Stimulus Text:

This poem is spoken in the voice of a male mermaid, whose wife has decided to leave the ocean and return to life on land.

The Forsaken Merman
By Matthew Arnold
Come, dear children, let us away;
**Down and away below!**
Now my brothers call from the bay,
Now the great winds shoreward blow,
Now the salt tides seaward flow;
Now the wild white horses play,
Champ and chafe and toss in the spray.
Children dear, let us away!
This way, this way!

Call her once before you go—
Call once yet!
In a voice that she will know:
"Margaret! Margaret!"
Children's voices should be dear
(Call once more) to a mother's ear;
Children's voices, wild with pain—
Surely she will come again!
Call her once and come away;
**This way, this way!**
"Mother dear, we cannot stay!
The wild white horses foam and fret."
Margaret! Margaret!

Come, dear children, come away down;
**Call no more!**
One last look at the white-wall'd town,
And the little gray church on the windy shore;
Then come down!
She will not come though you call all day;
Come away, come away!
Children dear, was it yesterday
We heard the sweet bells over the bay?
In the caverns where we lay,
Through the surf and through the swell,
The far-off sound of a silver bell?
Sand-strewn caverns, cool and deep,
Where the winds are all asleep;  
Where the spent lights quiver and gleam,  
Where the salt weed sways in the stream,  
Where the sea-beasts, ranged all round,  
Feed in the ooze of their pasture-ground;  
Where the sea-snakes coil and twine,  
Dry their mail and bask in the brine;  
Where great whales come sailing by,  
Sail and sail, with unshut eye,  
Round the world forever and aye?  
When did music come this way?  
Children dear, was it yesterday?  

**Item Stem:**

Which phrase signals a major change in the action of the poem?

**Options:**

A. “Down and away below!”

B. “This way, this way!”

C. “Call no more!”

D. “Children dear, was it yesterday?”

**Distractor Analysis:**

A. Incorrect: While the speaker tells his family that they must leave in the first stanza, the action of their departure does not begin until the third stanza.

B. Incorrect: While this phrase seems one of action, it occurs at the end of the first stanza, before the main action of the poem occurs.

C. Correct: The third stanza is the turning point of the poem, indicating the moment when the speaker and his family must leave and cannot look back. The phrase “Call no more!” represents this moment of decision.

D. Incorrect: While this is a phrase of nostalgia that relates to the main action of the poem, this is the last line of the poem, after the action of the poem has occurred.
Worksheet: Text Complexity Analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Text Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Forsaken Merman</td>
<td>Matthew Arnold</td>
<td>A poem with a merman narrator, exhorting his children to call their mother home to the sea</td>
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Recommended Placement for Assessment: Grade 7

The qualitative measures are of little use in measuring the difficulty of this archaic poem. Because the knowledge demands and the language difficulty are somewhat high, but the meaning/purpose more moderate, this passage is recommended for use at grade 7. Based on these sets of measures, this passage is recommended for assessment at grade 7.

Qualitative Measures

Meaning/Purpose:
**Moderately complex**: The theme is clear but conveyed in a way that may be challenging for some readers, from the perspective of the speaker (a merman).

Text Structure:
**Moderately complex**: There is just one storyline but because of the point of view it may still be a challenging read.

Language Features:
**Very complex**: The language is largely archaic and the many literary devices make this a more challenging read. There are some words with which some students will not be familiar (brine, chafe, champ, ranged [multiple meaning]).

Knowledge Demands:
**Very complex**: Students must put themselves in the place of the merman and make some inferences about the conflict portrayed.

Quantitative Measures

Common Core State Standards Appendix A Complexity Band Level (if applicable):

Lexile or Other Quantitative Measure of the Text:
Lexile: 670L; grades 2-3
Flesch-Kincaid: 1.5
Word Count: 272

Considerations for Passage Selection

Passage selection should be based on the ELA Content Specifications targets and the cognitive demands of the assessment tasks.

Potential Challenges a Text May Pose:
- Accessibility
- Sentence and text structures
- Archaic language, slang, idioms, or other language challenges
- Background knowledge
- Bias and sensitivity issues
- Word count

Adapted from the 2012 ELA SCASS work