



PRAXIS STUDY COMPANION

Middle School English Language Arts

5047



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Middle School English Language Arts (5047)

Test at a Glance

Test Name	Middle School English Language Arts		
Test Code	5047		
Time	160 minutes: 130 minutes for the selected-response (SR) section and 30 minutes for the constructed-response (CR) section		
Number of Questions	110 SR questions and 2 CR questions		
Format	The test consists of a variety of selected-response questions, where you select one or more answer choices; questions where you enter a numeric answer in a box; and other types of questions. You can review the possible question types in Understanding Question Types.		
Test Delivery	Computer Delivered		
	Content Categories	Approximate Number of Questions	Approximate Percentage of Examination
	I. Reading	50 SR and 1 CR*	46%
	II. Language Use and Vocabulary	16 SR	11%
	III. Writing, Speaking, and Listening	26 SR	18%
	IV. English Language Arts Instruction	18 SR and 1 CR*	25%
* On your score report, points earned on the CR questions are reported separately from points earned on the SR questions.			

About The Test

The Middle School English Language Arts test measures whether prospective middle school English language arts teachers have the knowledge, skills, and abilities believed necessary for competent professional practice. The test is aligned to the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) for English Language Arts and informed by the Early Adolescence/English Language Arts Standards from the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) and by the Standards for Initial Preparation of Teachers of Secondary English Language Arts, developed by the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) and the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP). It measures examinees' skills and knowledge of concepts relevant to four content categories: reading, including the study of literature (e.g., stories, drama, and poetry) and informational texts

(e.g., essays, biographies, and speeches); use of the English language, including conventions of standard English and vocabulary development; writing, speaking, and listening; and English language arts instruction.

Most of the 110 selected-response questions, which will address all four of the content categories, are traditional four-option selected-response questions with one correct answer. However, some innovative question types are also used.

Examples include the following:

- multiple-selection multiple-choice questions, which have five or more answer choices and one or more correct answers
- order/match questions, in which you categorize words or phrases by dragging them from a list into the appropriate boxes
- audio or video stimulus questions, in which you respond to a short audio or video clip instead of, or in addition to, a written passage
- table/grid questions, in which you click on a box or boxes in a grid to select your answer(s)
- select-in-passage questions, in which you choose your answer by clicking on a section of a passage to highlight it

The two constructed-response (CR) questions, or short essays, also address the first and fourth content categories, reading and English language arts instruction. The first CR question asks you to interpret a piece of literature or informational text; the second asks you to discuss approaches to teaching reading or writing, given a particular student writing sample or classroom context.

This test may contain some questions that will not count toward your score.

Content Topics

This list details the topics that may be included on the test. All test questions cover one or more of these topics.

Note: The use of “e.g.” to start a list of examples implies that only a few examples are offered and the list is not exhaustive.

Discussion Questions

In this section, discussion questions provide examples of content that may be included in the questions you receive on testing day. They are open-ended questions or statements intended to help test your knowledge of fundamental concepts and your ability to apply those concepts to classroom or real-world situations. Answers for the discussion questions are **not** provided; however, thinking about the answers will help improve your understanding of fundamental concepts and may help you answer a broad range of questions on the test. Most of the questions require you to combine several pieces of knowledge to formulate an integrated understanding and response. The questions are intended to help you gain increased understanding and facility with the test’s subject matter. You may want to discuss these questions with a teacher or mentor.

I. Reading

A. General Knowledge

1. Knows the major works, authors, and contexts of United States, British, and World literature appropriate for adolescents
 - a. identifies the authors and titles of major works of fiction, poetry, drama, and literary nonfiction appropriate for adolescents
 - b. identifies the historical or literary context of major works of fiction, poetry, drama, and literary nonfiction appropriate for adolescents

Discussion Questions

Questions about literary context may ask you to identify a representative work from a particular school of writers. The schools covered on the test include, but are not limited to:

- Harlem Renaissance (Zora Neale Hurston, Langston Hughes, Countee Cullen)
- British Romantics (John Keats, Percy Bysshe Shelley, Lord Byron)
- Metaphysical poets (John Donne, Andrew Marvell, George Herbert)
- Transcendentalism (Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry David Thoreau)

Some questions will ask you to place a work in a particular literary or historical period. The periods covered on the test include, but are not limited to:

- Old English period
- Middle English period
- British Renaissance
- British Neoclassical period

- British Romantic period
- American Colonial period
- American Renaissance
- British Victorian period
- American naturalistic period
- British and/or American modernist period
- British and/or American postmodernist period

What novels, poems, and essays from the American naturalistic period might you teach in a middle school English language arts class?

2. Understands the defining characteristics of literary genres (e.g., poetry, literary nonfiction, drama)
 - a. identifies typical characteristics of a genre
 - b. applies correct terminology for a genre (e.g., stanza versus paragraph)
 - c. compares and contrasts different genres

Discussion Questions

The test focuses on the four main genres identified by the CCSS:

- Stories
- Dramas
- Poetry
- Literary Nonfiction

3. Knows the defining characteristics of major subgenres (e.g., sonnet, historical fiction, functional text)
 - a. identifies characteristics of subgenres through distinctions in form or content (e.g., sonnets versus ballads, satire versus realism)
 - b. differentiates between two subgenres (e.g., historical fiction and science fiction)

Discussion Questions

Subgenre forms include, but are not limited to:

- Biography
- Drama
- Epic poem
- Essay
- History
- Lyric
- Novel
- Prose poem

Subgenres may also vary by content:

- Bildungsroman/coming of age story
- Comedy
- Gothic
- Pastoral
- Romance
- Satire
- Tragedy

B. Literature

1. Understands how literal and inferential interpretations of a literary text can be supported with textual evidence
 - a. comprehends the literal meaning of a text
 - b. draws inferences from a text
 - c. determines the textual evidence that supports an analysis of what a text says or implies
2. Understands how a theme is developed within and across works from a wide variety of literary genres and other media
 - a. identifies the theme of a given text
 - b. analyzes how a theme is developed throughout one or more works
 - c. recognizes universal themes from myths, traditional stories, or religious works and how they are rendered or alluded to in contemporary works
3. Understands how literary elements (e.g., characterization, setting, plot development) contribute to the meaning of a text
 - a. analyzes the impact of differences in the points of view of characters and readers
 - b. analyzes the structure of a plot
 - c. analyzes how setting contributes to mood, tone, and conflict
 - d. analyzes how particular lines of dialogue or story events impact meaning
 - e. analyzes the text for the use of indirect and direct characterization
4. Understands how word choice (e.g., figurative, connotative, or informal language) contributes to the meaning and tone of a literary text
 - a. distinguishes between connotation and denotation in a text
 - b. identifies examples of various types of figurative language (e.g., extended metaphor, imagery, hyperbole)
 - c. distinguishes between what is directly stated in a text and what is meant (e.g., satire, irony, understatement)
 - d. determines the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative and connotative meaning
 - e. analyzes the impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone
5. Understands how poetic devices and structure contribute to the meaning of a poem
 - a. analyzes how poetic devices (e.g. rhyme scheme, rhythm, figurative language) contribute to the meaning of a poem
 - b. analyzes how the structure of a poem contributes to its meaning

6. Understands literacy skills to support active reading of a literary text (e.g., making predictions, making connections with the text, summarizing)
 - a. identifies literacy skills to support active reading (e.g., text-to-self connection, prediction, summarizing)
 - b. evaluates a summary of a passage
 - c. evaluates the strength of a prediction based on textual evidence
2. Knows a variety of organizational patterns that can be used to develop a central idea in an informational text
 - a. identifies the central idea of a text
 - b. analyzes how an author develops or refines a central idea in a text
 - c. identifies the organizational pattern of a text (e.g., problem-solution, cause-effect, chronological order)
 - d. analyzes how ideas are connected to and distinguished from one another in a text

Discussion Questions

- How do an author's choices contribute to the overall meaning of a literary text?
- What are the purposes of active reading strategies such as making predictions, summarizing, and making connections with the text?

C. Informational Texts and Rhetoric

1. Understands how literal and inferential interpretations of an informational text can be supported with textual evidence
 - a. comprehends the literal meaning of a text
 - b. draws inferences from a text
 - c. determines the textual evidence that supports an analysis of what a text says or implies
 - d. compares two or more texts that provide conflicting facts or perspectives on the same topic
3. Understands how word choice (e.g., figurative, connotative, or technical language) contributes to the meaning and tone of an informational text
 - a. distinguishes between connotation and denotation in a text
 - b. identifies the purpose of technical language in a text
 - c. distinguishes between what is directly stated in an informational text and what is meant (e.g., satire, irony, understatement)

Discussion Questions

- How is organization linked to an essay's purpose? For example, how could a cause- and-effect organizational pattern be effective in a persuasive essay?

4. Understands methods that authors use to convey purpose and perspective in informational texts
 - a. determines an author's point of view or purpose
 - b. analyzes how an author uses rhetoric to support the point of view or purpose of a text

Discussion Questions

- Select essays from books or journals and identify the author's purpose. Think about the methods the author uses to achieve the purpose.

II. Language Use and Vocabulary

1. Understands the conventions of standard English grammar, usage, syntax, and mechanics (e.g., sentence types, verb tenses, punctuation)
 - a. explains the function of different parts of speech
 - b. identifies errors in standard English grammar, usage, syntax, and mechanics (e.g., inconsistent verb tense, nonparallel structure)
 - c. justifies grammar, usage, syntax, and mechanics choices (e.g., colon versus semicolon, its versus it's, saw versus seen)
 - d. identifies examples of different sentence types (e.g., simple, compound, compound-complex)

Discussion Questions

- What are the most common errors that middle school students make in grammar and sentence structure?

2. Understands the use of affixes, context, and syntax to determine word meaning
 - a. applies knowledge of affixes to determine word meaning
 - b. uses context clues to determine word meaning
 - c. applies knowledge of syntax to determine word meaning

Discussion Questions

- How is meaning affected by punctuation or word order in a sentence?
3. Understands the use of print and digital reference materials to support correct language usage
 - a. determines the most appropriate print or digital reference material for a particular language usage task
 4. Is familiar with variation in dialect and diction across regions, cultural groups, and time periods
 - a. identifies variation in dialect and diction across regions, cultural groups, and time periods

III. Writing, Speaking, and Listening

1. Understands the distinct characteristics of various types of writing (e.g., argumentative, informative/explanatory, narrative)
 - a. distinguishes among common types of writing
 - b. identifies examples of common types of writing
 - c. identifies typical characteristics of a type of writing

Discussion Questions

- What are some techniques commonly used in argumentative writing but not in informative/explanatory writing?
2. Understands that effective writing is appropriate to the task, purpose, and audience
 - a. identifies the task, purpose, or intended audience for a piece of writing
 - b. chooses the most appropriate type of writing for a particular task, purpose, or audience
 - c. evaluates the effectiveness of a particular piece of writing for a specific task, purpose, or audience

Discussion Questions

- How does the purpose or intended audience for a piece of writing shape its form? Its tone?
3. Understands the characteristics of clear and coherent writing (e.g., development, organization, style)
 - a. identifies details that help to develop a main idea
 - b. organizes parts of a text clearly and coherently
 - c. chooses appropriate transitions
 - d. justifies stylistic choices within a clear and coherent piece of writing

4. Knows effective research practices, including evaluating the credibility of multiple print and digital sources, gathering relevant information, and citing sources accurately
 - a. identifies relevant information during research on a given topic
 - b. evaluates the credibility of a print or digital source
 - c. identifies effective research practices
 - d. interprets a citation of a print or digital source
 - e. applies appropriate documentation techniques when quoting or paraphrasing source material to avoid plagiarism
5. Understands the effective delivery of a speech or presentation (e.g., eye contact, visual aids, tone)
 - a. identifies characteristics of effective delivery of a speech or presentation
 - b. evaluates the integration of multimedia components or visual displays in a particular presentation
 - c. evaluates the advantages and disadvantages of using different media to present ideas
6. Understands methods that authors use to appeal to a specific audience
 - a. identifies methods of appeal or persuasion (e.g., expert opinion, generalization, testimonial)
 - b. evaluates the effectiveness of an author's methods of appeal

7. Understands what constitutes an effective written argument with strong supporting evidence
 - a. evaluates the argument and specific claims in an expository or persuasive text
 - b. assesses whether an author's reasoning is sound
 - c. assesses whether evidence is relevant, factual, and sufficient

Discussion Questions

- How do stereotypes and biases interfere with the effectiveness of an author's argument?

IV. English Language Arts Instruction

1. Knows commonly used research-based approaches to supporting language acquisition and vocabulary development for diverse learners
 - a. recognizes approaches to supporting language acquisition or vocabulary development
 - b. evaluates the effectiveness of specific approaches to supporting language acquisition or vocabulary development
 - c. interprets research and applies it to particular instructional challenges related to language acquisition or vocabulary development
2. Knows techniques for instructing students to participate productively in collaborative discussions (e.g., one-on-one, in groups, teacher-led) and listen actively
 - a. identifies a variety of techniques for instructing students to participate productively in collaborative discussions and listen actively (e.g., selecting age-appropriate topics, facilitating appropriate discussion behavior, ensuring accountability)
 - b. evaluates the effectiveness of specific techniques for achieving particular discussion goals
3. Knows techniques for instructing students to communicate effectively and appropriately using technological tools (e.g., presentation software, blogs, wikis)
 - a. identifies a variety of techniques for instructing students to communicate effectively and appropriately using technological tools
 - b. evaluates the effectiveness of specific technology-based techniques for achieving particular communication goals

Discussion Questions

- What are the phases of language development, especially for middle school students learning English?

4. Knows commonly used research-based approaches to grouping and differentiated instruction to meet specific instructional objectives in English Language Arts (e.g., literature circles, peer conferencing, collaborating with educators of exceptional/special needs or linguistically diverse children)
 - a. identifies approaches to grouping or differentiated instruction to meet specific instructional objectives in English Language Arts
 - b. evaluates the effectiveness of specific grouping or differentiation approaches for achieving particular instructional goals
5. Is familiar with approaches to choosing texts for students based on ability and interests
 - a. identifies approaches to choosing texts for students based on ability and interests
6. Understands commonly used research-based strategies for teaching adolescent reading (e.g., activating prior knowledge, modeling metacognitive practices)
 - a. recognizes commonly used research-based strategies for teaching adolescent reading
 - b. evaluates the effectiveness of specific strategies to support a particular reading task
 - c. interprets research and applies it to particular reading instruction challenges

Discussion Questions

Some questions will test your ability to recognize specific strategies for teaching reading. These may include, but are not limited to:

- Anticipation guides
- Cueing systems
- Double-entry journals
- Metacognition
- Phonics instruction
- Questioning the author
- Reciprocal teaching
- Semantic feature analysis

What specific classroom activities can you imagine for teaching Gwendolyn Brooks's poem "We Real Cool" to a heterogeneous class of seventh graders? And for teaching Lincoln's "Gettysburg Address" to the same class?

7. Understands commonly used research-based approaches to teaching components of writing (e.g., explicit, systematic writing instruction, modeling)
 - a. recognizes commonly used research-based approaches to teaching components of writing
 - b. evaluates the effectiveness of specific strategies to support a particular writing task
 - c. interprets research and applies it to particular writing instruction challenges

Discussion Questions

Some questions will test your ability to recognize specific strategies for teaching reading. These may include, but are not limited to:

- Collaborative writing
 - Process writing
 - Sentence combining
 - RAFT
 - Writing workshop
8. Knows approaches to and purposes of formative and summative assessment of reading, writing, speaking, and listening (e.g., use of rubrics, conferencing techniques, providing useful feedback)
- a. recognizes a variety of approaches to and purposes of formative and summative assessment of reading, writing, speaking, and listening
 - b. evaluates the effectiveness of a variety of approaches to formative and summative assessment of reading, writing, speaking, and listening
 - c. interprets research and applies it to particular assessment challenges

Discussion Questions

Some questions will require you to demonstrate your knowledge of various assessment tools and response strategies. These may include, but are not limited to:

- 3-2-1 prompts
- Exit tickets
- Holistic scoring
- Peer review
- Portfolios
- Scoring rubrics
- Self-assessment

How can you assess students' writing in order to determine the classroom activities and writing assignments that will help them improve?

9. Knows effective approaches to incorporating student input into the design and use of English Language Arts curriculum and assessments (e.g., literature selection, collaboratively designed rubrics)
- a. identifies approaches to gathering student input, feedback, and reflection that motivate students and support
 - b. the development of an effective learning environment
 - c. identifies approaches to helping students become monitors of their own work and growth in speaking, listening, writing, reading, enacting, and viewing

Middle School English Language Arts (5047)

Sample Questions

The sample questions that follow represent a number of the types of questions and topics that appear on the test. They are not, however, representative of the entire scope of the test in either content or difficulty. Answers with explanations follow the questions.

Directions: The test consists of a variety of selected-response questions, where you select one or more answer choices, and questions where you enter a numeric answer in a box.

1. Set in the American Civil War, the novel concerns a young soldier's first encounter with battle and the psychological changes that he undergoes. Published in 1895, the novel had a great influence on 20th-century fiction.

The novel discussed is

- (A) Andrea Davis Pinkney's *Silent Thunder*
 - (B) Gary Paulsen's *Soldier's Heart*
 - (C) Stephen Crane's *The Red Badge of Courage*
 - (D) Carolyn Reeder's *Shades of Gray*
2. ___ is a narrative that takes abstract ideas of behavior—good or bad, wise or foolish—and attempts to make them concrete and striking. The chief actor in these stories is usually an animal or inanimate object that behaves like a human and engages in a single significant act intended to teach a moral lesson.

Which of the following will correctly complete the preceding passage?

- (A) A myth
- (B) A fable
- (C) An epic
- (D) A legend

3. Identify which of the following characteristics apply to each of the two poetic forms. For each characteristic, choose **ONE** poetic form.

Characteristic	Haiku	Limerick
Composed of 17 syllables		
Composed of 5 lines of verse		
Often has a nonsensical theme		
Follows a strict rhyme scheme		
Often focused on nature		

4. RUTH. Well—*(She waits a long time and then with resignation starts to put away the laundry.)*
I guess I might as well go on to bed—*(more or less to herself)* I don't know where we lost it—but we have . . .

—Lorraine Hansberry,
from *A Raisin in the Sun*

Which portion of the excerpted text provides an example of an aside?

- (A) "Well—"
 (B) "I guess I might as well go on to bed—"
 (C) "(more or less to herself)"
 (D) "I don't know where we lost it—but we have . . ."

Questions 5-8 refer to the following two poems.

Spellbound

The night is darkening round
me, The wild winds coldly blow;
But a tyrant spell has bound
me And I cannot, cannot go.

Line (5) The giant trees are bending
Their bare boughs weighed
with snow. And the storm is
fast descending,
And yet I cannot go.

(10) Clouds beyond clouds above me,
Wastes beyond wastes below;
But nothing drear can move me;
I will not, cannot go.

—Emily Brontë

Approach of Winter

Line (5) The half-stripped trees
struck by a wind together,
bending all,
the leaves flutter drily
and refuse to let go
or driven like hail
stream bitterly out to one side
and fall
(10) where the salvias, hard carmine,—
like no leaf that ever was—
edge the bare garden.

—William Carlos Williams

5. Which of the following interpretations best applies to both poems?
- (A) They portray winter as a time of waiting for the first signs of spring.
 - (B) They liken the coming of winter to the shock of sudden death.
 - (C) They describe acts of resistance against the powerful force of winter.
 - (D) They relate the harshness of winter to the darkness of night.

6. In "Spellbound," the speaker's change in tone from the first to the third stanza can best be described as shifting from
- (A) helpless to stubborn
 - (B) apathetic to passionate
 - (C) despondent to hopeful
 - (D) agitated to complacent
7. Which of the following statements best describes how the structure of "Spellbound" contributes to its meaning?
- (A) The use of rhyming quatrains contrasts with the chaos of the storm.
 - (B) The use of blank verse strengthens the effect of the "tyrant spell."
 - (C) The breaks between stanzas symbolize moments of regret.
 - (D) The lack of internal punctuation reflects a sense of anticipation.
8. Which of the following literary devices are present in "Approach of Winter"?
- Select **ALL** that apply.
- (A) Allusion
 - (B) Repetition
 - (C) Oxymoron
 - (D) Personification
 - (E) Simile
9. Which of the following approaches is most effective in supporting vocabulary development for English learners?
- (A) Having students memorize a list of words and definitions every week
 - (B) Introducing students to words in context through the use of engaging literature
 - (C) Introducing students to new words they will encounter at the start of each unit
 - (D) Assigning students a partner who can tell them the definition of unknown words
10. Which of the following topics is most appropriate to cover when teaching students how to evaluate the accuracy of digital sources?
- (A) How to ensure the security of the sources
 - (B) How to analyze the reliability of sources
 - (C) How to examine the software used to create the sources
 - (D) How to synthesize lists of potential sources

11. If atoms are the letters of the chemical language, then molecules are the words. But in order to put the chemical letters together to form chemical words, we have to know something about the rules of chemical spelling.

In the preceding passage, a discussion of atoms is introduced by

- (A) an analogy
 - (B) an aphorism
 - (C) an example
 - (D) a hypothesis
12. Which **THREE** of the following techniques best facilitate productive, collaborative discussions in the classroom?
- (A) Arranging the chairs so that students all face the front of the room
 - (B) Asking the students questions that have no clear wrong answer
 - (C) Setting clear student expectations in advance, either verbally or in a rubric
 - (D) Selecting a topic that is just above the age level of the students in the class
 - (E) Allowing students plenty of time to think before responding to questions

13. Though Josh mentioned that she was a good friend, Anna knew it was a hollow compliment.

In the preceding sentence, the word "hollow" is best defined as

- (A) deep
 - (B) sunken
 - (C) vicious
 - (D) insincere
14. The following paragraph is a draft written by a student.
- Samantha is a great basketball player. She sometimes scores as many as twenty points a game, and she helps our team win again and again. Samantha is also a great friend. She is really great and always shares her snacks with other kids on the team.
- Which of the following resource books would best help the student author to develop a more effective description of Samantha within her draft?
- (A) An encyclopedia
 - (B) A thesaurus
 - (C) A grammar guide
 - (D) A dictionary

Questions 15-17 refer to the following student draft.

A seventh-grade class is learning how to respond to literary analysis prompts. The following is a student response to the prompt "Describe the significance of the White Rabbit in *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, by Lewis Carroll."

(1) The White Rabbit represents an adult who worries about schedules; he says, "Oh my ears and whiskers, how late it's getting!" (2) Alice wanders after the rabbit down the hole because, unknown to her, she wishes to not be a child anymore, she wants to be an adult. (3) When she follows the rabbit down the hole, she makes the choice to transform into an adult and leave her childish ways behind. (4) She begins her journey to Wonderland confused about all of her choices. (5) The author uses The White Rabbit as a metaphor to contrast with the childish ways Alice is leaving behind. (6) Her choices are like the choices she will have to make as she gets older.

15. Which of the following revisions will best improve the clarity of the response?
- (A) Switch sentence 1 and sentence 5
 - (B) Switch sentence 2 and sentence 3
 - (C) Switch sentence 4 and sentence 6
 - (D) Switch sentence 5 and sentence 6
16. In sentence 1, which of the following words or phrases, inserted before "he says," provides the best transition between the first clause and the quotation?
- (A) similarly,
 - (B) for instance,
 - (C) first of all,
 - (D) namely,
17. Which of the following errors is present in sentence 2?
- (A) Comma splice
 - (B) Faulty parallelism
 - (C) Incorrect subject-verb agreement
 - (D) Inconsistent verb tense

18. Which of the following most accurately describes how the author's use of point of view works as a rhetorical strategy?
- (A) He speaks in the first person to invite the readers to see how they participate in the activities he describes.
 - (B) He speaks in the first person to emphasize his unique experience with the subject under discussion.
 - (C) He speaks in the third person to highlight the universality of the topic being discussed.
 - (D) He speaks in the third person to construct a more authoritative position from which to argue his point.
19. Everyone in my school has that video game. It is obviously the best video game out there. I need it too, or everyone will think I am backward.
- The preceding argument is ineffective because it suffers from which of the following logical fallacies?
- (A) Straw man
 - (B) Ad hominem
 - (C) Bandwagon
 - (D) Post hoc
20. A teacher is working with an eighth-grade student who reads at the fifth-grade level. When the student encounters an unknown word, "cohabit," the teacher breaks the word into parts and has the student determine the meaning of "co" and the meaning of "habit," using words with the same prefix or root, such as "coworker" and "habitat."
- The activity described relies most directly on knowledge of which of the following language concepts?
- (A) Morphemes
 - (B) Synonyms
 - (C) Phonemes
 - (D) Orthography

21. An article describes a method of writing instruction in which “children are in different stages of the writing process, working on self-selected topics. Simultaneously, teachers are meeting with individual students or small groups of students to confer and help move them along with their writing. Other components include peer conferences and/or response groups.”

The article best describes which of the following teaching models?

- (A) Writing workshop
- (B) Direct instruction
- (C) Literature circles
- (D) Shared writing

22. A teacher asks students to predict the outcome of a story. After students consider their predictions silently for one minute, they tell them to a partner. Then some students volunteer to describe their predictions to the class.

During the activity, the students are using which of the following instructional strategies?

- (A) Anticipation guide
- (B) Reciprocal teaching
- (C) Shared reading
- (D) Think-pair-share

Questions 23-24 refer to the following passage.

As the strands of online discussion develop, the teacher can stimulate classroom discussion based on the responses expressed in the Web-based communication tool outside of class. Students will connect with this form of communication in a much more positive way than they would with the traditional homework assignment that would ask them to research Rosa Parks and report back to the class.

—Heidi Hayes Jacobs, from *Curriculum 21: Essential Education for a Changing World*

23. The passage best supports which of the following statements?
- (A) When researching a historical figure, students should reference both print and Web-based resources to capture the most comprehensive range of information possible.
 - (B) Collaborative online communication tools, when paired with classroom discussions, can foster a greater interest in course material for students.
 - (C) The quality of an online discussion is strongly linked to the content of the discussion as well as the objectives set forth by the teacher.
 - (D) Current research shows that collaborative online communication tools are most effective when they replace traditional classroom discussions.

24. Which of the following online communication tools would best support the instructional goal described in the passage?

- (A) An RSS feed
- (B) A video conference
- (C) A blog
- (D) A podcast

25. The following is an article published in a school newspaper.

The student council has had a banner year with both fund-raising and school-spirit events, raising more money this year than in the past three years combined. Spirit Week was a particular success. There was high participation in the Color Wars, our yearly tradition of each class dressing up in their class color for points. The pep rally was widely praised too, especially on social media; special thanks to our principal for encouraging attendance.

Maria Santos, student council president, noted, "It was really the student body's participation that made these events successful. We're so glad that everyone joined in and made this year so wonderful."

Which of the following best describes the purpose of the article?

- (A) To persuade
- (B) To entertain
- (C) To inform
- (D) To advertise

26. After John had drilled eight holes, he noticed that the edge of the wood was cracked.

The sentence is an example of which of the following sentence types?

- (A) Simple
- (B) Compound
- (C) Complex
- (D) Compound-complex

27. This was the big night—the speech to Cong[ress] on our ec[onomic] plan. I’ve seen Presidents over the years enter the House chamber without ever thinking I would one day be doing it. The reception was more than I’d anticipated—most of it of course from one side of the aisle. Still it was a thrill and something I’ll long remember.

—Ronald Reagan, from *The Reagan Diaries*

Which of the following is the best literal interpretation of the excerpt?

- (A) Reagan’s entrance into the chamber was better received by Congress than he had anticipated.
 - (B) Reagan would long remember this night because of the impact of the economic plan.
 - (C) Reagan’s speech to Congress was favored by those who often opposed him.
 - (D) Reagan would often compare his actions to those of other presidents he admired.
28. To best encourage student engagement in the classroom, a teacher should select texts based on which of the following?
- (A) The instructional objectives
 - (B) Historically popular classic literature
 - (C) The instructional reading level of the class
 - (D) Topics that are interesting for the students

Answers

1. Option (C) is correct. The passage presents factual information and a brief description of the plot of *The Red Badge of Courage* by Stephen Crane.
2. Option (B) is correct. The statements on which the question is based constitute a definition of a fable.
3. The correct answers are haiku, limerick, limerick, limerick, and haiku. Haikus are composed of seventeen syllables (five in the first line, seven in the second line, and five in the third line) and are often focused on nature. Limericks are composed of five lines that follow a strict rhyme scheme, and they often center on nonsensical ideas.
4. Option (D) is correct. An aside is a comment made by an actor that the other characters onstage are not supposed to hear.
5. Option (C) is correct. In "Spellbound," the speaker references the "wild winds" that "coldly blow" and tree boughs "weighed with snow" as evidence of winter's force. At the beginning of the poem she is yielding to the storm, but she finds her strength at the end with the statement "I will not, cannot go." The speaker in "Approach of Winter" also describes acts of resistance to winter's powerful force. He refers to leaves that "refuse to let go" despite a wind capable of "bending all" of the trees and to carmine-colored salvias that continue to bring color and life to a garden that is otherwise "bare" because of the approach of winter.
6. Option (A) is correct. The speaker's change in tone is most evident in lines 4 and 12. The speaker begins by saying she "cannot, cannot go" (line 4), indicating that her actions are dictated by an outside force. She ends by saying she "will not, cannot go" (line 12). By saying she will not go, she is asserting ownership over her actions.
7. Option (A) is correct. The repeated rhyming quatrains are regular and predictable in form; however, the content of the poem—the spell and the storm—is neither predictable nor regular. This pairing of structure and irregularity serves to highlight the impact that the spell has on the speaker, as well as her desire to regain control of her environment.
8. Options (D) and (E) are correct. Personification involves giving human traits to nonliving objects. Line 5 states that the leaves "refuse to let go," personifying the leaves by making it seem as if they are making the choice not to let go. A simile is a figure of speech comparing two unlike things, usually using the words "like" or "as." In the poem, the phrases "driven like hail" and "like no leaf that ever was" are examples of similes.
9. Option (B) is correct. Engaging with literature allows students to have a context for new words and allows them to assimilate these words by examining the book, answering questions about the book, and talking to others who are also using the same words. Seeing the words used in context also helps the students to have a better understanding of the meanings of words, as well as to understand how and when they are used.
10. Option (B) is correct. By looking at the elements of reliability, the student can determine the accuracy of the source.

11. Option (A) is correct. By suggesting that atoms are like letters, the author of the passage has used an analogy; that is, the author has characterized one thing by reference to another thing that functions in a similar way.
12. Options (B), (C), and (E) are correct. (B) is correct because students will be more inclined to participate in the discussion if they do not fear being wrong. (C) is correct because clear guidelines will not only help limit unwanted behavior but also give the students confidence in their contributions. (E) is correct because giving students time to get their thoughts together will help to encourage coherent, confident contributions from students that will raise the level of the discussion.
13. Option (D) is correct. The use of the word “though” in the clause “Though Josh mentioned that she was a good friend” indicates that the compliment was not sincere.
14. Option (B) is correct. The student could use a thesaurus to locate synonyms for “great.” Use of these synonyms would help to clarify the type of person that Samantha is by providing a more specific description of her.
15. Option (D) is correct. Sentence 6 is most appropriate after sentence 4 because it clarifies why Alice is confused about the choices she must make in Wonderland. Sentence 5 is an appropriate conclusion because it ties back to the thesis stated in sentence 1.
16. Option (B) is correct. “For instance” signals that the quotation illustrates the kind of worry described in the first clause.
17. Option (A) is correct. The comma between “anymore” and “she wants” is a comma splice; it is used incorrectly to separate two independent clauses.
18. Option (A) is correct. In first person point of view, the author or narrator writes from his or her own perspective. In this passage, the author uses the words “we” and “our” to suggest that his experience is similar to the readers’ experience and invites readers to understand how people invent themselves through the words they use.
19. Option (C) is correct. The bandwagon fallacy is the suggestion that one should join a cause or adopt a behavior because of its popularity, not because of any reasoned argument for it.
20. Option (A) is correct. Knowledge of morphemes is knowledge of the affixes, combining forms, and roots of words. This knowledge builds vocabulary, and it is necessary for the kind of word analysis described in the activity.
21. Option (A) is correct. In the writing workshop model, student writers progress at different rates, and their work is supported by the feedback they receive in both teacher conferences and peer response groups.
22. Option (D) is correct. Think-pair-share is a strategy that supports the development of listening and speaking skills—and, in this case, reading skills. The class is given a prompt or a question, and every student thinks of a response and discusses it with a partner. After partner discussion, some students may also share their responses with the class.

23. Option (B) is correct. The passage emphasizes that online discussions should be used as a starting point for deeper classroom discussion and that students are more receptive to online discussions than they are to independent research findings that they “report back to the class.” It can be inferred from these statements that the social nature of online discussions yields greater interest in course material.
24. Option (C) is correct. A blog is an online discussion tool that allows users to read and respond to posts made by any user with posting privileges. It is ideal for this instructional goal because users can access the content both at home to complete their homework assignments and in class to facilitate discussion. None of the other tools would be as effective at supporting the instructional goal.
25. Option (C) is correct. The writer presents facts about the student council’s progress and a quotation from the student council president in order to inform the reader about Spirit Week events.
26. Option (C) is correct. Complex sentences contain one or more independent clauses and one or more dependent clauses. “After John had drilled eight holes” is a dependent clause, and “he noticed that the edge of the wood was cracked” is an independent clause.
27. Option (A) is correct. In the excerpt, Reagan says that he received a better reception to his speech than he had anticipated.
28. Option (D) is correct. Learners should be at the center of instruction, and they are more likely to be engaged if they are reading about topics in which they are interested.

Constructed-Response Questions

This section of the chapter provides you with strategies for reading, analyzing, and understanding the constructed-response questions on the Middle School English Language Arts test and for writing successful responses.

The test contains two equally weighted constructed-response questions that constitute approximately 25 percent of the test taker's total test score and emphasize the use of critical-thinking skills. You should plan to spend about 15 minutes on each short essay question, for a total of 30 minutes on this portion of the test.

Because the constructed-response section is timed separately, you will have no more than 30 minutes to write both essays.

This test contains two different types of questions.

The first type of question assesses your understanding of how the formal literary devices used in a poem or prose excerpt contribute to the development of meaning in the text. The question will ask you to analyze a piece of literature or literary nonfiction.

The second type of question assesses your understanding of how to teach reading or writing at the middle school level. The question will ask you to analyze a piece of student work or a classroom situation to determine students' strengths and/or weaknesses and to describe an instructional activity that addresses the identified strengths and/or weaknesses.

In the sections that follow, you will find a detailed description of these question types.

What to Study

Success on this test is not simply a matter of learning more about the structure of constructed-response questions. Cogent organization is important, but success on the test also requires real knowledge of the field. The test evaluates your ability to convey an understanding of some of the significant elements in textual interpretation and English language arts instruction. You have probably already encountered and used most of the concepts in the college-level courses you have taken as part of your career preparation.

The following books, articles, and web sites are particularly relevant to the types of knowledge, topics, and skills covered by the test.

Note: The test is not based on these resources, nor do they necessarily cover every topic that may be included in the test. Instead, these works are intended to help you revisit topics you have already covered in your education and English courses.

Guides to literary terms and methods of interpretation: The following texts can help you review the literary terms and critical approaches highlighted in this study guide. Each text is organized by central literary terms and their definitions. You can use these texts to look up specific literary concepts; each concept is usually illustrated through references to classic literary works with which you are likely to be familiar already.

Abrams, M. H. *A Glossary of Literary Terms*, 10th ed.
Boston: Wadsworth Learning, 2012.

Gale Glossary of Literary Terms
http://www.gale.cengage.com/free_resources/glossary/index.htm

Harmon, William, et al. *A Handbook to Literature*, 12th ed. New York: Longman, 2011.

Virtual Salt: A Handbook of Rhetorical Devices <http://www.virtualsalt.com/rhetoric.htm>
Robert A. Harris, 2013.

Guides to teaching reading and teaching writing: The following texts offer overviews of the teaching of reading and writing.

Atwell, Nancie. *In the Middle: New Understandings About Writing, Reading, and Learning*, 2nd edition. Portsmouth, NH: Boynton/Cook Publishers, 1998.

Beers, Kylene, Robert Probst, and Linda Rief, eds. *Adolescent Literacy: Turning Promise into Practice*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2007.

Burke, Jim. *The English Teacher's Companion: A Completely New Guide to Classroom, Curriculum, and the Profession*, 4th edition. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2013.

Textual Interpretation Question

The textual interpretation constructed-response question asks you to connect the use of literary devices and techniques to the development of a passage's meaning. You should be prepared to demonstrate your ability to interpret literary texts fully and accurately. Although you have most likely developed this skill over time through your training in your English courses, you may wish to practice and review this skill in preparation for this exam.

Literary Devices

Be familiar with literary devices that are used to create meaning and effect in literature. These devices are the same as those you will have encountered in the selected-response portion of the test (see the first part of this chapter). The devices include, but are not limited to:

- Allusion
- Ambiguity
- Dialogue

- Diction
- Figurative language (such as metaphor, simile, and personification)
- Imagery
- Narrative techniques (such as stream of consciousness)
- Parody
- Point of view
- Rhyme and rhythm
- Specific details (such as details of the setting)
- Symbolism
- Tone

Suggested Study Strategies: Literary Devices

- Using a literary anthology (for example, *The Norton Anthology of American Literature*), select short poems or brief excerpts from prose works. Practice identifying the literary devices used in these texts and connecting those devices to the development of meaning in the work.
- Look up those literary terms with which you are less familiar. Put the definition of each term in your own words. Try finding examples of each term in literature with which you are already familiar, or try to develop your own creative examples.

Teaching Reading/Writing Question

The teaching reading/writing constructed-response question asks you to identify a student's strengths and/ or weaknesses based on either an essay or a response to a reading task. You will need to be able to explain why what you have identified is a strength or a weakness and also to describe a teaching strategy that builds on either the identified strength or weakness. As with your literary interpretation skills, you have most likely developed these skills over time through your training in English language arts instruction.

Teaching Reading

Be familiar with common comprehension and vocabulary terms and strategies, such as the following:

- Context clues
- Predicting
- Prior knowledge
- Summarizing
- Text difficulty

Teaching Writing

Be familiar with common strengths and weaknesses in student writing, such as the following:

- Essay organization
- Paragraph organization
- Quality of descriptive detail
- Sentence variety and complexity
- Sense of audience
- Sense of voice

Suggested strategies for studying the teaching of reading/writing

Be able to develop targeted writing or reading assignments that build on the strengths and weaknesses of individual students' writing or reading comprehension. In the previous "What to Study" section, see the list of resources you can use to help you prepare.

What the Test Scorers Are Looking For

Even if you feel confident about your knowledge of the content to be tested, you still may wonder how you will be able to tell what the test scorers want.

In fact, you can find out what the test scorers want by looking at the questions themselves. The constructed-response test questions are crafted to be as clear as possible regarding what tasks you are expected to do. No expectations are hidden in the question or expressed in code words. The English language arts educators who score your responses base your score on two considerations:

- Whether you do the tasks that the question asks for
- How well you do those tasks

Readers will assign scores based on the following scoring guide:

General Scoring Guide for Constructed-Response Questions

Score of 3

The response is successful in the following ways:

- It demonstrates an ability to analyze the stimulus material thoughtfully and in depth.
- It demonstrates a strong knowledge of the subject matter relevant to the question.
- It responds appropriately to all parts of the question.
- It demonstrates facility with the conventions of standard written English.

Score of 2

The response demonstrates some understanding of the topic, but it is limited in one or more of the following major ways:

- It may indicate a misreading of the stimulus material or provide superficial analysis.
- It may demonstrate only superficial knowledge of the subject matter relevant to the question.
- It may respond to one or more parts of the question inadequately or not at all.
- It may contain significant writing errors.

Score of 1

The response is seriously flawed in one or more of the following ways:

- It may demonstrate weak understanding of the subject matter or of the writing task.
- It may be incoherent or severely underdeveloped.
- It may fail to respond adequately to most parts of the question.
- It may contain severe and persistent writing errors.

Score of 0

The response is totally incorrect, or it merely rephrases the question.

Understanding What the Questions Are Asking

It is impossible to write a successful response to a question unless you thoroughly understand the question. Often test takers jump into their written response without taking enough time to analyze exactly what the question is asking, how many different parts of the question need to be addressed, and *how the information provided in the excerpt can be used to support the answer*. The time you invest in making sure you understand what the question is asking will very likely pay off in a better performance, as long as you budget your time and do not spend a large proportion of the available time just reading the question.

To illustrate the importance of understanding the question before you begin writing, let's look at a sample question:

Sample Question: Textual Interpretation

"Why, thank you so much. I'd adore to."

I don't want to dance with him. I don't want to dance with anybody. And even if I did, it wouldn't be him. He'd be well down among the last ten. I've seen the way he dances.....Just think, not a quarter of an hour ago, here I was sitting, feeling sorry for the poor girl he was dancing with. And now I'm going to be the poor girl.

"The Waltz," a short story by humorist Dorothy Parker, opens with the preceding lines. Explain how Parker establishes tone and uses perspective in the excerpt.

Identifying the Key Components of the Question

- How does Parker establish tone?
- How does Parker use perspective?

Organizing Your Response

Successful responses start with successful planning, either in the form of an outline or another form of notes. By planning your response, you greatly decrease the chances that you will forget to answer any part of the question. You also increase the chances of creating a well-organized response. Your note-taking space also gives you a place to jot down thoughts whenever you think of them—for example, when you have an idea about one part of the question when you are writing your response to another part. Planning your response is time well invested, although you must keep your eye on the clock so that you have sufficient time to write your response.

To illustrate a possible strategy for planning a response, let us focus again on the sample question introduced previously. We analyzed the question and found that it necessitated a two-part response. You might begin by jotting down those parts on your notes page, leaving space under each. This will ensure that you address each part when you begin writing. In addition, you should underline key parts of the passage that can serve as examples in your response.

Sample Notes—Main Parts to be Answered

Here you start by identifying each part of the question:

- How does Parker establish tone?
- How does Parker use perspective?

You then might quickly fill out the main ideas you want to address in each part, like this:

Sample Notes—Ideas Under Each Main Part

How does Parker establish tone?

- *Use of contrast*
- *Exaggeration*

How does Parker use perspective?

- *First-person point of view*
- *Use of dialogue and internal monologue*

Writing Your Response

Now the important step of writing your response begins. The scorers will not consider your notes when they score your paper, so it is crucial that you integrate all the important ideas from your notes into your actual written response.

Sample Response That Received a Score of 3

Dorothy Parker tells the story in the first person with two contrasting perspectives: what her character says and what she is really thinking. This sets an amusing and intimate tone throughout the excerpt.

Contributing to the sense of intimacy with her character is the conversational tone of her thoughts. Immediately the reader identifies with the character. Also, the use of present tense, so we are overhearing the character's thoughts as she is having them, contributes to the intimacy of the internal dialogue. When she says that she didn't want to dance with anyone, and even if she did "it wouldn't be him," it feels like the character is having a private conversation with the reader. Finally, the reader is left with a feeling of ironic amusement. The character who so politely agrees to dance has just been feeling sorry for her partner's previous victim: "Just think, not a quarter of an hour ago, here I was sitting, feeling sorry for the poor girl he was dancing with. And now I'm going to be the poor girl." Again, the reader identifies with the intimate tone the character uses since at one time or another most of us have also agreed to do something we would have preferred not to, just to be polite.

Comments on Sample Response That Earned a Score of 3

This is a successful response because it addresses and analyzes the aspects of tone and perspective thoughtfully and in depth. Not only does the response identify the first person perspective, but it also recognizes the duality of the perspective in "what her character says and what she is really thinking." These "contrasting perspectives" reveal the outwardly proper and polite narrator, while the internal comments reflect the "ironic amusement" that she is now the "poor girl" who is the next "victim" of the awkward dance partner.

The words “amusing” and “intimate” accurately describe the tone of the piece, and the writer further analyzes how the tone establishes a connection (“the reader identifies”) between the character and the reader, which adds to the intimacy and ironic humor of the piece.

Sample Response That Received a Score of 2

The tone of the story is humorous. Dorothy Parker does not want to dance with the man. While she says yes, she is thinking just the opposite. It's funny because in the first line of the story she says she would like to dance; “Why, thank you so much. I'd adore to.” But in her mind, she is thinking about how much she does not want to dance with him. He would be one of the last people she'd dance with; “down among the last ten.” She also makes fun of the “poor girl” that he danced with before her. She believes that when she dances with him, she will look as bad as the “poor girl,” she does not want to look that bad. The story is funny because Dorothy Parker gets put in a tricky social situation.

Comments on Sample Response That Received a Score of 2

While recognizing that the excerpt is intended to be humorous, the response is limited and provides only a superficial analysis of the subject matter. The writer identifies the fundamental conflict in Parker’s excerpt: the speaker does not want to dance, but she cordially agrees when asked. However, the response does not go on to provide an in-depth analysis of how Parker uses first person perspective to establish a humorous, ironic tone in her short story.

Furthermore, the response demonstrates a crucial misreading of the excerpt by positing that the speaker is also making fun of the “poor girl.” In truth, the speaker was in sympathy with the “poor girl” and finds it ironic that she will now be the “poor girl” dancing with the young man.

Sample Response That Received a Score of 1

In the passage, Parker establishes tone with short, precise sentences, gradually getting longer. She used perspective in dealing with the fact that she does not want to dance and especially with him. She also was putting herself in the other girl's position.

Comments on Sample Response That Received a Score of 1

This response reveals a weak understanding of tone and perspective. It is severely underdeveloped, lacks analysis and, moreover, includes a glaring misread of the piece. The explanation of how Parker establishes tone is limited to merely describing sentence style, and the writer’s analysis of perspective is wrong. The response restates the central premise that “she does not want to dance and especially with him.” This is followed by a misread of the ironic moment, as reflected in a reference to “the other girl’s position” that misses the point that Parker is now in the position of the girl she earlier pitied.

Sample Question: Teaching Writing

Introduction

Students in a seventh-grade class were asked to write a descriptive essay, for an audience of their peers, in response to an assignment about a favorite person.

What follows is the final draft of one student's response to this assignment. Read the student's response carefully, paying particular attention to the features of writing listed below, and then complete the three tasks that follow the student's response.

Features of Writing

- Focus/Thesis
- Organization
- Content/Supporting Ideas
- Sentence variety and complexity

Student Response

There are a lot of people that are important to me. My family, friends, and many more, but I know that my Aunt Pat is high on the list.

My Aunt Pat is someone I truly care about. Aunt Pat is always there for me. She makes me happy when I am sad. She also cheers me up when I am sad. Another reason I care for her is because we have the same interests. Pat likes to sew, scrapbook, and march in parades.

Pat is a great role model. She always tries to do the right thing. She is also very enthusiastic. Pat has many traits. She is reliable, cool, funny, and most of all she is creative. I love that she is a creative person. Currently she owns the costume shop in town. She also likes fall. She thinks it is pretty. Most people like winter because of Christmas, or summer because of the heat, but she has her own mind. She likes fall. I also love that she isn't afraid to be different. In the end there are many reasons why I love her. She makes you feel like you are the most important person in the world and nobody can take that away from you.

Tasks

1. Identify one feature of the student's writing as a strength. Be sure to support your response with examples from the student's writing. Do NOT discuss facility in the conventions of standard written English (grammar, punctuation) in this part of your response.
2. Identify one feature of the student's writing as a weakness. Be sure to support your response with examples from the student's writing. Do NOT discuss the errors in the conventions of standard written English (grammar, punctuation) in this part of your response.

3. Describe one follow-up assignment you would give to this student that would build on the strength you described in Task 1 OR address the weakness that you identified in Task 2. Explain how the assignment would help the student.

Sample Response That Received a Score of 3

One strength of this student's descriptive essay is attention to the task of writing about a favorite person, which is established in a nicely stated (albeit structurally flawed) opening paragraph. "...my Aunt Pat is high on the list." All subsequent discussion is about Aunt Pat—who cheers, who shares interests, who is a "great role model," who is creative ("Currently she owns the costume shop in town."), who likes fall when winter and Christmas or summer are the more typical seasonal preferences.

However, the weakness in this essay is that this defined focus is not well elaborated with illustrative examples. Aunt Pat is a great role model, but how? "She always tries to do the right thing" but in what way or ways? When the student offers support—"...we have the same interests. Pat likes to sew, scrapbook, and march in parades"—the illustrative details are lacking. Sentences are simple, leaving the reader wishing for those supporting details.

The suggestion for revision, therefore, would be to build on the clear focus, which captures a genuine appreciation of this favorite person by extending the sentences to build interest. The student's respect and love of "Aunt Pat" is charming. The hints at her character (marching in parades, owning the costume shop, "she isn't afraid to be different") are intriguing. But, for example the simple, repetitive statements, "She makes me happy when I am sad. She also cheers me up when I am sad" do not reveal HOW "she is always there for me."

Illustrative examples literally "color in" the lines to make the portrait come alive. The purpose of the essay is to "describe" a favorite person. The follow up assignment encourages the student to address this purpose. The essay is definitely about one favorite person, but the descriptive details are limited. Adding in one or two stories and a brief example for other points would enhance the fullness of why Aunt Pat is special.

To extend the preceding example: The student could consider, "When was one specific moment when Aunt Pat cheered you up?" In doing this revision with a topic close to the student's heart, the student will gain a better understanding of the value of including descriptive details/supporting ideas when making a point, and, therefore, what is meant by "complex" sentences. The student will gain an understanding that complex sentences that include illustrative detail are applicable in all writing, whether in a descriptive essay or when making a case in a persuasive essay or when addressing a topic in an expository essay.

Comments on Sample Response That Received a Score of 3

This is a successful response because it addresses all three tasks with strong evidence of understanding the features of writing and how to support a student in strengthening an essay.

The response to Task 1 correctly identifies one strength as the focus on a favorite person, as required by the student's assignment. Examples are provided of how the essay centers on descriptions of Aunt Pat's personality and interests. The response to Task 2, identifying one weakness of the essay, notes the limits of those descriptive details: ("...is not well elaborated with illustrative examples"). What follows is an analysis of specific points in the essay that make a statement without explanation or examples. Task 2 is thorough in this analysis.

The response to Task 3 then pointedly addresses what could be done to provide the needed elaboration. These suggestions for revision are very strong, including both what should be done and why these additions would improve the essay: ("Illustrative examples literally 'color in' the lines to make the portrait come alive"). One specific task—directly related to the weakness identified in Task 2—is suggested that would hone an appreciation of descriptive details and enhance an awareness of the concept of "complex sentences." The response shows a clear understanding of how actions by the teacher could support the student's skills and appreciation of writing.

Sample Response That Received a Score of 2

The student who wrote the essay has great focus and gives lots of details. She describes her Aunt Pat and how much she likes her. Then she goes on to provide details: her Aunt Pat "cheers her up" and is a "great role model." The student also describes things that Aunt Pat likes to do: "sew, scrapbook, and march in parades" and says that she "owns the costume shop in town." I would say that a strength of this essay is how the student keeps the focus on Aunt Pat while also giving so many details about what her Aunt is like and what she does. The content and supporting details are what make this essay so enjoyable to read.

The weakness, however, is that the essay isn't very organized. The statements about Aunt Pat do not follow a logical pattern. The student should have made an outline before writing, each paragraph should have contained a separate supporting detail about her aunt. For example, the student could have had a whole paragraph about the costume shop and what kinds of costumes her aunt sold. It would have been very interesting to know whether she only sold Halloween costumes or whether she sold costumes for other parties. Also the writer could have had a whole paragraph about what kinds of parades her aunt marches in and why she likes parades.

For a follow-up assignment, I would ask the student to describe another favorite person and to give plenty of details about why that person is special. It wouldn't have to be a family member, this time it could be a friend. It would be interesting to read about someone who is the students' age and has the same interests as the student. Then the student could also talk about his or her own likes and dislikes. That would give readers a picture of the student; then we would know the student and her favorite people.

Comments on Sample Response That Received a Score of 2

The preceding response identifies both a strength and weakness of the student essay; however, they are only superficially described. For example, the response does identify a lack of organization as a weakness of the essay, but the analysis is not very strong. Adding entire paragraphs about the costume shop or about parades would not address the focus of the piece—why Aunt Pat is important to the student. While the response does provide a follow-up assignment, that assignment does not address the strength or weakness described in the response. Furthermore, the response also fails to explain why the assignment would be useful in building on a strength or improving a weakness. In summary, the response received a score of 2 not only because it provides a superficial analysis of a strength and a weakness, but also because it does not fully address the questions posed in the three tasks.

Sample Response That Received a Score of 1

This student really loves her Aunt Pat! She sounds like a fun person. As a scrapbooker, I know how much creative energy is needed. Aunt Pat is creative. The student says, "most of all she is creative" and she backs this up with the detail that the aunt owns a costume shop! And Aunt Pat loves fall, even when most people like winter "because of Christmas" and summer "because of the heat." These are good details of how Aunt Pat "isn't afraid of being different."

The essay makes a good case why Aunt Pat is a favorite person.

However, it is not perfect! I would have this student fix the fragments, like in the first paragraph. For example, "Some of those important people are my family, friends and many more, but I know that my Aunt Pat is high on the list." It is important to have the verb in that sentence to make it a sentence and not a fragment.

It is really important to write in complete sentences. This would be important to help the student become a better writer.

Comments on Sample Response That Received a Score of 1

Though one strength of the essay is noted ("The essay makes a good case why Aunt Pat is a favorite person"), the student's response is given too much credit for "good details" that are actually underdeveloped.

The attempt to respond to Task 2 addresses a grammatical weakness—fragmented sentences ("It is important to have a verb in that sentence...")—even though the prompt specifies NOT to discuss errors in grammar or punctuation.

The response to Task 3 is weak because it addresses remediation of grammar ("write in complete sentences") and because the example cited ("Some of those ... high on the list") is incorrectly listed as a sentence fragment.

Compounding the weak response is its lack of a recommended teacher-directed remedial activity or counseling. Enthusiasm for the student's response does not provide a basis for helping the student strengthen this essay.

In Conclusion

Whatever format you select, the important thing is that your answer be thorough, complete, and detailed. You need to be certain that you do the following:

- Answer all parts of the question.
- Give reasons for your answers.
- Demonstrate subject-specific knowledge in your answer.
- Refer to the examples in the passage provided.

It is a good idea to use the practice test in the preceding chapter to help you develop a plan for how you will take the test on the actual testing day, especially if you tend to get nervous or freeze up in a testing situation. Some test takers prefer to start with the question with which they feel most comfortable. Remember to consider your time so that you may give appropriate consideration to both essay questions. Stay within the framework of the question.

Understanding Question Types

The Praxis assessments include a variety of question types: constructed response (for which you write a response of your own); selected response, for which you select one or more answers from a list of choices or make another kind of selection (e.g., by selecting a sentence in a text or by selecting part of a graphic); and numeric entry, for which you enter a numeric value in an answer field. You may be familiar with these question formats from seeing them on other standardized tests you have taken. If not, familiarize yourself with them so that you won't have to spend time during the test figuring out how to answer them.

Understanding Selected-Response and Numeric-Entry Questions

For most questions you will respond by selecting an oval to choose a single answer from a list of answer choices.

However, interactive question types may also ask you to respond by doing the following.

- Selecting more than one choice from a list of choices.
- Typing in a numeric-entry box. When the answer is a number, you may be asked to enter a numerical answer. Some questions may have more than one entry box to enter a response. Numeric-entry questions typically appear on mathematics-related tests.
- Selecting parts of a graphic. In some questions, you will select your answers by selecting a location (or locations) on a graphic such as a map or chart, as opposed to choosing your answer from a list.
- Selecting sentences. In questions with reading passages, you may be asked to choose your answers by selecting a sentence (or sentences) within the reading passage.
- Dragging and dropping answer choices into targets on the screen. You may be asked to select answers from a list of choices and to drag your answers to the appropriate location in a table, paragraph of text, or graphic.
- Selecting answer choices from a drop-down menu. You may be asked to choose answers by selecting choices from a drop-down menu (e.g., to complete a sentence).

Remember that with every question, you will get clear instructions.

Understanding Constructed-Response Questions

Some tests include constructed-response questions, which require you to demonstrate your knowledge in a subject area by writing your own response to topics. Essay questions and short-answer questions are types of questions that call for a constructed response.

For example, an essay question might present you with a topic and ask you to discuss the extent to which you agree or disagree with the opinion stated. For such questions, you must support your position with specific reasons and examples from your own experience, observations, or reading.

Following are a few sample essay topics to review:

- *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka*

“We come then to the question presented: Does segregation of children in public schools solely on the basis of race, even though the physical facilities and other ‘tangible’ factors may be equal, deprive the children of the minority group of equal educational opportunities? We believe that it does.”

 - A. What legal doctrine or principle, established in *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896), did the Supreme Court reverse when it issued the 1954 ruling quoted above?
 - B. What was the rationale given by the justices for their 1954 ruling?
- *In his self-analysis, Mr. Payton says that the better-performing students say small-group work is boring and that they learn more working alone or only with students like themselves. Assume that Mr. Payton wants to continue using cooperative learning groups because he believes they have value for all students.*
 - Describe **TWO** strategies he could use to address the concerns of the students who have complained.
 - Explain how each strategy suggested could provide an opportunity to improve the functioning of cooperative learning groups. Base your response on principles of effective instructional strategies.
- *“Minimum-wage jobs are a ticket to nowhere. They are boring and repetitive and teach employees little or nothing of value. Minimum-wage employers take advantage of people who need a job.”*
 - Discuss the extent to which you agree or disagree with this opinion. Support your views with specific reasons and examples from your own experience, observations, or reading.

Keep the following things in mind when you respond to a constructed-response question.

1. **Answer the question accurately.** Analyze what each part of the question is asking you to do. If the question asks you to describe or discuss, you should provide more than just a list.
2. **Answer the question completely.** If a question asks you to do three distinct things in your response, you should cover all three things for the best score. Otherwise, no matter how well you write, you will not be awarded full credit.
3. **Answer the question that is asked.** Do not change the question or challenge the basis of the question. You will receive no credit or a low score if you answer another question or if you state, for example, that there is no possible answer.
4. **Give a thorough and detailed response.** You must demonstrate that you have a thorough understanding of the subject matter. However, your response should be straightforward and should not be filled with unnecessary information.
5. **Take notes on scratch paper so that you don't miss any details.** Then you'll be sure to have all the information you need to answer the question.
6. **Reread your response.** Check that you have written what you intended to write. Do not leave sentences unfinished or omit clarifying information.

General Assistance For The Test

Praxis Interactive Practice Test

This full-length Praxis practice test lets you practice answering one set of authentic test questions in an environment that simulates the computer-delivered test.

- Timed just like the real test
- Correct answers with detailed explanations
- Practice test results for each content category

ETS provides a free interactive practice test with each test registration. You can learn more [here](#).

Doing Your Best

Strategy and Success Tips

Effective *Praxis* test preparation doesn't just happen. You'll want to set clear goals and deadlines for yourself along the way. Learn from the experts. Get practical tips to help you navigate your Praxis test and make the best use of your time. Learn more at [Strategy and Tips for Taking a Praxis Test](#).

Develop Your Study Plan

Planning your study time is important to help ensure that you review all content areas covered on the test. View a sample plan and learn how to create your own. Learn more at [Develop a Study Plan](#).

Helpful Links

[Ready to Register](#) – How to register and the information you need to know to do so.

[Disability Accommodations](#) – Testing accommodations are available for test takers who meet ETS requirements.

[PLNE Accommodations \(ESL\)](#) – If English is not your primary language, you may be eligible for extended testing time.

[What To Expect on Test Day](#) – Knowing what to expect on test day can make you feel more at ease.

[Getting Your Scores](#) – Find out where and when you will receive your test scores.

[State Requirements](#) – Learn which tests your state requires you to take.

[Other Praxis Tests](#) – Learn about other *Praxis* tests and how to prepare for them.



Visit our website to find test prep resources and preparation materials to build confidence for test day:

<https://praxis.ets.org>



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