



**Grade 4**

**English Language Arts/Literacy  
Research Simulation Task**

**2017 Released Items**

## **2017 Released Items: Grade 4 Research Simulation Task**

The Research Simulation Task requires students to analyze an informational topic through several articles or multimedia stimuli. Students read and respond to a series of questions and synthesize information from multiple sources in order to write an analytic essay.

The 2017 blueprint for PARCC's grade 4 Research Simulation Task includes Evidence-Based Selected Response/Technology-Enhanced Constructed Response items as well as one Prose Constructed Response prompt.

### **Included in this document:**

- Answer key and standards alignment
- PDFs of each item with the associated text(s)

### **Additional related materials not included in this document:**

- Sample scored student responses with practice papers
- PARCC Scoring Rubric for Prose Constructed Response Items
- Guide to English Language Arts/Literacy Released Items: Understanding Scoring
- PARCC English Language Arts/Literacy Assessment: General Scoring Rules for the 2015 Summative Assessment

**PARCC Release Items Answer and Alignment Document  
ELA/Literacy: Grade 4**

| <b>Text Type:</b> RST  |  |   |
|--|--|---|
| <b>Passage(s):</b> from "Grandpa's Hobbit House" / from "Straw Houses: No Need to Fear the Big Bad Wolf" / "Itty-Bitty Houses" |  |   |
| <b>Item Code</b>   | <b>Answer(s)</b>   | <b>Standards/Evidence Statement Alignment</b> |
| <b>B1342</b>   | <b>Item Type: EBSR</b><br><b>Part A:</b> C<br><b>Part B:</b> C                   | RI 4.1.1<br>RI 4.4.1<br>L 4.4.1               |
| <b>B1343</b>   | <b>Item Type: EBSR</b><br><b>Part A:</b> B<br><b>Part B:</b> B, D                | RI 4.1.1<br>RI 4.5.1                          |
| <b>B1345</b>   | <b>Item Type: EBSR</b><br><b>Part A:</b> D<br><b>Part B:</b> A, F                | RI 4.1.1<br>RI 4.2.1                          |
| <b>B1348</b>   | <b>Item Type: EBSR</b><br><b>Part A:</b> B<br><b>Part B:</b> B                   | RI 4.1.1<br>RI 4.4.1<br>L 4.4.1               |
| <b>B1350</b>   | <b>Item Type: EBSR</b><br><b>Part A:</b> D<br><b>Part B:</b> A                   | RI 4.1.1<br>RI 4.3.2                          |
| <b>B1351</b>   | <b>Item Type: EBSR</b><br><b>Part A:</b> D<br><b>Part B:</b> A                   | RI 4.1.1<br>RI 4.4.1<br>L 4.5.2               |
| <b>B1353</b>   | <b>Item Type: EBSR</b><br><b>Part A:</b> B<br><b>Part B:</b> A                   | RI 4.1.1<br>RI 4.3.3                          |
| <b>B1354</b>   | <b>Item Type: EBSR</b><br><b>Part A:</b> C<br><b>Part B:</b> C                   | RI 4.1.1<br>RI 4.3.3                          |
| <b>B1356</b>   | <b>Item Type: PCR</b><br>Refer to Grade 4 Scoring Rubric                         | RI 4.1.1<br>RI 4.3.3<br>RI 4.9.1              |
| <b>B1352</b>   | <b>Item Type: EBSR (additional item)</b><br><b>Part A:</b> B<br><b>Part B:</b> A | RI 4.1.1<br>RI 4.5.1                          |

**Today you will research different kinds of houses. You will read a passage from “Grandpa’s Hobbit House.” Then you will read a passage from “Straw Houses: No Need to Fear the Big, Bad Wolf” and the article “Itty-Bitty Houses.” As you review these sources, you will gather information and answer questions about different kinds of houses so you can write an essay.**

Read the passage from “Grandpa’s Hobbit House.” Then answer the questions.

from “Grandpa’s Hobbit House”

*by* Harvey Baumgartner

- 1 My adventure in homesteading began about four years ago, when I decided to make some changes in my life to reconnect with Mother Earth. The one thing I owned was a 12-acre hayfield near Elroy, Wis., so I went out to the field and sat in the tall grass. As I felt the cool earth below me and gazed at the expansive sky above, I began to imagine a dwelling, and then a homestead.

### **AN EARTH-FRIENDLY HOME**

- 2 My idea of a homestead started with building a simple home out of native materials. I wanted an earth-friendly living structure, and my intuition said to build it round, like a Navajo hogan, so the energy could flow around it. I did not want any electricity or plumbing. I feel more at peace when not surrounded by electricity, and plumbing never made much sense to my way of thinking. I think outhouses are very practical because they don’t waste so much water.
- 3 I began the two-month project of creating a home by forming a circle of red cedar posts set upright in the ground. Next, I framed the roof by running logs wagon-wheel fashion from a center pole to the posts. I set rough-sawn oak boards over these rafters. Then, on top of the boards, I put No. 30 felt paper and two layers of 6 mil black plastic. I cut blocks of sod — hunks of earth, with grass, intact roots and all —

and put a 6-inch layer of sod over the plastic. Next came the real work of filling the area between the posts with blocks of sod. Because I'm on a hill and have a terrific view, I chose to have lots of windows, which cut down on the amount of sod I needed.

- 4 After laying the sod blocks, I applied three coats of cob — a clay and straw mixture — to the sod walls. Cob is wonderful stuff and can be molded into any shape imaginable, so I had a lot of fun being artistic. Now here I am in my home, which is about 200 square feet and looks like the hobbit houses that J.R.R. Tolkien wrote about in *The Lord of the Rings*. My house was built one handful at a time using basic hand tools, all for a cost of about \$3 a square foot.

### **THE HOMESTEAD EXPANDS**

- 5 Over the past four years, I've added several buildings to my homestead. The first was a root cellar. When I moved in, I planted a big garden, about 60 feet by 150 feet, so I needed a place to store food — nothing fancy, just a hole in the ground. As I dug the hole for my root cellar, I pried limestone rocks out of the ground and saved them for later use. This "quarry" gave me stone for the walls of the root cellar and provided a solid support for the sod roof. Thanks to the MOTHER EARTH NEWS articles about how and why to build a root cellar, I now have a better way to keep cabbages and other produce fresh year-round.
- 6 Every homestead needs a shed of some sort, and that was my next project. I made this building in the shape of a rectangle by using old hay bales for the walls, then I applied three coats of cob to the bales. The bale construction was much faster than the sod and provides better insulation. I kept two goats in the shed all winter, and they stayed warm.
- 7 Somehow, I always manage to have chickens; they seem to be part of my life here on Earth. I needed to build a chicken coop, so I attached it to the shed and dug it partially into the hill. This, combined with the hay bale construction, made the coop very warm

in the winter and cool in the summer. Because of this, my chickens laid eggs all winter long. My creative juices started flowing as I thought about nest boxes and a roost. I made the nest boxes using the cob mixture and placed them randomly around the walls to resemble swallows' nests. I made roosts from tree branches glued to the walls with the cob. I'm sure my chickens have more fun than most because of their unique coop.

- 8** After two years, I wanted a little more room for my grandkids and other guests, so I built a 200-square-foot addition to the house. The hay bales worked so well for the shed that I used them again for the walls of my addition. In keeping with the hobbit house theme, I made the roof low and put a small rear door in the north wall. Two small windows to the west were mudded into the wall like portholes. All in all, it's a very cozy room.

From "Grandpa's Hobbit House" copyright © 2006 by Harvey Baumgartner. Used by permission of Mother Earth News. All rights reserved.

**1. Part A**

What is the meaning of the phrase **creative juices started flowing** as it is used in paragraph 7 of the passage from “Grandpa’s Hobbit House”?

- A. planned an approach
- B. identified a solution
- C. imagined different ideas
- D. observed something special

**Part B**

What happens because Grandpa’s **creative juices started flowing**?

- A. The chickens have a warm coop.
- B. The chickens lay eggs in the winter.
- C. The chickens have an unusual coop.
- D. The chickens are cool during the summer.

**2. Part A**

What is the structure of paragraph 3 of the passage from “Grandpa’s Hobbit House”?

- A. a comparison of ideas
- B. a sequence of events
- C. problem and solution
- D. cause and effect

**Part B**

Which **two** details from paragraph 3 **best** support the answer to Part A?

- A. “. . . forming a circle . . .”
- B. “Next, I framed the roof. . . .”
- C. “. . . over these rafters.”
- D. “Then, on top of the boards . . .”
- E. “I cut blocks of sod. . . .”
- F. “Because I’m on a hill and have a terrific view . . .”

**3. Part A**

What is the main idea of the passage from “Grandpa’s Hobbit House”?

- A. A man takes two months to build a home made of blocks of sod using only his hands and small tools.
- B. A man adds on to his homestead by building a chicken coop where his hens are able to lay eggs year-round.
- C. A man dreams of creating a simple life by building a small home without modern conveniences.
- D. A man uses uncommon construction to build and continually improve his homestead.

**Part B**

Which **two** quotations **best** support the main idea in Part A?

- A. “I wanted an earth-friendly living structure, and my intuition said to build it round, like a Navajo hogan, so the energy could flow around it.” (paragraph 2)
- B. “I feel more at peace when not surrounded by electricity, and plumbing never made much sense to my way of thinking.” (paragraph 2)
- C. “I began the two-month project of creating a home by forming a circle of red cedar posts set upright in the ground.” (paragraph 3)
- D. “My house was built one handful at a time using basic hand tools, all for a cost of about \$3 a square foot.” (paragraph 4)
- E. “Somehow, I always manage to have chickens; they seem to be part of my life here on Earth.” (paragraph 7)
- F. “After two years, I wanted a little more room for my grandkids and other guests, so I built a 200-square-foot addition to the house.” (paragraph 8)

Read the passage from “Straw Houses: No Need to Fear the Big, Bad Wolf.” Then answer the questions.

from “Straw Houses: No Need to Fear the Big, Bad Wolf”

- 1** In the story of the three little pigs, the one who built his house of straw did not fare well; the big, bad wolf huffed and puffed and blew his house down.
- 2** But builder Michael Furbish, who made his own home from bales of straw and an elementary school of the same material, says in reality, straw houses are not only sturdy but also good for the environment.
- 3** Straw—the stalks of plants like wheat, oats, and barley—is considered a waste material and is commonly used for farm animal bedding. But more and more people are discovering that straw baled into rectangular blocks is an excellent, inexpensive building material. “Our mental picture is that a straw bale is light,” says Furbish. “But each bale weighs about 40 pounds (18 kilograms). We stack them like bricks and then spray plaster—mud, essentially—on the inside walls to coat them one and a half to two inches [3.8 to 5.1 centimeters] thick. Then we put stucco on the outside. So a straw building is really like a fortress, and it is not going to rot as long as water is kept out of the bales.”
- 4** There are two ways to make a straw-bale structure. You can build load-bearing walls with them, which means the walls support the roof. Or you can build a post-and-beam wooden frame that supports the roof and fill in the walls with straw bales.
- 5** Either way, the walls are there to stay. And they provide great insulation, helping keep straw homes in cold climates cozy in winter and those built in hot places like the desert cool in summer.
- 6** Straw is considered a “green” (good for the environment) building material because it is a renewable resource: A whole new crop can be grown and harvested every year, easily “renewing” the supply.

- 7 Also, planting and harvesting straw uses relatively little energy. “Most other building materials require a lot of energy use in production and manufacturing at a factory,” explains Furbish. “With straw-bale construction, you are getting a building product without using much energy at all.”

From “Straw Houses: No Need to Fear the Big, Bad Wolf” NGS Staff/National Geographic Creative

**4. Part A**

What is the meaning of the word **insulation** as it is used in paragraph 5 of the passage from “Straw Houses: No Need to Fear the Big, Bad Wolf”?

- A. a product that is always available
- B. a layer that protects
- C. a substance that is easily made
- D. a material that lasts

**Part B**

Which detail from paragraphs 5–7 helps the reader understand the meaning of **insulation**?

- A. “. . . the walls are there to stay.”
- B. “. . . helping keep straw homes in cold climates cozy in winter and those built in hot places like the desert cool in summer.”
- C. “. . . it is a renewable resource: A whole new crop can be grown and harvested every year, easily ‘renewing’ the supply.”
- D. “. . . planting and harvesting straw uses relatively little energy.”

**5. Part A**

According to the passage from “Straw Houses: No Need to Fear the Big, Bad Wolf,” which reason explains why builders put stucco on the outside of a straw house?

- A. It increases the comfort of the home in all seasons by maintaining the temperature.
- B. It maintains the shape of the bales and prevents them from shifting.
- C. It keeps home building and operating costs down.
- D. It adds strength to the bales and protects them from moisture.

**Part B**

Which detail supports the answer to Part A?

- A. “. . . it is not going to rot as long as water is kept out. . . .” (paragraph 3)
- B. “. . . the walls are there to stay.” (paragraph 5)
- C. “. . . they provide great insulation. . . .” (paragraph 5)
- D. “. . . straw uses relatively little energy.” (paragraph 7)

Read the article "Itty-Bitty Houses." Then answer the questions.

Itty-Bitty Houses

by Dan Oko

- 1** Wisecracks about low overhead aside, many Americans are embracing the idea that a bigger home is not always better. Concerns about carbon footprints and energy costs mean that where McMansions once sprouted, a small-house movement has taken root. Just ask Brad Kittle, who runs Tiny Texas Houses, a company specializing in very small dwellings—the largest has a 12-by-28-foot floor plan—constructed almost entirely from salvaged wood. In 2007, Kittle built four homes. This year he built ten. And he plans to start leading tiny-house-building seminars. "I can't build enough to keep up with demand," he says.
- 2** Kittle is not alone when it comes to diminutive home design. The blogosphere buzzes with tales of individuals living in micro-structures of less than 100 square feet.
- 3** Of course, not everybody wants to downsize so radically. That's one reason architect Sarah Susanka advocates that people tailor their expectations according to comfort, not sacrifice. A small-living guru, Susanka is author of *The Not So Big House* (Taunton, 1998), recently updated for its tenth anniversary. "Each household is different," she says. "Basically, the ideal house is a third smaller than what people think they need. I tell them, if you live with less space, you get a lot more bang for your buck."
- 4** That message resonates. Gopal Ahluwalia, vice president of research at the National Association of Home Builders in Washington, D.C., believes that between the mortgage meltdown and the green building boom, the door is closing on crazy-big houses. "We're seeing a trend toward stabilization," he says. "I don't think the size will go up any more."

"Itty-Bitty Houses" by Dan Oko, SIERRA MAGAZINE, January/February 2009, © 2009 Sierra Club.

**6. Part A**

What is the meaning of **get a lot more bang for your buck** as it is used in paragraph 3 of “Itty-Bitty Houses”?

- A. get a special discount
- B. get money quickly
- C. get a special loan
- D. get a good value

**Part B**

According to information in the article, how can people **get a lot more bang** for their buck?

- A. People can buy a house with less space than they think they need.
- B. People can buy a house constructed from recycled wood.
- C. People can buy a house that saves them money by using less energy.
- D. People can buy a house that has low monthly payments.

**7. Part A**

According to “Itty-Bitty Houses,” which idea explains why small houses appeal to many people?

- A. Small houses are very comfortable.
- B. Small houses benefit the planet.
- C. Small houses are more popular than large dwellings.
- D. Small houses have more modern designs than bigger homes.

**Part B**

Which quotation from the article supports the answer to Part A?

- A. “Concerns about carbon footprints and energy costs mean that where McMansions once sprouted, a small-house movement has taken root.” (paragraph 1)
- B. “The blogosphere buzzes with tales of individuals living in micro-structures of less than 100 square feet.” (paragraph 2)
- C. “Basically, the ideal house is a third smaller than what people think they need.” (paragraph 3)
- D. “We’re seeing a trend toward stabilization,” he says.” (paragraph 4)

**8. Part A**

Based on the information in “Itty-Bitty Houses,” which question should people consider when trying to determine the perfect size for a house?

- A. Is the home as tiny as possible?
- B. Does the home use energy wisely?
- C. Is all the space in the home necessary?
- D. Does the home have low monthly payments?

**Part B**

Select the quotation from the article that **best** supports the answer to Part A.

- A. “. . . constructed almost entirely from salvaged wood.” (paragraph 1)
- B. “The blogosphere buzzes with tales of individuals living in micro-structures. . . .” (paragraph 2)
- C. “Basically, the ideal house is a third smaller than what people think they need.” (paragraph 3)
- D. “. . . between the mortgage meltdown and the green building boom, the door is closing on crazy-big houses.” (paragraph 4)

9. Small houses are discussed in the passage from “Grandpa’s Hobbit House” and the article “Itty-Bitty Houses.” Write an essay that describes the key benefits of these types of houses. Be sure to include examples from **both** texts to support your ideas.

**10. Part A**

How does the author of “Itty-Bitty Houses” organize the information in paragraph 1?

- A. by describing the causes and effects involved in building small homes
- B. by explaining the changing opinions about buying homes
- C. by comparing and contrasting the designs of homes
- D. by presenting a problem homeowners face and providing a solution

**Part B**

Select the detail from paragraph 1 that **best** supports the answer to Part A.

- A. “. . . a small-house movement has taken root.”
- B. “. . . the largest has a 12-by-28-foot floor plan. . . .”
- C. “. . . constructed almost entirely from salvaged wood.”
- D. “. . . plans to start leading tiny-house-building seminars.”