



Information Bulletin

English Language Arts 30–1

Diploma Examinations Program **2023–2024**

This document was primarily written for:

Students

Teachers of English Language Arts 30–1

Administrators

Parents

General Audiences

Others

2023–2024 English Language Arts 30–1 Information Bulletin

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Please note that if you cannot access one of the direct website links referred to in this document, you can find diploma examination-related materials on the [Alberta Education website](#).

Introduction

The *English Language Arts 30–1 Diploma Examination* is designed to reflect the [Program of Studies for Senior High School English Language Arts](#), which outlines a variety of specific learning outcomes organized under five general outcomes in six language arts: listening, speaking, reading, writing, viewing, and representing. Because of the interconnected nature of the five general outcomes, both Part A and Part B of the diploma examination will assess, at least indirectly, all the general outcomes. The specific outcomes that will be assessed are indicated on the blueprints and scoring guides.

Diploma exams will be weighted at 30%, and the school-awarded mark will constitute 70% of a student’s final mark.

Teachers are encouraged to share the contents of this bulletin with students.

For further information about program implementation, refer to the [Alberta Education website](#).

Examination Security

All diploma examinations will be held secure until they are released to the public by the Minister. No secure diploma examination is to be previewed until it is released to the public by the Minister. No secure diploma examination is to be previewed, discussed, copied, or removed from the room in which the examination is being written. However, for the January and June administrations only, teachers will be allowed access to a teacher perusal copy for review purposes one hour after the examination has started.

For mathematics and science diploma examinations: All diploma examination booklets must be kept secure before, during, and after administration, without exception.

For humanities diploma examinations: The humanities Part A: Written Response booklets in the January and June administrations must be kept secure until after they are administered. All other humanities Part A: Written Response booklets, and all humanities Part B booklets, must be kept secure before, during, and after administration, without exception.

Unused copies of all secured diploma examinations must be returned to Alberta Education as per the dates indicated in the [Significant Dates at-a-Glance](#).

For more information about teacher perusal copies and examination security, please refer to the [Administering diploma exams web page](#).

Time Limits on Diploma Examinations

All students may use extra time to write diploma examinations. This means that all students have up to 6 hours to complete the *English Language Arts 30–1 Diploma Examination*, if they need it. The examination is nevertheless designed so that the majority of students can complete it within 3 hours. The examination instructions state both the designed time and the total time allowed.

Although extra time is allowed for diploma examinations in all subjects, the total time allowed is not the same in all subjects. For more information about accommodations and provisions for students, please refer to the [Administering diploma exams web page](#).



Equating to Maintain Consistent Standards over Time on Diploma Examinations

A goal of Alberta Education is to make scores achieved on examinations within the same subject directly comparable from session to session, to ensure fairness to students across administrations.

To achieve this goal, the examination has a number of questions in common with a previous examination. Common items are used to find out if the student population writing in one administration differs in achievement from the student population writing in another administration. Common items are also used to find out if the unique items (questions that have never appeared in a previous examination) differ in difficulty from the unique items on the baseline examination that sets the standard to which all students are held.

A statistical process called equating adjusts for differences in difficulty between examinations. Examination marks may be adjusted depending upon the difficulty of the examination written relative to the baseline examination. Therefore, the resulting equated examination scores have the same meaning regardless of when and to whom the examination was administered. Equated diploma examination marks are reported to students. More information about equating is available on the [Administering diploma exams web page](#).

Because of the security required to ensure fair and appropriate assessment of student achievement over time, *English Language Arts 30–1 Diploma Examinations* will be fully secured and will not be released at the time of writing.

Diploma Examinations: Multiple Forms

Some subjects may have two distinct forms (versions) of diploma examinations during major administrations (January and June). The two forms are equated to the baseline examination to ensure that the same standard applies to both forms. Both forms adhere to the established blueprint specifications and are reviewed by a technical review committee.

To facilitate the analysis of school-level results, each school receives only one examination form per subject. In subjects offering a translated French-language examination, both forms are administered in English and in French.

For more information, contact

Diploma exam format, content, confirming standards,
marking, results reporting
Diploma.exams@gov.ab.ca

or

French Assessment
French.Assessment@gov.ab.ca

or

Diploma exam security, diploma exam rules,
scheduling, policy issues
Exam.admin@gov.ab.ca

How to Get Involved

High-quality diploma examinations are the product of close collaboration between classroom teachers and Alberta Education. Classroom teachers from across Alberta are involved in many aspects of diploma examination development, including the development of items; the building, reviewing, administering, and marking of field tests; the reviewing and validating of diploma examinations; and the marking of diploma examinations.

The development of test items from when they are written until when they appear on an examination takes at least one year. All items on *English Language Arts 30–1 Diploma Examinations* are written by English Language Arts 30–1 teachers from across Alberta. After the first year of provincial implementation of the program of studies, items are field tested to ensure their reliability and validity. Diploma examinations are reviewed by editors and validated by working groups that consist of classroom teachers and curriculum staff.

Alberta Education values the involvement of teachers and annually asks school jurisdictions for the names of teachers who are interested in being involved in any of the development processes for diploma examinations. Teachers who are interested in developing items, constructing field tests, or reviewing and validating examinations are encouraged to talk to their principals about how they can submit their names for approval to be involved in these processes. Although the call for submissions occurs each fall, teachers are welcome to have their names submitted at any time.

Teachers may also be nominated by their school authority to mark written-response assignments for humanities and mathematics diploma examinations. The call for nominations occurs in early September (for January and April marking) and again in February (for June, August, and November marking). Teachers who would like to be nominated to mark diploma exams are encouraged to talk to their principals.

Periodically, we may send out information to those English Language Arts 30–1 teachers who are on our contact list. If you are not on that list and would like to receive updates related to English Language Arts 30–1 assessment activities, please contact either Philip Taranger, English Language Arts 30–1 Diploma Exam Lead, at Philip.Taranger@gov.ab.ca or Meghan Coles, English Language Arts 30–1 Examiner, at Meghan.Coles@gov.ab.ca.

Field Testing

Field testing is an essential stage in the development of fair, valid, and reliable provincial examinations. Field testing is a process of collecting data on questions before they become part of a diploma examination. Potential diploma examination questions are administered to students in diploma courses throughout the province to determine the difficulty and appropriateness of the questions. Each field test requires a large student sample to provide the examination developers with reliable information (i.e., statistical data and written validation comments from teachers and students).

How do field tests help teachers and students?

Teachers obtain each student's score promptly, gaining useful information about their students' performance. Students benefit from writing a test that duplicates some of the experience of writing a diploma examination. Field tests provide students and teachers with examples of the format and content of questions that may appear on diploma examinations. Finally, because of field testing, students, teachers, and parents can be reassured that the questions on diploma examinations have undergone a rigorous process of development, improvement, and validation.

How are field-test data used?

The data received from field tests indicate the validity, reliability, and fairness of each question. Questions that meet specific standards are selected for use on future diploma examinations.

Some questions or sets of questions may not initially perform as well as we require. These questions may be revised and field tested again. Revisions are influenced by the written comments of students and teachers, who provide valuable advice about the appropriateness of the questions, the adequacy of writing-time limits, test length, text readability, artwork/graphics clarity and suitability, and question difficulty.

Humanities field tests

While most field tests in humanities subjects are in conventional paper form, some field tests are partially online ("hybrids"). Hybrid field tests combine a paper copy of sources or readings with questions read and answered online using Alberta Education's [Quest A+ online delivery system](#).

Teachers are provided with data on how their students performed. Data from hybrid field tests include the proportion of students who chose each alternative answer on multiple-choice questions.

Teachers have a 24-hour window to peruse hybrid field tests. Once logged into the hybrid field test on the online delivery system, teachers have the same length of time to peruse the test as their students did to write it. Teachers might choose to log into the field test, submit the confidentiality form, and then log out of the test so that they can finish perusing the test after receiving their students' data.

It is important to note that the security of field-test items remains vital to the administration of diploma examinations. Participating teachers must commit to maintaining the security of field-test items. Paper copies of readings or sources for hybrid format field tests are mailed to schools and must be kept secure by the school principal until administration of the field test. After the administration of the test, all paper copies must be mailed back to Alberta Education within two business days.

More information about field-test registration deadlines, administration, and security is available at the [Teacher participation in provincial assessments web page](#).

How can teachers request field tests?

Teachers requesting field tests must have a Public Authentication System (PAS) account. All requests are made through the [Field Test Request System](#).

Further information, including the closing dates to request and administer a field test, may be obtained at the [Teacher participation in provincial assessments web page](#), or by contacting Field.Test@gov.ab.ca.

Digital field tests

Digital field tests are offered through the [Quest A+ online delivery system](#) for Session 1. Please refer to the [Field Test Rules and Request Guide 2023–2024](#) for more information regarding Session 2.

For more information, contact

Diploma exam format, content, confirming standards,
marking, results reporting
Diploma.exams@gov.ab.ca

or

French Assessment
French.Assessment@gov.ab.ca

or

Diploma exam security, diploma exam rules,
scheduling, policy issues
Exam.admin@gov.ab.ca

Practice Tests

To give students an opportunity to practise answering questions of the kind used on diploma examinations that address learning outcomes in the program of studies, Alberta Education produces practice tests for most subjects that have a diploma examination. Students can access these practice tests using Alberta Education's [Quest A+ online delivery system](#).

Special-format Practice Tests

To give students an opportunity to practise answering questions of the kind used on diploma examinations that address learning outcomes in the program of studies in Braille, audio, large print, or coloured print versions, Alberta Education produces special-format practice tests for all subjects that have a diploma examination. Alberta schools with registered Alberta K–12 students may place orders for these tests. Braille versions are available in English and, by request, in French. All tests are provided free of charge, but limits may be placed on order volumes to ensure access for all students.

For the greatest benefit, special-format practice tests should be written under conditions similar to those of the corresponding diploma examination. The same rules regarding the use of resources and devices should be followed.

Braille versions must be returned to Alberta Education after use.

For more information or to place an order, contact Field.Test@gov.ab.ca.

Audio Descriptions

A support document, [Examples of Descriptions Used in Audio Versions of Humanities Diploma Exams](#), has been developed to assist teachers and students planning to use an audio version during the administration of a humanities diploma examination.

Assessment Standards and Practices for English Language Arts 30–1

Weightings	The diploma examination mark constitutes 30% of a student’s final mark, and the school-awarded mark constitutes 70% of a student’s final mark in English Language Arts 30-1.	
Examination Format and Weightings	The <i>English Language Arts 30–1 Diploma Examination</i> is made up of two parts: Part A: Written Response (50%) and Part B: Reading (50%) .	
<i>Part A: Written Response</i> Assignments, Scoring Categories, and Weightings	Personal Response to Texts Assignment (20%) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ideas and Impressions 10% Presentation 10% 	Critical/Analytical Response to Literary Texts Assignment (30%) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Thought and Understanding 7.5% Supporting Evidence 7.5% Form and Structure 5.0% Matters of Choice 5.0% Matters of Correctness 5.0%
<i>Part B: Reading</i>	The <i>Part B: Reading</i> component is an assessment of students’ abilities to read a variety of literary texts closely. Critical reading and thinking skills; understanding of vocabulary; appreciation of tone, figurative language, and rhetorical devices; understanding of the purposes and effects of writers’ choices; and appreciation of human experience and values reflected in literature will be assessed. Text types include excerpts from extended texts —novel, book-length nonfiction, modern and/or contemporary drama, and Shakespearean drama—and shorter texts —poetry; short story; visual texts; persuasive, personal, expository, biographical, and autobiographical essays; and popular nonfiction. Some questions will be linked to more than one reading selection; that is, they will ask students to consider two or more readings connected by technique, context, and/or theme.	
Time Limits on Diploma Examinations	All students may now use extra time to write diploma exams. This means that all students now have up to 6 hours to complete the <i>English Language Arts 30–1 Diploma Examination</i> , if they need it. The examination is still designed so that the majority of students can comfortably complete it within 3 hours. The examination instructions state both the original time and the total time now available. Extra time is available for diploma examinations in all subjects, but the time limits of other examinations may differ. For more information about accommodations and provisions for students, please refer to the General Information Bulletin .	

Suggested word count range

All Part A Humanities written-response assignments contain a suggested word count range. Students can use the suggested word count range, along with the suggested time limit, as a guideline when responding to the assignment. The range is not a cap, and students who handwrite will not be expected to hand-count their words.

The suggested word count ranges below are based on various sources, including the student exemplars chosen for the [Examples of the Standards for Students' Writing](#), and on discussions with psychometricians and curriculum staff. They also reflect discussions with teachers during exam development regarding the expectations for each written-response assignment.

Written-response Assignment Suggested Word Count Range

English Language Arts 30–1 Assignment 1: 600–1200 words

English Language Arts 30–1 Assignment 2: 800–1600 words

Note: There are approximately 300 words per page, depending on the font size used and other factors. The expectations for student responses, including written responses, are unchanged.

Release of examination materials

Providing examples of readings and multiple-choice questions is the best way to demonstrate how the English Language Arts 30–1 examinations have been designed to support the *Program of Studies for Senior High School English Language Arts*. The [Released Items](#) contains readings and questions from various administrations. An answer key, item descriptions, blueprint classifications, and performance data are also included to offer insights regarding the knowledge and understanding as well as skills and processes students are expected to demonstrate when writing the English Language Arts 30–1 *Part B: Reading* component.

Part A: Written Response for January and June 2024 administrations will be released immediately following the writing of the examination.

Part B: Reading **will be secured, without exception**, for the January and June 2024 administrations.

Part A: Written Response and *Part B: Reading* **will be secured, without exception**, for the November 2023, April 2024, and August 2024 administrations.

Student assessment

Because many types of assessment are suited to classroom situations only, teachers should ensure that their assessment of student progress reflects the full [Program of Studies for Senior High School English Language Arts](#).

Diploma exams are designed to match the program of studies of each subject, but what the diploma exams measure may not be the same in scope as what teachers measure. Diploma exam marks and teacher-awarded marks should reflect the same standard, however, because both assess students based on the same program of studies (curriculum). Alberta Education works with teachers to set and maintain the standards of achievement for diploma exams. This information bulletin is intended to assist teachers in understanding the provincial standards for English Language Arts 30–1.

Other support documents

[A Guide for Students Preparing to Write the English Language Arts 30–1 Diploma Examination](#) and [Examples of the Standards for Students' Writing](#) from various administrations of the *English Language Arts 30–1 Diploma Examination* are posted on the Alberta Education website. Please note that the texts presented in the Sample Personal Response to Texts Assignment on pages 19 to 21 of this document do not necessarily reflect the length or number of texts that will be presented to students in the 2023–2024 *Part A: Written Response, Personal Response to Texts Assignments*.

Blueprints

The blueprints for Part A and Part B of the *English Language Arts 30–1 Diploma Examination* are on pages 16 and 35, respectively.

Part A: Written Response

Description

Part A: Written Response, worth 50% of the total diploma examination mark, consists of two assignments:

- Personal Response to Texts Assignment
- Critical/Analytical Response to Literary Texts Assignment

Lined pages

Lined pages for handwritten student responses are not included in Part A diploma examination booklets. A [template lined page](#) (Written-Response Bilingual Lined Page) can be downloaded for printing from the Alberta Education website.

Authorized references

Students writing *Part A: Written Response* are allowed to use the following print references:

- an English and/or bilingual dictionary
- a thesaurus
- an authorized writing handbook

Seven writing handbooks are authorized by Provincial Assessment at this time for use during the administration of Part A:

- *A Canadian Writer's Guide* (J. Finnbogason and A. Valleau), second edition only
- *A Canadian Writer's Reference* (D. Hacker)
- *Checkmate: A Writing Reference for Canadians* (J. Buckley)
- *English Language Arts Handbook for Secondary Students* (Alberta Education)
- *Fit to Print: The Canadian Student's Guide to Essay Writing* (J. Buckley)
- *The St. Martin's Handbook for Canadians* (A. Lunsford et al.)
- *The Writing Process* (Q. Gehle et al.)

With the exception of *A Canadian Writer's Guide*, any edition of these texts is acceptable for use.

Students and supervising examiners must remove any extraneous material from print references.

Personal Response to Texts Assignment

The Personal Response to Texts Assignment requires students to explore a given thematic topic in response to given texts that will include visual text(s) and any combination of fiction, nonfiction, and/or poetry.

This assignment is designed to

- be completed in approximately 45 to 60 minutes
- provide students with the opportunity to use a prose form of their choice to create personal responses that convey their ideas about the topic as prompted by their reading of a text or texts
- encourage the expression of student voice with an awareness of the contexts and intended audiences of the prose forms that the students have chosen
- introduce students to the thematic context of the Critical/Analytical Response to Literary Texts Assignment

Students are expected to write developed responses that reflect the quality of logical thought and effective presentation expected of students graduating from English Language Arts 30–1.

Value: 20% of the total examination mark (Parts A and B combined)

Scoring: Scores contribute to the total examination mark in the following proportions:

Ideas and Impressions	10%
Presentation	10%

Insufficient

Compositions that provide no evidence of an attempt to fulfill the task presented in the assignment are assessed as Insufficient.

A response assigned an Insufficient receives a score of zero in both scoring categories.

Insufficient is a special category. It is not an indicator of quality. Compositions are assigned Insufficient when

- the student has responded using a form other than prose **OR**
- the student has written so little that it is not possible to assess Ideas and Impressions **OR**
- there is no evidence that the topic presented in the assignment has been addressed **OR**
- there is no connection between the text(s) provided in the assignment and the student's response **OR**
- there is no evidence of an attempt to fulfill the task presented in the assignment.

Critical/Analytical Response to Literary Texts Assignment

The Critical/Analytical Response to Literary Texts Assignment requires students to relate literature that they have studied in English Language Arts 30–1 to an assigned topic based on the thematic context introduced in the Personal Response to Texts Assignment.

The Critical/Analytical Response to Literary Texts Assignment sets a specific writing task that requires students to **choose relevant literary text(s) and appropriate support** (e.g., details, examples, illustrations) from their chosen text(s), and to select an effective method of development. The assignment requires students to demonstrate their understanding of the chosen literature studied in English Language Arts 30–1 and relate it to ideas relevant to the assigned topic.

The specific topic prompt for the Critical/Analytical Response to Literary Texts Assignment will not be identical to that of the Personal Response to Texts Assignment. It will in some manner provide a reframing of the thematic context already introduced (e.g., adding a thematic context, qualifying a theme, specifying a human attribute).

Students should choose from literary texts that they have studied in depth in English Language Arts 30–1. Texts which have literary merit and complexity of theme and style provide students with the best opportunity to produce a response that demonstrates insight and skillful analysis. When planning their response, the Personal Reflection on Choice of Literary Text(s) section allows students to explore their reasons for choosing a particular text in order to clarify their ideas prior to beginning the Critical/Analytical Response to Literary Texts Assignment.

In better responses, it is evident that students have deliberately chosen the text and support that reinforces their ideas in relation to the assigned topic.

Students are encouraged to write about literary texts that they understand and that they enjoy. The best way for students to prepare for the diploma examination is to learn strategies that assist them with the development of strong reading and writing skills.

This assignment is designed to

- be completed in approximately 1½ to 2 hours
- assess students' responses to the thematic topic
- assess the quality of students' knowledge and understanding of literary text(s) and the ability to employ, develop, and synthesize evidence to support their ideas
- assess students' ability to use an appropriate form and structure to focus, arrange, and shape their discussions using effective and correct language choices.

When responding to the Critical/Analytical Response to Literary Texts Assignment, students have the opportunity to reveal their understanding of a writer's craft and their interpretations of the texts they have chosen to discuss and to demonstrate how well they can express their ideas in first-draft writing. Markers are interested in learning what students actually think and believe. Formulaic approaches to writing often impede students' ability to express ideas clearly or to create an authentic voice.

Value: 30% of the total examination mark (parts A and B combined)

Scoring: Scores contribute to the total examination mark in the following proportions:

Thought and Understanding	7.5%
Supporting Evidence	7.5%
Form and Structure	5.0%
Matters of Choice	5.0%
Matters of Correctness	5.0%

Insufficient

Compositions that refer only to the reading selections provided in the examination or that demonstrate no evidence of an attempt to fulfill the task presented in the assignment are assessed as Insufficient.

A response assigned an Insufficient receives the score of zero in all scoring categories.

Insufficient is a special category. It is not an indicator of quality. Compositions are assigned Insufficient when

- the student has written so little that it is not possible to assess Thought and Understanding and/or Supporting Evidence **OR**
- no reference has been made to literature studied **OR**
- the only literary reference present is to the text(s) provided in the first assignment **OR**
- there is no evidence of an attempt to address the topic or to fulfill the task presented in the assignment.

Illustrative examples

The [Examples of the Standards for Students' Writing](#) documents available on the Alberta Education website are from previous examinations and are a valuable teaching resource. They demonstrate the standards for first-draft writing expected of students by the end of their English Language Arts 30–1 course in the context of a timed test. Note that the sample responses in these documents have been provided for illustrative purposes only. If students use sections from these responses when writing Part A of the diploma examination, they are guilty of plagiarism and will be in breach of examination regulations.

Blueprint purpose

The *English Language Arts 30–1 Diploma Examinations* are designed to reflect the [Program of Studies for Senior High School English Language Arts](#). The blueprint on the following page outlines the design of Part A. It presents the relationship between the requirements of the writing assignment and scoring of assignments as well as the headings and subheadings used to organize the specific learning outcomes in the program of studies.

As well, the blueprint delineates the categories used to report summary data to school authorities and high schools, and the percentage that each section of the examination contributes to the total examination mark.

English Language Arts 30–1 Diploma Examination

Part A: Written Response Blueprint

Description of Writing Assignment	Reporting Category (Scoring Category)	Cross-reference to Program of Studies	PROPORTION OF TOTAL EXAMINATION	
			Reporting Category	Section
The Personal Response to Texts Assignment requires the student to respond personally, creatively, and/or analytically to the content and contexts of a variety of texts while exploring ideas and impressions that the student may also consider in the Critical/Analytical Response to Literary Texts Assignment.	Ideas and Impressions	2.1 2.2 2.3 4.1	10%	20%
	Presentation	3.1 3.2 4.1 4.2	10%	

Description of Writing Assignment	Reporting Category (Scoring Category)	Cross-reference to Program of Studies	PROPORTION OF TOTAL EXAMINATION		
			Reporting Category	Section	
<p>The Critical/Analytical Response to Literary Texts Assignment sets a specific writing topic but allows the student to choose relevant literary text(s) and a method of development, and to select supporting details from the chosen literary text(s). The Critical/Analytical Response to Literary Texts Assignment requires the student to understand literal and implied meanings in the chosen text(s) and to synthesize thoughts clearly and express ideas effectively and correctly in writing.</p>	<p>Thought and Understanding</p> <p>The student is required to address the topic by demonstrating an understanding of the ideas developed by the text creator(s), and by analyzing and explaining the personality traits, roles, relationships, motivations, attitudes, and values of characters developed and presented in literary text(s).</p>	2.1 2.2 4.1 4.2	7.5%	30%	
	<p>Supporting Evidence</p> <p>The student is required to present relevant support and evidence from a literary text (or texts) to support ideas. Significant appropriate evidence skillfully used is required to create an effective and convincing response.</p>	2.3 3.2 4.1 4.2	7.5%		
	<p>Form and Structure</p> <p>The student is required to develop a coherent, unified composition by choosing an appropriate method to create a unified effect. A controlling idea may be implicit or explicit within the composition.</p>	2.2 3.1 4.1 4.2	5%		
	<p>Matters of Choice</p> <p>The student is required to demonstrate a repertoire of stylistic choices and vocabulary in a deliberate, precise, and controlled manner.</p>	4.2	5%		
	<p>Matters of Correctness</p> <p>The student is required to write clearly and correctly, while appropriately applying the conventions for written language.</p>	4.2	5%		
	Proportion of Total Examination Mark			50%	50%

Part A: Written Response Sample Assignments, Scoring Categories, and Scoring Criteria

January 2023

English Language Arts 30–1

Part A: Written Response

Grade 12 Diploma Examination

Description

Time: 3 hours. This examination was developed to be completed in 3 hours; however, you may take up to 6 hours to complete the examination, should you need it.

Part A: Written Response consists of two assignments worth 50% of the total English Language Arts 30–1 Diploma Examination mark.

Assignment I:

Personal Response to Texts

Value 20% of total examination mark

Assignment II:

Critical/Analytical Response to Literary Texts

Value 30% of total examination mark

Recommendation: Plan your time carefully. Use the initial planning pages. Time spent in planning will result in better writing.

- You may use the following print references:
 - an English and/or bilingual dictionary
 - a thesaurus
 - an authorized writing handbook
- Space is provided in your booklet for planning.

Do not write your name anywhere in this booklet. Feel free to make corrections and revisions directly on your written work.

Instructions

- Complete Assignment I first. The Personal Response to Texts Assignment is designed to allow you time to think and reflect upon the ideas that you may also explore in Assignment II: Critical/Analytical Response to Literary Texts. The two assignments are thematically linked, but are not identical. Complete **both** assignments.
- It is your responsibility to print out and staple all of your final written work to the designated pages in your booklet. You must also verify that this has been done correctly. Page 9 illustrates how to attach your final work to the booklet.

Additional Instructions for Students Using Word Processors

- Format your work using an easy-to-read 12-point font, double space, and use headers and footers as illustrated on page 9.

Additional Instructions for Students Who are Handwriting

- **Use the paper provided by your school for handwritten work.** Note that there is no paper provided in this booklet for final written work.
- Use blue or black ink for handwritten work.

ASSIGNMENT I: PERSONAL RESPONSE TO TEXTS

Suggested time: approximately 45 to 60 minutes

Suggested word count range: 600 to 1200 words

Carefully read and consider the texts on pages 1 to 4, and then complete the assignment that follows.

FOR WHAT BINDS US

There are names for what binds us:
strong forces, weak forces.
Look around, you can see them:
the skin that forms in a half-empty cup,
nails rusting into the places they join,
joints dovetailed on their own weight.
The way things stay so solidly
wherever they've been set down—
and gravity, scientists say, is weak.

And see how the flesh grows back
across a wound, with a great vehemence,
more strong
than the simple, untested surface before.
There's a name for it on horses,
when it comes back darker and raised: proud flesh,

as all flesh
is proud of its wounds, wears them
as honors given out after battle,
small triumphs pinned to the chest—

And when two people have loved each other
see how it is like a
scar between their bodies,
stronger, darker, and proud;
how the black cord makes of them a single fabric
that nothing can tear or mend.

Jane Hirshfield

In this excerpt from a novel set in a post-apocalyptic future, the narrator, six-year-old Benjamin Chestnut, is intrigued by his aunt, Sarat Chestnut, who is staying at his parents' home after spending seven years as a prisoner of war. She recently rescued Ben when he broke his arm.

from AMERICAN WAR

Often she wandered around the property, walking among the greenhouses. But this was the first time I'd seen her come near the levee in the daytime. It was as though she was repelled in some invisible way by the river—not by the sight of it, which was hidden by the seawall, but by the sound of it, the sound of water moving.

“How's the arm?” she asked.

“It's fine,” I replied. “In two weeks it'll be good as new.”

“It'll be better than that. Bones that set right grow back stronger.”

It was an amazing thing to hear, and whether it was true or not, instantly I believed it.

I stood up. “Do you wanna see something cool?” I asked.

“Sure.”

“Come on then,” I said. Without thinking I took her hand and led her to a place near the levee protected by the shade of a hanging willow tree. It was there, in a small pen, that I kept my pet.

“This is my turtle,” I said, pointing at the mounded, unmoving animal.

She seemed to forget me for a moment. I watched as she knelt down until her face was almost in the pen, inspecting the yellow, symmetrical markings on the shell.

“He's real slow,” I said, embarrassed at my pet's reluctance to even show its head. “Some days he doesn't even move at all.”

“She's a girl,” Sarat said.

I asked her how she knew, but she didn't answer.

Finally she broke from her trance and stood up. I wiped the dirt from the knees of her pants.

“Is it true you were in prison?” I asked.

“Yeah.”

“Why?”

“They never told me.”

“How long were you there?”

“Seven years.”

The number was incomprehensible to me; a lifetime.

“What are you gonna do when they get that cast off you?” she asked.

“Play basketball,” I said. For weeks I'd thought about little else. “My team's in first place, and if we win the rest of our games, we get to go to the championship in Atlanta. They have a water park there, got the biggest swimming pool in the whole country.”

“You like swimming?” she asked.

I nodded. “I go twice a week to the pool in Lincolntown. I'd be there today if I didn't have the cast.”

“What you doing in a pool in Lincolntown when you got the river right here?”

I laughed. “You can't swim in the river, silly.”

She looked at me as though I'd come from some other planet, and then that vague confusion turned to pity. She walked past me to the levee, shuffling slowly in that way of hers, the frame hunched and the knees threatening to give.

Where the seawall passed our backyard, my mother had painted a crude mural, the kind they have in kindergartens. It was of stick-figure children playing in the field among the apple trees, a smiling sun watching over them. She had given the children names and sometimes she'd talk to me about them as though they were real. I never understood why.

Sarat stood by the side of the levee. She was tall enough to see past the wall and through the willows. She watched the river. It wasn't until many years later that I understood the courage she was struggling to summon, the demon she had to bury before she could set foot once more into the moving water.

She turned to me. "C'mon, then," she said. "Let's go swimming."

Instinctively, I turned to see if my parents were around. Going over the levee was the one thing I was forbidden to do above all else. Beyond the wall lay death by drowning and death by disease and all the monsters that populated my mother's stern warnings. My feet froze to the soil.

"I can't swim with my cast on," I said, but it was not the cast that scared me.

"Yeah, you can," she said. "C'mon, I won't let nothing bad happen to you."

Slowly she climbed down the other side of the levee, and soon she was walking among the willows to the riverbank. Suddenly the sight of her fading behind the braided leaves filled me with panic. I imagined she might step into the river and never return, taken by that green snake to the end of the world. My feet unfroze, a newfound courage took me, and I chased after her.

From atop the levee I saw her walk into the water. She walked barefoot and fully clothed. I climbed down the wall and ran with my head to the ground, following her footsteps in the soft riverbank soil.

And then I looked up, and the monster was upon me. For the first time in my life, I was at the river. Its sound and size astounded me, the banks wild and wide, the speed of the current readable in the branches and leaves that raced along its surface. I had never seen water move this way.

She stood waist-high in the river, the water curling around her. I remember the way she looked in that moment, that violent euphoria barely sheathed behind the lips. The water curled around her wounded body and as it moved it did not heal her wounds, it cauterized.

She was motionless. I waved at her to come closer to the riverbank, but she seemed not to see me at all. She was breathing hard, though she had not run. She looked in that moment like a child, wide-eyed, uncertain. Then it dawned on me: she was afraid.

And then she was gone, fully submerged as though weighted with anvils. When she surfaced, her baggy shirt held fast to her skin and pins of light glimmered on her shaven head.

"Come here," she said.

I shook my head. "I'm scared."

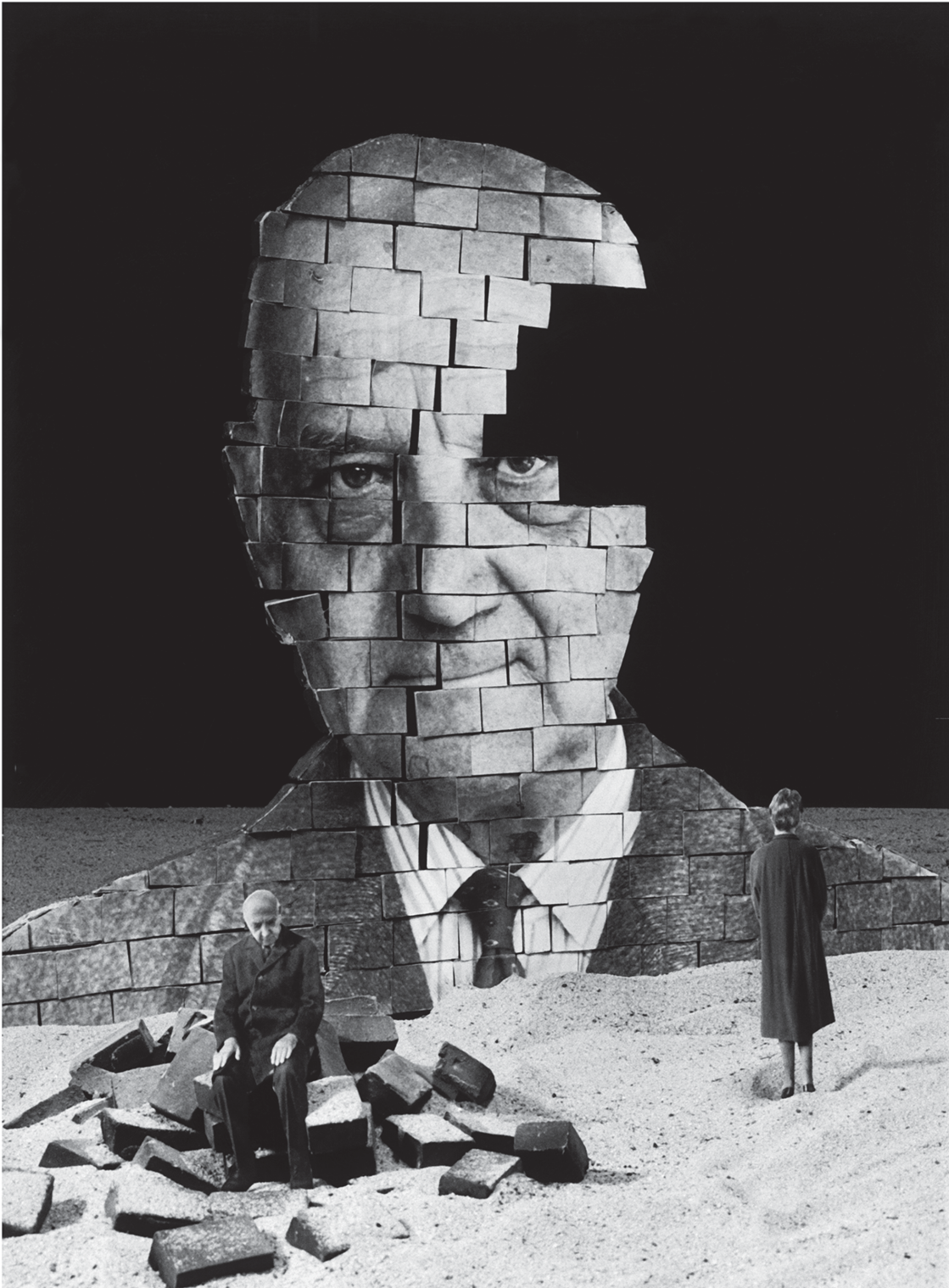
"Good," she said. "Now you have something you can kill. Come here."

I faced down the river. Everything I had known of the world suddenly felt very far away. I saw that beyond the river there was a high wall, lined with razor wire and manned by guards. And although I wouldn't be able to articulate what I felt until much later, I knew then that the bulk of the world was just like this: wild, unvaccinated, malicious. I stepped into the river.

It was only a few footsteps before the soft polished floor fell from beneath my feet, and I was taken by the current. I screamed, but her hands were quickly on me. She held me afloat and carried me in further. The sound of water was like a million invisible mouths all whispering at once. The water was alive; I knew it because the water was moving.

I looked at her then, and I saw a thing I'd never seen before. My aunt was laughing.

WORK IN PROGRESS



Work in Progress, 2004 © Gilbert Garcin/Courtesy Stephen Bulger Gallery

Gilbert Garcin

ASSIGNMENT I: PERSONAL RESPONSE TO TEXTS

Suggested time: approximately 45 to 60 minutes

Suggested word count range: 600 to 1200 words

You have been provided with three texts on pages 1 to 4. The speaker in the poem “For What Binds Us,” by Jane Hirshfield, reflects on the impact of interactions with others. In the excerpt from Omar El Akkad’s novel *American War*, the narrator recounts a unique experience that he shares with his aunt. In the black-and-white photograph *Work in Progress*, photographer Gilbert Garcin places himself in the image.

The Assignment

What do these texts suggest to you about the power of recovery in an individual’s life? Support your idea(s) with reference to one or more of the prompting texts presented and to your previous knowledge and/or experience.

In your writing, you must

- use a prose form
- connect one or more of the prompting texts provided in this examination to the topic and to your own ideas and impressions

The texts presented in the Sample Personal Response to Texts Assignment on pages 19 to 22 do not necessarily indicate the length or number of texts that will be presented to students in the 2023–2024 *Part A: Written Response, Personal Response to Texts* Assignment.

Assignment I: Personal Response to Texts

Initial Planning

To which of the provided texts are you responding? What is the connection between the text(s) and your response?

What idea about the prompting text(s) do you intend to explore and how does it address the topic?

State your choice of prose form. Choose from prose forms that you have practised in English Language Arts 30–1. You may respond using a personal, creative, or analytical perspective. Do NOT use a poetic form.

Scoring Categories and Criteria for 2023–2024

Personal Response to Texts Assignment

Ideas and Impressions

(10% of total examination mark)

Cross-reference to the *Programs of Study for English Language Arts High School Language Arts 2.1, 2.2, 2.3, 4.1*

When marking **Ideas and Impressions**, the marker should consider the quality of

- the student's **exploration** of the topic in relation to the prompting text(s)
- the student's **ideas** and **reflection**
- **support** in relation to the student's ideas and impressions.

Excellent

E

The student's exploration of the topic is insightful. Perceptions and/or ideas are confident and discerning. Support is precise and aptly reinforces the student's ideas and impressions.

Proficient

Pf

The student's exploration of the topic is purposeful. Perceptions and/or ideas are thoughtful and considered. Support is specific and strengthens the student's ideas and impressions.

Satisfactory

S

The student's exploration of the topic is generalized. Perceptions and/or ideas are straightforward and relevant. Support is adequate and clarifies the student's ideas and impressions.

Limited

L

The student's exploration of the topic is vague. Perceptions and/or ideas are superficial and/or ambiguous. Support is imprecise and/or ineffectively related to the student's ideas and impressions.

Poor

P

The student's exploration of the topic is minimal. Perceptions and/or ideas are undeveloped and/or irrelevant. Support is lacking and/or unrelated to the student's ideas and impressions.

Insufficient

INS

Insufficient is a special category. It is not an indicator of quality.

A response assigned an Insufficient receives the score of zero in all scoring categories. Assign Insufficient when

- the student has responded using a form other than prose **OR**
 - the student has written so little that it is not possible to assess Ideas and Impressions **OR**
 - there is no evidence that the topic presented in the assignment has been addressed **OR**
 - there is no connection between the text(s) provided in the assignment and the student's response **OR**
 - there is no evidence of an attempt to fulfill the task presented in the assignment.
-

Presentation

(10% of total examination mark)

Cross-reference to the *Programs of Study for English Language Arts High School Language Arts* 31, 3.2, 4.1, 4.2

When marking Presentation, the marker should consider the effectiveness of

- **voice** in relation to the context created by the student in the chosen prose form
- **stylistic choices** (including quality and correctness of language and expression) and the student's creation of **tone**
- the student's development of a **unifying and/or aesthetic effect**.

Consider the complexity of the response in terms of its context and length.

Excellent

E

The voice created by the student is convincing. Stylistic choices are precise and the student's creation of tone is adept. The unifying and/or aesthetic effect is skillfully developed.

Proficient

Pf

The voice created by the student is distinct. Stylistic choices are specific and the student's creation of tone is competent. The unifying and/or aesthetic effect is capably developed.

Satisfactory

S

The voice created by the student is apparent. Stylistic choices are adequate and the student's creation of tone is conventional. The unifying and/or aesthetic effect is appropriately developed.

Limited

L

The voice created by the student is undiscerning and/or unsuitable. Stylistic choices are imprecise and the student's creation of tone is inconsistent. The unifying and/or aesthetic effect is inadequately developed.

Poor

P

The voice created by the student is confused. Stylistic choices impede communication and the student's creation of tone is ineffective. A unifying and/or aesthetic effect is haphazard or obscure.

Notes

Because students' responses to the Personal Response to Texts Assignment vary widely—from philosophical discussions to personal narratives to creative approaches—assessment of the Personal Response to Texts Assignment on the diploma examination will be in the context of Louise Rosenblatt's suggestion:

... the evaluation of the answers would be in terms of the amount of evidence that the youngster has actually read something and thought about it, not a question of whether, necessarily, he has thought about it the way an adult would, or given an adult's "correct" answer.

Rosenblatt, Louise. "The Reader's Contribution in the Literary Experience: Interview with Louise Rosenblatt." By Lionel Wilson. *English Quarterly* 14, no.1 (Spring, 1981): 3–12.

Markers will also consider Grant P. Wiggins' suggestion that we should assess students' writing "*with the tact of Socrates: tact to respect the student's ideas enough to enter them fully—even more fully than the thinker sometimes—and thus the tact to accept apt but unanticipatable or unique responses.*"

Wiggins, Grant P. *Assessing Student Performance: Exploring the Purpose and Limits of Testing*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1993, p. 40.

**ASSIGNMENT II:
CRITICAL/ANALYTICAL RESPONSE TO LITERARY TEXTS**
Suggested time: approximately 1½ to 2 hours
Suggested word count range: 800 to 1600 words

Do *not* use the texts provided in this booklet for the Critical/Analytical Response to Literary Texts Assignment. Choose from short stories, novels, plays, screenplays, poetry, films, or other literary texts that you have studied in English Language Arts 30–1. When considering the works that you have studied, choose a literary text (or texts) that is meaningful to you and relevant to the following assignment.

The Assignment

Discuss the idea(s) developed by the text creator in your chosen text about the role of generosity when an individual undergoes the process of recovery.

In your planning and writing, consider the following instructions.

- Carefully consider your *controlling idea* and how you will create a strong *unifying effect* in your response.
- As you develop your ideas, support them with appropriate, relevant, and meaningful examples from your choice of literary text(s).

Initial Planning Page

ASSIGNMENT II: CRITICAL/ANALYTICAL RESPONSE TO LITERARY TEXTS ASSIGNMENT

Initial Planning

You may use this space for your initial planning. This information assists markers in identifying the text you have chosen to support your ideas. The markers who read your composition will be very familiar with the literary text you have chosen.

Literary Text and
Text Creator

Note: Write the title of your chosen literary text on the back cover of this examination booklet.

Personal Reflection on Choice of Literary Text

Suggested time: 10 to 15 minutes

Briefly explore your reasons for selecting the literary text as support for your response. Markers will consider the information you provide here when considering the effectiveness of your supporting evidence.

Scoring Categories and Criteria for 2023–2024

Critical/Analytical Response to Literary Texts Assignment

Thought and Understanding

(7.5% of total examination mark)

Cross-reference to the *Programs of Study for English Language Arts High School Language Arts* 2.1, 2.2, 4.1, 4.2

When marking **Thought and Understanding**, the marker should consider

- how effectively the student's **ideas** relate to the assignment
- the quality of the **literary interpretations** to show **understanding** of the text relative to the topic.

Excellent E	Ideas are insightful and carefully considered, demonstrating a comprehension of subtle distinctions in the literary text(s) and the topic. Literary interpretations are perceptive and illuminating.
Proficient Pf	Ideas are thoughtful and considered, demonstrating a competent comprehension of the literary text(s) and the topic. Literary interpretations are revealing and sensible.
Satisfactory S	Ideas are relevant and straightforward, demonstrating a generalized comprehension of the literary text(s) and the topic. Literary interpretations are general but plausible.
Limited L	Ideas are superficial or oversimplified, demonstrating a weak comprehension of the literary text(s) and the topic. Literary interpretations are incomplete and/or literal.
Poor P	Ideas are largely absent or irrelevant, and/or do not develop the topic. Little comprehension of the literary text(s) is demonstrated.
Insufficient INS	<p>Insufficient is a special category. It is not an indicator of quality. A response assigned an Insufficient receives the score of zero in all scoring categories. Assign Insufficient when</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• the student has written so little that it is not possible to assess Thought and Understanding and/or Supporting Evidence OR• no reference has been made to literature studied OR• the only literary reference present is to the text(s) provided in the first assignment OR• there is no evidence of an attempt to address the assigned topic or to fulfill the task presented in the assignment.

Supporting Evidence

(7.5% of total examination mark)

Cross-reference to the *Programs of Study for English Language Arts High School Language Arts* 2.3, 3.2, 4.1, 4.2

When marking **Supporting Evidence**, the marker should consider

- the **selection** and **quality** of evidence
- how well the supporting evidence is **employed**, **developed**, and **synthesized** to support the student's ideas.

Consider ideas presented in the *Personal Reflection on Choice of Literary Text(s)*.

Excellent

E

Support is precise and astutely chosen to reinforce the student's ideas in a convincing way. A valid connection to the student's ideas is efficiently maintained.

Proficient

Pf

Support is specific and well chosen to reinforce the student's ideas in a persuasive way. A sound connection to the student's ideas is capably maintained.

Satisfactory

S

Support is general, adequate, and appropriately chosen to reinforce the student's ideas in an acceptable way but occasionally may lack persuasiveness. A reasonable connection to the student's ideas is suitably maintained.

Limited

L

Support is inadequate, inaccurate, largely a restatement of what was read, and/or inappropriately chosen in relation to the student's ideas and thus lacks persuasiveness. A weak connection to the student's ideas is maintained.

Poor

P

Support is irrelevant, overgeneralized, lacks validity, and/or is absent. Little or no connection to the student's ideas is evident.

Form and Structure

(5% of total examination mark)

Cross-reference to the *Programs of Study for English Language Arts High School Language Arts 2.2, 3.1, 4.1, 4.2*

When marking **Form and Structure**, the marker should consider

- the manner in which the student **focuses, arranges, and shapes** the discussion in response to the assignment
- how well a **unifying effect** or a **controlling idea** is developed and maintained.

Excellent E	A judicious arrangement of ideas and details contributes to a fluent discussion that is developed skillfully. The unifying effect or controlling idea is effectively presented and integrated.
Proficient Pf	A purposeful arrangement of ideas and details contributes to a controlled discussion that is developed capably. The unifying effect or controlling idea is coherently presented and sustained.
Satisfactory S	A straightforward arrangement of ideas and details provides direction for the discussion that is developed appropriately. The unifying effect or controlling idea is generally presented and maintained; however, coherence may falter.
Limited L	A discernible but ineffectual arrangement of ideas and details provides some direction for the discussion that is underdeveloped. A unifying effect or controlling idea is inconsistently maintained.
Poor P	A haphazard arrangement of ideas and details provides little or no direction for the discussion, and development is lacking or obscure. A unifying effect or controlling idea is absent.

Matters of Choice

(5% of total examination mark)

Cross-reference to the *Programs of Study for English Language Arts High School Language Arts 4.2*

When marking **Matters of Choice**, the marker should consider how effectively the student's choices enhance communication. The marker should consider

- **diction**
- choices of **syntactic structures** (such as parallelism, balance, inversion)
- the extent to which **stylistic choices** contribute to the creation of **voice**.

Excellent

E

Diction is precise. Syntactic structures are effective and sometimes polished. Stylistic choices contribute to the creation of a skillful composition with a convincing voice.

Proficient

Pf

Diction is specific. Syntactic structures are generally effective. Stylistic choices contribute to the creation of a considered composition with a capable voice.

Satisfactory

S

Diction is adequate. Syntactic structures are straightforward, but attempts at complex structures may be awkward. Stylistic choices contribute to the creation of a conventional composition with an appropriate voice.

Limited

L

Diction is imprecise and/or inappropriate. Syntactic structures are frequently awkward and/or ambiguous. Inadequate language choices contribute to the creation of a vague composition with an undiscerning voice.

Poor

P

Diction is overgeneralized and/or inaccurate. Syntactic structures are uncontrolled and/or unintelligible. A lack of language choices contributes to the creation of a confused composition with an obscure voice.

Matters of Correctness

(5% of total examination mark)

Cross-reference to the *Programs of Study for English Language Arts High School Language Arts 4.2*

When marking **Matters of Correctness**, the marker should consider the correctness of

- **sentence construction** (completeness, consistency, subordination, coordination, predication)
- **usage** (accurate use of words according to convention and meaning)
- **grammar** (subject-verb/pronoun-antecedent agreement, pronoun reference, consistency of tense)
- **mechanics** (punctuation, spelling, capitalization).

Consider the proportion of error in terms of the complexity and length of the response.

Excellent E	This writing demonstrates confident control of correct sentence construction, usage, grammar, and mechanics. The relative insignificance of error is impressive considering the complexity of the response and the circumstances.
Proficient Pf	This writing demonstrates competent control of correct sentence construction, usage, grammar, and mechanics. Minor errors in complex language structures are understandable considering the circumstances.
Satisfactory S	This writing demonstrates control of the basics of correct sentence construction, usage, grammar, and mechanics. There may be occasional lapses in control and minor errors; however, the communication remains clear.
Limited L	This writing demonstrates faltering control of correct sentence construction, usage, grammar, and mechanics. The range of errors blurs the clarity of communication.
Poor P	This writing demonstrates lack of control of correct sentence construction, usage, grammar, and mechanics. Jarring errors impair communication.

Part B: Reading

Description

Part B: Reading is worth 50% of the total diploma examination mark and consists of 70 machine-scored questions based on readings from shorter texts and excerpts from extended texts.

Part B: Reading is an assessment of students' ability to read a variety of literary texts closely. Critical reading and thinking skills, understanding of vocabulary, appreciation of tone and literary and rhetorical devices, understanding of the purpose and effect of writers' choices, and appreciation of human experience and values reflected in literature will be assessed at the level of challenge appropriate for graduating English Language Arts 30–1 students.

Readings

Texts *will* include

- Shakespearean drama
- modern and/or contemporary drama—may include television or radio scripts or screenplays
- poetry
- fiction and nonfiction readings representing a broad selection of literary texts, which includes persuasive, personal, expository, biographical, and autobiographical texts
- photographs and other visual texts—may include cartoons, advertisements, or works of art.

Students may be required to make comparisons between thematically connected texts and/or to explore the context within which a text was created and/or presented in the readings.

Reading selections will reflect the minimum one-third Canadian texts requirement in the [Program of Studies for Senior High School English Language Arts](#). Readings will also reflect a variety of cultural perspectives.

Questions

The questions on *Part B: Reading* progress through each selection in a manner intended to guide students with their reading. For this reason, and with the inclusion of linked readings and items, students should read the passages and answer the questions in the order in which they appear in the booklets.

Linked passages and questions

When presented with texts in combination or in sequence, students are expected to maintain a critical awareness across multiple texts. Texts may be linked to reading selections that offer interpretations, background information, or parallel thematic presentations. Students may be asked to identify similar or contradictory ideas, identify biases evident in a passage, or assess the appropriateness of a conclusion drawn from the context in which the text was created or the context created by the passages collectively.

Blueprint

Part B: Reading is designed to reflect the [Program of Studies for Senior High School English Language Arts](#). The blueprint for Part B is on the following page.

English Language Arts 30–1 Diploma Examination

Part B: Reading Blueprint

Reporting Category*	A. Form Literal Understandings	B. Infer, Apply, and Analyze	C. Assess and Form Generalizations	Total Items***
1. Construct meaning from content and context, and engage contextual knowledge (2.1)**				30–40 items
2. Relate textual forms, elements, and techniques to content, purpose, and effect (2.2, 2.3.3)				20–25 items
3. Connect self, culture, and milieu to text and text creators (2.3.1, 2.3.2)				10–15 items
Total Items	5–15 items	30–40 items	15–25 items	70 items (50%)

* Texts used to assess learner outcomes are chosen for their literary merit and represent the reading standard expected of English Language Arts 30–1 graduates.

Text selections will reflect the minimum one-third Canadian texts requirement in the [Programs of Study for Grades 10–12 English Language Arts](#). **Text types** include excerpts from **extended texts**—novel, book-length nonfiction, modern and/or contemporary drama (including television or radio scripts or screenplays), and Shakespearean drama—and **shorter texts**—poetry, short story, visual texts (including photographs, works of art, cartoons, advertisements, posters, and photographic compositions); persuasive, personal, expository, biographical, and autobiographical essays; and popular nonfiction (including news stories, feature articles, reviews, interviews, and technical writing). Some questions may be **linked** to more than one reading selection; that is, the questions will ask students to consider two or more readings connected by context and/or theme.

** Numbers in parentheses refer to headings and subheadings from the [Programs of Study for Grades 10–12 English Language Arts](#) to which the reporting categories are cross-referenced.

*** Numbers of items and percentages are approximate and will vary depending on the readings chosen. Part B is worth 50% of the total *English Language Arts 30–1 Diploma Examination* mark.

Student Achievement on *English Language Arts 30–1 Diploma Examinations*

These comments are intended to provide classroom teachers with general impressions concerning strengths and weaknesses as demonstrated on previous administrations of the *English Language Arts 30–1 Diploma Examinations*. Because the diploma exams were cancelled for January 2022 there will be no commentary relating specifically to administrations in the 2021–2022 school year. Information provided here is best used in conjunction with school and/or school authority reports, and with information gleaned by the classroom teacher concerning student strengths and weaknesses displayed as part of ongoing classroom assessment. By reviewing results on past diploma examinations, classroom teachers may be able to strengthen their instructional programs and enhance student success.

To view examples of student responses to the writing assignments, [Examples of the Standards for Students' Writing](#), refer to the Alberta Education website.

Part A: Written Response

The topics for the two assignments in the *Part A: Written Response* portion of the exam are thematically linked, but are not identical. The Personal Response to Texts Assignment topic establishes a general thematic context in relation to the given prompting texts. The Critical/Analytical Response to Literary Texts Assignment then builds upon that established thematic context and asks students to consider and discuss a more narrowly focused topic in relation to a text they had studied during their ELA 30–1 course. For a number of years now, teacher markers in January and June sessions have been asked to fill in survey questions about the nature of student responses they were marking. The information gathered from these survey questions, along with observations from standards confirming and from group leaders during the marking session, serves as the basis for the following commentary.

Since the 2017–2018 school year, all students have had access to the extra-time provision. This provision has not changed the standard that is expected and that markers utilize in scoring the written-response assignments. Anecdotally, markers have reported a significant range in the length of student responses for both assignments, but that the majority of responses fit into the suggested word count ranges. Over the past few years, markers have noted that the amount and detail of student planning evident in booklets seems to have increased over time. In the most recent major administrations, just over half of students had some degree of annotation on one or more of the prompting texts for the Personal Response to Literary Texts Assignment, with about 20% exhibiting moderate or extensive annotation. Almost two-thirds of all students had moderate or extensive planning associated with their Critical/Analytical response. Overall, the extra-time provision seems to have allowed students the flexibility to engage with the material and plan their approach to the topics more thoroughly.

Assignment I: Personal Response to Texts Assignment

Students have a great deal of choice when it comes to responding to this assignment. As part of the marking survey, markers have been asked to identify the type of prose form used by students in their response. Overall, the most commonly used prose form is a hybrid model, whereby students provide some form of personal or anecdotal reference along with either an analytical or a philosophical discussion of one or more of the prompting texts that is linked to a personal or an anecdotal reference. In recent administrations, this approach has been used by approximately 40% of all students. Narrative responses, whether they be personal anecdotes or creative short stories, tend to account for close to another 40% of responses. The next largest general type of response is analytical, where students analyze one or more of the prompting texts in relation to the topic question. These responses tend to amount to roughly 10% of all response types. The remaining responses are varied in their approach. While each of these prose forms have their own inherent characteristics, the selection of a particular prose form does not necessarily indicate the level of performance that a student can be expected to achieve. Teacher markers are instructed to take into consideration the prose form chosen by the student and the expected associated features when scoring papers.

Markers note that successful “hybrid” responses exhibit clear and genuine connections between the personal reflection or anecdote and the prompting text(s) provided on the exam. Students that balance or, in some cases, interweave analysis or commentary on one or more of the prompting texts with personal experience tend to be more successful. In successful responses of this type, the blending of analysis and personal experience goes beyond just a simple comparison or “parallel” experience that illustrates a similarity to the prompting text. Students that reflect on and consider the significance of their personal experience relative to the prompting texts are able to develop ideas and demonstrate an insightful exploration of the assigned topic. In the less successful hybrid responses, however, the connection between the prompting text(s) and the student’s personal experience often lacks clear development or explanation. In the weakest responses of this type, there tends to be little, if any, connection between the student’s personal experience or anecdote and the prompting text(s). These responses often have little flow or cohesiveness; instead, they typically exhibit a disjointed presentation where the pairing of personal and analytical sections appears arbitrary or superficial.

Although the hybrid personal/analytical response is often the single most popular prose form, many students write from a personal perspective with only brief or implicit reference(s) to the prompting text(s). In the most successful responses of this nature, students generate ideas clearly in response to the prompting text(s) but focus their discussion on a meaningful anecdote, experience, or philosophical perspective and reflect on it purposefully in relation to the assigned topic. In weaker responses of this type, students tend simply to recount a narrative or an anecdote that either parallels the prompting text(s) or provides an illustration of the assigned topic. Responses of this type often do little to explore ideas or offer meaningful reflection on either the prompting text(s) or personal experience.

In terms of those students who use a creative form for their response, markers note that successful responses of this type often demonstrate awareness and use of the expected conventions associated with the chosen creative prose form as part of the aesthetic or unifying effect. Additionally, the notes on the Initial Planning page typically identify and/or outline the overall understanding, purpose, and/or intended development of the response, which allows for a focused and concise approach. In these instances, markers are readily able to recognize how the careful reading and consideration of the prompting text prompt students’ creative responses to the topic. Responses that do not provide any initial planning notes indicating the connection(s) between the students’ creative work and the prompting texts can be problematic if there is no clear link evident in the response. Although a response may be on topic, if a student fails to provide a connection between the prompting text(s) and the actual response, it will be assessed as an Insufficient.

For students who choose a more analytic form of response—whether that includes a personal aspect or not—markers note that the more successful responses demonstrate a judicious selection of support from the prompting text(s) to develop the ideas and impressions. In these responses, students are clearly exploring the assigned topic and developing their own interpretations. In less successful analytic responses, often the exploration of the student’s ideas about the topic is lacking, and the development of support does not move beyond simply providing examples from the prompting text(s) that reflect the topic. Lengthy summaries of the provided prompting text(s) alone do not constitute analysis and exploration of the topic. At times, some students respond to the assignment by making reference to or analyzing literature other than the provided prompting texts. These responses often prove challenging for markers to assess in terms of the exploration of the topic in relation to the prompting text(s), a key component of the assignment. Overall, this approach does not tend to result in successful responses and is not encouraged.

In the last major marking session (June 2023), markers were asked to identify the manner in which students referenced the prompting texts, and whether the reference(s) being made were implicit, explicit but brief, or explicit and extended. While the prose-form response to each prompting text may differ, overall more students make explicit and extended references to the prompting texts than they make implicit or explicit but brief ones. Generally, students who make extended references to the prompting text(s) have slightly stronger responses than those who make explicit but brief references. Markers have also noted that students’ implicit references often have an interpretive element and demonstrate an engagement with both the text and the topic. Students who make explicit and extended references tend to explore multiple aspects of the prompting text and thus are able to develop ideas and support in a cohesive manner. In responses where the reference to the prompting text is explicit but brief, development of the support for a student’s idea is often lacking. Markers often remark that the strongest responses, regardless of the type of reference made by the student, exhibit a clear engagement with the prompting texts as a whole in relation to the assigned topic. They also note that in many cases, even if a student identifies their response as focusing primarily on a single prompting text, there are often echoes or ideas that are clearly inspired by the other prompting text(s) on the exam. Students who engage clearly with all the prompting texts are able to make connections and develop ideas about the assigned topic more fully.

While much of the study's focus has been aimed at gaining an understanding of how students approach the assignment in terms of how they interact with the prompting texts and structure their responses, markers have indicated differences in how students respond to the topic and the impact they have on scores. Because the topic tends to be very open-ended, markers have noted that students who recognize nuance in the topic and extend or shape it tend to produce responses that are more successful. Weaker analytic responses often simply identify the thematic topic in one or more of the prompting texts, while weaker creative responses recount an event that illustrates the topic. Stronger responses, whether they are personal, analytical, or creative, develop clear ideas that address the significance of the topic in relation to the prompting text(s) and to the students' own experience or understanding.

Assignment II: Critical/Analytical Response to Literary Texts Assignment

For many sessions now, markers have indicated how important it is for students to recognize that the more narrow and focused topic of the Critical/Analytical assignment requires a confident and accurate understanding of the key words and phrases of the topic in order to determine subtleties and connotations. From this understanding of the topic, students are then better able to make a deliberate choice of a studied literary text as a starting point. Such careful selection can lead to an arrangement of ideas and evidence that will allow the student to address the topic in its entirety. In some cases, markers have noted that students seemed to have chosen a text for reasons of personal comfort and familiarity rather than for reasons of good fit with the topic. Granted, students should not write on a text that they do not know well (no matter how tidily it fits the topic), but the awkwardness of some student choices speaks to the necessity of students entering the exam having mastered a number of different texts that they can write on with confidence. Better responses clearly demonstrate a purposeful choice of literature, and the ensuing response reflects a more thorough and complete understanding of the relationship between topic, text, and analysis.

Markers have also noted that the manner in which students analyze their chosen text and develop their ideas relative to the topic has a bearing on overall performance. Students who approach this assignment by simply identifying and describing examples or situations in their chosen text that illustrate the assigned topic typically do not address significance, human complexity, or causal relationships. Without thoughtful consideration of such aspects, students do not afford themselves the opportunity to provide perceptive ideas, in-depth analysis, or competent literary interpretations on the assigned topic. Markers also note that weaker responses often exhibit large textual gaps or fail to account for critical moments in the text. While it is not possible (or even desirable) for students to write on the "entire" text of an extended work, when the lack of discussion of key events leads to uncertainty about how well a student understands the text, it becomes problematic. In better responses, students have a clearly established overall idea in response to the topic that then guides their selection of textual details for discussion. In doing so, both interpretations and supporting evidence become linked together in a cohesive overall structure.

While the majority of students clearly attempt to address the assigned topic throughout their response, markers continue to come across a particular "problem" type of paper that does not clearly fulfill the task as assigned. In some cases, markers see a response where the introduction is clearly on topic and seemingly leading to a focused analysis. However, the body of the response does not develop ideas relative to the assigned topic. The most challenging of these types of papers to mark are those where the student not only includes considerable detail from the text, but also often provides some form of literary criticism such as a commentary on symbolism or other literary devices. In papers such as these, both the level of detail and commentary clearly demonstrate that the student has some understanding of the text itself, but because the focus is not on the assigned topic, markers are left with the difficult task of scoring Thought and Understanding. While students are expected and encouraged to incorporate relevant details from a text they have studied, they also need to keep in mind that markers will be considering "how effectively the student's ideas relate to the assignment" and will be assessing "the quality of the literary interpretations to show understanding of the text relative to the topic." In the most extreme case, where the student has provided only literary analysis with no reference to the assigned topic, the response will be scored as Insufficient for not having demonstrated evidence of an attempt to fulfill the task presented in the assignment. Careful consideration of the assigned topic and deliberate planning can help the student focus the discussion appropriately.

Part B: Reading

Students continue to demonstrate their ability to apply English Language Arts 30–1 subject-specific knowledge such as the use of figurative language and rhetorical devices. As well, students demonstrate the ability to comprehend and interpret print texts from various genres that have multiple levels of meaning and considerable sophistication. Students who meet the acceptable standard are able to draw inferences from the personality traits, roles, relationships, motivations, attitudes, and values of characters presented in both straightforward and complex texts. The most difficult questions tend to be ones that require students to recognize the tone and the effect created by the use of various literary devices and text features in order to draw inferences or to make generalizations regarding a character's values and/or a text creator's attitude toward context, subject, or characters. More proficient students are able to identify the text creator's intended main idea, especially when such themes are implied rather than stated explicitly.

Classroom Assessment

The nature of classroom situations permits teachers to assess students using a broad range of assessment instruments which reflect the *Alberta English Language Arts Kindergarten to Grade 12 Program of Studies*.

[A Guide for Students Preparing to Write the English Language Arts 30–1 Diploma Examination](#) and [Examples of the Standards for Students' Writing](#) are posted on the Alberta Education website.

Website Links

[Alberta Education website](#)

[Programs of study](#)

[General Information Bulletin](#)

contains specific directives, guidelines, and procedures of diploma examinations

[Diploma examinations program](#)

[Writing diploma examinations](#)

contains Guides for Students, exemplars, and other support documents

[Quest A+](#)

contains practice questions and questions from previous diploma examinations

[Field Test Request System](#)

[Field Test Information](#)

[Teacher participation in provincial assessments](#)

contains information about marking, field testing, item development, and examination validation

[School Reports and Instructional Group Reports](#)

contain detailed statistical information on provincial, group, and individual student performance on the entire examination

Contacts 2023–2024

Provincial Assessment

Provincial Assessment,
Alberta Education
44 Capital Boulevard
10044 108 Street NW
Edmonton AB T5J 5E6

Alberta Education website: alberta.ca/education

Provincial Assessment

Diploma exam security, diploma exam rules, scheduling, policy issues

780-427-1857
Email: Exam.admin@gov.ab.ca

Results statements and rescoring

780-427-1857
Email: Exam.admin@gov.ab.ca

Field Testing general inquiries

Email: field.test@gov.ab.ca

Special cases, accommodations, and exemptions

General inquiries

780-427-9795
780-415-9242
780-427-4215
Email: special.cases@gov.ab.ca

Diploma exam format, content, confirming standards, marking, results reporting

Email: Diploma.exams@gov.ab.ca

French Assessment

Email: French.Assessment@gov.ab.ca

Diploma exam registration/*myPass* Alberta Education Help Desk

780-427-5318
Email: AE.helpdesk@gov.ab.ca

Inquiries about transcripts, detailed academic reports, and rewrite fees

780-427-5732
Email: StudentRecords@gov.ab.ca

Inquiries about school marks and mature student status

780-422-9337

Inquiries about diploma certificates

780-427-5732
Email: StudentRecords@gov.ab.ca

Student enrolment and marks

780-422-9337
Email: StudentRecords@gov.ab.ca

Digital Assessment

Email: online.assessment@gov.ab.ca

When contacting Alberta Education, please include your name, title, school name, school code, and, if referring to a student, include the student's Alberta Student Number.

Contacts 2023–2024

Provincial Assessment

***NEW** **Satinder Dhillon, Executive Director**
Provincial Assessment
780-422-3282
Email: Satinder.Dhillon@gov.ab.ca

Diploma Programs

***NEW** **Janet Rockwood, Director**
Diploma Programs
780-422-5160
Email: Janet.Rockwood@gov.ab.ca

French Assessment

***NEW** **Jessica Schultchen, Acting Director**
French Assessment
587-987-6237
Email: Jessica.Schultchen@gov.ab.ca

Nicole Lamarre, Director
French Assessment
780-422-3535
Email: Nicole.Lamarre@gov.ab.ca

Diploma Exam Leads

***NEW** **Philip Taranger**
English Language Arts 30–1
780-422-4478
Email: Philip.Taranger@gov.ab.ca

***NEW** **Keri Helgren**
English Language Arts 30–2
780-422-4645
Email: Keri.Helgren@gov.ab.ca

***NEW** **Sarah Ouellette**
Français 30–1, French Language Arts 30–1
780-422-5140
Email: Sarah.Ouellette@gov.ab.ca

Dwayne Girard
Social Studies 30–1
780-422-5161
Email: Dwayne.Girard@gov.ab.ca

Nathalie Langstaedtler
Social Studies 30–2
780-422-4631
Email: Nathalie.Langstaedtler@gov.ab.ca

Shannon Mitchell
Biology 30
780-415-6122
Email: Shannon.Mitchell@gov.ab.ca

Brenda Elder
Chemistry 30
780-427-1573
Email: Brenda.Elder@gov.ab.ca

Delcy Rolheiser
Mathematics 30–1
780-415-6181
Email: Delcy.Rolheiser@gov.ab.ca

Jenny Kim
Mathematics 30–2
780-415-6127
Email: Jenny.Kim@gov.ab.ca

***NEW** **Marc Kozak**
Physics 30
780-422-5465
Email: Marc.Kozak@gov.ab.ca

Stan Bissell
Science 30
780-422-5730
Email: Stan.Bissell@gov.ab.ca

Exam Administration

***NEW** **Jessica Schultchen, Acting Director**
Exam Administration
587-987-6237
Email: Jessica.Schultchen@gov.ab.ca

***NEW** **Pascal Couture, Director**
Digital Assessment Implementation
780-643-9157
Email: Pascal.Couture@gov.ab.ca

Amy Wu, Coordinator
Business Coordinator (GED[®], and
Special Cases and Accommodations)
Email: Amy.Wu@gov.ab.ca