States and their understanding of how events in China can affect other parts of the world. Students read newspaper articles about a dissident imprisoned after the Tianenmen Square uprising and recently exiled to the United States. They then write a letter to the new immigrant describing how life in his new country will be different from life in his former country.

## **Prompt**

Students receive a copy of two articles from the *Detroit Free Press*: "Chinese Dissident Exiled to U.S. Lands in Detroit" (April 20, 1998) and "Chinese Dissident in Pretty Good Shape" (April 21, 1998). Following the second article is a political cartoon pertaining to the topic of the articles.

## **Directions**

"Read the newspaper articles describing the arrival in Detroit of Wang Dan, an exiled Chinese dissident, and review information provided earlier about the demonstration in Beijing's Tianenmen Square in May of 1989. Then meet with your discussion group and explore the following:

### **"What happened in Beijing in 1989?"**

"You should understand what the students wanted and what the government did. Discuss what led up to this demonstration and compare it to student demonstrations in the United States.

### **"Why did Wang Dan come to Detroit? Where will he go next?"**

"Look at transportation routes from China to the United States. Also, look at ethnic population patterns in the United States. Discuss why he came to the United States instead of another country.

### **"What will Wang Dan do now that he is in the United States?"**

"Think about how he might make a living, and discuss how the Chinese government might view what he will do.

### **"How will life be different for Wang Dan now that he is living in the United States?"**

"His life has changed dramatically. Compare how the U.S. government will treat him compared to the government of China. Think about what his day-to-day life might be like.

"After you read the assigned materials and discuss the questions, write a letter of your own to Wang Dan. Begin your letter by welcoming him to America and offering him advice on how to cope with changes he will face in his daily life. Include the following in your letter:

- In your welcome, recap what has happened to him to show your interest in his situation.
- Indicate how his exile might affect people in China as well as people in the United States and other countries.
- Describe American constitutional government for Wang and tell him how it is different from Chinese communist rule.
- Offer him suggestions on how he might make a living. Suggest things he might find useful and tell him how he might obtain them. Describe the difference between public and private goods so that he can distinguish between them.
- Conclude with a paragraph wishing him well and offering your assistance for the future.

"Your letter can be typewritten or in long hand so long as it is neat and legible. Your letters are due in class the day after tomorrow. As a class, we will decide which letters to send to Wang Dan."

## **Procedure**

Duplicate the prompts for each student. Present each student with a written copy of the directions and have them follow along as you read them aloud. Answer any questions students might have about the assigned task. Provide students with class time to read through the prompts. Place students in small groups to discuss the questions and encourage them to take notes during the discussion that might be helpful to them when writing their letters.



Remind them of the questions to guide their small group discussions. Provide additional time as appropriate the next day to continue small group discussions. Allow students to begin drafting their letters in class and to revise and complete them as homework. Collect the letters and score them using the scoring rubric. Engage the class in a

procedure to decide how many student letters to send to Wang Dan and to determine which ones to send. Students might read each other's letters (coded but without names or grades/scores on them) and rate them. Ratings could be tabulated and the letters with the highest ratings overall sent to Wang Dan.

### SCORING RUBRIC

BENCHMARK	SCORE			
	1	2	3	4
Students will express an informed position on a current public issue involving China (VI.3.MS.1)	Acknowledges that protests in China are noticed in other countries.	Identifies an economic or political effect in the United States of protests by Chinese dissidents.	Explains how treatment of dissidents by the Chinese government could affect diplomatic or trade relations with the United States.	Explains the tension in United States foreign policy toward China between economic interests in trade and support for human rights.
Students will distinguish between American constitutional government and Chinese communist rule (III.1.MS.2)	Indicates in the letter that China and the United States have different forms of government.	Accurately describes one difference between American constitutional democracy and Chinese communist rule.	Explains that under the United States Constitution, Wang has the right to free expression and will not be punished for criticizing the Chinese or American governments.	Explains why Americans believe in free expression as a necessary foundation for democratic government.
Students will distinguish between public and private good, using examples of China and the U.S. (IV.3.MS.1)	Identifies one good that might be available to Wang in the United States that was probably not available to him in China.	Distinguishes accurately between public and private goods.	Distinguishes accurately between public and private goods and provides an example of each.	Describes the difference between public and private goods by comparing the United States to China.

**COURSE TITLE: American Studies**

GRADE LEVEL: Eighth Grade

UNIT: Immigration

**Abstract**

This task is designed to assess students' understanding of the controversy over national policy regarding immigration to the United States. They read a periodical article which contains information on the history of twentieth century immigration and presents opposing views on restriction of immigration at the present time. Using the article as a stimulus, they are asked to seek out additional information to inform their thinking about the issue. Finally, they compose an essay expressing their own position on the issue supported by evidence and logical reasoning.

**Prompt**

Students receive a copy of an article by Alexandra Hanson-Harding, reprinted with permission, from *Junior Scholastic* (February 7, 1997). The article is entitled "Should the U.S. Cut Back on the Number of Immigrants Coming to America?" The first part of the article describes recent changes in federal immigration law, including new restrictions on welfare benefits to immigrants, and on bringing family members to this country once an immigrant has arrived. The article goes on to identify the costs posed to taxpayers by new immigrants, including public assistance, social security benefits, and public services such as schools. Next, arguments supporting immigration are presented, for example, that immigrants create new jobs, bring life to decaying cities, pay taxes, take jobs not wanted by others, and use welfare less than native-born citizens. In addition, the article contains brief stories about successful recent young immigrants. The article concludes with tables, graphs, and maps, taken with permission from the *Los Angeles Times*, of the history and geography of twentieth century immigration to the United States.

**Directions**

"We have been studying the history of immigration to the United States. You have traced the geographic origins

of immigrants, analyzed changes in the law governing immigration, read accounts of immigrants' experiences in America, and considered opposing views on immigration policy. You are now assigned to take a stand on the issue: Who should be allowed to immigrate to the United States? Compose an essay in which you take a position on this public issue.

"Read the *Junior Scholastic* article entitled 'Should the U.S. Cut Back on the Number of Immigrants Coming to America?'" Using the Internet and other library resources, locate and study additional information about recent immigration to the United States. Then compose your essay. As you compose your essay, do the following:

- State the issue and express a clear position on it.
- Refer to information in the article from *Junior Scholastic*.
- Support the position you take on the issue with clearly reasoned arguments.
- Include in your supporting arguments information that you discovered from your library search and identify the source(s) of your information.
- Identify an opposing position and explain why you think your position on the issue is more persuasive than the alternative.

"Your essay should be typewritten and no longer than 500 words in length. It is due in three days."

**Procedure**

Duplicate the prompt for each student. Confer with the librarian in advance, so that he or she can anticipate and organize resources that might be helpful, including possible websites for students to search. Read the directions to students with emphasis on the criteria for a good essay and respond to any questions students might have about the assigned task. Post the directions on the board or duplicate copies for students. Collect essays on the due date and score them using the scoring rubric.

**SCORING RUBRIC**

<b>BENCHMARK</b>	<b>SCORE</b>			
	1	2	3	4
Students will compose an essay expressing a position on a public issue relating to the topic of immigration (VI.3.MS.1)	The issue is stated as a question and a clear position on it is expressed.	The issue is stated as a question and a clear position on it is expressed. The position taken is supported by at least one reason that is elaborated. Reference is made to relevant information from the prompt.	The issue is stated as a question and a clear position on it is expressed. The position taken is supported by at least two reasons that are elaborated using information from the student's search of library resources. Reference is made to relevant information from the prompt.	The issue is stated as a question and a clear position on it is expressed. The position taken is supported by at least two reasons that are elaborated using information from the student's search of library resources. Reference is made to relevant information from the prompt. An opposing position is identified and refuted.



# ASSESSMENT TASK

## COURSE TITLE: Twentieth Century American History

GRADE LEVEL: Ninth or Tenth Grade

UNIT: The Second World War

### Abstract

This task is designed to assess the ability of students to participate thoughtfully and constructively in a small group discussion of the decision of the United States to use atomic bombs against Japan in World War II. They are given a prompt that summarizes major facts surrounding the historical decision and a second prompt containing guidelines for productive discussion of a public issue. They can also draw upon earlier discussions in class as well as persuasive essays they have written on the issue. Stimulated by these prompts, students videotape their discussion. The policy issue guiding the discussion is: "Should the United States have used the atomic bomb against Japan during the Second World War?"

### Prompt

★ "Choices: Truman, Hirohito, and the Atomic Bomb." (See Instructional Resources, handout HS3-2.) This prompt is a brief summary of the choices facing President Truman for ending the war against Japan in the summer of 1945.

★ Performance criteria for a public issues discussion on pp. 289-295 of "Assessing Discussion of Public Issues." (See Instructional Resources, handout HS3-2) This prompt illustrates criteria for a productive discussion of a public issue.

### Directions

"We have been studying President Truman's decision to drop the atomic bomb on the cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki to bring about the surrender of Japan. You are now going to evaluate the President's decision in a discussion with five of your classmates. Your discussion will be videotaped, and I will use the videotape to evaluate your individual performance.

"Check the listing of discussion groups posted in the classroom to identify the members of your small group.

Consult with the other members of the group to set a 45-minute block of time for your discussion. Schedule the block of time in the library to use the conference room and the video camera. Bring a blank videotape to the discussion. Identify a member of your group to set the camera at a fixed position on its tripod so that it captures the faces of all members of the group and audibly records everything that is said. See the media specialist for help in operating the camera if it is needed. Your group may choose to record the discussion outside of school if appropriate equipment is available and permission is granted.

"Prepare for the discussion in advance. You might want to review materials, your persuasive essay, and notes you have from our study of the issue. Read the short article "Choices: Truman, Hirohito, and the Atomic Bomb" to refresh your memory of the circumstances facing the president in the summer of 1945. Also read "Performance Criteria for a Public Issues Discussion" to review the qualities of a good discussion. Use the skills of good discussion during your videotaped session. Your discussion should address the policy issue: Should the United States have used the atomic bomb against Japan during the Second World War?

"Your individual performance in the discussion will be evaluated on the basis of your knowledge of the history of the period and your skill in discussing the issue with your classmates. Remember this is not a debate. The purpose of the discussion is not to impose your position on others but to clarify the issue and evaluate various positions. Be sure that all members of your discussion group have an opportunity to express their thinking during the discussion. As a result of the discussion, you should be better prepared to express your individual position on the issue, and to support it with accurate historical evidence, democratic values, and logical reasoning. See the scoring rubric for more details about the criteria that will be used to evaluate your discussion performance.

"Your videotape should be no longer than 30 minutes. It is due in class one week from today."

## Procedure

Prepare and distribute a copy of both prompts to students. Assign each student to a small discussion group of five. Post the names of students in each group in the classroom. Make arrangements with the media specialist for students to reserve 45-minute blocks of time during or after school to record their discussions in the library conference room.

Arrange for a video camera with recording capabilities on a tripod to be available in the conference room and for a technician to be available if students need help operating the camera. Read the assessment task directions to students and post a copy in the classroom. Also, post a copy of the scoring rubric. Respond to any questions students have about the assessment task assignment.

## SCORING RUBRIC

BENCHMARK	SCORE			
	1	2	3	4
Students will evaluate the U.S. decision to use the atomic bomb in light of core democratic values and the resulting costs and benefits as viewed from a variety of perspectives (I.4.HS.4).	Makes statements about the policy issue that express only personal attitudes, or mentions a potentially important idea but does not pursue it in a way that advances the group's understanding.	Presents a position on the policy issue accurately supported by one historical claim.	Presents a position on the policy issue accurately supported by two historical claims and considers an alternative position.	Presents a position on the policy issue accurately supported by two historical claims. Refutes an alternative position with historical evidence and logical reasoning.
Students will engage each other in conversations that deeply examine whether the United States should have dropped the atomic bomb (VI.2.HS.1).	Responds substantively to an idea expressed by another person or invites a response to an expressed idea, and does not inhibit contributions to the discussion from others.	States a factual, ethical, or definitional issue clearly and does not inhibit contributions to the discussion from others.	States a factual, ethical, or definitional issue clearly and engages in a dialogue; paraphrases or summarizes to move the discussion forward; does not inhibit contributions to the discussion from others.	States a factual, ethical, or definitional issue clearly and engages in more than one dialogue; paraphrases or summarizes to move the discussion forward; rationally challenges a statement made; does not inhibit contributions to the discussion from others and intervenes if others do.