



**English Language Arts
Grade 8
Scoring Guide for
Released Item # 31
Writing from Knowledge
and Experience
Fall 2008**



PART 3

WRITING FROM KNOWLEDGE AND EXPERIENCE

DIRECTIONS:

You will be given a theme and a number of ways to write about it. You may use examples from real life, from what you read or watch, or from your imagination.

Your audience will be interested adults.

You may not use any resource materials (such as dictionaries, grammar books, or spelling books) for this test. Use only a No. 2 pencil.

Use the checklist for Part 3 to help with your response. The Notes/Planning space may be used for writing down and organizing your ideas.

Your response must be written on the lines in Part 3 of your **Answer Document**. Only the writing in your **Answer Document** will be scored. No extra sheets may be used.

Turn the page and follow along as I read the prompt to you.

WRITING FROM KNOWLEDGE AND EXPERIENCE**31 WRITE ABOUT THE THEME: OVERCOMING AN OBSTACLE**

At one time or another, everyone has to overcome an obstacle or meet a challenge. Obstacles might be large and tough to overcome, or they might be small and easily overcome. Think about an obstacle that you have had to overcome.

Do **ONLY ONE** of the following:

convince readers how overcoming obstacles can have lasting, positive effects

OR

describe a major challenge that someone might face and how he or she might meet that challenge

OR

tell about a time when you or someone you know overcame an obstacle

OR

explain how a group of people worked together to overcome an obstacle

OR

write about overcoming an obstacle in your own way.

PART 3: CHECKLIST FOR WRITING FROM KNOWLEDGE AND EXPERIENCE

DIRECTIONS:

Use this checklist to help you with your response. Your response must be written on the lines in Part 3 of your **Answer Document**.

CHECKLIST:

- Do I have a clear central idea that connects to the theme?
- Do I stay focused on the theme?
- Do I support my central idea with important details/examples?
- Do I need to take out details/examples that DO NOT support my central idea?
- Do I use a variety of words, phrases, and/or sentences?
- Have I spelled, punctuated, and capitalized my writing to help readers understand it?

NOTES/PLANNING

Michigan Educational Assessment Program
Rubric for Writing from Knowledge and Experience
Grades 3 – 8

- 6** The writing is exceptionally clear and focused. Ideas and content are thoroughly developed with relevant details and examples where appropriate. The writer's control over organization and the connections between ideas moves the reader smoothly and naturally through the text. The writer shows a mature command of language including precise word choice that results in a compelling piece of writing. Tight control over language use and mastery of writing conventions contribute to the effect of the response.
- 5** The writing is clear and focused. Ideas and content are well developed with relevant details and examples where appropriate. The writer's control over organization and the connections between ideas effectively moves the reader through the text. The writer shows a command of language including precise word choice. The language is well controlled, and occasional lapses in writing conventions are hardly noticeable.
- 4** The writing is generally clear and focused. Ideas and content are developed with relevant details and examples where appropriate, although there may be some unevenness. The response is generally coherent, and its organization is functional. The writer's command of language, including word choice, supports meaning. Lapses in writing conventions are not distracting.
- 3** The writing is somewhat clear and focused. Ideas and content are developed with limited or partially successful use of examples and details. There may be evidence of an organizational structure, but it may be artificial or ineffective. Incomplete mastery over writing conventions and language use may interfere with meaning some of the time. Vocabulary may be basic.
- 2** The writing is only occasionally clear and focused. Ideas and content are underdeveloped. There may be little evidence of organizational structure. Vocabulary may be limited. Limited control over writing conventions may make the writing difficult to understand.
- 1** The writing is generally unclear and unfocused. Ideas and content are not developed or connected. There may be no noticeable organizational structure. Lack of control over writing conventions may make the writing difficult to understand.

Condition codes for unratable papers (zeroes):

A – Off-topic or insufficient

B – Written in a Language other than English or Illegible

C – Blank

because you can overcome it and
when you do you don't have to worry
about overcoming it any more
life or death situation by accident and
you could face it some day.
my friend overcame her fear of swimmin

Anchor Paper 1**Scorepoint: 1**

This response is unclear and unfocused. There is no development and no organizational structure to this brief response. The absence of punctuation and capitalization shows the writer's lack of control over writing conventions.

Some people have challenges with
waking up early. Most have a
challenge by leaving a fight.
Some people don't have none.

Anchor Paper 2**Scorepoint: 1**

This brief response merely list some unrelated challenges. (Some have challenges with waking up early. Most have a challenge by leaving a fight.) The ideas are undeveloped. There is no organization evident in the random order of the sentences.

A major challenge that someone might face is picking a cat or dog. Some ways you can meet the challenge is to make a list of things you like dogs better than cats, look at the type of breeds and see which one is more playful and loyal.

Anchor Paper 3**Scorepoint: 2**

This response attempts to focus on the challenge of picking a pet. The writer lists three ways to meet this challenge (things you like about dogs better than cats, the type of breeds, which is more playful and loyal), but each remains underdeveloped. There is little evidence of organization beyond a list.

The biggest obstacle I have had to overcome was riding a roller coaster. When I was younger, I had a terrible experience at Six Flags. My brother made me ride a roller coaster. I cried a lot. Since then, I had been afraid of carnival rides. Finally, I got up enough nerves to ride the roller coaster.

Anchor Paper 4**Scorepoint: 2**

The writing is only occasionally clear and focused. There is an attempt to organize this response by introducing the obstacle of riding a roller coaster in the first sentence and ending with a brief conclusion (The biggest obstacle I have had to overcome was riding a roller coaster....Finally, I got up enough nerves to ride the roller coaster.) However, the content is underdeveloped with only a few general statements rather than specific details.

Overcoming an obstacle of challenges is hard. I know from experience. This summer my mom passed it was really hard. Science. My mom passed there has been challenge after challenge. Now I lived with my mom

so that meant I had to move in with dad. Problem number two is going to another school. That was scary, but the worst is over for the most part, which I'm glad that it is. See even though my obstacle was hard and scary the outcome was great, happy and memorable. Like meeting new people, having new friends, new types of teachers and knowing some ones always there for me.

So if your obstacle is hard or heart breaking just think about what you will get out of your challenge. It might just make life more fun, or maybe even memorable.

Anchor Paper 5**Scorepoint: 2**

The focus of this longer response is only occasionally clear and shifts from the mother's death to going to a new school. There is little evidence of organizational structure. The writer's ideas are expressed in general terms (obstacle was hard and scary... outcome was great, happy and memorable), and the lack of details leaves the content vague and underdeveloped.

An obstacle that I've had to overcome is getting good grades and turning in homework. This was hard for me because I never turned in my homework on time so it got marked down. I got over this obstacle by getting a study buddy. I also asked my parents to help me do it. Writing in my planner helped a lot too. Ever since I've started doing those things my grades have gone up a lot. You just need to put forth effort into what ever needs to be done. In this case I have overcome this obstacle in my life which is one out of many so far.

Anchor Paper 6**Scorepoint: 3**

The writing is somewhat clear in its focus on the obstacle of getting good grades. The writer develops the content with a list of partially successful examples (got a study buddy, asked parents for help, wrote in planner) that relate to the topic. Some organizational structure is provided with transitions (so, also, too, ever since) that help lead to the conclusion. The vocabulary is basic.

A few years ago September 11th happend. That is known as a very big tragity that happend in America. when the plain hit the buildings, they came crashing down. There was a huge mess and a ton of dead people. Then cops, firemen and Ambulences came Rushing in to help the people who were close by that got hurt. It was a Huge obstical America needed to overcome, so Americans started donating money and we got the mess cleaned up. Now today in 2008 New York is building a momorial buiding to honor the people who died in the twin towers. This shows that if a ton of people work together you can overcome an obstical.

Anchor Paper 7

Scorepoint: 3

This response is only somewhat clear in focusing on working together to overcome an obstacle. The writer is partially successful in developing the example of New York City working together to overcome the tragedy of September 11th (cops and fireman rushing in to help, Americans donating money, building a memorial). The vocabulary is basic.

Overcoming obstacles can have lasting, positive, effects. The obstacles you face may be easy or hard to overcome, but if you succeed in the end, you will find that many good things come from a challenge.

One thing that results from overcoming an obstacle in life is confidence. Confidence will stay with you for as long as you let it so, this effect is very rewarding to a person's life. When you face a challenge, you feel that nothing will ever stand in the way of your dreams again. Though things will come up, you now have the confidence to confront the problem and overcome it.

Another effect of facing a challenge is perseverance. This runs hand-in-hand with confidence because, due to your new-found confidence, you now have the strength to persevere. Perseverance is key if you want to accomplish your goals in life.

Pride is another great effect of overcoming challenges. Along with confidence, it gives you the strength to carry on, or persevere. Knowing you can do something, or believing in yourself will help you overcome any obstacle.

All of the ~~parts~~ developed after overcoming an obstacle described above, as well as many, many others, help persons become better people in their eyes and in the eyes of others. Sometimes facing a challenge is hard to do, but when we face it and succeed, the effects are ^{positively} everlasting.

Anchor Paper 8
Scorepoint: 3

This writing is somewhat clear and focused. In spite of the organizational structure with an introduction, three positive effects of overcoming obstacles (confidence, perseverance, pride), and a conclusion, the response remains only partially developed. The writer effectively transitions from one idea to the next (another effect, along with, as well as).

I've had to overcome many obstacles, but the hardest one I think was last year. My first year of middle school in Wyandotte, and I had been doing great in all of my classes except for Math. In Math I was getting very poor grades. To get better grades I started listening more and really trying to understand. Even though I tried I wasn't getting any better. After going three marking periods with low grades in Math my mom said if I got my final report card and I still had bad grades, I would be grounded for the whole summer. Since I didn't wanna be grounded I started to work extra hard. I payed attention way more, went to tutoring, and turned in all of my homework in an time. I would even do extra credit if it was given out. I tried so hard, and at the end of the year I ended up with an A in Math on my last report card. So now I know, I can overcome any obstacles.

Anchor Paper 9**Scorepoint: 4**

This brief but coherent response is generally clear and focused on how the student's math grades improved. Functional organization is shown in the progression from poor grades in the first marking period to a final "A" on the last report card. The student uses transitions (after, even though, since) to move from the introduction to a brief concluding statement. Relevant details (threat of grounding, tutoring, extra credit) are enough to explain what the student did to improve. Some variety in sentence structure is apparent.

When I was in 7th grade, I broke my nose in gym class. My nose was so blue that I couldn't go back to school for a whole week. And while I was gone, someone made up a rumor that I got in a fight with someone and broke my nose. When I heard this news from my friend, I was scared to go back to school. I was so scared that people started to think that I was weird. That people would know me as the girl who got in a fight at school. I was scared that people would start teasing me. And when my doctor told me that I could go back to school, I was too scared to go back. So I told my parents that I still wasn't feeling well even though I was. I couldn't go back to school. I knew people would be staring at me, making faces at me. Then one night, my friend called me and asked when I was coming back. So I told her about how I felt about going back to school. Then she told me that I had to go back to school. She told me that I couldn't run away from my fears. She was right. The longer it took for me to go back to school, the worse. So knowing that my friends would be there for me, I had enough.

courage to go back to school. People still did tease me, but I felt better knowing that I didn't run away from my fears. I felt strong, knowing that I had enough courage to overcome one of my biggest obstacle. And I feel that by overcoming this obstacle, I can overcome even bigger obstacles now. And this is how I overcame one of my biggest obstacle.

Anchor Paper 10**Scorepoint: 4**

This writing is generally clear and remains focused on overcoming the fear of returning to school. The writer develops the text with relevant details to describe what happened and why returning to school would be frightening (people would be staring at me, making faces at me). The response progresses from what happened (broken nose in gym) to how a friend helped (friends would be there for her) to finally gaining enough courage to return to school (strength to not run away from fear). Functional organization is demonstrated through the use of transitions (while I was gone, when my doctor told me, so I told my parents) that move the reader through the text to a somewhat weak conclusion. Command of language supports meaning.

Everyone one has obstacles in their life. Some are easier to get through others are harder. But whatever they are you get through them.

I've been playing the piano for about 6 years. The past 5 years I have gone to competitions and competed around the state. In the competition you are required to memorize two solos and perform them to a judge. Last year I chose Für Else and Moonlight on the Lily Pond. Both were pretty simple songs so I thought I would do good in the competitions. It turns out Für Else was harder than I thought. The song is about 6 pages long and your hands move up and down the piano alot. I spent 3 months trying to memorize that piece and I succeeded. However by the time I memorized Für Else the state competition was a week away, and Moonlight on the Lily Pond wasn't even close to being done. I worked ever so hard trying to memorize that piece, however nothing worked. It was even harder because that week I also had two tests that I wasn't prepared for. A few hours before the competition. I

memorised my piece, and aced both my tests that week.

In conclusion if you try your hardest and don't give up you can do almost anything. And on top of that I came second in the state of Michigan with my two songs.

Anchor Paper 11**Scorepoint: 4**

This response is generally clear and focused on doing well in a piano competition. The writer develops the description of the first song with relevant details (6 pages long, hands had to move up and down the piano a lot, 3 months memorizing) but spends less time on the second song, resulting in uneven development. The text is generally coherent with functional organization including a brief introduction and conclusion. Command of language supports meaning

Looking up at the round clock in the kitchen my mom hurriedly exclaimed "Hurry up and finish eating, the audition notice said 12:00!" "I'm almost done" I said with a tone of annoyance in my voice that my mom couldn't see that for herself. I gulped down the last of the cereal milk from my bowl and ~~fuddled~~ up the stairs to put on a sweater and grab my script. Nearly sprinting out the door my mom and I jumped into her minivan.

"Well, my my huck! I sure ain't seen you in a long time!" I practiced one of the lines I had prepared to read for my audition with a drawly southern accent. I probably seemed relaxed to my mom, but the truth was that I was the most nervous out of my whole entire life. I really wanted to do it, but I wasn't sure if my stage-fright would let me.

Pulling into the gravel driveway of Alon Players Theater it seemed like we got there too fast. Looking out the window of the car I saw many teenagers just like me walking up to the triangular theater building. Most of them with the same expression of anxiousness written on their face.

As a stout lady with red hair stood on the stage I could feel the butterflies in my stomach fluttering around.

"Now we will begin the auditions. First up number 23"

Oh NO! That was me! With a panicked look on my face I walked up to the stage and climbed the stairs to get on it. I quietly walked to the center of the stage, and looked out to the audience. The second my eyes grew accustomed to the bright spotlights on I saw the expectant faces of all the people my stage fright was gone. My heart slowed down, my butterflies settled, and I was at peace.

My overcoming the obstacle of having stage fright improved my whole life, now I love being on stage, and do shows all the time.

Anchor Paper 12

Scorepoint: 5

This writing is clear and focused on how the writer successfully overcomes stagefright. The content is well developed with clear descriptions (pulling into the gravel driveway, triangular theater, butterflies in my stomach) and appropriate dialog from the script (My, my Huck! Sure ain't seen you in a long time) that adds voice to the writing. The control over organization and the connections between the ideas effectively show the anxiety felt by the writer as the audition grows closer and how it was finally overcome (heart slowed down, butterflies settled, finally at peace). The language is well controlled with precise words (gulped, trudged, sprinted), and lapses in writing conventions are hardly noticed.

"Come on you can do it," my mom and dad shouted in glee.

My body was beat up so bad from trying over, and over. My body was covered in scraps, long cuts, and giant bruises. I thought it was impossible to accomplish, but I was not going to give up I demanded to myself. I gave up on a lot of other hard things in the past but this time I am going to fight through it. This was for sure one of the hardest obstacles to overcome. "

* * * * *

It was a dreadful, cloudy, Sunday when I saw a little, red head, showing off on the coolest bike ever. The bike was blue, with red flames running down the side of it, and its awesome midnight black handle grips. But what I didn't know was that sweet bike was going to put me through a lot of pain. That day I decided I wanted to learn how to ride a bike. At dinner I questioned my dad if he could teach me how to ride a bike.

"Yes, I will teach you how to ride a bike. But I am telling you it is not easy," my dad answered.

"It's probably a piece of cake," I told my dad as he placed his plate in the dishwasher. The next morning when I woke up I slipped my clothes on and, dashed downstairs and out the door.

"You ready . . .," my dad asked as he pulled out a bike

out of the truck.

"Yea, but what am I going to ride," I questioned, very puzzled.

"This, it's your cousins bike they are letting me use it," my dad answered.

I was looking at the junky bike, it had a rusty green color, with ripped rubber handle bars, and flat tires on bent axles. I didn't think it could hold me if I sat on it. But I still rode the bike, well, I tried to ride it. The first couple of times my dad gave me a push and every time I fell, I had about five cuts, seven bruises, and thirteen scraps by the end of the day. My body was pounding, it hurt really bad, my heart practically stopped beating. Early next sunny morning I rolled out of bed, tripped down the stairs, and plowed through the door and tried over, and over.

"Come on you can do it," my mom and dad shouted in glee.

My body was beat up so bad from trying over, and over. I was covered in scraps, long cuts, and giant bruises. I thought it was impossible to accomplish, I was not going to give up I demanded to myself. On my last try I started pedaling and then I shut my eyes thinking I was going to fall. But to my surprise I was still up and pedaling. I think learning how to ride a bike was one of the hardest obstacles to overcome.

Anchor Paper 13**Scorepoint: 5**

This writing is clear and focused on the pain that is overcome in learning to ride a bike. Appropriate use of examples and dialogue add voice to the development. The writer tightly controls and organizes the response by beginning with a quote from the mother and a description of injuries (Come on _____, you can do it. Body covered in scrapes, long cuts, and giant bruises) and then repeating these same words in the conclusion. The writer's command of language includes precise word choice (midnight black handle grips, dashed downstairs, plowed through the door) throughout the text.

Squeek! Squeek, screech! BOOM! My foot banged with frustration against my wall, adding to the collection of marks from previous days that week. I inhaled a deep breath and my eyes began to water. I firmly set my new violin down on its case and rushed into the bathroom. I sat on the toilet seat and sobbed with my face buried in my hands. I heard my mom's footsteps approaching up the stairs. She knocked on the door softly and slowly opened it. I sat there, hugging my knees and gazing out the window.

"I know it's hard at first, but you have to just accept that you're a beginner," my mother said hoping to comfort me.

Between sniffles and tears I managed to cry out, "But it's just so frustrating, and I can't do it! I'm not good enough to do this!"

"...listen," My mom began, "Nobody is going to sound amazing on the violin after three months," She mentioned.

"I know, but I just can't get it! I've been practicing almost everyday and I'm still not getting any better!" The tears came back harder. My mom knelt down and took my hand in one of hers. With the other she lifted up my chin and stared into my splashed-red, discouraged face.

Forcing me to make eye contact with her, my mom gently said, "You have a gift in music and I know if you discipline yourself and dedicate your time to practicing, you will improve. Stop telling yourself you're not good enough, because that's not true. You're

just a beginner and it's going to be hard for a couple months, but I promise you'll get it if you continue to practice consistently. This is just an obstacle that you can choose to overcome. I stopped and thought about all my mom's words and realized she was speaking the truth. I don't have to make this issue a big deal. I reached for the box of tissues to blow my nose and dry my eyes. I managed to sneak a small smile and gave my mom a hug. From that moment on I decided to accept my faults and try my best.

A couple months later my violin teacher, _____, complimented me on how much I had improved since my first lesson. I took a moment to reflect on that dreadful memory and compare it to the level I was currently at. I ranged from a screechy, simple "twinkle, twinkle" to challenging concertos by well-known composers. I was so satisfied that I had finally overcome my obstacle of frustration.

Anchor Paper 14**Scorepoint: 6**

This exceptionally clear and focused response moves the reader through the frustration of constant practice to eventual success in playing the violin. The writer thoroughly develops this narrative by using appropriate dialog that showed how the mother's encouragement helped the student succeed. (Between sniffles and tears, I cried out – I'm not good enough....Forcing me to make eye contact, my mom gently said – You have a gift for music.) Tight control over the organization moves the reader smoothly and naturally from initial frustration (sat on the toilet seat and sobbed) to final satisfaction (I reached for the tissue box to dry my eyes) by using two contrasting images of crying. Sophisticated command of language and precise word choice (inhaled a deep breath, face buried in my hands) result in compelling writing.