

**Information
Bulletin**

**English
Language
Arts**

30–1

2016–2017 Diploma Examinations Program

Alberta  Government

This document was written primarily for:

Students	✓
Teachers	✓ of English Language Arts 30–1
Administrators	✓
Parents	
General Public	
Others	

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Diploma Examinations: Multiple Forms

As part of Alberta Education's commitment to fairness to students, and to expand flexibility in the writing of diploma examinations, the number of distinct examination forms (versions) has increased. There are now two forms 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 thoroughly 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.

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Special-format Practice Tests

To provide students an opportunity to practise diploma examination-style questions and content in Braille, audio, large print, or coloured print versions, Alberta Education is making special-format practice tests available. Tests are offered in all subjects with a corresponding diploma examination. Alberta schools with registered Alberta K–12 students may place orders for these tests. Braille tests 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 everyone.

For more information or to place an order, contact

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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.

Weightings

On September 1, 2015, the diploma examination weighting shifted from a 50/50 weighting to a 70/30 weighting, where the school-awarded grades are worth 70 percent. For further information, please refer to [Marks, Results, and Appeals](#).

Release of Examination Materials

Releasing a diploma examination in its entirety is the best way to demonstrate how the ELA 30–1 examinations have been designed to support the *Program of Studies for Senior High School English Language Arts*. The January 2008 *Part B: Reading* examination was released to Alberta High Schools in the English Language Arts 30–1 2010 *Released Items* document. This document is not available online, but copies are available in schools.

Part A: Written Response of both the January 2017 and June 2017 English Language Arts 30–1 Diploma Examinations will be released following administration; however, *Part B: Reading* will be fully secured for both the January and June 2017 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 Studies for Senior High School 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 10 to 16 of this document do not necessarily reflect the length or number of texts that will be presented to students in the 2017 *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 9–10 and 28–29, respectively.

Assessment Standards and Practices for English Language Arts 30–1

Weightings	On September 1, 2015, the diploma examination weighting shifted from a 50/50 weighting to a 70/30 weighting, where the school-awarded grades are worth 70 percent. For further information, please refer to Marks, Results, and Appeals .	
Examination Format and Weightings	The English Language Arts 30–1 Diploma Examination 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 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.	
Time Limits on Diploma Examinations	The English Language Arts 30-1 Diploma Examination Part A: Written Response and the Part B: Reading components each have a time limit of 3 hours. The time limits of other diploma examinations may differ.	

Part A: Written Response

Description	<p><i>Part A: Written Response</i>, worth 50% of the total diploma examination mark, consists of two assignments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Personal Response to Texts Assignment• Critical / Analytical Response to Literary Texts Assignment
Lined Pages	<p>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 at http://www.education.alberta.ca/admin/testing/forms.aspx.</p>
Authorized References	<p>Students writing <i>Part A: Written Response</i> are allowed to use the following print references:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• an English and/or bilingual dictionary• a thesaurus• an authorized writing handbook <p>Seven writing handbooks are authorized by the Provincial Assessment Sector at this time for use during the administration of Part A:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>A Canadian Writer's Guide</i> (J. Finnbogason and A. Valteau), second edition only• <i>A Canadian Writer's Reference</i> (D. Hacker)• <i>Checkmate: A Writing Reference for Canadians</i> (J. Buckley)• <i>English Language Arts Handbook for Secondary Students</i> (Alberta Education)• <i>Fit to Print: The Canadian Student's Guide to Essay Writing</i> (J. Buckley)• <i>The St. Martin's Handbook for Canadians</i> (A. Lunsford et al.)• <i>The Writing Process</i> (Q. Gehle et al.) <p>With the exception of <i>A Canadian Writer's Guide</i>, any edition of these texts is acceptable for use. <i>The St. Martin's Handbook for Canadians</i> and <i>The Writing Process</i> are out of print, but copies of these texts may be available for student use in some high schools.</p> <p>Students and supervising examiners must remove any extraneous material from print references.</p>

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 to a topic that is related to the thematic context introduced in the Personal Response to Texts Assignment.

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 fulfill the task presented in the assignment.

Illustrative Examples

The [*Examples of the Standards for Students' Writing*](#) documents available on the Alberta Education website at education.alberta.ca 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

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 Mark		
			Reporting Category	Section	
<p>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.</p>	<p>Ideas and Impressions The student is required to reflect on and explore ideas and impressions prompted by the texts and the topic.</p>	2.1	10%		
		2.2			
		2.3			
		4.1			
		4.2			
	<p>Presentation 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.</p>	3.1	10%	20%	
		3.2			
		4.1			
		4.2			
		4.2			
<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 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	7.5%		
		2.2			
		4.1			
		4.2			
	<p>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.</p>	<p>Form and Structure 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>	2.3	7.5%	30%
			3.2		
			4.1		
			4.2		
			4.2		
			4.2		
<p>Matters of Choice The student is required to demonstrate a repertoire of stylistic choices and vocabulary in a deliberate, precise, and controlled manner.</p>	<p>Matters of Correctness The student is required to write clearly and correctly, while appropriately applying the conventions for written language.</p>	4.2	5%		
		4.2			
Proportion of Total Examination Mark			50%	50%	

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

January 2016

English Language Arts 30–1

Part A: Written Response

Grade 12 Diploma Examination

Description

Time: 3 hours. You have a total of 3 hours to complete this examination.

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 this booklet for planning.

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

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.

Sample ASSIGNMENT I: PERSONAL RESPONSE TO TEXTS ASSIGNMENT
Suggested time: approximately 45 to 60 minutes

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

The Leaving

My father said I could not do it,
but all night I picked the peaches.
The orchard was still, the canals ran steadily.
I was a girl then, my chest its own walled garden.
How many ladders to gather an orchard?
I had only one and a long patience with lit hands
and the looking of the stars which moved right through me
the way the water moved through the canals with a voice
that seemed to speak of this moonless gathering
and those who had gathered before me.
I put the peaches in the pond's cold water,
all night up the ladder and down, all night my hands
twisting fruit as if I were entering a thousand doors,
all night my back a straight road to the sky.
And then out of its own goodness, out
of the far fields of the stars, the morning came,
and inside me was the stillness a bell possesses
just after it has been rung, before the metal
begins to long again for the clapper's stroke.
The light came over the orchard.
The canals were silver and then were not,
and the pond was—I could see as I laid
the last peach in the water—full of fish and eyes.

Brigit Pegeen Kelly

Kelly, Brigit Pegeen. "The Leaving." In *To the Place of Trumpets*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988.
Copyright © 1988 by Brigit Pegeen Kelly.

This excerpt is from a novel set in a remote part of northern Ontario. Bruno has brought his eighty-two-year-old aunt to a roadside hotel run by the narrator, Steve.

from AND THE BIRDS RAINED DOWN

‘What’s her name?’

‘Gertrude.’

‘You’re not serious!’

‘Yes, but we’ll have to find something else for her.’

I only half understood, but I was reassured. If we had to produce fake ID for the woman, it wasn’t hard. We had done it for Charlie, and then for Tom. I don’t even remember their real names. Ted didn’t need any, because he was running only from himself.

Bruno handled the paperwork, fake and real. ... If it was just a matter of getting her fake ID, he didn’t have to bring her to me. So whatever it was, it was a lot more complicated.

A lot more complicated, in fact, than anything I could have imagined. The story of Gertrude, who became, at our hands, Marie-Desneige, was long. Very long. She was eighty-two years old when Bruno brought her to me, and her story had begun sixty-six years earlier when her father admitted her to a psychiatric hospital. ...

Bruno didn’t know why she had been committed. In fact, no one in Bruno’s family had known anything about her. They didn’t even know she existed. A letter was discovered after the death of Bruno’s father, among the deceased’s papers, in which Gertrude begged her brother to get her out of that hell. She was thirty-seven years old. The letter was dated May 15, 1951, and bore the letterhead of the Ontario Hospital, but the address, 999 Queen Street West, contained all the drama of a life – 999 Queen Street West was notorious throughout the province as the place in Toronto where thousands of the mentally ill were sent.

There was no further correspondence. No other trace of the woman who had signed *Your sister Gertrude* in the deceased’s papers. The letter had gone unanswered.

‘It’s appalling, there’s no other word for it,’ is what I told Bruno, ‘it’s terrible,’ and he nodded his head.

‘Yes, it’s terrible, and yet my father was a loving man. He raised us to care about others and to want to help, within reason. That’s what defined my father, I think. Within reason. And it was the too-reasonable side of him that made him fear his sister’s supposed insanity – “supposed” because she’s not crazy, I’m telling you. She is in full possession of her faculties.’

‘Sixty-six years in an asylum is not reasonable.’

‘No, not exactly reasonable, but you have to understand.’

His father, his grandfather, his uncles, his aunts – all those who had come before him were guilty. A life had been wasted because of them. But Bruno couldn’t help it. He had to defend his father and his blood.

‘You have to understand. It was ignorance, the dark ages, the fear of anything that couldn’t be seen or understood. It was the times.’

It wasn’t like Bruno to defend the failings of another era. Nothing he was doing or saying was like him. He was nervous, agitated, his hands were fluttering like butterflies. ...

The letter had gone unanswered. Bruno’s father had to die for it to be discovered.

‘My mother,’ Bruno began, and I knew that it would get stuck in his throat. He had never had a good relationship with his mother.

‘My mother couldn’t bear it. The letter was written with impeccable grammar, not a single error of spelling or syntax. The handwriting was also remarkable: elegant, graceful, fine loops, downstrokes with pretty flourishes. All from the hand of a woman institutionalized at the age of sixteen.

‘That’s what convinced my mother – the letter with no mistakes – to move heaven and earth to find her relative. Specifically her use of the word *whom*. My mother had taught for thirty years, and she was moved to read sentences like *There are those of us for whom life is cruel and unjust.*’

She found her relation in a home in the suburbs of Toronto. ...

‘My mother just wanted something to do, to let off steam, to keep busy preparing meals and organizing a family celebration around the long-lost relative, and then when everything was done, when there was nothing left to keep her busy, so long, Gertrude. The poor lunatic was to be sent back to where she came from. Except there was a snag.’

The snag was the fiery eyes that sought out Bruno in the living room bursting with uncles, aunts, cousins and second cousins – a long sidelong look that snaked its way through the crowd and came to rest on Bruno’s earlobe.

‘They had all filed past her, all astonished by her excellent mental health. They were making comments and being mildly appalled. I refused to take part in the circus. But when an old woman just out of the asylum seeks you out with her eyes ... ’

The dissident nephew approached his aunt, and once he leaned over her, he understood.

‘It was my earring that had caught her eye.’

She pointed to his earring and told him, in a confidential tone, as if to warn him of a serious misunderstanding, ‘You’ve made a mistake. You’re a boy, not a girl,’ and he, in the same tone, said, ‘You’re right, auntie. When I got up this morning I thought I was a girl,’ and, understanding the game, she said, ‘It’s true. Sometimes it’s hard to know what’s what in the morning,’ and they laughed the same laugh.

This incident and others that followed – because regularly that day they found themselves laughing at private jokes, shared flights of fancy – convinced him to stay at his mother’s the whole time his aunt was there. His mother, naturally, had no idea what was going on. I understood. This woman was the only member of her species, alone on her own planet, and Bruno likes those who are unique.

‘She sees things we don’t see.’

But on the evening of the third day, they were no longer laughing. Her departure was set for the next morning, and she watched the preparations warily. He had not seen that look in her eye before. It was anger dug up from deep inside, sixty-six years of internment, a devil’s cauldron of emotions. He felt like she was on the verge of hurling it all in their faces and yet she didn’t. She held back. Sixty-six years of holding back. She knew that anger was no good, that authority punished anger, and authority at this moment was the two people who were packing her suitcase; she turned her eyes, wild with the rage of impotence, to Bruno. It was to him that she said, ‘I don’t want to go back there.’

‘That was yesterday – a century ago. What would you have done if you were in my position?’

The same thing, Bruno. I would have done the same thing, I thought.

Jocelyne Saucier
Translated by Rhonda Mullins

And the Birds Rained Down

Jocelyne Saucier, translated by Rhonda Mullins. Published by Coach House Books, 2012.
Originally published in French in 2011 as *Il pleuvait des oiseaux* by Les Éditions XYZ inc.

Coney Island, NY, 1969



Stephen Salmieri

Stephen Salmieri/www.salmieriphotos.com

ASSIGNMENT I: PERSONAL RESPONSE TO TEXTS

Suggested time: approximately 45 to 60 minutes

You have been provided with three texts on pages 1 to 4. In the poem “The Leaving,” the speaker reflects on a night’s labour. In the excerpt from *And the Birds Rained Down*, Bruno and the narrator discuss the circumstances leading to Gertrude’s arrival at the hotel. The photograph by Stephen Salmieri shows a carnival worker posing in front of a game of chance.

The Assignment

What do these texts suggest to you about the forces that inhibit or encourage an individual’s actions? Support your idea(s) with reference to one or more of the 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 12 to 15 do not necessarily indicate the length or number of texts that will be presented to students in the 2016–2017 Part A: Written Response, Personal Response to Texts Assignment.

Initial Planning Page

Personal Response to Texts Assignment

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 practiced 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 Scoring Criteria for 2016–2017 Personal Response to Texts Assignment

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.

Ideas and Impressions (10% of total examination mark)
Cross-Reference to the *Program of Studies for Senior High School English Language Arts* 2.1, 2.2, 2.3, 4.1

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

- 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.** 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

Scoring Categories and Scoring Criteria for 2016–2017
Personal Response to Texts Assignment
(continued)

Presentation (10% of total examination mark)
Cross-Reference to the *Program of Studies for Senior High School English Language Arts* 3.1, 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.

***NEW**

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.

Sample ASSIGNMENT II: CRITICAL/ANALYTICAL RESPONSE TO LITERARY TEXTS ASSIGNMENT

Suggested time: approximately 1½ to 2 hours

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 nature of motivations that direct an individual’s course of action.

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

Sample 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 Scoring Criteria for 2016–2017 Critical / Analytical Response to Literary Texts Assignment

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.*

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.

Thought and Understanding (7.5% of total examination mark)
Cross-Reference to the *Program of Studies for Senior High School English 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

Insufficient is a special category. It is not an indicator of quality. Assign 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 fulfill the task presented in the assignment.

Scoring Categories and Scoring Criteria for 2016–2017 Critical / Analytical Response to Literary Texts Assignment

Supporting Evidence (7.5% of total examination mark)
Cross-Reference to the *Program of Studies for Senior High School English 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.

Scoring Categories and Scoring Criteria for 2016–2017 Critical / Analytical Response to Literary Texts Assignment

Form and Structure (5% of total examination mark)
Cross-Reference to the *Program of Studies for Senior High School English 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.

Scoring Categories and Scoring Criteria for 2016–2017 Critical / Analytical Response to Literary Texts Assignment

Matters of Choice (5% of total examination mark)
Cross-Reference to the *Program of Studies for Senior High School English 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.

***NEW**

Scoring Categories and Scoring Criteria for 2016–2017 Critical / Analytical Response to Literary Texts Assignment

Matters of Correctness (5% of total examination mark)
Cross-Reference to the *Program of Studies for Senior High School English 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 assist 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 they may be asked to 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

In September 2010, the January 2008 *Part B: Reading* examination was released for teachers to use in preparing their students for the *Part B: Reading* examination. Copies of the Released Items for ELA 30–1 were sent to Alberta High Schools directly.

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

<i>Reporting Category*</i>	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)				15–25 items
3. Connect self, culture, and milieu to text and text creators (2.3.1, 2.3.2)				5–15 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 [Program of Studies for Senior High School 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, cartoons, works of art, advertisements, posters, photographic compositions), persuasive, personal, expository, biographical, and autobiographical essays, and popular nonfiction (including news stories, feature articles, reviews, interviews, technical writing). 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 context and/or theme.
- ** Numbers in parentheses refer to headings and subheadings from the *Program of Studies for Senior High School 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.

***NEW** *Student Achievement on the January and June 2016 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 and June 2016. Information provided here is best used in conjunction with school and/or school authority reports for January and June 2016, and with information gleaned by the classroom teacher concerning student strengths and weaknesses displayed during the 2015–2016 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 at <http://education.alberta.ca>.

Part A: Written Response

In January and June 2016, 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.

Assignment I: Personal Response to Texts Assignment

In both January and June, markers noted that students took a variety of approaches to the assignment and topics. As in recent administrations, the “hybrid” form whereby students provided some form of a personal anecdote along with some analytical discussion of one or more of the prompting texts continued to be the most common form of response; however, many students found the prompting texts provided material for them to engage in creative responses from a variety of perspectives, utilizing both implicit and explicit details for support. The overall number of creative responses remained quite consistent with previous years’ administrations. As in previous years, the short story format was by far the most popular creative form choice. In June, the number of students choosing to respond using a creative form was lower than in January. In a somewhat problematic way, the number of students analyzing literature on the Personal Response to Texts Assignment other than the provided prompting texts was higher than in the previous year. These responses do not clearly complete the task presented and often prove challenging for markers to assess in terms of the exploration of the topic in relation to the prompting text(s). In some of these responses, there was no reference to any of the prompting texts, which resulted in them being assessed as Insufficient. 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.

As in previous administrations, the more successful “hybrid” responses exhibited clear and genuine connections between the personal anecdote and the prompting text(s) provided on the exam. The most successful of these responses balanced or, in some cases, interwove analysis of one or more of the prompting texts and personal experience. The connections made then allowed students the opportunity to consider the significance of their ideas and demonstrate an insightful exploration of the assigned topic. In the less successful hybrid responses, however, there was often little, if any, connection noted between the student’s personal experience or anecdote and the prompting text(s). Often, the reference(s) to the prompting text(s) were cursory in nature, doing little more than briefly paraphrasing an aspect of the prompting text(s). In these instances, the discussion tended to be somewhat disjointed and/or unbalanced. Markers noted that, in these cases, assessing the “unifying and/or aesthetic effect” in Presentation often proved to be difficult.

For 2016, markers noted a significant increase in the number of students who wrote primarily 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 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 to provide a narrative or anecdote that simply 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 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 of situations that reflected the topic. Lengthy summaries of the provided prompting text(s) or detailed recounting of personal narratives 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 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.

In January, students found that the poem “The Leaving” offered fruitful material as a writing prompt, particularly for personal connections and reflections. Many students drew parallels with the speaker facing a significant challenge. The poem in June, “Atrophy,” was also a popular choice, and students utilized the imagery and metaphors present in the poem as support for both personal and analytic responses. The prose excerpts from both administrations were also frequently referenced by students. In the excerpt from *And the Birds Rained Down* in January, many students focused on the complex circumstances surrounding Bruno’s decision to help his eighty-two-year-old aunt leave a psychiatric hospital. In June, students utilized the excerpt from *The Signature of All Things* in a variety of ways, focusing primarily on the vitality of the child, Alma. The black-and-white photographs in both administrations tended to prompt more creative responses. As in previous administrations, those students who extended their use of support beyond just inserting a literal detail from the visual (or any of the prompting texts for that matter) tended to create responses of greater sophistication and a more nuanced exploration of ideas relative to the topic. In weaker responses to either visual, students often lost sight of the assigned topic and failed to construct a unified idea and/or created implausible scenarios or situations for the characters depicted.

In January, students were clearly able to respond to the topic “about the forces that inhibit or encourage an individual’s actions.” In general, students typically identified a number of ways that individuals act or are prevented from acting. In weaker responses, students offered some description of an action taken, but provided little analysis about the “forces” that influenced the action. Stronger responses tended to explore the circumstances surrounding an act or action, and, in particular, considered the implications or results for those involved. In June, the question “about the power an individual has to create a meaningful life” offered students multiple entry points for discussion. As a starting point, many students sought to identify what constitutes a meaningful life and proceeded to consider the role of choice as an aspect of determining whether or not a meaningful life is achieved. Stronger responses reflected the aspect of agency inherent in the topic and elevated the discussion through a consideration of the factors that either grant individuals power and agency in their own life or restrict their ability to create a meaningful life.

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; however, students’ selection of supporting evidence from a studied text in relation to an assigned topic and their ability to structure a focused and cohesive response remain areas of concern. On the whole, in both January and June, students recognized that the more narrowed and focused topics of the Critical / Analytical demanded a deliberate choice of a studied literary text as a starting point, and that careful arrangement of the ideas and evidence was required in order to address the topic in its entirety. 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. Overall, in better responses, the supporting evidence and textual details were clearly selected and arranged in such 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. Additionally, these stronger responses considered the connotations and implications of the topic as a whole. Not surprisingly, markers indicated how important it was for students to develop a confident and accurate understanding of the key words and phrases of the topic in order to determine subtleties and nuances.

In January, students were asked to write about “the nature of motivations that direct an individual’s course of action.” As in the first assignment, many students seemed to find the topic very accessible and readily discussed the “actions” of a character or characters and generally recognized that they were motivated by some force. Markers noted that students typically identified that the relationship between motivation and action suggested a cause-and-effect relationship in order to explain why a character acted in a particular manner. In more successful responses, students extended this analysis to consider the “nature” of a character’s motivations, realizing that motivation is often not singular or unified and can come from both internal and external forces. Additionally, stronger responses often considered how the phrase “course of action” was not necessarily the same as “actions” and suggested an element of consequence. These distinctions allowed for a more thorough and multifaceted analysis of the complexities and consequences of human behaviour.

In June, students were asked to write about “the interplay between time and opportunity when an individual seeks to create a meaningful life.” Markers noted that the student’s choice of literary text on which to focus the discussion often had a considerable impact in how the topic was approached, particularly when it came to the phrase “seeks to create a meaningful life” and whether or not it was achieved. Students also had to determine how they would consider the aspect of time, which again was often dictated by text selection and whether time was considered as timing, the passage of time, the historical timeframe, or in some other manner. Despite the apparent complexity of the topic, students seemed to find that it provided direction for them to focus their discussion. As in January, those students who considered and dealt with the topic as a whole tended to offer more complex interpretations and develop more sophisticated analyses.

As in previous administrations, markers again noted that more purposeful responses contained some thoughtful and detailed initial planning regarding the selection of support and the arrangement of ideas about the topic, which provided the student with direction and structure. The demands of the Critical / Analytical Response to Literary Texts Assignment require careful attention to and consideration of all the elements within the topic question. Closely connected to students’ understanding of the topic was the choice of text for the assignment. In some cases, 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 to analyze and a careful consideration of the assigned topic as a whole. The ensuing response then reflected a more thorough and complete understanding of the relationship between topic, text, and analysis.

Part B: Reading

In the 2016 examinations, students demonstrated that they could apply ELA 30–1 subject-specific knowledge such as the use of figurative language and rhetorical devices. As well, the 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. The better students were able to identify the text creator’s intended main idea, especially when such themes were implied rather than stated straightforwardly.

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Inquiries about special cases,
achievement test accommodations, and
special format materials can be sent by email to
special.cases@gov.ab.ca

Inquiries about field testing
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