

**ISTEP+ Grade 10
English/Language Arts (ELA)
Released Item:**

Muscatatuck River Themes

English/Language Arts
2-point Constructed-Response (CR) Rubric

2 points	Proficient The response fulfills all the requirements of the task. The information given is text-based and relevant to the task.
1 point	Partially Proficient The response fulfills some of the requirements of the task, but some of the information may be too general, too simplistic, or not supported by the text.
0 point	Not Proficient The response does not fulfill the requirements of the task because it contains information that is inaccurate, incomplete, and/or missing altogether.

Note: This rubric is applied to reading-comprehension items. Student responses to these items are scored only for reading comprehension.

Rubric Clarifications for 2-point CRs

The following statements are intended to clarify how the 2-point Constructed-Response Rubric is applied during scoring. They relate to questions and problems that invariably arise during the training of evaluators.

1. The rubric is applied holistically. "The task" referenced in the rubric is question-specific. If the response sufficiently answers the question and is supported with relevant text-based details, the response receives full credit.
2. When a response is scored using the 2-point Constructed-Response Rubric, it is read as if it contains no spelling, grammatical, punctuation, or other mechanical errors. ONLY reading comprehension is assessed through these questions.
3. Poor handwriting does not affect the scores assigned. Handwriting is not a part of any rubric. If an evaluator is unable to read a response, another evaluator or the supervisor should read it. If no one is able to decipher the handwriting, then—and only then—is it assigned the condition code for illegible.
4. Restating the question is not a requirement of the task or addressed in the rubric, so it does not contribute to the score.
5. Any student writing that has been erased or otherwise marked out will not be scored.

Read the story "Muscatatuck, 1819." Then answer the questions.

Muscatatuck, 1819

1 For a river, it was a disappointment: shallow, the water green with algae, cress, and plants I knew even less about. The banks were marshy and ill defined. Mama said it was an insult to rivers elsewhere to call them banks, since they seemed to her so indecisive, so equally disposed between solid and liquid. And indeed, the bottomlands seemed caught up between liquid and gas in the summer, when the marshes either stank, as Mama claimed, or smelled like growth and renewal, as Papa insisted. Everything in summer in the bottomlands was a green silk you could walk through: you could feel it on your skin, almost like a spider web, but if anything, it was more tangible and enveloping. Mama was forever making a brushing motion with her hands, as if she were trying to wipe it away.

2 We'd come through the Cumberland Gap in April, having left the red-clay soil of North Carolina as soon as the storms of March would allow. Papa figured that as winter withdrew its heavy hand, bit by bit, latitude by latitude, we'd enjoy an almost perpetual spring. The roads weren't quite thronged except in the gap itself, where everything narrowed. Suddenly it felt like a carnival, and we kept meeting people like us, people we didn't know but who were just like the people we were leaving behind. The Baptists sang hymns at night from their wagons; the Quakers didn't. Everything seemed to slow and gather in the gap. When my son now asks me about the night sky of my youth, it's the night sky in the gap that I remember most clearly, the Milky Way pouring across the darkness. We slept bundled together in the covered wagon, and I awoke with a nip of frost on my clothes.

3 After that was the hilly blur of Kentucky, and then the vast Ohio River at Madison, where we crossed into Indiana. Papa was cautious. Because he knew the journey had its dangers, we hired an agent, who steered us through open country (or opened country: here and there a farm, a clearing; it was easiest to make them out in the evening just before dusk from the oily smoke of their cooking fires) to Vernon. Vernon was a straggling village not so much in the crook of the Muscatatuck's (muss-CAT-uh-tuck) liquid arm, but fully enveloped in its embrace, bounded on three sides by that viscous flow. It was in Vernon that I first laid eyes on the river. Before, it had been a tangled blue string dropped on a flat map. It was also in Vernon that we executed a deed before we ever even saw the land.

4 It was low-lying, marshy ground. "This river is unhealthy, Timothy," Mama told me often, but in spring the odor of new growth was everywhere, and the emerald carapaces of the dragonflies dazzled. I had never seen them before; "darning needles" our neighbors called them, the way they zipped through the atmosphere, and the way the eye tried to follow, as if the air itself were a torn cloth the world was trying to stitch back together, moment by moment.

5 We had our wagon, some salted pork, some flour, and a few iron tools. Here in this strange, green country, iron was better for us than gold. Gathering the hardwood on what Papa insisted on calling our "farm" was our first task. In a clearing, Mama planted the squash and corn seeds she'd brought. We camped in the wagon for weeks until Papa had felled enough poplar for our first cabin.

6 The river fascinated me—a necklace, in some places as green as the dragonflies. I imagined it as a dress worn by someone regal, not quite a queen but someone who spoke with queens, perhaps. And the river had its attendants: the herons, blue and white, that stalked supper in its shallows; the otters, shaking the water from their sleek coats onto the riverbank in rainbow shards of light.

7 The Ohio: now that was a river, a highway choked with boats, with an idea of industry. It was purposeful. The Muscatatuck (it took me months to pronounce the name) was a different kind of river, a green world turned inward, focused on itself. I envied the otters, who seemed so at home. I felt more akin to the herons: ungainly and hungry. Oh, to be hungry in such a green land!

8 And it was from the river we ate, mostly. The watercress was still in season when we arrived; there were mussels, once we learned to dredge and soak them, and the fish teemed in almost any season. Mama's garden vegetables dawdled into early autumn, seemingly even more reluctant than I had been to emerge into this new landscape. The river provisioned us.

9 Papa had an ax, a maul, a drawing knife, and a wedge—his quartet of loyal retainers. When he wore out a blade, he sharpened it. When he wore out a handle under the tension between the vast muscles of his back and arms and the vaster trunk of an oak, he used the other implements to shape a new one. I asked my father why his tools didn't snap or rust like others, including those of our hapless neighbors, for whom everything seemed a cycle of debility and decay. He replied, "Because, Timothy, I don't let them." The iron tools were passports to the life my father had imagined, every bit as important as the paper deed in the courthouse.

10 Once, working on a knot of cypresses, my father's ax-head slipped from its stock in midswing; my father said it flew straight and clear, a trajectory so pure it seemed to have its own purpose. Like the winter ducks we often startled, the ax-head flew low on the water and seemed briefly to kiss its viridian surface; unlike the ducks, it sank immediately. (My son asks why didn't he just buy a new one, and I explain again, patiently, that the nearest store was a three-day journey away.) Perhaps the river was curious, perhaps it wanted a taste of this strange ore. My father dove and dove again into the lazy current until he felt solid metal in the mud. He brought the blade up, he cleaned it with dry sand, and he refit it and labored over it into the dusk until he couldn't see his work. But, he said, he hadn't worried about finding his way home across the darkened landscape. He didn't need to "see" his way by then. The river led him home.

How does the author use details about the Muscatatuck River to develop the themes of humankind's relationship with nature and the importance of family in challenging times? Support your answer with details from the story.

Score Point 2

Anchor Paper 1

The author uses details about the River to show that when humankind can work alongside nature, both parties will receive benefits of this. The family used the river in healthy, nonpollutive ways and in return the river provided food, water, and a point of reference for the family. As for the importance of family, the river serves as a place for the author to learn a lesson about how his family would push through mishaps and struggles by persisting to treat the few things they had with value and respect. This lesson is one the author could use for the rest of his life as well as pass down to his kids, all because of something as simple and small as his father losing an axe head in the Muscatatuck River.

Score Point 2

This response fulfills all of the requirements of the task. The information provided explains how the author's use of details about the Muscatatuck River develop both the themes of humankind's relationship with nature (*when humankind can work alongside nature, both parties will receive benefits of this*) and the importance of family in challenging times (*the river serves as a place for the author to learn a lesson about how his family would push through mishaps and struggles by persisting to treat the few things they had with value and respect*). Both parts of the explanation are supported with implied, relevant, text-based details (*The family used the river in healthy, nonpollutive ways and in return the river provided food, water, and a point of reference for the family ... This lesson is one the author could use for the rest of his life as well as pass down to his kids, all because of something as simple and small as his father losing an axe head in the Muscatatuck River*).

Score Point 1

Anchor Paper 2

The author shows the theme of humankind's relationship with nature when the narrator describes every thing he is seeing on his trip. With the way he is fascinated by the nature he sees, especially the river, you can tell how much he likes nature. The theme of importance of family in challenging times is showed some in paragraph 2. In paragraph 2 there is a short part where he talks about how they were all bundled together in the wagon to keep warm. That is very important because if they all had slept seperately they would've been even more cold. There is also a part in paragraph 3 when it talks about how his father was cautious because he knew the journey was dangerous. If he hadn't been cautious bad things could've happened to them.

Score Point 1

This response fulfills some of the requirements of the task. The information provided generally explains how the author's use of details about the Muscatatuck River develop the themes of humankind's relationship with nature (*With the way he is fascinated by the nature he sees, especially the river, you can tell how much he likes nature*). The response also attempts to answer the importance of family in challenging times, however the information provided does not use details about the Muscatatuck River, and therefore is not relevant to the task.

Score Point 0

Anchor Paper 3

it uses details such as like when the father threw the axe into the water he asked his father if it was rusty and the father then said no i wont allow it. And another detail from the text is that when he asked his father if they coyuld just get a new one the ftather then said no we cannot because the store is a nthree day drive.

Score Point 0

This response does not fulfill the requirements of the task. The response is missing an answer to how the author's use of details about the Muscatatuck River develop the themes of humankind's relationship with nature and the importance of family in challenging times. The details provided are inaccurate.