

# MeTEOR Performance Task Seventh Grade

English Language Arts  
I Hear America

## **Performance Task Item: I Hear America**

Grade Level: 7<sup>th</sup> Grade

**Focus Areas:** Reading Informational Text; Inference; Author's Purpose; Music

### **Essential Questions:**

- What influences do songs, lyrics and songwriters have in the past and present shaping of the America?
- What can songs tell us about our history?

### **Learning Targets:**

- Students will determine purpose from the text and its effect on the reader.
- Students will look for and identify deeper meaning within the text by drawing inferences.
- Students will explain how the author conveys his/her point of view.
- Students will draw evidence from the text to support point of view analysis.
- Students will analyze multiple texts to determine meaning that strongly supports both explicit and inferential conclusions.

## **STANDARDS**

### **Content Standards:**

- Cite several pieces of textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.
- Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the impact of rhymes and other repetitions of sounds (e.g., alliteration) on a specific verse or stanza of a poem or section of a story or drama.
- Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text; provide an objective summary of the text.
- Compare and contrast a fictional portrayal of a time, place, or character and a historical account of the same period as a means of understanding how authors of fiction use or alter history.

### **Supporting Standards:**

- Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including vocabulary specific to domains related to history/social studies.
- Identify aspects of a text that reveal an author's point of view or purpose (e.g., loaded language, inclusion or avoidance of particular facts).

- Analyze the main ideas and supporting details presented in diverse media and formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively, and orally) and explain how the ideas clarify a topic, text, or issue under study.
- Students analyze the role of music in past and present cultures throughout the world, noting cultural diversity as it relates to music, musicians, and composers.

## **Materials/Resources:**

- Partridge, Elizabeth. “This Land Was Made for You and Me: The Life and Songs of Woody Guthrie.” New York: Viking, 2002. (2002) Lexile 1020
- “This Land Is Your Land” lyrics by Woody Guthrie
- “Woody Guthrie” <http://www.pbs.org/kenburns/dustbowl/bios/woody-guthrie/>
- “I Too Sing America” Langston Hughes
- “Author Langston Hughes” <https://newsela.com/articles/bio-authors-langston-hughes/id/27280/> Lexile 1040
- Then and Now Chart
- Venn Diagram

## **Ideas for Planning and Scaffolding:**

- Reading the passage aloud before students read independently
- Modeling visible thinking through Teacher Think-Alouds
- Pre-teaching key vocabulary terms
- Using close reading techniques – reread to clarify information
- Chunking the text
- Providing an audio recording
- Using graphic organizers

**Part A:**

**Read “This Land Was Made for You and Me: The Life and Songs of Woody Guthrie.” by Elizabeth Partridge and answer questions 1 and 2.**

1. According to the text, what kind of songs did Woody Guthrie dislike? (DOK 1)
2. Woody Guthrie is called *restless* in the text. What does that word mean in this passage? (DOK 1)

**Read and/or listen to “This Land Was Made for You and Me” and answer questions 3 and 4.**

3. Thinking about the article by Elizabeth Partridge and the lyrics by Woody Guthrie, use text evidence to make a list of the states that Woody Guthrie could have visited during his travels. (DOK 2)
4. Woody Guthrie’s restless spirit helped create a folk song that is known by all of America, “This Land is Your Land”. In Partridge’s text, she lists all kinds of music and songs that influenced him in his travels. Make a list of the song categories (work songs, etc.) and then research and list a song that would have been popular at that time. (DOK 2)

**Read Woody Guthrie’s Biography and answer questions 5 and 6.**

5. Woody Guthrie was called the “Dust Bowl Troubadour”. What event took place that earned him this nickname and what effect did it have on the people in the Great Plains (Nebraska, Kansas, Oklahoma and Texas)? (DOK 2/3)
  
6. Why do you think Guthrie’s verse about class inequality is left out of traditional renditions of “This Land Is Your Land”? Looking at the language used in the lost verse, what do you think his purpose was of adding it? Does it add or detract from the traditional rendition? (DOK 2/3)

**Part B:**

**Read “Author: Langston Hughes” and answer questions 7 - 9.**

7. What type of music is Langston Hughes drawn to? (DOK 1)
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
8. According to the text, what political and social issues did Langston Hughes address through his art (poetry, music, etc.)? What type of people did he most identify with and how did that affect his work? (DOK 2/3)

**Read: “I Too, Sing America” by Langston Hughes and answer questions 9 and 10.**

9. What figurative language does Hughes use to reinforce his point of view? What does the significance of “eating in the kitchen” have on the times in which Langston Hughes lived? (DOK 2)
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
10. Based on what you have learned about the importance of music in America, what could you infer about society’s woes from “I Too, Sing America”? (DOK 2)

**Part C:**

11. Woody Guthrie hitchhiked all through the country without anyone knowing where he was going or why. Would he be able to do this in today's climate of cell phones and social media? Why or why not? Make a "Then and Now" chart showing what would be the same and different from today and Woody Guthrie's era? This will require some research. (DOK 3)
  
12. Woody Guthrie and Langston Hughes felt like outsiders in the world and used music as a way to make political statements. Use the "compare/contrast" chart to show their similarities and differences. Some research may be needed. (DOK 3)
  
13. There is no indication that Guthrie and Hughes had ever met. Using the information from all of the texts as well as research, write at least three friendly letters (six total) from Guthrie to Langston and vice versa. Address their struggles, similarities, differences, political climate at the time, class inequality, discrimination and of course, music. You will write a total of six letters (three from Guthrie to Langston and three from Langston to Guthrie). (DOK 3)
  
14. Travel was a big influence on both Langston Hughes and Woody Guthrie. The quote "Travel is the only thing you spend money on that makes you richer," holds true for both men. Though they had little in monetary resources, their experiences made them wealthy with information. Looking at current social issues and the political climate, do you feel travel is still necessary to understand other cultures and social issues? Write an argumentative essay on whether students should be required to pay to study for a semester in another country in order to graduate from college. (DOK 4)

15. Music has been used throughout history to make statements, protest and shape America. Choose a current event or social issue that you feel strongly about and write song lyrics that addresses your view of the issue and work to shape public opinion similar to what we saw with Guthrie and Hughes. You may use a “catchy” tune, rap or song that you already know but the music and lyrics must fit together. (DOK 4)



## ARTICLES/STUDENT MATERIALS/RUBRICS

**Partridge, Elizabeth. "This Land Was Made for You and Me: The Life and Songs of Woody Guthrie." New York: Viking, 2002. (2002)**

From the Preface: "Ramblin 'Round"

"I hate a song that makes you think that you're not any good. I hate a song that makes you think you are just born to lose. I am out to fight those kind of songs to my very last breath of air and my last drop of blood."

Woody Guthrie could never cure himself of wandering off. One minute he'd be there, the next he'd be gone, vanishing without a word to anyone, abandoning those he loved best. He'd throw on a few extra shirts, one on top of the other, sling his guitar over his shoulder, and hit the road. He'd stick out his thumb and hitchhike, swing onto moving freight trains, and hunker down with other traveling men in flophouses, hobo jungles, and Hoovervilles across Depression America. He moved restlessly from state to state, soaking up some songs: work songs, mountain and cowboy songs, sea chanteys, songs from the southern chain gangs. He added them to the dozens he already knew from his childhood until he was bursting with American folk songs. Playing the guitar and singing, he started making up new ones: hard-bitten, rough-edged songs that told it like it was, full of anger and hardship and hope and love. Woody said the best songs came to him when he was walking down a road. He always had fifteen or twenty songs running around in his mind, just waiting to be put together. Sometimes he knew the words, but not the melody. Usually he'd borrow a tune that was already well known—the simpler the better. As he walked along, he tried to catch a good, easy song that people could sing the first time they heard it, remember, and sing again later.

## **“This Land is Your Land” by Woody Guthrie**

This land is your land, this land is my land  
From the California to the New York Island  
From the Redwood Forest, to the Gulf stream waters  
This land was made for you and me  
As I went walking that ribbon of highway  
I saw above me that endless skyway  
Saw below me the golden valley  
This land was made for you and me  
I roamed and rambled and followed my footsteps  
To the sparkling sands of her diamond deserts  
All around me a voice was sounding  
This land was made for you and me  
When the sun come shining, then I was strolling  
In wheat fields waving and dust clouds rolling  
The voice was chanting as the fog was lifting  
This land was made for you and me  
This land is your land, this land is my land  
From the California to the New York Island  
From the Redwood Forest, to the Gulf stream waters  
This land was made for you and me  
When the sun come shining, then I was strolling  
In wheat fields waving and dust clouds rolling  
The voice was chanting as the fog was lifting  
This land was made for you and me

## “Woody Guthrie Biography”

<http://www.pbs.org/kenburns/dustbowl/bios/woody-guthrie/>

Woodrow Wilson “Woody” Guthrie is arguably the most influential American folk musician of the first half of the 20th century. He is best known for his folk ballads, traditional and children’s songs, and improvised works, often incorporating political commentary. Woody Guthrie is closely identified with the Dust Bowl and Great Depression of the 1930s. His songs from that time period earned him the nickname “Dust Bowl Troubadour.”

Born in 1912 in Okema, Oklahoma, Guthrie moved at age 18 to Pampa, Texas, a small town in the hardest-hit area of the Dust Bowl. It was in Pampa that he experienced the fury of Black Sunday—a severe dust storm that swept across the Midwestern states on April 14, 1935, and inspired Guthrie to write the song, “So Long, It’s Been Good to Know You.” After Black Sunday, Guthrie joined the ranks of Okies migrating to California in search of work. Many of his works—“Do Re Mi,” “I Ain’t Got No Home,” “Talking Dust Bowl,” and others—chronicle the difficult conditions faced by the working class Okies in their new home. At the close of the 1930s, Guthrie left California for New York City. It was there that he wrote his best-known song, “This Land Is Your Land.” In the often-omitted fourth and sixth verses of the song, Guthrie rails against class inequality.

*As I went walking, I saw a sign there,  
And on the sign there, it said “Private Property.”  
But on the other side, it didn't say nothing!  
That side was made for you and me.  
In the squares of the city, in the shadow of a steeple,  
By the relief office, I'd seen my people.  
As they stood there hungry, I stood there asking,  
Is this land made for you and me?*

**“Authors: Langston Hughes”**

<https://newsela.com/articles/bio-authors-langston-hughes/id/27280/>



**By Library of Congress and National Park Service, adapted by Newsela staff**

**Synopsis:** Langston Hughes was born in Joplin, Missouri, in 1902. He is one of the most important writers and thinkers of the Harlem Renaissance. This was an artistic movement in 1920s New York that celebrated African-American life and culture. Through his poetry, novels, plays, essays and children's books, Hughes promoted equality, condemned racism and became a celebrated voice of black culture, humor and spirituality.

**Early Years**

Hughes' childhood was one of frequent change and exposure to people of many backgrounds. He was born in 1902 in Joplin, Missouri, but his parents separated when he was very young. His father moved to Mexico, and his mother left him for long periods in search of steady employment. Hughes' grandmother raised him in Lawrence, Kansas, until he was 12. He later lived with his mother and stepfather in Illinois and Ohio.

Hughes began writing creatively in high school, exploring his experiences and feelings in poetry. The year 1921 was a pivotal one for Hughes. He traveled to Mexico to be with his father and teach English in Mexican schools. While traveling on a train, he wrote his first significant poem, "The Negro Speaks of Rivers." The poem was published in "The Crisis," a magazine of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, the leading civil rights

organization in the United States. It begins, "I've known rivers: I've known rivers ancient as the world and older than the flow of human blood in human veins."

That same year, Hughes attended Columbia University in New York and fell in love with the nearby neighborhood of Harlem. Although he remained at Columbia for only a year, his time there changed the direction of his life and art. He established friendships with other young African-American writers who were part of Harlem's vibrant artistic scene. He met talented musicians and artists who would also influence his writing. Around this time, he also voyaged to Europe and Africa before returning to live in Washington, D.C.

### **Growing Recognition**

The mid-1920s saw Hughes grow into his talent. In 1925, while working as a hotel busboy, Hughes gave three of his poems to Vachel Lindsay, a famous critic and poet. Lindsay's enthusiastic support introduced Hughes to a wider audience. Hughes's book about the blues and jazz music scene, "The Weary Blues," was published in 1926. In an essay that same year in *The Nation* magazine, Hughes shared ideas that united a new generation of African-American thinkers, writers and visual artists:

"We younger Negro artists who create now intend to express our individual dark-skinned selves without fear or shame. If white people are pleased, we are glad. If they are not, it doesn't matter. We know we are beautiful...We build our temples for tomorrow, strong as we know how, and we stand on top of the mountain, free within ourselves."

Hughes traveled extensively and spent time living and working in Europe. Like many black writers of that period, he was interested in race relations in other nations and cultures. However, he always returned to Harlem, and the people and places there dominate his poetry and prose. He also believed in using his art to share his beliefs about politics and justice as they impacted African-American communities.

### **Man of the People and the Arts**

Hughes was interested in all walks of life, but he had a special place in his heart and art for the people he called the "low-down folks." He admired these working-class, low-income families and friends because "they accept what beauty is their own without question." They appear frequently in his works, and he used his poetry as a form of praise for their strength, style and humor.

Hughes also loved African-American styles of music, especially the blues. These are songs that express sad themes and heartbreak. In "Songs Called the Blues" (1941), Hughes said this music was sung by "black, beaten but unbeatable throats."

Other forms of art influenced Hughes, and, in turn, his work crossed over into other mediums, including music. Hughes said that jazz and blues expressed the wide range of black America's experience. In 1958, he recorded his poetry accompanied by jazz artists. The rhythms of jazz also influenced his 1951 "Montage of a Dream Deferred." This was a book-length poem in five sections depicting African-Americans' experience in American cities. It combines music, poetry and prose history.

Hughes also loved drama and plays and established theater companies in both New York and Los Angeles. Hughes wrote his first play, "Mule Bone," with Zora Neale Hurston in 1930 and kept writing for the stage the rest of his life. In order to make his plays sound more real-to-life, Hughes mixed the lyrical nature of his poetry with more natural dialogue.

### **Death and Legacy**

Langston Hughes died in New York City in 1967 at the age of 65. He wrote right until the end of his life, and a collection of poems reflecting the racial politics of the 1960s was published after his death.

Hughes influenced many people with his art. Young writers and artists continue to admire the poet and his works. African-Americans especially have found in him an upbeat, hopeful voice for their own experiences and culture — a voice that had not been widely shared until Hughes shared his.

**Hughes, Langston. "I, Too, Sing America." The Collected Poems of Langston Hughes.  
New York: Knopf, 1994. (1925)**

I, too, sing America.  
I am the darker brother.  
They send me to eat in the kitchen  
When company comes,  
But I laugh  
And eat well,  
And grow strong.  
  
Tomorrow,  
I'll be at the table  
When company comes.  
Nobody'll dare  
Say to me,  
"Eat in the kitchen," then.  
Besides,  
They'll see how beautiful I am  
And be ashamed-  
I, too, am America...

Many people have called Woody Guthrie’s music timeless and that it is as applicable today as it was when it was written. Complete this “Then and Now” chart to show similarities and differences.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

	Then	Now
<b>Communication</b>		
<b>Transportation</b>		
<b>Lodging</b>		
<b>Economics</b>		
<b>Obligations</b> (Job, Family, etc.)		
<b>Possessions</b>		
<b>Poverty</b>		
<b>Immigration</b>		
<b>Politics</b>		
<b>Music</b>		
<b>Your pick!</b>		



Name:

## I HEAR AMERICA

Woody Guthrie and Langston Hughes had many similarities and differences. Please complete the charts using research and text evidence for each man.

**Woody Guthrie**

**Langston Hughes**

**Similarities**



<b>Woody Guthrie (WG)</b> <b>Langston Hughes (LH)</b>	<b>Supporting Evidence</b>
<b>Early Life</b>	
<b>Challenges Faced</b>	
<b>Political Beliefs</b>	
<b>Lifestyle</b>	
<b>Music</b>	
<b>Your Pick!</b>	

## Argumentative Essay Rubric

### Rubric

	4	3	2	1
<b>Focus</b> 8 pts	Essay has a focus throughout.	Essay mostly has a focus throughout.	Essay sometimes loses focus.	Essay does not have a focus.
<b>Organization</b> 8 pts	Essay has a clear introduction, body and conclusion.	Essay has an introduction, body and conclusion, though not always clear.	Essay is missing an introduction, body or conclusion.	Essay is missing two of the following: an introduction, a body or conclusion.
<b>Grammar</b> 4 pts	Essay has no grammatical mistakes.	Essay has 1–2 grammatical mistakes.	Essay has 3–4 grammatical mistakes.	Essay has more than 4 grammatical mistakes.
<b>Effectiveness</b> 4pts	Essay makes an effective argument.	Essay makes a mostly effective argument.	Essay does not make an effective argument.	Essay does not make an argument.
<b>Length</b> 4 pts	Essay has more than 130 words.	Essay has 128–130 words.	Essay has 120–130 words.	Essay has fewer than 120 words.
<b>Completes Assignment Requirements</b> 4 pts	Essay has more than two reasons to support the position.	Essay has two reasons to support the position.	Essay has one reason to support the position.	Essay has no reason to support the position.

## Friendly Letter Rubric

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

	<b>25 Excellent</b>	<b>20 Good</b>	<b>15 Developing</b>	<b>10 Unsatisfactory</b>
<b>Letter Parts</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Has heading, date, greeting, body, closing, and signature.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Has five of the six letter parts</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Has four of the six letter parts.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Has three or fewer letter parts.</li> </ul>
<b>Flow</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Letter addresses all issues of significance addressed in instructions.</li> <li>Letter is creative and humorous.</li> <li>The letter is true to the purpose of the author.</li> <li>There is a flow from sender to receiver and vice versa.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Letter addresses most of issues of significance.</li> <li>Letter shows some creativity and humor.</li> <li>The letter is mostly true to the purpose of the author.</li> <li>There is some flow from the sender to receiver and vice versa.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Letter addresses few of the issues of significance.</li> <li>Letter shows little creativity and/or humor.</li> <li>The letter is somewhat true to the purpose of the author.</li> <li>There is little flow from sender to receiver and vice versa.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Letter addresses none of the issues of significance.</li> <li>Letter is very stilted and shows no creativity or humor.</li> <li>The letter is not at all true to the purpose of the author.</li> <li>There is no flow from sender to receiver.</li> </ul>
<b>Conventions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Excellent punctuation, spelling, and grammar with fewer than three errors.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Very good punctuation, spelling, and grammar with fewer than five errors.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Punctuation, spelling, and grammar slightly distract the reader and interfere with meaning.</li> <li>There are ten errors or less.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Punctuation, spelling, and grammar significantly distract the reader.</li> <li>There are more than ten errors.</li> </ul>
<b>Content</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Message stated is clear, precise, and shows insight into task.</li> <li>Letter is three or more paragraphs.</li> <li>Letter encourages a response from the reader.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Message is clear and demonstrates understanding of task.</li> <li>Letter contains only two paragraphs or does not encourage a response from the reader.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Message is mostly clear.</li> <li>Letter is only one paragraph in length.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Message is unclear or disorganized.</li> <li>Letter demonstrates a lack of understanding of the assignment.</li> </ul>



[meteoreducation.com](http://meteoreducation.com) . 800.699.7516

MeTEOR CONNECT, MeTEOR Education and MeTEOR Design are trademarks or registered trademarks of MeTEOR Education, LLC © 2019.

All rights reserved. PTELA7.1