

PSSA ELA Vocabulary

Updated September 2017

KEY
Words Introduced in <i>Kindergarten</i>
Words Introduced in <i>First Grade</i>
Words Introduced in <i>Second Grade</i>
Words Introduced in <i>Third Grade</i>
Words Introduced in <i>Fourth Grade</i>

WORDS & VOCABULARY
Academic Vocabulary - words that are used across subjects and play important roles across different content areas (e.g. <i>theory, discourse, justify</i>)
Affix - the word part added to the beginning or ending of a root word (<i>prefix</i> or <i>suffix</i>)
Antonyms - words that mean the opposite of each other
Connotation - the suggested meaning of a word that gives it a negative or positive feeling (<i>slender, thin, scrawny</i>)
Domain-specific vocabulary - words that relate to a specific field of study (domain)
Formal Language - the type of language used in most writing; includes complete sentences, proper grammar, and well-chosen vocabulary
Multiple-meaning word - a word that has several meanings depending on how it is used in a sentence
Prefix - an affix added to the beginning of a word that changes the word's meaning
Root or root word - the base, or main part of a word that tells the word's meaning
Synonyms - words that have the same meaning or almost the same meaning
Suffix - an affix added to the end of a word that changes the word's meaning
Syllable - a word part made up of a letter or group of letters with one vowel sound
Time-Order Word - a word that tells when something happens and in what order, and how much time passes in between
Word Family - a group of words that have something in common
Hyperlink - a word or phrase in online documents that you can click on to jump to a new Web page

PUNCTUATION

Apostrophe - a punctuation mark that shows possession or takes the place of letters in a contraction

Comma - a punctuation mark that shows a pause in a sentence, date, or an address; separates items in a series; or separates clauses in sentences

Dash (-) a wide mark of punctuation that shows an interrupted thought

Ellipsis (...) - a series of spaced periods showing a trailing thought or that text has been omitted

Exclamation Point - (!) an end punctuation mark that shows excitement, shock, or surprise

Punctuation - the marks that writers use to give meaning to sentences

Question Mark - (?) an end punctuation mark used to show that a question is being asked

Quotation Marks (" ") - punctuation used to show the exact-words of a speaker

PARTS OF SPEECH

Abstract Noun - a noun that cannot be detected with one of the five senses

Adjective - a word that describes a noun

Adverb - a word that describes a verb, adverb or adjective

Antecedent - the noun that a pronoun refers to in the sentence

Article - a word that is linked to nouns such as *the*, *a* and *an*

Coordinating Conjunction - a word such as *and*, *yet*, *or*, *so* or *but* that joins two independent clauses in a sentence

Comparative Adjective - an adjective that compares two things using the ending *-er* or the word *more*

Conjunction - a word, such as *and*, *or*, or *but*, that joins other words or groups of words

Linking Words and Phrases - words and phrases that connect ideas and help them flow smoothly (because, therefore, for example); also called transitions

Modal Auxiliary Verb - a verb such as *can*, *might*, *should*, *could* and *must* that shows the possibility or necessity of an action

Noun - a word that names a person, place, thing, or idea

Possessive Noun - a noun that shows ownership

Preposition - a word that comes before a noun or pronoun to show direction, location or time (*in*, *around*, *above*)

Present participle - a verb form that ends in *-ing* and describes a current action or state of being

Progressive Tense - the tense that shows action in progress, using a form of the verb *be* with the main verb

Progressive Verb - a verb form that is used to express an ongoing action, ending with *-ing* and preceded by a form of the verb *to be*

Pronoun - a word that takes the place of a noun

Proper Adjective - an adjective that comes from the name of a specific person, place or thing, such as Ferris wheel or Brussels sprouts

Proper Noun - a noun that names a specific person, place or thing, such as President Kennedy or Scranton, Pennsylvania

Relative Adverb - an adverb such as *when*, *where*, and *why* that shows time, place or reason

Relative Pronoun - a pronoun such as *which*, *that*, *who*, *whom*, and *whose* that is used to add information about a noun

Superlative Adjective - an adjective that compares more than two things using the ending *-est* or the word *most*

Superlative Adverb - an adverb that compares more than two actions using the ending *-est* or the word *most*

Tense - refers to when the action of a verb takes place

Verb - a word that shows action or a state of being

Verb Tense - the form of a verb that shows when an action takes place

SENTENCE STRUCTURE

Clause - a group of words that contains both a subject and a verb

Independent Clause - a group of words with a subject and verb that represents a complete thought and could stand alone as a simple sentence

Complete sentence - a sentence that forms a complete thought, using a subject and a verb

Compound sentence - a sentence made up of two or more independent clauses connected by conjunctions

Grammar - a system of language used in writing and speaking

Run-on Sentence - one or more sentences that have been combined without proper punctuation

Sentence Fragment - an incomplete sentence, lacking either a subject or a verb

Simple Sentence - a sentence that has a subject and a verb and tells a complete thought

Predicate - the part of a sentence that contains the verb and tells what the subject does

Prepositional phrase - a phrase that shows time, space, or position; begins with a preposition and ends with a noun or pronoun

Subordinate Clause - a group of words that has a subject and a verb but cannot stand alone as a sentence

Subject - the part of a sentence that tells what or whom the sentence is about; the "naming part" of a sentence

Subject-Verb Agreement - when the subject and the verb of a sentence match the number as in singular and plural

STORY ELEMENTS & Words used to talk about FICTION

Character - usually a person, but sometimes an animal or object, that takes part in a story or play

Conflict - a problem that the characters solve in a fictional narrative

Context clues - the words or phrases around an unknown word that help the reader understand the meaning

Dialogue - the words that characters say in a story or play; a conversation between characters

Events - the things that happen in a story

First person point of view - a way of telling a story in which the narrator is a character in the story and uses the pronouns *I*, *me*, and *my*

Illustration - a drawing or other picture that shows what something looks like

Inference - an educated guess that a reader makes about a text; based on evidence the author provides and the reader's prior knowledge

Narrator - the character or person who tells a story

Plot - the order of events, or things that happen in a story

Plot structure - the organization of the events in a story, including the beginning, middle, end, problem, and solution

Point of View - in fiction, the way the narrator tells a story; in persuasive texts, the way the author thinks about a topic or idea

Problem - a difficult situation, obstacle, or challenge; also called *conflict*

Real-Life Connection - a link between what you read and what you know about the world

Recount - to remember and retell a story

Resolution - the end of a story; how characters solve the story's problem

Sequence - the order in which things happen

Setting - where and when a story takes place

Speech - what someone says about a topic

Summary - a retelling of the main points or plot of a text in your own words

Theme - the important lesson or message in a story or play that the writer wants the reader or audience to learn

Third-person Point of View - a way of telling a story in which the narrator is someone outside the story; uses the pronouns *he*, *she* and *they*

FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE

Figurative Language - words or phrases that mean something different from the dictionary meaning

Idiom - a word or phrase that has a different meaning from the meaning of the individual words

Alliteration - the repetition of consonant sounds

Allusion - a reference to a person, place, event, or piece of literature

Literal Language - words or phrases that mean exactly what they say

Metaphor - a comparison that does not contain like or as

Nonliteral Language - words and phrases that mean something different from their usual dictionary meanings

Personification - a type of figurative language in which human qualities are given to nonhuman things

Repetition - the repeating of a word, phrase, or line

Shades of Meaning - when words that are considered synonyms have slight differences in strength or meaning

Simile - a comparison using *like* or *as*

AUTHOR'S CRAFT

Author's Purpose - the reason an author writes a text, usually to inform, entertain, or persuade the reader

Claim - a statement that an author makes about an idea, event, or observation

Conclusion - the end of a piece of writing in which the author restates his or her position and sums up the text's main points

Introduction - the beginning of a piece of writing that gets the reader's attention and presents the text's main ideas

Informal Language - the type of language that people use in everyday conversation and some types of writing; may include incomplete sentences, slang, and contractions

Position - a statement of the author's thoughts and feelings about a topic or issue

Precise Language - words or phrases that tell the writer's ideas in a clear and exact way

Reasons - in persuasive text, the ideas that support an author's opinions; why a person thinks or feels a certain way; supports the main idea or opinion

TYPES OF TEXTS (Genre)

Article - a short nonfiction text that appears online or in a newspaper and magazine

Autobiography - a personal account of the author's life written by the author

Biography - the true story of a person's life told by someone else

Cookbook - a book that gives directions for how to make foods

Dictionary - a book that gives the meanings of many words

Document - an official paper

Drama - a story that is performed on a stage by actors; a play

Legend - a type of folktale about heroes and their brave actions

Essay - a type of writing that presents a main idea and claim supported by reasons and details

Explanatory Text - a type of writing in which the author explains an idea or process to the reader

Fable - a made-up story that teaches a lesson

Fiction - made-up stories

Firsthand Account - a text in which the author describes an event that he or she is observing or has observed

Folktale - a story that is told by people to other people over time

Genre - a kind of writing, such as a fable or myth

Historical fiction - a story that takes place in the past and may tell about important real events from history

Government Document - an official text provided by a government, such as a pamphlet, form, or set of laws

Historical Text - a nonfiction text based on facts about people, places, and events from history

Informational Text - nonfiction text that informs readers about a topic

Myth - a story that explains how things in nature came to be; can also tell how and why things work the way they do

Narrative writing - a story about real or made-up characters and events

Literary nonfiction - informational texts that are mostly based on fact but may have some elements of fiction, such as a plot and a narrator

Nonfiction - writing that is made up of true facts

Opinion or Opinion Piece - a type of writing in which the author states a personal belief and tries to persuade others to agree; a statement based on personal feelings, cannot be proven

Persuasive Text - nonfiction text that tries to make people do something or agree with an idea

Poetry - a special type of writing that uses words in creative ways to describe things or show

feelings; often written in stanzas with rhyming lines

Present-Day Fiction - a story that takes place at the current time

Realistic Fiction - made up stories with characters, settings, and plots that could take place in the real world

Science Fiction - a story that tells about science, machines, and events in the future, and sometimes on other worlds

Scientific Text - nonfiction text that tells readers about a science topic

Secondhand Account - an account of an event written by someone who did not directly experience the event

Sensory Description - details that tell how things look, feel, sound, smell, and taste

Speech - a text or presentation that is meant to be spoken aloud to a group of people; what someone says about a topic

Technical Text - informative text that gives details about how something works or tells how to do something

Textbook - a book that gives facts and details about a general subject; often used in schools

NONFICTION TEXT FEATURES

Bulleted list - a list of details or information, using symbols called bullets (*) instead of numbers

Caption - an explanation for a picture or illustration

Chart - a graphic feature that shows information in columns and rows; also called a table

Diagram - a drawing with labels that shows the parts of an object or how something works

Fact - a piece of information that is true and can be proved

Flowchart - a graphic feature that shows the steps in a process

Glossary - a list of words at the end of a text that gives the meanings of important terms in the text

Graph - information shown in a visual way with lines, bars, or other shapes

Graphic Feature - a diagram, map, or other visual aid that explains the text or gives extra information

Heading - a word or phrase that tells what a section or text is about

Illustration - a drawing or other picture that shows what something looks like

Key Word - a word that is important to a topic

Map - a drawing that shows the location of physical features, such as cities, roads, or rivers

Photograph - an image of actual people, places, or things

Sidebar - a short group of sentences or paragraphs next to an article that gives more information about a topic

Model - a representation of how something looks

Subheading - a text feature that breaks down the sections of a text into even smaller parts

Symbol - a shape or letter that stands for an idea

Table - a graphic feature that shows information in columns and rows; also called a chart

Text Feature - a text trait that helps readers find information, such as a heading or caption

Timeline - a graphic feature that shows the dates when important things happened

Topic - the subject of a text

TEXT STRUCTURES

Cause-and-effect structure - a text organization that shows what happens and why

Chronological Structure - a text organization in which the author presents events in the order in which they happened; also called *sequence structure*

Compare-and-Contrast Structure - a text organization in which the author points out how two or more things or ideas are alike or different

Problem-and-Solution Structure - text organization in which the author states a problem and suggests a way to solve the problem

Sequence Structure - text organization in which the author presents events in the order they happen; also called *chronological structure*

Spatial Structure - the text organization that arranges details by where they are located; uses signal words like *top*, *middle*, and *bottom*

Steps in a Process - a type of text organization in which the writer tells how to do something or how something was done

Text Structure - the way a text is organized, such as by sequence, cause and effect, or comparing and contrasting

Whole-to-Part Structure - a text organization that describes something in general and then describes its parts or details

POETRY

Haiku - a very short poem, usually about nature, that has 3 lines and just 17 syllables

Free verse - a poem that does not follow fixed rules of rhythm or rhyme

Epic Poem - a long poem that tells about the adventures of a hero or a historical event

Limerick - a humorous five-line poem that rhymes

Line - a row of words; the basic building block of a poem

Lyric poem - a short poem that is like a song and usually deals with the speaker's thoughts or feelings

Meter - the "beat," or pattern of rhythm, in a poem

Narrative Poem - a poem that tells a story

Ode - a serious poem about a meaningful topic; usually has two or more stanzas and rhyming lines

Poetry - a special type of writing that uses words in creative ways to describe things or show feelings; often written in stanzas, with rhyming lines

Rhyme - the name for words that have the same ending sound

Rhyme Scheme - a pattern of end rhyme in a poem; usually shown as a series of lowercase letters, where each letter represents one rhyming sound

Rhythm - the "beat," or pattern of stressed and unstressed syllables in a line of poetry

Speaker - the narrator of a poem

Stanza - a group of lines that makes up a section of a poem

DRAMA

Act - one of the largest parts of a drama, or play; sometimes made up of scenes

Cast - the characters in a drama

Cast of characters - a list at the beginning of a play that tells who is in the play

Character - usually a person, but sometimes an animal or object, that takes part in a story or play

Dialogue - the words that characters say in a story or play; a conversation between characters

Direct Speech - the words that someone says, set off by punctuation in writing

Drama - a special kind of fiction story, often called a *play*; usually performed on a stage or in front of a camera

Narrator - the character or person who tells a story

Scene - a section of a drama, smaller than an act

Set - in a drama or play, the way a scene looks to the audience

Stage Directions - the instructions in a drama that give details about lighting, sound, props, and actors' movements

THINKING & WRITING ABOUT READING

Analyze - to look more closely at something and carefully think about it

Cause - the reason why something happens

Compare - to show how two things are the same

Contrast - to show how two things are different

Detail - information that supports the main idea in a piece of writing

Effect - a result of a cause

Evidence - information, or facts, used to support a main idea or claim

Integrate Information - to combine ideas and details from two or more sources in order to better understand a topic

Main Idea - the most important idea in a piece of writing, usually stated at the beginning

Summarize - to retell in your own words the most important events of a story, or the main ideas and key details of a nonfiction text

Supporting Paragraphs - the part of the text that includes reasons and details that back up and explain the main idea

Supporting Details - important information that backs up a main idea, such as facts and examples

Text-Dependent Analysis - a type of writing in which the author states a position, or gives an opinion, about one or more texts; must be supported with text evidence

Text Evidence - the details and information from a text that are used to support inferences or ideas

WRITING PROCESS & WRITING

Conclusion - the end of a report or other piece of writing; the writer restated the topic or main idea

Drafting - the second step of the writing process; creating an early version of a written work

Editing - to correct mistakes in grammar, spelling, capitalization, and punctuation

First Draft - the first time that something is written down

Prewriting - choosing a topic and deciding what to say about it; the first step in the writing process

Publishing - to let others read your work, either in print or digitally; the last step in the writing process

Purpose - the reason for writing: to entertain, to inform, to persuade

Revising - to make changes or corrections to a writing draft

Topic Sentence - a sentence that states the main idea early in a paragraph, article, or report

Transition - a word or phrase that connects sentences, paragraphs, or ideas to help writing flow

Writing Process - the steps taken by writers to express themselves in an organized way: prewriting, drafting, revising, editing, and publishing

Writing Prompt - a set of directions that gives a topic to write about

Audience - the people who watch, read, or listen to something