

Innovation Lab Network Performance Assessment Project
Quality Criteria for Performance Assessments
Government of the People

Quality Criteria	Yes	Yes, with Slight Modifications	No	Rationale/Suggestions
1. Focus on Deeper Learning				
a. Does the task require the demonstration and/or application of complex skills (e.g., Critical Abilities, DOK Levels 3 and 4, 21 st century skills, Key Cognitive Strategies)?*		✓		This task's prompt asks students "what is government by the people." It then also asks students to choose among two documents the one with the most "rhetorically compelling definition of democracy." This task demands of students a demonstration of critical skills such as analyzing ideas from two separate documents and synthesizing them in an evidence-based argumentative essay. However, the task prompt actually asks two quite different questions. This may cause confusion. Moreover, the mini-tasks as they are described in the instructions are often too unclear to give students much of a basis for applying the skills.
b. Can students' responses to this task (what students are asked to produce) provide evidence of important college/career readiness skills and Critical Abilities (e.g., collaboration, research skills, evidence-based communication)?*	✓			In performing this task, it is possible for students to write an effective comparative/argumentative essay that responds to the prompt and demonstrates an ability to make a claim and provide evidence in support of a well-reasoned argument.
c. Does the task address key concepts and skills in the discipline that are transferable to other contexts?*		✓		<p>The task focuses on the concept of democracy, a concept that is central in history. Students are asked to interpret primary source documents, compare such sources, and construct a coherent written argument regarding those sources and what the sources reveal about the nature of democracy. All of these challenges address key concepts and skills in history and social studies.</p> <p>However, the two documents central to the entire task are highly problematic given the questions posed by the prompt. The first question asks "What is government by the people?". Lincoln's Gettysburg Address does refer to government by the people, or democracy. Yet in fact, the Address does not really explore the meaning of democracy at all. It is about a battle and the need to commemorate it. True, it focuses on the profound significance of that battle and of people's understanding of that battle for the future of</p>

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				<p>democracy in America. But it really says little of substance about what democracy is. Pericles' Funeral Oration presents other problems. It is not even what Pericles actually said, given that the speech is recorded by Thucydides, who acknowledges he is not reproducing it verbatim. Moreover, even more than with Lincoln's address, Pericles' speech is embedded in an extremely complex historical context unfamiliar to most students. Both documents derive much of their meaning from their contexts. When Pericles says, "Our laws guarantee equal justice for all in their private disputes," how is a student to evaluate the significance of this for Athenian democracy without knowing more about the social structure of Athens, its slave and non-citizen populations, its judicial procedures, its relations with other city-states, and more? As for Lincoln, how are students to evaluate what might be "rhetorically compelling" in his speech without understanding the historical occasion for it in all of its many aspects? How, without background on the Civil War and the role of the Battle of Gettysburg in that war, can students estimate the rhetorical impact, for example, of Lincoln's statement: "Now we are engaged in a great civil war, testing whether that nation, or any nation so conceived and so dedicated, can long endure"? Nevertheless, this task appears to provide no real contextualization that might help students address such details, which are central to the questions posed by the task prompt.</p>
2. Alignment to Standards				
a. Does the task measure key skills and major claims emphasized by the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) and/or NGSS? *	✓			The task demands the use of several key reading and writing skills designated by the Common Core standards listed at the beginning of the task instructions. Despite its problems, this task does measure those standards.
b. Can students' responses to this task (what students are asked to produce) be scored using CCSS/NGSS aligned rubrics? *	✓			Students are asked to produce a comparative/argumentative essay, and the guidance given to enable them to do this is consistent with a CCSS aligned rubric.
c. Are the scoring criteria--rubrics, point scoring systems, checklists (if provided)--aligned to key expectations of the CCSS/NGSS?	✓			The rubric for an argumentative essay provided with these instructions is adequately aligned to the Common Core standards.
d. Is the rigor of the task appropriately matched to the grade-level standards being		✓		The degree of "rigor" is somewhat hard to determine given the problems with the prompt and the task instructions. However, if these

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assessed?				can be clarified and refined, the task could be manageable for grade 9-10 students.
3. Student Choice and Agency				
a. Does the task allow for a variety of responses and/or solution pathways? *	✓			There is variety in this task. It is entirely confined to the choice of answer, the way students formulate that answer in their essays, and the kinds of details they draw on from the documents to support their answer. In other words, a quite limited variety of responses are allowed.
b. Does the task offer opportunities for student ownership and student choice (e.g., selecting a research question or topic; selecting sources; etc.)?			✓	No opportunities are offered for student selection of the topic, sources, or essay formats.
c. Does the task require student-initiated planning and management of information/data and ideas (e.g., determining strategies for solving a problem; designing an investigation; deciding how to present findings; etc.)?			✓	Students do not initiate any of the planning and management efforts required by this task. They simply follow a structure already set up for them.
4. Relevance and Authenticity				
a. Is task content represented in a way that is appropriately authentic (i.e., not overly hypothetical), relevant (i.e., relatable), and/or meaningful to students and the discipline (e.g., topic connects to students' lives, task simulates authentic purpose and audience)? *		✓		These documents are rich in relevant and meaningful ideas for students living in a democratic culture today. By themselves, they may seem thinly abstract and not that "relatable." However, more background on the two central documents could help students to see them as meaningful efforts to grapple with crucial ideas in relation to specific historical situations whose importance students should be able to recognize.
b. Is the task related to real world problems, contexts, and/or purposes?	✓			The essential nature of democracy and the rhetorical achievements of important leaders, as seen from past times, are both certainly related to real world problems today.
5. Suitable for Diverse Student Populations				
a. Is the task, at its core, free of bias that might disadvantage specific student populations and free of stereotypes in language, content, and design? *	✓			

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b. Does the task include, or allow for the use of, a variety of stimuli?			✓	The task is based entirely on written texts and group discussions and writing activities dealing with those texts.
c. Does the task provide instructional scaffolds to support student learning and skill development toward successful completion of the task?		✓		<p>The task instructions guide students through a series of steps, with scaffolding provided for mini-tasks such as the defining of terms, note-taking, recording results of structured discussions, essay planning, writing the essay, and peer editing or feedback on the results.</p> <p>The problem here is that many of the instructions are either unclear or based on Paideia Seminar practices that are nowhere described in these instructions clearly enough for other teachers to use, easily or at all.</p>
d. Does the task include appropriate recommendations for accommodations and differentiation to provide access for diverse students?			✓	
6. Design of Student Task				
a. Is the overall task prompt clear (e.g., clear student directions, unambiguous graphics)? *			✓	As indicated in 1a and 1c above, the task prompt is not sufficiently clear. It appears to ask two distinctly different questions.
b. Is task information presented in an organized way?		✓		A reasonably sensible overall outline of steps in discussing documents and writing an essay is described in these instructions. Aside from other problems discussed, however, many of the individual instructions are unclear.
7. Curriculum-Embedded				
a. Is the task feasible for most school/classroom environments (e.g., access to necessary resources)?	✓			
b. Does the task include opportunities for independent work as well as interaction/collaboration with peers?	✓			

Task Materials	Yes	No	Comments
a. Is the task missing any referenced accompanying materials (resources, handouts, rubrics etc.)? If yes, please indicate which materials are missing.	✓		Many references are made to Paideia materials that are not accessible in this document and that many teachers will not be familiar with. Examples: teachers are told to present "background points on Pericles (see student reader)," yet no reader is identified or available. A reference to "Adler & Van Doren, pp. 31-44" is made, but no actual title or other information is provided. At another point, teachers are to "Share essential background points about The Gettysburg Address," yet no link to background points of this sort is available. Teachers are asked to "take each of the Process steps of Paideia Seminar," yet no documents related to these steps are provided. A "Teaching Thinking Through Dialogue" document is mentioned, but it is not made available. Teachers are also asked to "See Speaking and Listening Rubric and sample Seminar Process Assessment in Appendix," yet no Appendix is linked to or available.
b. Does this task contain topics/materials/texts that might be sensitive for some students? If yes, please explain.		✓	

Comments: The task relies on two important historical sources that cannot be effectively analyzed or compared without the provision of far more historical context than is offered here. This context might be provided by other primary sources or with background secondary source materials. It is very hard to see how students will be able to construct a valid comparative argumentative essay about them without much more support than these instructions provide.

Criteria summarized in this document were derived from the following sources:

- *Quality Criteria for Performance Assessments*, SCALE, 2013
- *Criteria for High-Quality Assessment*, SCOPE, CRESST, LSRI, June 2013
- *Quality Performance Assessment: Harnessing the Power of Teacher and Student Learning*, Brown & Mevs, February 2012
- *ThinkReady Task Review Checklist*, 2013