Some information in this document may be subject to change due to COVID-19. See the Alberta Education website for updates.
This document was written primarily for:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Audience</th>
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<td>Parents</td>
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<td>General Audience</td>
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Alberta Education, Government of Alberta
2020–2021

*English Language Arts 30–1 Information Bulletin*

Distribution: This document is posted on the [Alberta Education website](#).

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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.
Examination Security

All English Language Arts 30–1 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 they are 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 examinations, 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 exams: All diploma examination booklets must be kept secure.

For humanities diploma exams: All diploma examination booklets must be kept secure. The only exception is for the humanities Part A: Written Response in the January and June administrations.

Unused copies of all secure examination booklets must be returned to Alberta Education.

For more information about teacher perusal copies and examination security, please refer to the General Information Bulletin.

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 available.

Extra time is available for diploma examinations in all subjects, but the total time allowed is not the same in all subjects. For more information about accommodations and provisions for students, please refer to the General Information Bulletin.
Maintaining 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 here.

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

As part of Alberta Education’s commitment to fairness to students and flexibility in the writing of diploma examinations, there may be two distinct forms (versions) of diploma examinations in some subjects during major administrations (January and June). The two forms are equated to baseline examinations 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

Deanna Shostak
Director, Diploma Programs
780-422-5160 or Deanna.Shostak@gov.ab.ca

or

Pascal Couture
Director, Exam Administration
780-643-9157 or Pascal.Couture@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 level and appropriateness of the questions. Each field test requires a large student sample to provide the examination developers with reliable information (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, 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+ system.

Teachers have a 24-hour period to peruse hybrid field tests and are provided with data on how their students performed. These data include the proportion of students who chose each alternative. Test items are blueprinted to program of studies outcomes, which allows teachers to use field-test results to learn more about their students’ strengths and areas for improvement.

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. In the case of hybrid field tests, paper copies of sources or readings are mailed to schools. Prior to the test, the paper copies must be kept secure by the school principal, and after the administration of the test, all paper copies must be mailed back to Alberta Education.

More information about field-test registration deadlines, administration, and security is available here.

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 here, or by contacting Field.Test@gov.ab.ca. Practice tests are available online.

For more information, contact

Deanna Shostak
Director, Diploma Programs
780-422-5160 or Deanna.Shostak@gov.ab.ca

or

Pascal Couture
Director, Exam Administration
780-643-9157 or Pascal.Couture@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 Gary Hoogers, English Language Arts 30–1 Exam Manager, at Gary.Hoogers@gov.ab.ca or Vera Franjic, English Language Arts 30–1 Examin, at Vera.Franjic@gov.ab.ca.
Practice Tests

To give students an opportunity to practise diploma examination-style questions and content, Alberta Education produces practice tests for most subjects that have a diploma examination. Students can access these practice tests using Alberta Education’s online test delivery system.

Special-format Practice Tests

To give students an opportunity to practise diploma examination-style questions and content 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

Laura LaFramboise
Distribution Coordinator, Examination Administration
780-492-1644
Laura.LaFramboise@gov.ab.ca

Audio Descriptions

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 diploma examination.
## Assessment Standards and Practices for English Language Arts 30–1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Weightings</th>
<th>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.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Examination Format and Weightings</td>
<td>The English Language Arts 30–1 Diploma Examination is made up of two parts: <strong>Part A: Written Response (50%)</strong> and <strong>Part B: Reading (50%)</strong>.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **Part A: Written Response Assignments, Scoring Categories, and Weightings** | **Personal Response to Texts Assignment (20%)**  
- Ideas and Impressions 10%  
- Presentation 10%  
**Critical/Analytical Response to Literary Texts Assignment (30%)**  
- Thought and Understanding 7.5%  
- Supporting Evidence 7.5%  
- Form and Structure 5.0%  
- Matters of Choice 5.0%  
- Matters of Correctness 5.0% |
| **Part B: Readings** | The **Part B: Reading** 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. |

(Continued on the next page)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time Limits on Diploma Examinations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>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 English Language Arts 30–1 Diploma Examination, if they need it. <strong>The examination is still designed so that the majority of students can comfortably complete it within 3 hours.</strong> 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 <a href="#">General Information Bulletin</a>.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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 2016* contains readings and 40 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* of both the January 2021 and June 2021 administrations of the *English Language Arts 30–1 Diploma Examination* will be released following administration; however, *Part B: Reading* will be fully secured for both the January and June 2021 administrations.
Classroom 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 Study for Grades 10–12 English Language Arts.

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 21 to 23 of this document do not necessarily reflect the length or number of texts that will be presented to students in the 2020–2021 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 17 and 39, 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 the Provincial Assessment Sector 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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description of Writing Assignment</th>
<th>Reporting Category (Scoring Category)</th>
<th>Cross-reference to Program of Studies</th>
<th>Proportion of Total Examination Mark</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>The Personal Response to Texts Assignment</strong> 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.</td>
<td><strong>Ideas and Impressions</strong> The student is required to reflect on and explore ideas and impressions prompted by the texts and the topic.</td>
<td>2.1 2.2 2.3 4.1</td>
<td>10% 20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Presentation</strong> The student is required to select an appropriate and effective prose form to convey impressions, to explore ideas, and to create a unifying and/or aesthetic effect and effective voice. The student is required to communicate clearly.</td>
<td></td>
<td>3.1 3.2 4.1 4.2</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Continued on the next page)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description of Writing Assignment</th>
<th>Reporting Category (Scoring Category)</th>
<th>Cross-reference to Program of Studies</th>
<th>Proportion of Total Examination Mark</th>
<th>Reporting Category</th>
<th>Section</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>The Critical/Analytical Response to Literary Texts Assignment</strong> 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.</td>
<td><strong>Thought and Understanding</strong> 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).</td>
<td>2.1 2.2 4.1 4.2</td>
<td>7.5%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supporting Evidence 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.</td>
<td>2.3 3.2 4.1 4.2</td>
<td>7.5%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Form and Structure</strong> 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.</td>
<td>2.2 3.1 4.1 4.2</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matters of Choice The student is required to demonstrate a repertoire of stylistic choices and vocabulary in a deliberate, precise, and controlled manner.</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Description of Writing Assignment</td>
<td>Reporting Category (Scoring Category)</td>
<td>Cross-reference to Program of Studies</td>
<td>Proportion of Total Examination Mark</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------</td>
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<td>--------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critical/Analytical Response to Literary Texts Assignment (continued)</td>
<td>Matters of Correctness The student is required to write clearly and correctly, while appropriately applying the conventions for written language.</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Proportion of Total Examination Mark</strong></td>
<td><strong>50%</strong></td>
<td><strong>50%</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Part A: Written Response sample assignments, scoring categories, and scoring criteria

January 2020

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.

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 (or handwrite) and staple all of your final written work to the designated pages in this 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.

Do not write your name anywhere in this booklet or on your response. Feel free to make handwritten revisions directly on your final response.
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.

WHO BURNS FOR THE PERFECTION OF PAPER

At sixteen, I worked after high school hours
at a printing plant
that manufactured legal pads:
Yellow paper
stacked seven feet high
and leaning
as I slipped cardboard
between the pages,
then brushed red glue
up and down the stack.
No gloves: fingertips required
for the perfection of paper,
smoothing the exact rectangle.
Sluggish by 9 PM, the hands
would slide along suddenly sharp paper,
and gather slits thinner than the crevices
of the skin, hidden.
The glue would sting,
hands oozing
till both palms burned
at the punchclock.

Ten years later, in law school,
I knew that every legal pad
was glued with the sting of hidden cuts,
that every open law book
was a pair of hands
upturned and burning.

Martín Espada

“Who Burns for the Perfection of Paper,” from CITY OF COUGHING AND DEAD RADIATORS by Martín Espada. Copyright © 1993 by Martín Espada. Used by permission of W. W. Norton & Company, Inc. This selection may not be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means without the prior written permission of the publisher.
In the following excerpt from a novel, Miranda is an artist whose current project is a science-fiction graphic novel entitled Station Eleven.

from STATION ELEVEN

This excerpt is unavailable for electronic posting.

Tomasz Gudzowaty
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 Martín Espada’s poem “Who Burns for the Perfection of Paper” reflects on the production of legal pads. In the excerpt from Emily St. John Mandel’s novel Station Eleven, Miranda considers her work and her relationships with others. Tomasz Gudzowaty’s untitled photograph is of a woman in a training centre in Kollam, India.

The Assignment

What do these texts suggest to you about the tension between an individual’s doubts and convictions? 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 21 to 23 do not necessarily indicate the length or number of texts that will be presented to students in the 2020–2021 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 2020–2021
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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>Excellent: 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.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pf</td>
<td>Proficient: 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.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S</td>
<td>Satisfactory: 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.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L</td>
<td>Limited: 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.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P</td>
<td>Poor: 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.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INS</td>
<td>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&lt;br&gt;  - the student has responded using a form other than prose <strong>OR</strong>&lt;br&gt;  - the student has written so little that it is not possible to assess Ideas and Impressions <strong>OR</strong>&lt;br&gt;  - there is no evidence that the topic presented in the assignment has been addressed <strong>OR</strong>&lt;br&gt;  - there is no connection between the text(s) provided in the assignment and the student’s response <strong>OR</strong>&lt;br&gt;  - there is no evidence of an attempt to fulfill the task presented in the assignment <strong>OR</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Excellent</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
<th>Satisfactory</th>
<th>Limited</th>
<th>Poor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>Pf</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>P</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>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.</td>
<td>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.</td>
<td>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.</td>
<td>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.</td>
<td>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.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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.


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.”

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 strength of an individual’s convictions when dealing with the expectations of others.

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 2020–2021
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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Excellent</td>
<td>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.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proficient</td>
<td>Ideas are thoughtful and considered, demonstrating a competent comprehension of the literary text(s) and the topic. Literary interpretations are revealing and sensible.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfactory</td>
<td>Ideas are relevant and straightforward, demonstrating a generalized comprehension of the literary text(s) and the topic. Literary interpretations are general but plausible.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limited</td>
<td>Ideas are superficial or oversimplified, demonstrating a weak comprehension of the literary text(s) and the topic. Literary interpretations are incomplete and/or literal.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>Ideas are largely absent or irrelevant, and/or do not develop the topic. Little comprehension of the literary text(s) is demonstrated.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Insufficient</td>
<td>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:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

  • 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).**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Excellent</th>
<th><strong>E</strong></th>
<th>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.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Proficient</td>
<td><strong>Pf</strong></td>
<td>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.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfactory</td>
<td><strong>S</strong></td>
<td>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.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limited</td>
<td><strong>L</strong></td>
<td>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.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor</td>
<td><strong>P</strong></td>
<td>Support is irrelevant, overgeneralized, lacks validity, and/or is absent. Little or no connection to the student’s ideas is evident.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Notes

Because students’ responses to the Critical/Analytical Response to Literary Texts Assignment vary widely—from philosophical discussions to personal narratives to creative approaches—assessment of the Critical/Analytical Response to Literary 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.


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.”

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**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Excellent E</th>
<th>Diction is precise. Syntactic structures are effective and sometimes polished. Stylistic choices contribute to the creation of a skillful composition with a convincing voice.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Proficient Pf</td>
<td>Diction is specific. Syntactic structures are generally effective. Stylistic choices contribute to the creation of a considered composition with a capable voice.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfactory S</td>
<td>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.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limited L</td>
<td>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.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor P</td>
<td>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.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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** | 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** | 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** | 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** | This writing demonstrates faltering control of correct sentence construction, usage, grammar, and mechanics. The range of errors blurs the clarity of communication. |
| **Poor** | 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.
Sample readings and questions

The *Released Items 2016* contains readings and 40 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.

**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

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

* 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 the January 2020 English Language Arts 30–1 Diploma Examinations

These comments are intended to provide classroom teachers with impressions concerning strengths and weaknesses as demonstrated on the English Language Arts 30–1 Diploma Examinations written in January 2020. Because the diploma exams were cancelled for June 2020, there will be no commentary on that administration. Information provided here is best used in conjunction with school and/or school authority reports for January 2020, and with information gleaned by the classroom teacher concerning student strengths and weaknesses displayed during the 2019–2020 school year. 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

In January 2020, the topics for the two assignments in the Part A: Written Response portion of the exam remained thematically linked, but the specific topics for each assignment were different. For both administrations, the Personal Response to Texts Assignment topic established a general thematic context in relation to the given prompting texts. The Critical/Analytical Response to Literary Texts Assignment then built upon that established thematic context and asked students to consider and discuss a more narrowly focused topic in relation to a text they had studied during their ELA 30–1 course. During the marking session, teacher markers were asked to fill in survey questions about the nature of student responses they were marking. The following commentary explores some of the information gathered.

For the 2019–2020 school year, all students 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 continue to report a significant range in the length of student responses, particularly for some students who took a creative approach to the Personal Response to Texts Assignment; however, many of the responses were similar in length to previous years. Some markers reported that they felt the overall average length of the Critical/Analytical Response to Literary Texts Assignment was consistent with previous years. Markers continued to note that student planning was often quite detailed. For the Personal Response to Literary Texts Assignment, just over half of students had some degree of annotation on one or more of the prompting texts, 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. The extra-time provision seems to have allowed students the flexibility to engage with the material and plan their approach 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 were asked to identify the type of prose form used by students in their response. Overall, as has been the case for a number of administrations now, the most commonly used prose form in January 2020 was a hybrid model, whereby students provided some form of personal or anecdotal reference along with either an analytical or philosophical discussion of one or more of the prompting texts and linked it to a personal or anecdotal
reference. In total, this approach was used by approximately 40% of all students. The number of students opting to provide just an analytical response to one or more of the prompting texts remained consistent with previous administrations. In terms of students using creative approaches, narratives in the form of a short story were by far the most common. In total, 20% of all students wrote a short story, which accounted for over 75% of all creative responses. The number of students using a letter as their creative form was significantly less than last year, while other creative forms had roughly the same percentage of use. 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. Figure 1 shows the selection of form types for January 2020.
As in previous administrations, successful “hybrid” responses continued to exhibit clear and genuine connections between the personal reflection or anecdote and the prompting text(s) provided on the exam. Markers noted that increasingly the more successful of these responses balanced or, in some cases, interwove analysis or commentary on one or more of the prompting texts and personal experience. This consideration of the prompting text went beyond just a simple comparison or “parallel” experience and allowed students the opportunity to reflect on and consider the significance of their personal experience in order to develop ideas and demonstrate an insightful exploration of the assigned topic. In the less successful hybrid responses, however, the connection to the student’s personal experience often lacked clear development or explanation. In the weakest responses of this type, there was often little, if any, connection noted between the student’s personal experience or anecdote and the prompting text(s). These responses tended to have little flow or cohesiveness; instead, they typically had a disjointed presentation and the pairing of personal and analytical sections was seemingly arbitrary or superficial.

Although the hybrid personal/analytical response was still the single most popular prose form, the number of students who wrote from a personal perspective with only brief or implicit reference(s) to the prompting text(s) continues to be very high. In the most successful responses of this nature, students generated ideas clearly in response to the prompting text(s) but focused their discussion on a meaningful anecdote, experience, or philosophical perspective and reflected on it purposefully in relation to the assigned topic. In weaker responses of this type, students tended simply to recount a narrative or anecdote that either paralleled the prompting text(s) or provided an illustration of the assigned topic. Responses of this type did little to explore ideas or offer meaningful reflection on either the prompting text(s) or personal experience.

For students who chose a more analytic form of response—whether that included a personal aspect or not—markers noted that the more successful responses demonstrated a judicious selection of support from the prompting text(s) to develop the ideas and impressions. In these responses, students were 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 was lacking, and the development of support did not move beyond simply providing examples from the prompting text(s) that reflected the topic. Lengthy summaries of the provided prompting text(s) alone did not constitute analysis and exploration of the topic.

In terms of those students choosing to utilize a creative form for their response, markers noted that successful responses of this type often demonstrated awareness and use of the expected conventions associated with the chosen creative prose form as part of the unifying effect. Additionally, the notes on the Initial Planning page typically identified and/or outlined the overall understanding, purpose, and/or intended development of the response, which allowed for a focused and concise approach. In these instances, markers were readily able to recognize how students’ creative responses to the topic were prompted by the careful reading and consideration of the prompting text(s). As in previous administrations, markers continued to note that some responses were problematic in that they offered little or no evidence that the students had actually read, thought about, and developed a response to the prompting text(s). 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.
There continued to be a small number of students responding to the assignment by making reference to or analyzing literature other than the provided prompting texts. As in previous administrations, these responses often proved challenging for markers to assess in terms of the exploration of the topic in relation to the provided prompting text(s). In some of these cases, there was no reference to any of the prompting texts, which resulted in them being assessed as Insufficient. Overall, this approach does not result in successful responses and is not encouraged.

Another form of “problematic response” appearing in marking sessions is one where a reference to one or more of the prompting texts is made in the planning, but markers can find no evidence in the response itself that reflects the claimed link between the student’s ideas and the prompting text(s). Although the planning page(s) often assist markers by giving them some indication of the direction taken by the student, the response must clearly exhibit the exploration of the assigned topic in relation to one or more of the prompting texts. Regardless of the prose form chosen by the student, there must be clear reference to at least one of the prompting texts in the response.

In addition to identifying the prose form, markers were also 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. The January 2020 Personal Response to Texts Assignment had three prompting texts: Martín Espada’s poem “Who Burns for the Perfection of Paper,” an excerpt from Emily St. John Mandel’s novel *Station Eleven*, and an untitled black-and-white photograph by Tomasz Gudzowaty. While the prose-form response to each prompting text may differ, overall more students made explicit and extended references to the prompting texts than they did implicit or explicit but brief ones. This pattern held true for all prompting texts, but was especially apparent with the novel excerpt, where over half of the students referring to it did so with explicit and extended reference. Figure 2 shows the breakdown of prompting text(s) used in student responses and the manner in which students made reference to them.
Overall, students who made implicit or explicit and extended references to the prompting text(s) tended to have slightly stronger responses than those who had explicit but brief references. Markers noted that students’ implicit references often had an interpretive element and demonstrated an engagement with both the text and the topic. Students who made explicit and extended references tended to explore multiple aspects of the prompting text and thus were able to develop ideas and support in a cohesive manner. In responses where the reference to the prompting text was explicit but brief, development of the support for a student’s idea was often lacking. Markers often expressed that the strongest responses, regardless of the type of reference made by the student, exhibited a clear engagement with the prompting texts as a whole in relation to the assigned topic. They also noted that in many cases, even if a student focused their response primarily on a single prompting text, there were echoes or ideas that were inspired by the other text(s). Students who clearly engaged with all the prompting texts were able to make connections and develop ideas about the assigned topic more fully.

In January 2020, students dealt with the topic of “the tension between an individual’s doubts and convictions” in a number of different ways. Most students attempted to address and explore the primary thematic elements in their response. In many cases, students were more clearly able to articulate specific doubts while the concept of “convictions” tended to be less well developed.
Many students identified convictions as beliefs or goals. While the majority of students were able to consider some aspect of tension evident between doubts and convictions, weaker responses often tended to focus on one concept or the other, and did little to address or consider the tension between these two elements in any meaningful way. Straightforward responses often presented the relation between the two elements as a sort of struggle where often an individual’s convictions or determination would simply overcome whatever doubts were present. More-complex responses typically explored the background to both an individual’s doubts and convictions and were able to explain why they were in tension. Sophisticated responses often expanded on an insightful analysis of the source of an individual’s doubts and convictions before exploring the element of tension in a highly nuanced way. In many cases, the tension was not regarded as something static or as a battle that could be resolved, but instead was explored as a force that influenced behaviour in some way.

Assignment II: Critical/Analytical Response to Literary Texts Assignment

Overall performance on the Critical/Analytical Response to Literary Texts Assignment remained relatively consistent with previous administrations. In January 2020, students were asked to write about “the strength of an individual’s convictions when dealing with the expectations of others.” As with the first assignment, students were able to approach the topic from a number of different perspectives. While most students attempted to address both convictions and expectations of others in their response, markers found that the concept of expectations was typically handled in a more concrete manner than convictions. In weaker responses, students tended to equate convictions with goals, without establishing a connection to how a character’s goals would be a manifestation of their convictions. In these cases, students often relied on retelling events of their chosen text and focusing more of the analysis on the expectations of others. Generally, however, students were able to discuss convictions in relation to a character’s beliefs or values. Depending on the text selected, students typically dealt with expectations either from other individual characters or from the position of society as a whole. Overall, markers found that stronger papers were those that delved into the aspect of “strength” and how an individual character’s convictions were formed. These papers often analyzed how a character’s convictions would be re-evaluated or even changed as a result of the expectations placed upon them.

On the whole, markers indicated how important it was 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 then lead to an arrangement of ideas and evidence that will allow the student to address the topic in its entirety. In some cases, markers noted that students seemed to have chosen a text for reasons of personal comfort and familiarity rather than for reasons of a 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 demonstrated a purposeful choice of literature, and the ensuing response reflected a more thorough and complete understanding of the relationship between topic, text, and analysis.

Markers also noted that the manner in which students analyzed their chosen text and developed their ideas relative to the topic had a bearing on overall performance. Students who approached this assignment by simply identifying and describing examples or situations in their chosen text that illustrated the assigned topic typically did little to 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 noted that weaker responses often exhibited large textual gaps or did not 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, the supporting evidence and textual details were clearly selected and arranged in a way that demonstrated a cohesive structure. This arrangement resulted in the establishment of a unified controlling idea and contributed to the thoughtful development of interpretations and ideas in relation to the topic.

While the majority of students clearly attempted to address the assigned topic throughout their response, markers continued to come across a particular “problem” type of paper. These were responses where the introduction would clearly be on topic and seemingly leading to a focused analysis. However, the body of the response would not develop ideas relative to the assigned topic. The most challenging of these types of papers to mark were those where the student not only included considerable detail from the text, but also often provided 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 demonstrated that the student had some understanding of the text itself, but because the focus was not on the assigned topic, markers were 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

In the 2020 examinations, students demonstrated that they could apply English Language Arts 30–1 subject-specific knowledge such as the use of figurative language and rhetorical devices. As well, students demonstrated the ability to comprehend and interpret print texts from various genres that have multiple levels of meaning and considerable sophistication. Consistent with results from previous administrations, results within the Blueprint Reporting Categories 1 and 2 indicate that 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. As in previous administrations, the most difficult questions required 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 were able to identify the text creator's intended main idea, especially when such themes were implied rather than stated explicitly.
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

School Reports and Instructional Group Reports
contain detailed statistical information on provincial, group, and individual student performance on the entire examination
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