Power Up: Reading ACT Prep, Week 3

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Time Frame 35 minutes

Essential Question(s)

- How can I increase my ACT score?

Summary

In this reading ACT prep activity, students first infer what they know about an ACT-style reading passage before reading it. Students then respond to three different claims about the passage by creating evidence and reasoning to each claim. Students practice responding to five ACT-style questions and review the correct answers as a class. This is the third activity in a 10-week "Power Up" series for ACT prep.

Learning Goals

- Locate important details in a passage.
- Identify the main idea in a passage.

Attachments

- Activity Slides—Reading Act Prep, Week 3.pdf
- Activity Slides—Reading Act Prep, Week 3.pptx
- CER—Reading ACT Prep, Week 3 - Spanish.docx
- CER—Reading ACT Prep, Week 3 - Spanish.pdf
- CER—Reading ACT Prep, Week 3.docx
- CER—Reading ACT Prep, Week 3.pdf
- Passage—Reading ACT Prep, Week 3.docx
- Passage—Reading ACT Prep, Week 3.pdf
- Questions (Teacher Guide)—Reading ACT Prep, Week 3.docx
- Questions (Teacher Guide)—Reading ACT Prep, Week 3.pdf
- Questions—Reading ACT Prep, Week 3.docx
- Questions—Reading ACT Prep, Week 3.pdf

Materials

- Activity Slides (attached)
- Passage handout (attached; one per student)
- CER handout (attached; one per student)
- Questions handout (attached; one per student)
- Questions (Teacher Guide) document (attached; for teacher use)
- Pen/pencil

5 minutes

Introduction

Teacher's Note: ACT Enhancements

The following resource has been updated to better align with the test changes that began in April 2025 for the online test and in September 2025 for the paper-pencil test. Some outside resources linked are based on the previous version of the ACT. Learn more about enhancements to the ACT in 2025.

Introduce the activity using the attached **Activity Slides**. Share the essential question on **slide 3** and the learning objectives from **slide 4**.

Move to **slide 5** and tell students to imagine that this information was provided on the ACT before reading a passage. Ask students to think about what they could infer about the passage based on the information. Have students talk to a partner and then ask for a few volunteers to share their thoughts.

Sample Student Responses:

- Fiction
- Literary Narrative
- Book
- Purpose is to entertain
- Written in 1939, so language might be outdated
- Classic novel

20 minutes

Activity

Display **slide 6**. Tell students that on the ACT reading section, they will be given 40 minutes to answer 36 questions about 4 passages. This means that they should spend approximately ten minutes on reading the passage and answering the corresponding questions. If students spend four minutes reading each passage, they have about six minutes to answer the nine questions related to each passage.

Pass out the attached **Passage** handout to each student. Display **slide 7** and have students read the passage silently. Use the embedded 4-minute timer on the slide to give students four minutes to read the passage. If students need more than four minutes, provide that extra time as students are just starting to practice reading stamina.

After students have read the passage, pass out the attached **CER Grapes of Wrath** handout to each student. Move to **slide 8** and introduce the Claim, Evidence, Reasoning strategy to students. Provide time for students to find evidence and write an example of reasoning evidence to each claim in the Passage handout. Each evidence and reasoning example should be one to two sentences only. Display **slide 9** and have students share their responses with another student. Have students discuss the question on the slide: *What is the main idea of the passage?* If time allows, ask for several volunteers to share what they think the main idea of the passage is.

Sample Student Response

The tenants are struggling to farm the land, and the owners want the tenants to move off the land.

10 minutes

Wrap-Up

Move to **slide 10** and pass out the attached **Questions** handout to each student. Since students traditionally have 6 minutes to answer 9 questions on the ACT, give them 2 minutes to answer the 5 given questions. Tell students there are five ACT-style questions, and they should try to answer the questions in two minutes to prepare for the pacing that the ACT reading test requires. Use the embedded 2-minute timer on the slide to time students but give more time to answer all five questions, if necessary.

Display **slide 11** and review the correct answers as a class. If students have questions about answers, use the attached **Questions (Teacher Guide)** document, which provides explanations for the correct answers to these ACT-style questions. Facilitate a brief conversation about not knowing all the vocabulary in a passage and still being able to answer the questions. Reinforce with students that they can still be successful on the reading test without knowing what every word means.

Move to **slide 12** and congratulate students on working to increase their preparation for the ACT. Suggest that students spend twenty minutes reading a text for pleasure weekly to further prepare for the ACT reading section.

Research Rationale

Standardized testing in high schools has long stood as a metric for assessing college readiness and school accountability (McMann, 1994). While there has been debate surrounding the accuracy of such metrics, as well as concerns regarding fairness, many institutions of higher education continue to make these scores part of the admissions process (Allensworth & Clark, 2020; Black et al., 2016; Buckley et al., 2020). Aside from admissions, it is also important to keep in mind that standardized test scores can also provide students with scholarship opportunities they wouldn't otherwise have (Klasik, 2013). Though the topic of standardized testing continues to be debated, effective test prep can ensure that our students are set up for success.

With several benefits to doing well on college admissions tests, it is important to consider how best to prepare students for this type of high stakes test. Those students from groups that may historically struggle to find success, such as those in poverty or first generation college students, especially stand to benefit from effective test preparation (Moore & San Pedro, 2021). The American College Test (ACT) is one option students have for college admissions testing that is provided both at national centers and school sites. Taking time to understand this test including the timing, question types, rigor, and strategies for approaching specific questions can help to prepare students to do their best work on test day and ensure their score is a more accurate representation of what they know (Bishop & Davis-Becker, 2016).

Resources

- Allensworth, E. M., & Clark, K. (2020). High school GPAs and ACT scores as predictors of college completion: Examining assumptions about consistency across high schools. Educational Researcher, 49(3), 198-211.
- Bishop, N.S. & Davis-Becker, S. (2016). Preparing examinees for test taking: Guidelines for test developers and test users. 2nd edition. Crocker, L. (Ed). In Handbook of test development (pp. 129-142). Routledge.
- Black, S. E., Cortes, K. E., & Lincove, J. A. (2016). Efficacy versus equity: What happens when states tinker with college admissions in a race-blind era? Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis. 38(2), 336–363. http://www.jstor.org/stable/44984542
- Buckley, J., Baker, D., & Rosinger, K. (2020). Should state universities downplay the SAT? Education Next, 20(3).
- Klasik, D. (2013). The ACT of enrollment: The college enrollment effects of state-required college entrance exam testing. Educational Researcher, 42(3), 151–160. http://www.jstor.org/stable/23462378
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- McMann, P. K. (1994). The effects of teaching practice review items and test-taking strategies on the ACT mathematics scores of second-year algebra students. Wayne State University. https://www.monroeccc.edu/sites/default/files/upward-bound/McMannP.-the-effects-of-teaching-practice-review-items-ACT-mathematics-second-year-algebra.pdf
- Moore, R., & San Pedro, S. Z. (2021). Understanding the test preparation practices of underserved learners. ACT Research & Policy. Issue Brief. ACT, Inc. https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED616526.pdf