



District Assessments
2020 -2021 School Year

Grade 7

ELA

VLT 2 Informative 2020-2021

**This is a secure assessment.
All individuals must follow the security agreement
below.**

This assessment must be administered in a teacher's classroom and may **not** be transferred to another room by any student at any time.

Taking photographs, transferring, or recording information onto **any** platform from this secure district assessment is strictly prohibited.

Student Name: _____

Teacher Name: _____

Read the “The Everglades” passage set.

“The Everglades”

Source 1: Past and Present: The Florida Everglades

by Tobey Haskell

- 1 The Florida Everglades is a subtropical wilderness filled with grass marshes, hardwood hammocks (broad-leafed trees packed densely together that grow to be only a few inches tall), and mangrove forests. These wetlands were once the home to many rare, endangered, and exotic species. However, this is no longer the case due to changes in the environment. The Everglades have always existed in a delicate balance—even the smallest change can have a large impact.
- 2 Though the Seminole and Miccosukee tribes lived in the Everglades prior to 1882, they did not attempt to alter the lush landscape. But when settlers from outside of Florida came to the Everglades, they considered it useless swampland. They had the idea of draining the Everglades.
- 3 From 1905–1910, the settlers began to convert the land so that it could be used for agricultural purposes. They laid rails for a railroad system, and more and more settlers came to the wetlands. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and government officials authorized the digging of canals, the creation of water storage facilities, and the regulation of the flow of water. The streams were dredged, and the Everglades was nearly drained entirely.
- 4 The construction and population increase in the Everglades upset its fragile ecosystem, and cut off the flow of fresh water to the Everglades. As a result, the quantity and diversity of the wetlands’ wildlife decreased, and 50% of the original wetlands of South Florida no longer exist today.
- 5 Some people tried to defend and preserve the Everglades. In 1934, Congress designated the Everglades as a national park and in 1947 the park officially opened. The creation of the park was a win for those who had worked toward protecting land in the area. However, they knew that changes to the land outside the park’s boundary might create problems that would affect the land within the park.

- 6 In the 1960s, environmentalists came to the Everglades' aid, protesting the construction of an international airport in the area. From that time on, conservationists have been working to reverse the damage done to the wetlands by human actions.
- 7 Agribusinesses, government agencies, and conservation groups are working to restore Everglades National Park. Improving and increasing the water supply is their first priority. Once a plan of action has been agreed on, the issue of money will come into play. How will the project be financed? Who will pay for it? The answers to these questions will determine what will become of the Everglades.

Source 2: Can We Fix the Water Supply?

by Caleb Hughes

- 8 Imagine that, after a long afternoon spent working in the hot sun, you rush inside to pour yourself a nice, crisp glass of water. Upon turning on the faucet, nothing comes out. No bother, you'll just try another faucet in the house. Unfortunately, the water running from the other faucets in the house contains phosphorous, mercury, and other hazardous elements, making the water polluted and undrinkable. Does this sound like a nightmare?
- 9 This nightmare is a reality for one of our nation's most beloved environmental treasures. Since 1900, drainage of the Everglades for development and farming has eroded the original wetlands by 50%. However, changes have been implemented to ensure that the Everglades will soon have access to all of the clean water that it and its millions of animal inhabitants need to survive.
- 10 The Everglades, which provides water to nearly 7 million people living in Florida, has fallen victim to three extended droughts over the last ten years. When a fragile ecosystem like the Everglades undergoes even a small change like a particularly rainy storm or a short-term lapse in rainfall, the repercussions can be huge. Many animals and people rely on the Everglades' clean water supply as their primary source of water. When that water is in short supply or contaminated, the effects can be staggering.

- 11 One reason the water in the Everglades faces these issues is because the sugarcane crop grows so well there. The Everglades is host to 440,000 acres of sugar cane. As the demand for the sugarcane crop increases, more land is needed for planting, which means less land is available to support life. Also, as the sugarcane crop is harvested, fertilizer used on the plants to ensure a successful crop introduces chemicals and excess amounts of nitrogen and phosphorus into the delicate ecosystem. These chemicals contaminate the often limited water supply found in the Everglades.
- 12 Nonetheless, there is hope for the Everglades. A Supreme Court decision made in 2004 implemented an \$8.4 billion project to re-establish the natural flow of water to the Everglades in the next 30 years. By making an effort to erase the effects of both nature and man on the Everglades, we are working hard to ensure that this important part of Florida's landscape exists for many generations to come . . . and that all who call the Everglades home have access to plenty of clean, refreshing water!

Source 3: Water Quality Nearly Halts Everglades Restoration
by Robin Martelli

- 13 The major obstacles to replenishing the water supply to the Everglades aren't related to construction or drought. The restoration of the Everglades is delayed because of the price tag and the quality of the water being sent to the wetlands.
- 14 In the early 20th century, the Everglades were drained to make the land agriculture-ready. It has been many years since the first settlers decided to alter the area. The water that once flowed into the Everglades is now directed to irrigate farmland and replenish supplies of urban drinking water.
- 15 We've come a long way since the early settlers began to drain the area. Plans are now in place to restore the Everglades by reinstating the natural water flow to the wetlands that had previously been cut off. Unfortunately, the redirected water may not meet water quality standards.
- 16 The concern about the water quality stems from the amount of phosphorus present in the water. Phosphorous is found in fertilizer, decaying soil, and animal waste. In other words, it is likely to be present in areas around a farm. In 1986, when detrimental levels of

phosphorous were discovered, water management became a primary focus in the Everglades. This resulted in long court battles to determine who was responsible for the cleanup. As a result, the Everglades Forever Act was passed in 1994 by then-governor Lawton Chiles.

- 17 In 1999, a report on the health of the Everglades water system was drafted and submitted to Congress by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the South Florida Water Management District. The report recommended improvements to the region that eventually led to the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP), signed into law by President Clinton in December of 2000. The cost of restoration was to be shared by the federal government and other sources.
- 18 But many were unhappy with the red tape and slow pace of CERP. In an attempt to accelerate much-needed assistance to the Central Everglades, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers began an initiative called the Central Everglades Planning Project (CEPP). The new plan proposed to refill sections of manmade canals to help redirect some of the water that flows through them to the Everglades. The plan would also improve water quality by installing stormwater treatment marshes that would act as filters for some of the pollution. Building more reservoirs in the Everglades would also address concerns about water quality.
- 19 The projected cost for the project is about \$1 billion. Florida state leaders believe that the federal government should finance the project. However, federal funding would require congressional approval, something that might not be easy to attain.
- 20 In May of 2013, an encouraging solution emerged. A settlement between Florida's governor, the Obama Administration, and the sugar industry has led to The Everglades Restoration Act, a bill that would invest \$880 million in state money and restore water quality in the Everglades. This historic bill was approved unanimously by both the House and the Senate.
- 21 The Everglades Restoration Act will replace the final phase of the Everglades Forever Act introduced nearly two decades prior.

Writing Prompt

Think about the past, present, and future of the Everglades as presented in the texts. Write an informative essay that explains how humans have influenced the Everglades' environment and water supply, and the steps humans are now taking to improve the Everglades for the future.

Manage your time carefully so that you can:

- read the passages;
- plan your response;
- write your response; and
- revise and edit your response.

Be sure to

- use evidence from multiple sources; and
- avoid overly relying on one source.

Your response should be in the form of a multi-paragraph essay.

You can plan for your essay on the **ELA WRITING PLANNING SHEET** and then use the last three pages called the **Writing Folder** to write your essay.

