

ELA.09.SR.1.03.098 C1 T3

Sample Item ID:	ELA.09.SR.1.03.098
Grade/Model:	9/4
Claim:	1: Students can read closely and analytically to comprehend a range of increasingly complex literary and informational texts.
Assessment Target:	3: WORD MEANINGS: Determine intended, precise, or nuanced meanings of words, including distinguishing connotation-denotation and words with multiple meanings (academic/tier 2 words), based on context, word patterns, word relationships, etymology, or use of specialized resources (e.g., dictionary, thesaurus, digital tools)
Secondary Target(s):	n/a
Standard(s):	RL-4, L-4, L-5b, L-6
DOK:	2
Difficulty:	Medium
Item Type:	Selected Response
Score Points:	1
Key:	calm expression
Stimulus/Passage(s):	Excerpted from "The Discontented Pendulum," by Jane Taylor, reproduced in <i>McGuffey's Fifth Eclectic Reader, Revised Edition</i> by William Holmes McGuffey
Stimuli/Text Complexity:	While the qualitative measures are slightly lower, the levels of meaning embedded in this parable suggest that a higher grade level assignment is appropriate. Based on these sets of measures, this passage is recommended for assessment at grade 9. Please see the text complexity worksheet attached.
Acknowledgement(s):	http://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/15040/pg15040.html
Item/Task Notes:	
How this task contributes to the sufficient evidence for this claim:	To complete this task, students must select a definition from a dictionary entry that best replaces two instances of the same word in the passage.
Target-Specific Attributes (e.g., accessibility issues):	

Stimulus Text:

Read an excerpt from "The Discontented Pendulum" and then answer the question.

The Discontented Pendulum
By Jane Taylor

An old clock that had stood for fifty years in a farmer's kitchen, without giving its owner any cause of complaint, early one summer's morning, before the family was stirring, suddenly stopped. Upon this, the dial plate (if we may credit the fable) changed countenance with alarm; the hands made a vain effort to continue their course; the wheels remained motionless with surprise; the weights hung speechless; and each member felt disposed to lay the blame on the others.

...The dial could scarcely keep its countenance during this harangue; but, resuming its gravity, thus replied: "Dear Mr. Pendulum, I am really astonished that such a useful, industrious person as yourself should have been seized by this sudden weariness. It is true, you have done a great deal of work in your time; so have we all, and are likely to do; which, although it may fatigue us to think of, the question is, whether it will fatigue us to do. Would you now do me the favor to give about half a dozen strokes to illustrate my argument?"

Item Stem:

Read this dictionary entry for the word "countenance."

Countenance (n) 1. calm expression. 2. moral support. 3. behavior. 4. face.

Which definition best applies to the way the word "countenance" is used in the highlighted sentences above?

- A. calm expression
- B. moral support
- C. behavior
- D. face

Distractor Analysis:

- A. KEY—calm expression: In both paragraphs, the dial’s composure and calmness is tested by challenges resulting from the pendulum’s refusal to operate.
- B. moral support: The dial’s interactions with the other clock parts (including the pendulum) reflect his own concern rather than support and encouragement of others.
- C. behavior: While the context of the first paragraph might support this definition, the usage in the second paragraph does not. In the latter, the dial exhibits more specific concern than is described by the general nature of “behavior.”
- D. face: While the dial’s calm facial expression changes as a result of the challenges posed by the pendulum’s behavior, its actual face does not. In particular, the context of the second paragraph does not support this definition.

Worksheet: Text Complexity Analysis		
Title	Author	Text Description
Discontented Pendulum	Jane Taylor	A parable of a clock that faces a defining moment



Recommended Placement for Assessment: Grade 9

While the qualitative measures are slightly lower, the levels of meaning embedded in this parable suggest that a higher grade level assignment is appropriate. **Based on these sets of measures, this passage is recommended for assessment at grade 9.**

Qualitative Measures	Quantitative Measures
<p>Meaning/Purpose: <u>Very complex:</u> The parable form may not be as familiar as some to students; the theme is revealed gradually over the course of the text.</p> <p>Text Structure: <u>Moderately complex:</u> The piece requires readers to see human characteristics in the parts of a clock and to consider the allegorical meaning.</p> <p>Language Features: <u>Very complex:</u> Relies entirely on figurative language (personification, mainly). The vocabulary and style are formal.</p> <p>Knowledge Demands: <u>Very complex:</u> The parable form may be unfamiliar; students must consider everything that is said and done on more than one level.</p>	<p>Common Core State Standards Appendix A Complexity Band Level (if applicable):</p> <p>Lexile or Other Quantitative Measure of the Text:</p> <p>Lexile: 990L; grades 6-8 Flesch-Kincaid: 7.0 Word Count: 818 (full passage)</p> <p style="background-color: #0070C0; color: white; padding: 2px;">Considerations for Passage Selection</p> <p>Passage selection should be based on the ELA Content Specifications targets and the cognitive demands of the assessment tasks.</p> <p>Potential Challenges a Text May Pose:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accessibility • Sentence and text structures • Archaic language, slang, idioms, or other language challenges • Background knowledge • Bias and sensitivity issues • Word count

Adapted from the 2012 ELA SCASS work