



# **Nebraska State Accountability**

**Grade 8  
Reading  
Practice Test**

Name:

**Directions:**

On the following pages are passages and multiple-choice questions for Grade 8 Reading Practice Test, a practice opportunity for the *Nebraska State Accountability (NeSA)*.

Each question will ask you to select an answer from among four choices.

For all questions:

- Read each passage. Then answer each question carefully by choosing the best answer.
- Mark your answers for ALL of the questions.

Only one of the choices provided is the correct answer.

## The Mistake

“He knew from the beginning that it was a mistake, but he was already trapped in a web of his own making,” Grandpa said. Then he stared off into the distance, reflecting on a time gone by.

Fran tugged at his sleeve impatiently. “Don’t stop there, Grandpa,” she entreated him. “Toby and I want to hear what happened.”

She enjoyed nothing more than one of her grandfather’s stories, and although her older brother Toby tried to look uninterested and slightly bored, he hoped Fran would convince Grandpa to continue.

“Well, it was a curious thing,” Grandpa said slowly, “because ordinarily Danny never went fishing. He really didn’t enjoy Frank Cunningham’s company, but there he was—promising that he would go fishing with him the very next day.”

Danny was usually the main character in Grandpa’s outrageous stories, and the family had decided that Grandpa must have been very much like Danny when he was a boy.

“So why did Danny say he would go?” inquired Fran, who liked to have a clear understanding of the circumstances. “I wouldn’t go because I don’t like to fish either, and I sure wouldn’t go with someone I didn’t even like.”

Grandpa nodded sagely. “But you are a sensible young girl, Fran. Danny always allowed himself to get caught up in the heat of the moment. He probably wouldn’t have gone if Frank hadn’t goaded him a little bit. He said Danny just didn’t want to be embarrassed when Frank came home with a mess of fish and he came home empty-handed.”

“And he let himself be taken in by that?” said Toby, disgusted by Danny’s spinelessness. Fran was quick to agree.

Grandpa nodded again. “He did—but I will say in his defense that there was a little more to the situation. You see, they weren’t alone when Frank said those things. They were with a group of Danny’s friends, and one of them was a girl named Nancy that he thought was pretty special. So he didn’t want to be embarrassed in front of them.”

“Well, I can sort of see his difficulty,” conceded Toby, but Fran sniffed disapprovingly, still irritated by Danny’s lack of gumption.

“At any rate, Danny set out with Frank the next morning, but he was reluctant because he really didn’t like the thought of catching a fish. He was determined not to, even if Frank made him look bad. When they got down to the Platte, they climbed into Frank’s boat and rowed out to the very deepest part of the river.”

12 “The deepest part of the Platte?” snickered Toby derisively. “I’ll bet they found a lot of fish in that six inches of water!”

Fran laughed appreciatively, but Grandpa shook his head seriously. “This was a long time ago,” he explained, “and at that time, the Platte was a narrow, deep river.”

Toby and Fran looked at each other and grinned; they both knew that the Platte was a really wide river, but it was only inches deep. Grandpa was telling another tall tale.

“Well, Frank baited his hook and then watched in disbelief while Danny baited his,” Grandpa continued, “because Danny used a chunk of dried bread as his bait. Frank just shook his head and laughed, telling Danny that he was going to be the laughingstock of the whole town when people heard about his lack of fishing know-how.

“They sat there for a while without either one of them getting a nibble. Danny was getting bored, and the Sun was making him feel like a fish in a frying pan. Then it happened.”

17 “What happened?” demanded Fran. “Go ahead, Grandpa! Don’t stop!” Grandpa was noted for his extensive use of dramatic pauses.

“You won’t believe what happened next because I still have a hard time believing it myself.” He paused again and reflected on the matter. “Still, I can’t deny that we have the proof of it all right in front of us.”

19 This time neither Fran nor Toby spoke. They knew that their grandfather would not be hurried, so they swallowed their protests and allowed him to take his time.

20 “Suddenly a catfish just about as big as Frank’s boat snatched Danny’s line, apparently not knowing that catfish aren’t supposed to be partial to bread. That catfish appeared bound and determined to have that bread because it roared off down that river, pulling the boat behind it. Danny and Frank were hanging on for dear life, and that catfish tried to get rid of them by every method it could devise. It threw the boat up on the riverbank and dragged them along the dry ground. When that didn’t work, the catfish tried it again on the other bank. The catfish whipped that boat back and forth so many times that the boys were too dizzy to keep up with what was going on. Frank kept screaming for Danny to let go of his line, but Danny wasn’t about to do it. He didn’t really want to catch that catfish, but he didn’t want to give up either.

“Folks from town heard all the commotion and came down to the river in time to see that catfish roll over from exhaustion. Danny disengaged the line and dropped the catfish in the deepest puddle he could find.

“That was hard to do, you know,” Grandpa observed thoughtfully, looking slyly at Fran and Toby, “because that old catfish had torn up the banks for miles up and down the river. Instead of having all of that water running in one deep channel, it was spread out over a wide area, dotted with sandbars and as shallow as a dinner plate.

23 “And so, you see,” he concluded, “Danny’s mistake gave us the Platte River we know today—a mile wide and six inches deep.”

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1. Based on paragraph 12, which inference can be made about Toby's attitude?
    - A. He is being mean.
    - B. He is being truthful.
    - C. He is being sarcastic.
    - D. He is being humorous.
  
  2. In which paragraph does the climax of the story occur?
    - A. paragraph 17
    - B. paragraph 19
    - C. paragraph 20
    - D. paragraph 23
  
  3. What is Grandpa referring to when he says, ". . . he was already trapped in a web of his own making"?
    - A. Danny's fishing trip with a boy he dislikes
    - B. Danny's inexperience with the river
    - C. Danny's lack of fishing skills
    - D. Danny's feelings for Nancy
  
  4. Which type of literary device is illustrated in the line "Danny was getting bored, and the Sun was making him feel like a fish in a frying pan"?
    - A. hyperbole
    - B. metaphor
    - C. personification
    - D. simile

5. What is the BEST new title for the passage?
- A. A Fish Tale
  - B. Grandpa and Danny
  - C. A Boy Goes Fishing
  - D. Navigating the Platte
6. Which event happens first in the story?
- A. Danny is getting bored.
  - B. Danny and Frank bait their hooks.
  - C. Danny drops the catfish in a deep puddle.
  - D. Danny and Frank row to the deepest part of the river.

## The Nebraska Unicameral Legislative System

- 1 Should you be required to wear a seat belt in a moving car? How many days a year should you be required to attend school? These and other similar questions are discussed and answered by your senators—elected politicians, who are authorized to **institute**, amend, or eliminate Nebraska laws. Forty-nine of the fifty states in the United States have a House of Representatives and a Senate. These two-house systems are called bicameral legislatures. Nebraska is unique in that it is the only state in the country that has just one legislative body.

### What Is a Unicameral Legislature?

A one-house system is called a unicameral legislature. In 1937 Nebraskans voted to do away with the House of Representatives. In Nebraska a bill, or proposed law, is discussed and voted on only by the Senate. Nebraskans made the change because they wanted to make their government more accessible to the public, more efficient, and less expensive. They succeeded.

### Advantages of a Unicameral System

- 3 A unicameral system is less expensive to support. In a bicameral system, there are many more politicians to pay and more building space needed than in a unicameral system. By reducing to just one legislative body, a significant amount of money is saved.

A unicameral system tends to keep the focus on a bill. In a bicameral system, a bill must first be discussed, debated, and voted on by the House of Representatives. If it passes the House, then it is discussed, debated, and voted on by the Senate. Complications may arise in that system. Bills are sometimes altered in order to convince members of both the House and the Senate to vote for them. The original intent might get lost. Sometimes unrelated proposals to spend money are added onto bills in order to get the votes necessary to pass them through both legislative bodies. The result is unnecessary expense to citizens.

A unicameral system tends to be more efficient than a bicameral system because only senators discuss a bill and vote on it. Discussions, in general, are focused on the proposed law and its intent rather than on how to get it passed by another legislative body. Also, time and energy are saved by not going over the same things in two separate legislative bodies. In the unicameral system, ample time is allotted to carefully discuss everything in different stages but without inefficient repetition.

### How a Bill Becomes a Law in Nebraska

- 6 When people in a district want a new law, they tell their senator. Nebraska is divided into forty-nine equal districts. Each district has about the same-sized population. Voters in each district elect a senator to represent them for four years. A senator must be at least twenty-one years old and have lived in the district for at least a year.

The senator takes the idea for a law to the Capitol and writes it up as a bill. A bill in Nebraska may contain only one subject. Therefore, everyone is clear on exactly what is being discussed and voted on. The bill is filed with the clerk of the legislature, who reads its title aloud to all the senators and distributes written copies. Bills then get a public hearing in front of a committee of senators. Citizens can speak up and express their opinions at these hearings. After the hearing, the committee votes on whether to send the bill to the full legislature, to postpone it, or to defeat it.

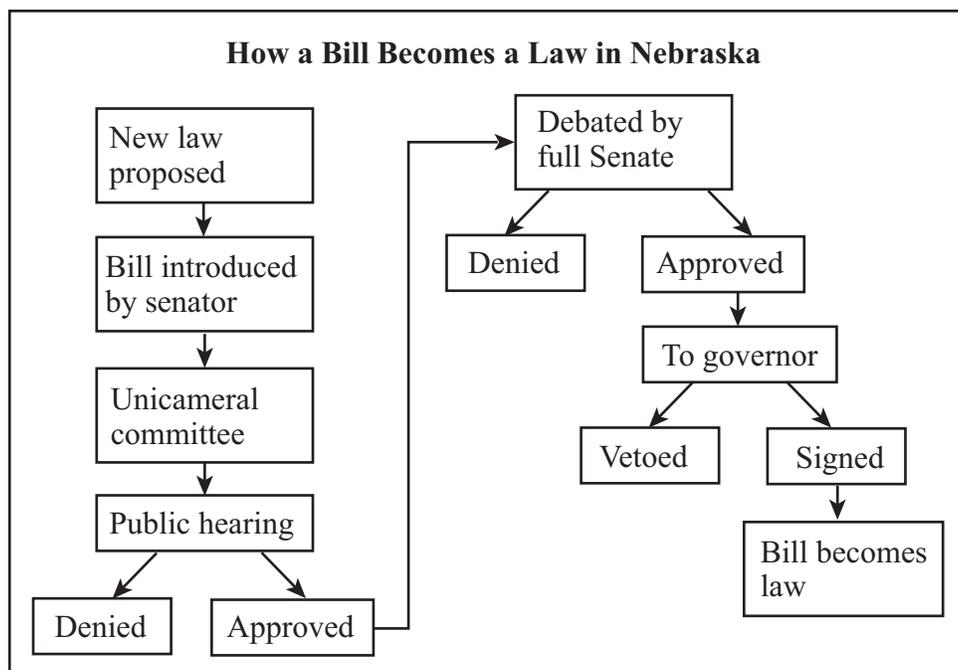
8 If the bill goes to the full legislature, it is discussed and debated openly. Committees and individual senators can propose amendments, or changes, to the bill. The resulting draft is voted on. If a majority of senators (25 of the 49) approve it, then it has received general approval and moves on to the next stage of consideration.

The next stage involves discussion and debate of details. Amendments might be made, or the bill might be dropped. If a final vote is taken and a majority of senators approve the bill in its new detailed form, then it moves on for a final reading. In the final reading, the entire bill is read aloud to the whole senate and voted on for the final time. If the bill passes that vote, then it is sent to the governor for his or her approval.

10 If the governor signs the bill or chooses to ignore it, then the bill becomes law. If the governor vetoes the bill, a vote of thirty senators is needed to make the bill a law.

### How Nebraska's Citizens Participate in Making Laws

Citizens of Nebraska can participate in making laws. Citizens can propose a new law to the senator of their district. They can attend the public hearing in which their bill is discussed. They can even speak up at the hearing and explain more fully why the law they propose should be passed. If they explain it well, their idea might proceed through the unicameral system and become a law in Nebraska.



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7. What is the meaning of the prefix in the word **unicameral**?
- A. one
  - B. noted
  - C. whole
  - D. together
8. Why does the author most likely begin the passage with questions?
- A. to gain the reader's interest
  - B. to organize the information
  - C. to introduce the idea from the title
  - D. to tell the reader what will be learned
9. In paragraph 1, what is a different word for **institute**?
- A. organize
  - B. establish
  - C. debate
  - D. change
10. What might happen if Nebraska changed to a bicameral legislature?
- A. Fewer senators would be needed.
  - B. More focus would be on the bill.
  - C. It would take less time to pass a bill.
  - D. State government expenses would increase.

11. Which paragraph is an example of the text organization structure proposition/support?
- A. paragraph 3
  - B. paragraph 6
  - C. paragraph 8
  - D. paragraph 10
12. Which part of the flow chart supports the statement “Citizens of Nebraska can participate in making laws”?
- A. New law proposed
  - B. Unicameral committee
  - C. Public hearing
  - D. Bill becomes law
13. Under which heading is the text presented in order of events?
- A. What Is a Unicameral Legislature?
  - B. Advantages of a Unicameral System
  - C. How a Bill Becomes a Law in Nebraska
  - D. How Nebraska’s Citizens Participate in Making Laws
14. Which detail in the passage supports an inference that a unicameral legislature is better than a bicameral?
- A. A unicameral system avoids repetitive discussions.
  - B. Senators can propose amendments to improve a bill.
  - C. Each legislative district has the same-sized population.
  - D. Senators may recommend alterations to a proposed bill.

15. Which part of the lawmaking process is NOT represented on the flow chart?
- A. who can introduce a bill
  - B. actions the governor may take
  - C. stage at which a bill is debated
  - D. number of votes needed to approve a bill

**Grade 8  
Reading Practice Test  
Answer Key**

1	C
2	C
3	A
4	D
5	A
6	D
7	A
8	A
9	B
10	D
11	A
12	C
13	C
14	A
15	D