

English III Reading

Single Selection Scoring Guide April 2013

Read the selection and choose the best answer to each question. Then fill in the answer on your answer document.

The Case for Short Words

from *The Miracle of Language*

by *Richard Lederer*

- 1 When you speak and write, there is no law that says you have to use big words. Short words are as good as long ones, and short, old words—like *sun* and *grass* and *home*—are best of all. A lot of small words, more than you might think, can meet your needs with a strength, grace, and charm that large words do not have.
- 2 Big words can make the way dark for those who read what you write and hear what you say. Small words cast their clear light on big things—night and day, love and hate, war and peace, and life and death. Big words at times seem strange to the eye and the ear and the mind and the heart. Small words are the ones we seem to have known from the time we were born, like the hearth fire that warms the home.
- 3 Short words are bright like sparks that glow in the night, prompt like the dawn that greets the day, sharp like the blade of a knife, hot like salt tears that scald the cheek, quick like moths that flit from flame to flame, and terse like the dart and sting of a bee.
- 4 Here is a sound rule: Use small, old words where you can. If a long word says just what you want to say, do not fear to use it. But know that our tongue is rich in crisp, brisk, swift, short words. Make them the spine and the heart of what you speak and write. Short words are like fast friends. They will not let you down.
- 5 The title of this chapter and the four paragraphs that you have just read are wrought entirely of words of one syllable. In setting myself this task, I did not feel especially cabined, cribbed, or confined. In fact, the structure helped me to focus on the power of the message I was trying to put across.

Long & Complicated vs. Short & Simple

Why use this long word when this short word can express the same idea?
ameliorate	improve
bifurcate	split
expectorate	spit
obfuscate	hide
plenary	full
terminate	end

6 One study shows that twenty words account for twenty-five percent of all spoken English words, and all twenty are monosyllabic. In order of frequency they are: *I, you, the, a, to, is, it, that, of, and, in, what, he, this, have, do, she, not, on, and they*. Other studies indicate that the fifty most common words in written English are each made of a single syllable.

7 For centuries our finest poets and orators have recognized and employed the power of small words to make a straight point between two minds. A great many of our proverbs punch home their points with pithy monosyllables: "Where there's a will, there's a way," "A stitch in time saves nine," "Spare the rod and spoil the child," "A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush."

8 Nobody used the short word more skillfully than William Shakespeare, whose dying King Lear laments:

And my poor fool is hang'd! No, no, no life!
Why should a dog, a horse, a rat have life,
And thou no breath at all? . . .
Do you see this? Look on her; look, her lips.
Look there, look there!

9 Shakespeare's contemporaries made the King James Bible a centerpiece of short words—"And God said, Let there be light: and there was light. And God saw the light, that it was good." The descendants of such mighty lines live on in the twentieth century. When asked to explain his policy to Parliament, Winston Churchill responded with these ringing monosyllables: "I will say: it is to wage war, by sea, land, and air, with all our might and with all the strength that God can give us." In his "Death of the Hired Man" Robert Frost observes that "Home is the place where, when you have to go there,/They have to take you in." And William H. Johnson uses ten two-letter words to explain his secret of success: "If it is to be,/It is up to me."

10 You don't have to be a great author, statesman, or philosopher to tap the energy and eloquence of small words. Each winter I ask my ninth graders at St. Paul's School to write a composition composed entirely of one-syllable words. My students greet my request with obligatory moans and groans, but, when they return to class with their essays, most feel that, with the pressure to produce high-sounding polysyllables relieved, they have created some of their most powerful and luminous prose. Here are submissions from two of my ninth graders:

11 What can you say to a boy who has left home? You can say that he has done wrong, but he does not care. He has left home so that he will not have to deal with what you say. He wants to go as far as he can. He will do what he wants to do.

12 This boy does not want to be forced to go to church, to comb his hair, or to be on time. A good time for this boy does not lie in your reach, for

what you have he does not want. He dreams of ripped jeans, shorts with no starch, and old socks.

13 So now this boy is on a bus to a place he dreams of, a place with no rules. This boy now walks a strange street, his long hair blown back by the wind. He wears no coat or tie, just jeans and an old shirt. He hates your world, and he has left it.

—CHARLES SHAFFER

14 For a long time we cruised by the coast and at last came to a wide bay past the curve of a hill, at the end of which lay a small town. Our long boat ride at an end, we all stretched and stood up to watch as the boat nosed its way in.

15 The town climbed up the hill that rose from the shore, a space in front of it left bare for the port. Each house was a clean white with sky blue or gray trim; in front of each one was a small yard, edged by a white stone wall strewn with green vines.

16 As the town basked in the heat of noon, not a thing stirred in the streets or by the shore. The sun beat down on the sea, the land, and the back of our necks, so that, in spite of the breeze that made the vines sway, we all wished we could hide from the glare in a cool, white house. But, as there was no one to help dock the boat, we had to stand and wait.

17 At last the head of the crew leaped from the side and strode to a large house on the right. He shoved the door wide, poked his head through the gloom, and roared with a fierce voice. Five or six men came out, and soon the port was loud with the clank of chains and creak of planks as the men caught ropes thrown by the crew, pulled them taut, and tied them to posts. Then they set up a rough plank so we could cross from the deck to the shore. We all made for the large house while the crew watched, glad to be rid of us.

—CELIA WREN

18 You too can tap into the vitality and vigor of compact expression. Take a suggestion from the highway department. At the boundaries of your speech and prose place a sign that reads "Caution: Small Words at Work."

English III Reading Single Selection

After reading "The Case for Short Words," do you think the author makes a convincing case that short words are effective? Explain your answer and support it with evidence from the selection.

Score Point 0 — Insufficient Response to the Question

Insufficient responses indicate a very limited reading performance.

These responses have one of the following problems.

- The idea is not an answer to the question asked.
- The idea is incorrect because it is not based on the text.
- The idea is too general, vague, or unclear to determine whether it is reasonable.
- No idea is present. Sometimes the response contains only text evidence. At other times there appears to be an idea; however, this idea cannot be considered an answer to the question because it merely repeats verbatim, or “echoes,” the text evidence.

yes i do think the author makes a convincing case that the short words are effective because short words are not always helpful

Score Point 0

The student presents an explanation that is unclear because it contradicts the student's assertion that short words are effective.

No. Short words are not effective. They cannot encompass the entire situation

Score Point 0

This response is insufficient because the student presents an idea that is too vague to determine whether it is reasonable.

After reading "The case for short words", I think that the author does make a convincing case that short words are effective. I also agree with the fact that "small words are the ones we seem to have known from the time we were born" and that "short words are like fast friends. They will never let you down," but I personally think that longer words are better. One, because it increases your vocabulary, and two, because they look better when writing an essay. They also give a better impression of who you are and what you know. So even though short words are consider effective, they are not better than using longer words, which make you sound smarter.

Score Point 0

The student asserts that the author makes a convincing case that short words are effective and provides text evidence. However, no explanation is given for this assertion. Therefore, the positive side of this response consists only of text evidence. The student goes on to present her personal opinion about why large words are better than small ones. This opinion is unreasonable because it is not based on the ideas presented in the text and, therefore, cannot be supported by textual evidence from the selection. Overall, this response indicates a very limited reading performance.

yes I think the author makes it convincing short words are effective. For example he says "short words are bright like sparks that glow in the night!" Also he said "For centuries our finest poets have recognized and employed the power of small words."

Score Point 0

The student asserts that the author makes a convincing case that short words are effective and provides text evidence. However, this response is insufficient because no explanation is presented. Providing only text evidence indicates that the student's reading performance is very limited.

Score Point 1 — Partially Sufficient Response to the Question

Partially sufficient responses indicate a basic reading performance.

These responses have one of the following characteristics.

- The idea is reasonable, but the response contains no text evidence.
- The idea is reasonable, but the text evidence is flawed and does not adequately support the idea. Text evidence is considered inadequate when it is
 - only a general reference to the text,
 - too partial to support the idea,
 - weakly linked to the idea, or
 - used inappropriately because it wrongly manipulates the meaning of the text.
- The idea needs more explanation or specificity even though it is supported with text evidence.
- The idea represents only a literal reading of the text, with or without text evidence.

The author of "The Case for Short Words" uses examples of great literature and famous writers to show that even they use simple words to write their stories about. He shows us a chart of large extravagant words and then translates those words into simpler terms.

Score Point 1

The student presents two reasonable ideas explaining why the author makes a convincing case that short words are effective: the author mentions that even great writers use simple words, and he provides a chart that translates long words into shorter ones. However, the response is only partially sufficient because no text evidence is provided to support the ideas.

In the selection "The Case for Short Words" the author makes a convincing case because long words can make you confused and short words get right to the point. "At the boundaries of speech and prose place a sign that reads "Caution: Small Words at Work!"

Score Point 1

The student offers the reasonable idea that the author makes a convincing case that short words are effective because long words can make you confused and short words get right to the point. However, the text evidence provided is flawed because it is weakly linked to the idea and does not adequately support it.

In the excerpt, "The Case For Short Words," the author does make a convincing case that short words are effective. By showing example from notable writers like Shakespeare and from his own students, he proves that effective, even notable works of literature can be written using short words.

Score Point 1

The student states that the author makes a good case by explaining that works of literature can be comprised of short words. The student attempts to provide textual evidence; however, this evidence is flawed because it refers only generally to the text and cannot be considered specific textual evidence.

After reading "The Case for Short Words," I do feel that the author has made a very good case for the use of short words. The first four paragraphs, which all used short (one syllable words) such as "Big," "short" and "here" (repeated) were not only easy to understand but they were also beautifully written, proving that short words are effective and maybe even better than long words.

Score Point 1

The student offers the reasonable analysis that the author makes a convincing case for using short words because the first four paragraphs he wrote were beautifully written and easy to understand, and he used only short, one-syllable words. However, the text provided to support the analysis is flawed because it is too partial to adequately support the idea. Therefore, this response indicates only a basic reading performance.

Score Point 2 — Sufficient Response to the Question

Sufficient responses indicate a satisfactory reading performance.

These responses have the following characteristics.

- The idea is reasonable and goes beyond a literal reading of the text. It is explained specifically enough to show that the student can make appropriate connections across the text and draw valid conclusions.
- The text evidence used to support the idea is accurate and relevant.
- The idea and text evidence used to support it are clearly linked.
- The combination of the idea and the text evidence demonstrates a good understanding of the text.

In my opinion, I think the author did make a convincing case. "For centuries our finest poets and orators have recognized and employed the power of small words... Nobody used the short word more skillfully than William Shakespeare..." The author used a famous poet to explain and show that short words are effective.

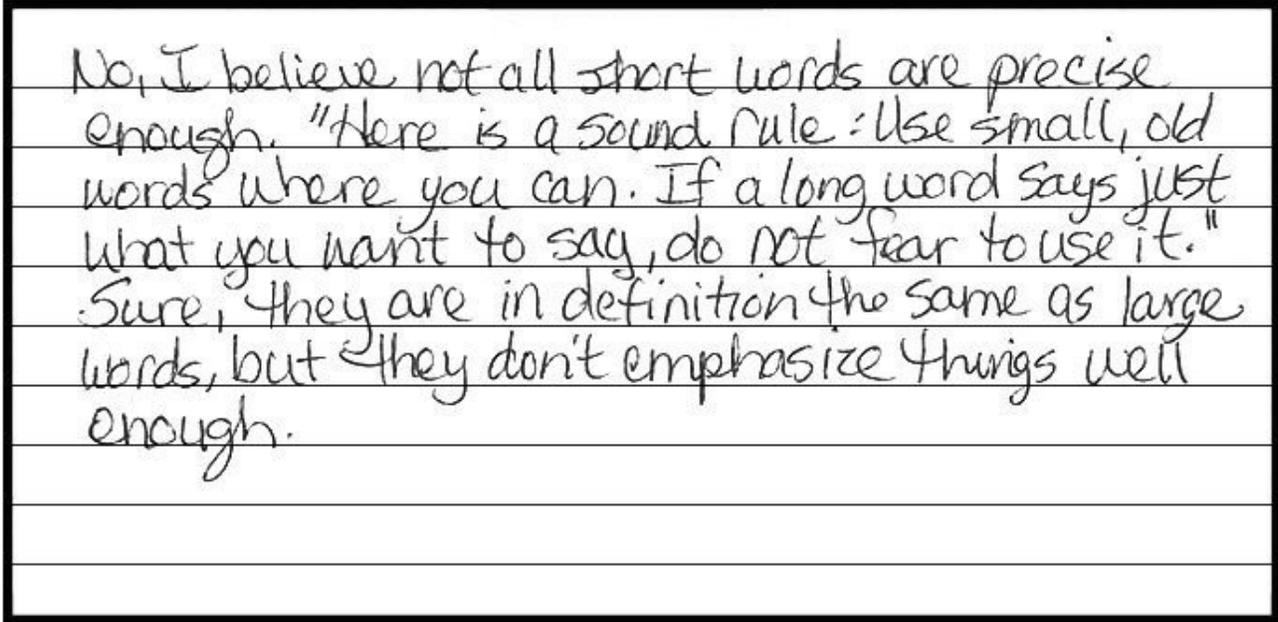
Score Point 2

The student presents the reasonable idea that the author uses a famous poet to explain and show that short words are effective. The student provides two relevant quotations from the text that clearly support this idea, making this a sufficient response.

I think that the author made a convincing case because he used short words himself. The story says, "The title of this chapter and the four paragraphs you just read are wrought entirely of words of one syllable."

Score Point 2

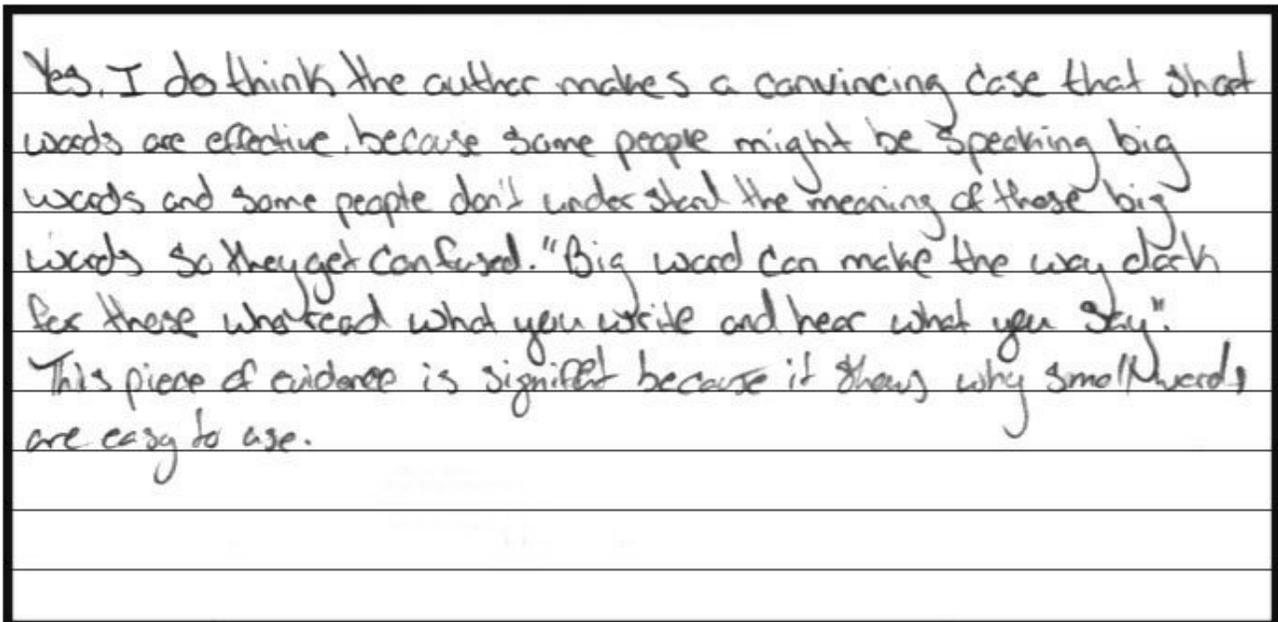
In this satisfactory reading performance, the student offers the reasonable idea that the author makes a convincing case because he uses short words himself and provides a direct quotation to support this idea. The idea and text evidence used to support it are clearly linked.



No, I believe not all short words are precise enough. "Here is a sound rule: Use small, old words where you can. If a long word says just what you want to say, do not fear to use it." Sure, they are in definition the same as large words, but they don't emphasize things well enough.

Score Point 2

In this sufficient response, the student presents the reasonable idea that not all short words are precise enough because, although they have the same definitions as large words, they don't emphasize things well enough. The student provides an accurate, relevant quotation from the text to support this idea.



Yes, I do think the author makes a convincing case that short words are effective, because some people might be speaking big words and some people don't understand the meaning of those big words so they get confused. "Big word can make the way dark for those who read what you write and hear what you say." This piece of evidence is significant because it shows why small words are easy to use.

Score Point 2

The student presents the reasonable idea that the author makes a convincing case that short words are effective because some people can't understand the meaning of big words and may get confused. The student provides a direct quotation to support the idea. The combination of the idea and the text evidence demonstrates a good understanding of the text. This response represents a satisfactory reading performance.

Score Point 3 — Exemplary Response to the Question

Exemplary responses indicate an accomplished reading performance.

These responses have the following characteristics.

- The idea is perceptive and reflects an awareness of the complexities of the text. The student is able to develop a coherent explanation of the idea by making discerning connections across the text.
- The text evidence used to support the idea is specific and well chosen. Overall, the evidence strongly supports the validity of the idea.
- The combination of the idea and the text evidence demonstrates a deep understanding of the text.

I think that the author of "The case for short words" does make a convincing case. He believes that short words can be more useful and easy in writing, and that the reader will also better understand the writing as well. In the story it says, "Big words can make the way dark for those who read," this means that big words can sometimes be confusing. However, the author later states that, "Short words are bright like sparks that glow in the night." This simile shows that short words provide an easier reading experience and can help the reader understand more.

Score Point 3

The student presents a perceptive analysis that reflects an awareness of the complexities of the selection by explaining both aspects of the author's argument in his case for using short words: short words can be more useful and easier to understand, while big words can often be confusing. The student uses specific text evidence to support both aspects of the argument, making the evidence particularly well chosen. The response represents an accomplished reading performance.

The author's use of monosyllables backs his statement in the clarity of the simple wording. With it, the point becomes much more clear, fluid, and easier to comprehend. Even Shakespeare's reputation for complication is overlooked with his laments of the dying King Lear: "And my poor fool is hang'd! No, no, no life! Why should a dog, a horse, a rat have life, and thou have no breath at all?...". Each word containing a single syllable yet so flawlessly executed. Short words aren't "dumber", they're clearer.

Score Point 3

In this exemplary response, the student presents a perceptive analysis and provides well-chosen text evidence to support it. Overall, the evidence strongly supports the validity of the analysis. The combination of analysis and text evidence demonstrates the student's deep understanding of the selection.

In "The Case for Short Words", Richard Lederer makes a convincing case that short^{words} are more effective. Sometimes we intend to overthink on simple words to make a more complex word. For example, ameliorate is a more complex word for improve, used by the "Long & Complicated vs. Short & Simple" box. Short words are more of a dagger or "sharp like the blade of a knife," when it comes down to speaking and writing. Not all authorized listeners and readers know what the complex word is, but they do know the basic language and simple words. "Big words at times seem strange to the eye and the ear..." (expresses) that not every individual has the knowledge to know difficult words. "Short words are as good as long ones..." really sets the bar on complex words.

Score Point 3

By providing a clear explanation of the idea and specific textual evidence that strongly supports it, the student offers a coherent response. The combination of the idea and the text evidence indicates an accomplished reading performance.

I believe the author does make a very convincing case that short words are effective. He first explains how our best poets in literature have "employed the power of small words to make a straight point." By then giving examples of Shakespeare, Frost and Churchill, the author shows the reader how powerful small words can be. Then he gives examples of the works his ninth graders have done, creating powerful short worded sentences such as "He hates your world, and he has left it." Both examples show the author has made a convincing case.

Score Point 3

The student offers two ideas explaining how the author makes a convincing case that short words are effective: the author explains that the best poets in literature show how powerful small words can be, and the author uses examples from his ninth-graders' writings. Specific text evidence strongly supports the validity of each idea, indicating an accomplished reading performance.