



TNCore

*Tennessee Department of Education's
Tennessee Comprehensive Assessment Program
for English Language Arts*

**Grade 11 Writing
Practice Task III
2014–2015**

TCAP Grade 11 Writing

Practice Task III

Directions

Student Directions

Today you will be taking the Grade 11 Writing Task. The task is made up of two texts and two prompts. For each prompt, you are to plan and write an essay about the text(s) according to the instructions provided. Your essays will be scored as rough drafts, but you should watch for careless errors.

There are some important things to remember as you complete the task:

- The time you have for reading both texts and answering the prompts will be 120 minutes.
- Read each prompt carefully and think about the best way to answer it.
- Write only about the texts and prompts you are given.
- You may complete pre-writing activities and notes before beginning your response, but do not write your response on the same pages as your pre-writing activities or notes.
- If you do not know the answer to a prompt, skip it and go on to the next prompt. You may return to it later if there is time.

Topic

For many years psychologists have debated the importance of a child's order of birth within the family. This task will address some of the theories about birth order and how birth order affects a person.

Texts

- **“That Elusive Birth Order Effect and What it Means for You”** by Susan Krauss Whitbourne
- **“How Birth Order Affects Your Personality”** by Joshua K. Hartshorne

TCAP Grade 11 Writing

Practice Task III

Text 1

Text 1 Introduction

In “**That Elusive Birth Order Effect and What it Means for You,**” by **Susan Krauss Whitbourne**, the author describes several theories about how birth order affects individuals.

Please read “That Elusive Birth Order Effect and What it Means for You” and then answer Prompt 1.

That Elusive Birth Order Effect and What it Means for You

Susan Krauss Whitbourne, Ph.D.

1 . . . Perhaps you’ve come to believe the myths both in your family and in psychology as a whole
2 that your character, values, achievement strivings, and life success are determined by the family
3 position that fate, and your parents, awarded to you. Psychology goes through periods of
4 alternatively accepting and rejecting these myths. Although various theories abound, when you
5 come right down to it, the matter is one that requires the right research approach. Methods are
6 everything in studies of birth order and personality.

7 Of the many factors to control for, there’s sex of the children, number of years between them (in
8 multiple-child families), and family history, not to mention the right way to study personality.
9 What about step-siblings, half-siblings, and siblings who don’t even know that the other one
10 exists? There are biological and adopted families. Parents vary in their ages and in the ages they
11 were when they had their children. When it comes to psychological variables, the situation
12 becomes even more complex. Do we study actual achievements, and if so, how do we measure
13 them? Income? Education? Occupational prestige or advancement up the career ladder? Should
14 we look at personality, motivation, intelligence, happiness, or mental health?

15 OK, your methodological head is spinning by now, so we’ll try to make some sense of the latest
16 research, much of which does a better job of controlling for all of these factors than was true in
17 years past. We’ll look at three recent studies, beginning with a dose of reality from the
18 distinguished University of Georgia psychologist Alan E. Stewart, who wrote what is perhaps the
19 definitive recent work (2012) on the theory and research on birth order. He bases his paper on
20 529 journal articles published over a 20-year period. The sheer number of studies on birth order
21 is a testimony to the importance of this topic in psychology.

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TCAP Grade 11 Writing

Practice Task III

Text 1

22 Taking his lead from the original birth order theorist, Alfred Adler (a one-time disciple of
23 Freud), Stewart distinguished between “actual” birth order, or ABO (the numerical rank order
24 into which you are born in your family of origin) and “psychological” birth order, or PBO (self-
25 perceived position in the family). Right away, you’ve probably learned something useful. Your
26 actual birth order need not have the same impact on you as the birth order you believe you have.
27 Actual and psychological birth order can deviate for a number of reasons, including illness of
28 one child, size of family, and degree of separation between siblings. Your role in the family
29 based on your age may not be the same as the role you have come to occupy.

30 As explained by Stewart, using Adler’s framework, the first-born (or one with the “oldest” role)
31 would be most likely to take on a leadership position, like when people stick to rules and order,
32 and strive toward achievement goals. The firstborn may be sensitive to being “dethroned” by
33 younger sibs¹ who drain away the attention of parents that the firstborn enjoyed before they came
34 along.

35 The youngest child may feel less capable and experienced, and perhaps is a bit pampered by
36 parents and even older sibs. As a result, the youngest may develop social skills that will get other
37 people to do things for them, thus contributing to their image as charming and popular.

38 Then there’s the all-too-easy-to-ignore middle child, who feels robbed of the prized youngest
39 child status, and perhaps feels rejected. On the positive side, the middle child may also develop
40 particularly good social skills in order to keep from being ignored.

41 For the only child, there’s the possible advantage of receiving all the attention from parents, but
42 this is balanced by the feeling of constantly being scrutinized and controlled.

43 These brief portraits probably sound quite familiar to you, and they should, because they make
44 up much of the stereotyped mythology about birth order. Adler’s description of these positions
45 are more nuanced than we typically read about in their pop psych translations, but for now,
46 they’ll suffice.

47 For decades following Adler’s writings, researchers working in the tradition of “individual
48 psychology,” or the Adlerian school of thought, tried without much success to validate the
49 theory. In part, this was because they lacked statistical methods available now, but also because

¹ **sibs:** short for siblings

TCAP Grade 11 Writing

Practice Task III

Text 1

50 they focused on ABO (i.e. actual) rather than PBO (i.e. psychological). Much of this changed
51 when the Psychological Birth Order Inventory (PBOI) was developed in 1991 by a research team
52 that included Stewart. The PBOI contains items to assess all birth order positions in the family
53 that individuals rate on an agree-disagree scale.

54 Firstborn items on the PBOI tap feelings of being powerful, important, leading, and achieving
55 (“It was important for me to do things right”). The middle-child items focus on competition,
56 having fewer resources, and feeling unimportant (“It seemed like I was less important than other
57 members of my family”). For the youngest child items, individuals rate themselves on being the
58 boss of the family, getting others to do things for them (“I was pampered by my family
59 members”). Finally, the only child scale tapped those feelings of pressure (“I felt like I lived in a
60 fishbowl”).

61 Now we’ve got the scales sorted out. Let’s see whether PBO trumps ABO, as Stewart’s model
62 would predict. Taking three examples, rational vs. irrational relationship beliefs, perfectionism,
63 and personality, in each case, the extent of the relationships with PBO were not overwhelmingly
64 large, but they were measureable. Your perceived niche in your family plays a larger role in
65 influencing the adult you’ve become than the actual timing of your birth.

66 Stewart’s study shows that we’re not fated to live out a life dominated by the accident of the
67 timing of our birth. You can’t change your actual birth order, but you can change the way you
68 think about your role in the family. Sounds like pretty good news, especially if you felt doomed
69 to a life of middle-child insignificance.

70 Now we’ll take a look at the second contribution, a paper by Daniel Eckstein of Saba University
71 in Netherlands Antilles written with co-author Jason Kaufman (2012). Examining several areas
72 of family life and sibling relationships, Eckstein and Kaufman tested, among other areas, what’s
73 known as the “Confluence model” developed by Zajonc (1976). According to this view, first-
74 borns are the teachers, and later-borns are the learners. However, as Eckstein and Kaufman point
75 out, first-borns aren’t necessarily the only ones doing the teaching between sibs. If we use the
76 assumption that perceptions count more than reality, it then becomes clear that second-borns can
77 have much to teach their older sibs. The way they approach the task may be different, but the
78 direction isn’t just one-way, as we might otherwise assume. . . .

79 Let’s return, then, to some of the other implications of your self-assigned birth order, but let’s
80 flip it and see the role of parental perceptions of their children’s birth order. Eckstein and
81 Kaufman point out that perceptions and beliefs about birth order may have their effects, in large

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TCAP Grade 11 Writing

Practice Task III

Text 1

82 part, because parents impose their own stereotypes onto their children. By assigning these
83 stereotyped birth-order roles, which may interact with gender roles, parents create self-fulfilling
84 prophecies among their brood. You come to feel like the leader, if you're a first-born, because
85 you were handed this role early in your life.

Whitbourne, Susan K. "Fulfillment at Any Age: That Elusive Birth Order Effect and What It Means for You." *Psychology Today*. May 18, 2013. Used by permission. <http://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/fulfillment-any-age/201305/elusive-birth-order-effect-and-what-it-means-you>

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TCAP Grade 11 Writing

Practice Task III

Prompt 1

Prompt 1

You have now read “That Elusive Birth Order Effect and What it Means for You.” In this text, Susan Krauss Whitbourne explains some of the implications of birth order.

Write an essay that determines the author’s point of view about the importance of birth order and analyzes how that point of view is developed over the course of the text. Be sure to cite evidence from the text to support your analysis. Follow the conventions of standard written English.

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TCAP Grade 11 Writing

Practice Task III

Text 2

Text 2 Introduction

In “**How Birth Order Affects Your Personality**” by **Joshua K. Hartshorne**, the author describes recent research on the effect of birth order.

Please read “How Birth Order Affects Your Personality” and then answer Prompt 2.

How Birth Order Affects Your Personality

Joshua K. Hartshorne

For decades the evidence has become inconclusive, but new studies show that family position may truly affect intelligence and personality.

1 When I tell people I study whether birth order affects personality, I usually get blank looks. It
2 sounds like studying whether the sky is blue. Isn't it common sense? Popular books invoke birth
3 order for self-discovery, relationship tips, business advice and parenting guidance in titles such
4 as *The Birth Order Book: Why You Are the Way You Are* (Revell, 2009). Newspapers and
5 morning news shows debate the importance of the latest findings (“Latter-born children engage
6 in more risky behavior; what should parents do?”) while tossing in savory anecdotes (“Did you
7 know that 21 of the first 23 astronauts into space were firstborns?”).

8 But when scientists scrutinized the data, they found that the evidence just did not hold up. In fact,
9 until very recently there were no convincing findings that linked birth order to personality or
10 behavior. Our common perception that birth order matters was written off as an example of our
11 well-established tendency to remember and accept evidence that supports our pet theories while
12 readily forgetting or overlooking that which does not. But two studies from the past three years
13 finally found measurable effects: our position in the family does indeed affect both our IQ and
14 our personality. It may be time to reconsider birth order as a real influence over whom we grow
15 up to be.

16 Size Matters

17 Before discussing the new findings, it will help to explain why decades of research that seemed
18 to show birth-order effects was, in fact, flawed. Put simply, birth order is intricately linked to
19 family size. A child from a two-kid family has a 50 percent chance of being a firstborn, whereas

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TCAP Grade 11 Writing

Practice Task III

Text 2

20 a child from a five-kid family has only a 20 percent chance of being a firstborn. So the fact that
21 astronauts are disproportionately firstborns, for example, could merely show that they come from
22 smaller families—not that firstborns have any particularly astronautic qualities. (Of course,
23 firstborns may indeed have astronautic qualities. The point is that with these data, we cannot
24 tell.)

25 There are many reasons that family size could affect our predilections² and personalities. More
26 children mean that parental resources (money, time and attention) have to be spread more thinly.
27 Perhaps more telling, family size is associated with many important social factors, such as
28 ethnicity, education and wealth. For example, wealthier, better-educated parents typically have
29 fewer children. If astronauts are more likely to have well-educated, comfortable parents, then
30 they are also more likely to come from a smaller family and thus are more likely to be a
31 firstborn.

32 Of the some 65,000 scholarly articles about birth order indexed by Google Scholar, the vast
33 majority suffer from this problem, making the research difficult to interpret. Many of the few
34 remaining studies fail to show significant effects of birth order. In 1983 psychiatrists Cecile
35 Ernst and Jules Angst of the University of Zurich determined, after a thorough review of the
36 literature, that birth-order effects were not supported by the evidence. In 1998 psychologist
37 Judith Rich Harris published another comprehensive attack on the concept in *The Nurture*
38 *Assumption* (Free Press). By 2003 cognitive scientist Steven Pinker of Harvard University found
39 it necessary to spend only two pages of his 439-page discussion of nature and nurture, *The Blank*
40 *Slate* (Penguin), dismissing birth order as irrelevant.

41 **New Evidence**

42 Even so, the case in 2003 against birth-order effects was mainly an absence of good evidence,
43 rather than evidence of an absence. In fact, the past few years have provided good news for the
44 theory. In 2007 Norwegian epidemiologists Petter Kristensen and Tor Bjerkedal published work
45 showing a small but reliable negative correlation between IQ and birth order: the more older
46 siblings one has, the lower one's IQ. Whether birth order affects intelligence has been debated
47 inconclusively since the late 1800s, although the sheer size of the study (about 250,000
48 Norwegian conscripts) and the rigorous controls for family size make this study especially
49 convincing.

² **predilections:** natural likings for something

TCAP Grade 11 Writing

Practice Task III

Text 2

50 In 2009 my colleagues and I published evidence that birth order influences whom we choose as
51 friends and spouses. Firstborns are more likely to associate with firstborns, middle-borns with
52 middle-borns, last-borns with last-borns, and only children with only children. Because we were
53 able to show the effect independent of family size, the finding is unlikely to be an artifact of
54 class or ethnicity. The result is exactly what we should expect if birth order affects personality.
55 Despite the adage that opposites attract, people tend to resemble their spouses in terms of
56 personality. If spouses correlate on personality, and personality correlates with birth order,
57 spouses should correlate on birth order.

58 Thus, the evidence seems to be shifting back in favor of our common intuition that our position
59 in our family somehow affects who we become. The details, however, remain vague. The
60 Norwegian study shows a slight effect on intelligence. The relationship study shows that oldest,
61 middle, youngest and only children differ in some way yet gives no indication as to how.
62 Moreover, although these effects are reasonably sized by the standards of research, they are
63 small enough that it would not make any sense to organize college admissions or dating pools
64 around birth order, much less NASA applicants.

65 Still, I expect people—myself included—will continue to try to make sense of the world through
66 the prism of birth order. It’s fine for scientists to say “more study is needed,” but we must find
67 love, gain self-knowledge and parent children *now*. In that sense, a great deal about who we are
68 and how we think *can* be learned reading those shelves of birth order-related self-help books,
69 even if the actual content is not yet—or will never be—experimentally confirmed.

Hartshorne, Joshua K. “How Birth Order Affects Your Personality.” *Scientific American*. Jan. 8, 2009. Reproduced with permission. Copyright © 2009 Scientific American, a division of Nature America, Inc. All rights reserved.

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TCAP Grade 11 Writing

Practice Task III

Prompt 2

Prompt 2

You have now read two texts relating to birth order:

- **“That Elusive Birth Order Effect and What it Means for You”** by Susan Krauss Whitbourne
- **“How Birth Order Affects Your Personality”** by Joshua K. Hartshorne

Write an argumentative essay about the relative importance of birth order in determining a person’s personality and future. Be sure to cite evidence from both texts to support your argument. Follow the conventions of standard written English.

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