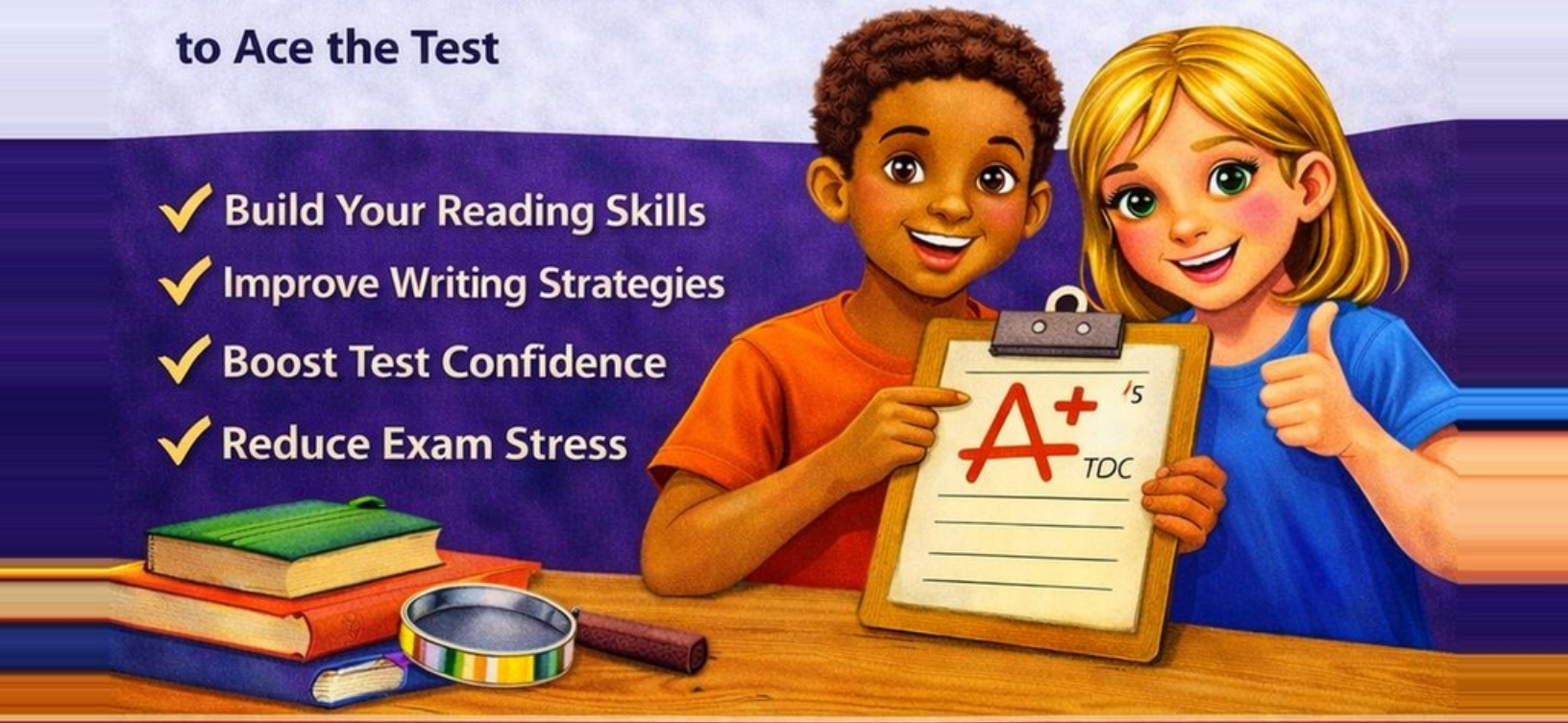
Everything You Need to Help Achieve an Excellent Score

8 Illinois Grade 8

English Language Arts (ELA)

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- ✓ Improve Writing Strategies
- ✓ Boost Test Confidence
- ✓ Reduce Exam Stress

✓ **Includes Detailed Answer Explanations**

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Tests

Full Stamina

Multi-Skill Flow

Test-Day Calm

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Smart Practice

The Difference Between Busy and Better.

Busy practice fills time. Better practice changes you. The quiet truth: the thirty minutes after a test matters more than the ninety minutes of the test itself. That is where real learning lives — in the review, not the rep. Here is what separates a score plateau from a score climb:

✓ Six Moves That Raise Real Scores

1. **Simulate the pressure.** One seat, one timer, no phone, no interruptions. Stamina is its own skill and you can only train it by using it.
2. **Preview the questions, then attack the passage.** Skim the question stems first. That turns reading from passive intake into a directed search.
3. **Annotate with purpose.** Circle transitions (*however*, *therefore*, *in contrast*). Bracket claims. Underline evidence. These marks become your map back to the answer.
4. **Do a miss audit after every test.** Sort your wrong answers into four piles: *knowledge gap*, *careless misread*, *time pressure*, *trap answer*. Each one demands a different fix.
5. **Upgrade one skill per week.** Pick one weakness — inference, vocabulary in context, claim-and-evidence writing — and make it the focus. Narrow practice beats broad review.
6. **Protect sleep like it is part of the test.** Working memory, focus, and stamina all collapse on less than seven hours. You cannot out-study exhaustion.

⋆ The Rewrite Habit

After each test, pick one short response and rewrite it — cleaner claim, tighter evidence, sharper analysis. Do this just three times across this book and your writing will visibly level up. The rewrite, not the first draft, is where eighth-grade writing becomes high-school-ready.

The Big Day

Your Test Day Playbook.

Calm is a skill. This is how to bring it with you.

◯ The Night Before

- Pack everything tonight. Pencils, eraser, water, ID, approved calculator if needed.
- Do light review only — a single short passage. No new material. No all-nighter.
- Eat something familiar. Tonight is not the night to experiment with anything new.
- Phone out of the room an hour before bed. Protect your sleep like it is part of the grade.

◯ The Morning Of

- Eat protein and complex carbs. Skip the sugar spike — the crash comes during the test.
- Move your body for five minutes. Walk, stretch, shake out your hands. Lower the nerves.
- Arrive early enough to settle, not so early that waiting builds up pressure.
- At the door, four slow breaths: *in for four, hold for four, out for six.* It works.

Read the story and the poem. Then answer questions 9–19.

Gate Four

1 Every afternoon, after her bus let out at the transit center, Imani cut through the nearly empty waiting area beside Gate Four on her way home. The benches there were usually overlooked because the brighter platforms were closer to the food kiosks and route signs. Gate Four felt like a place people passed rather than used, and that was exactly why Imani liked it. It gave her ten quiet minutes before the rest of the day resumed.

2 One Tuesday she found an older man sitting on the far bench with a small portable typewriter balanced on his knees. He fed in a sheet of paper, typed three lines, paused, removed the page, and started another. Imani slowed without meaning to. The man glanced up and said, *Most people think I am fixing it. I am listening to it.*

3 For the next week she saw him there every day. Some afternoons he typed only a few words. Other times he sat with his fingers resting on the keys as if waiting for a sentence to arrive from the noise of engines and announcements around him. Eventually Imani asked what he was writing. He answered, *The station. Or maybe the way the station sounds when people are almost leaving.*

4 On Friday he handed her one of the pages. It was not a poem exactly and not a schedule either. It was a list of brief observations: a suitcase wheel squeaking in uneven rhythm, a child reading route numbers aloud like multiplication facts, the electric doors breathing open and shut. Imani had waited at Gate Four for months without noticing half of it. The paper made the ordinary place feel newly detailed, as if attention had switched on a second layer of the room.

5 The following Monday, the bench was empty. Imani stood there longer than usual before taking out her phone and opening the notes app. She typed her first line, deleted it, and then tried again. The station had not changed. Her way of arriving in it had.

Waiting Area

A room of departures can seem blank
until someone writes down its small machinery:
the wheel's complaint,
the doors practicing breath,
the tired speaker lifting each route into the air.

Then the place grows a second surface,
not hidden,
only previously unopened.

Attention is the hand on the latch.

9) What does the word *machinery* suggest in the first stanza of the poem?

(A) heavy equipment used to repair roads
(B) a collection of old tools
(C) the many small moving parts that make a place function
(D) the speaker's computer or phone

Use the story and poem to answer this question.

10) How does Imani change over the course of the story?

(A) She moves from treating the station as background to seeing it as a place full of details worth noticing.
(B) She decides Gate Four is too quiet to be useful.
(C) She avoids the transit center after meeting the man.
(D) She begins as a writer and ends tired of writing.

Use the story and poem to answer this question.

11) Which statement best expresses a theme of the story?

(A) Transit stations are better for writing than classrooms.
(B) Quiet places are always more interesting than crowded ones.
(C) Writers should use typewriters instead of phones.
(D) Attention can reveal richness in places that seem ordinary or overlooked.

Use the story and poem to answer this question.

12) What does the author suggest by saying the station gained a second layer in paragraph 4?

(A) A hidden room opened behind the benches.
(B) Imani began perceiving details and meaning that had always been there but unnoticed.
(C) The transit center installed a new floor above Gate Four.
(D) The station became more crowded after school.