Examples of the Standards for Students’ Writing

English Language Arts 30–1

From the January 2013 Diploma Examination

Alberta Government
This document was written primarily for:

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<td>Students</td>
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<td>General Public</td>
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<td>Others</td>
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Acknowledgements

Publication of this document would not have been possible without the permission of the students whose writing is presented. The co-operation of these students has allowed us to continue illustrating the standards of writing performance expected in the context of diploma examinations and demonstrate the variety of approaches taken by students in their writing.

This document includes the valuable contributions of many educators. Sincere thanks and appreciation are extended to the following Standards Confirmers: Tim Bonner, Jennifer Crumpton, Cammy Feehan, John Finnie, Amanda Huddleston, Brad Kaminsky, Janine Metzner Huizing, Jeff Madsen, and Heather Wheatland.

We gratefully acknowledge the contributions made by members of the Humanities Unit and the Document Design and Desktop Publishing Unit of the Assessment Sector, Alberta Education.

You can reach us with your comments and questions by email to Gary.Hoogers@gov.ab.ca, John.Finnie@gov.ab.ca, or Deanna.Shostak@gov.ab.ca, or by regular mail at

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We would be pleased to hear from you.
**Introduction**

The written responses in this document are examples of English Language Arts 30–1 Diploma Examination writing that received scores of Satisfactory (S), Proficient (Pf), or Excellent (E). These sample responses are taken from the January 2013 administration. Along with the commentaries that accompany them, they should help you and your students to understand the standards for English Language Arts 30–1 Diploma Examination writing in relation to the scoring criteria.

The purpose of the sample responses is to illustrate the standards that governed the January 2013 marking session. The sample papers and the commentaries were used to train markers to apply the scoring criteria consistently and to justify their decisions about scores in terms of each student’s work and the criteria.

The sample responses included in this document represent a very small sample of successful approaches to the assignments.

**Selection and Use of Sample Papers**

The teachers on the Standards Confirmation Committee for the January 2013 marking session selected the examples of student responses included here. They also wrote the commentaries that discuss the students’ writing in terms of the scoring criteria used for marking.

During their preparation for the January 2013 marking session, markers reviewed and validated the standards represented by these sample responses. Markers then used these sample responses as guidelines for marking the written-response sections of the January 2013 English Language Arts 30–1 Diploma Examination.

**Cautions**

1. **The commentaries are brief.**

   The commentaries were written for groups of markers to discuss and apply during the marking session. Although brief, they provide a model for relating specific examples from student work to the details in a specific scoring criterion.

2. **Neither the scoring guide nor the assignments are meant to limit students to a single organizational or rhetorical approach in completing any diploma examination assignment.**

   Students must be free to select and organize their materials in a manner that they feel will enable them to best present their ideas. In fact, part of what is being assessed is the final effectiveness of the content, the form and structure, and the rhetorical choices that students make.

   The student writing in this document illustrates *just a few of the many* successful organizational and rhetorical strategies used in January 2013.
We strongly recommend that you caution your students that there is no preferred approach to an assignment except the approach that best accomplishes the student writer’s goal of effectively communicating his or her own ideas about the topic.

We advise you not to draw any conclusions about common patterns of approach taken by students.

3. **The sample papers presented in this document must not be used as models for instructional purposes.**

Because these papers are illustrations only, and because they are sample responses to a set topic, students must be cautioned not to memorize the content of any of these assignments or to use them when completing classroom assignments or when writing future diploma examinations.

The approaches taken by students at the standard of excellence, not their words or ideas, are what students being examined in the future should consider emulating. In fact, it is hoped that the variety of approaches presented here will inspire students to experiment with diction, syntax, form, and structure as a way of developing an individual voice and engaging the reader in ideas and forms that the student has considered.

Examination markers and staff at Alberta Education take any possibility of plagiarism or cheating seriously. The consequences for students are grave.

4. **It is essential that you consider each of these examples of student writing in light of the constraints of the examination situation.**

Under examination conditions, students produce first-draft writing. Given more time, students would be expected to produce papers of considerably improved quality, particularly in the dimensions of Presentation, Matters of Correctness, and Writing Skills.

5. For further information regarding student performance on the Part A: Written Response, access the [English Language Arts 30–1 Information Bulletin](#).
January 2013

**English Language Arts 30–1**

**Part A: Written Response**

*Grade 12 Diploma Examination*

**Description**

**Time:** 2½ hours. This examination was developed to be completed in 2½ hours; however, you may take an additional ½ hour to complete the 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

**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. Complete both assignments.

- Space is provided in this booklet for planning.

- 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.*
Useless Boys

There’s an automotive warehouse
in the north end of the city
backing on a field that for
a few weeks every summer
is full of daisies. My father
has his lunch out there. The warehouse,
his twenty-year stint; clocks stretched around
his legs, a pay cheque over his
mouth. The years are showing,
responsibilities wrecking
his heart.

Such a moth-life is not for me—
remember how we’d talk? … all our
plans were promises not to be
like our fathers. No direction
to go, just a finger of a
man telling us which way not to.
We were going to be free, dashed
away by any wind that came
along. No padlocked love, no tokens.
We said we were afraid of mousegrey
interiors, of men who limped,
of buildings where they paid you to age.

So how did it go? … one of my
arms has turned into a pen. I’m
blind now but there’s braille. I build
a better world on paper
then sell it. Someone told me you
were living in an air
conditioner, just counting the
money. Here’s to you. We must have
been crazy. Lucky us, useless
boys, found cures for all our dreams.

Barry Dempster
This excerpt is unavailable for electronic posting.
The Fall of Superman Near Bliss Street Station (V4)

Simon Donikian

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 “Useless Boys” by Barry Dempster, the speaker reflects on the consequences of decisive choices. In the excerpt from Cutting for Stone, Marion reflects on the interplay between his chosen course of study and Ghosh’s mentorship. In Simon Donikian’s painting The Fall of Superman Near Bliss Street Station (V4), Superman plummets to the ground.

The Assignment

What do these texts suggest to you about the human need to make a commitment or renounce a course of action? 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 texts provided in this examination to your own ideas and impressions
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 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.

________________________________________________________________________

Use additional paper for planning if required.
ASSIGNMENT II:  
CRITICAL/ANALYTICAL RESPONSE TO LITERARY TEXTS  
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 human need to make a commitment or renounce a 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).
Assignment II: Critical/Analytical Response to Literary Texts

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.
Background

For all diploma examination scoring sessions, Assessment Sector staff use a process of standards confirmation to establish and illustrate expectations for students’ work in relation to the scoring criteria and to ensure scoring consistency within and between marking sessions. Because there are several diploma examination administrations and scoring sessions each school year, the standards must remain consistent for each scoring session in the school year and, similarly, from year to year.

Standards for student achievement start with both the demands of the Program of Studies for senior high school English Language Arts and the interpretation of those demands through learning resources and classroom instruction. These agreed-upon standards are also exemplified in the kinds of tasks and the degree of independence expected of students. All these complex applications of standards precede the design, development, and scoring of each diploma examination.

The Standards Confirmation Committee is composed of experienced teachers from representative regions of the province. These teachers work with the Assessment Sector staff responsible for the development, scoring, and results-reporting for each diploma examination. Teacher-members participate over a two-year period and are required to serve as group leaders or markers during at least one of the subsequent marking sessions.

There are two essential parts to applying standards at the point of examination scoring: the expectations embedded in the scoring criteria and the examples of students’ work that illustrate the scoring criteria within each scoring category. The scoring categories and scoring criteria are available to teachers and students via the English Language Arts 30–1 Information Bulletin. During each of the January and June marking sessions, example papers selected by members of the Standards Confirmation Committee are used to train markers. Subsequent to each marking session, the example papers that received scores of Satisfactory (S), Proficient (Pf), and Excellent (E) are posted on the Alberta Education website at education.alberta.ca in the documents entitled Examples of the Standards for Students’ Writing.

During the standards confirmation process,

- the appropriateness of the standards set by the examination in relation to students’ work is confirmed
- student responses that clearly illustrate the standards in the scoring categories and the scoring criteria are selected and are used when training markers
- rationales that explain and support the selection of sample papers in terms of the scoring categories, scoring criteria, and students’ work are written
Examples of Students’ Writing with Teachers’ Commentaries

English Language Arts 30–1, January 2013
Personal Response to Texts Assignment

Example Scored Satisfactory (S)

Initial Planning

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

The story (Cuttng for Stone) → Manian wanted to be his own person, different from his twin (for once). He used determination and followed his dream & achieving a dream he had found.

What idea do you intend to explore and how does it address the topic?

I intend to explore the idea that with determination and a set of goals, one can make a strong commitment towards their ambition. → need someone to guide you!

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.
Assignment I: Personal Response to Texts

Planning

Experience w/me -> brother supported me the most

The author suggests that in order to make commitment towards something one should be very determined. I have someone to guide them.
In the story, "Cutting for Stone," Marion is presented as an ambitious child who wants to pursue his dream with great determination and interest. It is evident from the excerpt that Marion, being an orphan, wants people to realize he needs his time to develop into a person who he can associate with. In order words, he is very grateful that Ghosh is someone who is "never prying, but knows when I (Marion) needed him," as it helped Marion get the courage to open up and accomplish the things he found interest in. It is important for Marion to be able to make his own decision without his twin, Shiva influencing him which Ghosh understood as Ghosh didn't force Marion to take dancing lessons like Shiva. This proved to Marion that "you can be you" without having to worry about what other people want you to become. His commitment was to become an individual learner and thinker and with the help of a leader like Ghosh, Marion started finding who he was (after the visits to the hospital). Marion's dedication towards Science was because of Ghosh's helpful hand and his reassurance that Marion could follow his own aspirations. Marion agrees that in order to know what to look for, "you needed a guide." The significance of Marion's determination is trying to find who he really was and with the guidance of his foster father Ghosh as well as his strong commitment towards becoming an independent individual, Marion was able to find himself.

Similar to Marion's experience with discovering yourself, I too went through certain events that helped me understand who I really was and who I wanted to become. My brother has always been the person who I would go to whenever I needed advice or guidance. From the start, my parents really urged me to become an Engineer as most of my relatives as well as my cousins were pursing in that career. Feeling pressurized, I started concentrating and spending a
lot of time improving on Physics, as it was my weakest subject. When I saw no improvement in my grades, I started panicking and cried as I went to my brother for help. Instead of helping me get better on Physics, he told me to follow my heart and do the things I always took interest in, which was Biology. His words played a great role in who I am now as he was the only one who made me realize no matter what others think of you, don’t crush your own dreams. After that day, I made a promise to myself that no matter what anyone says, I would not let them take over my decisions because in the end I was the one responsible for my actions for which I did not want to regret later on. My commitment in becoming a better student by focusing on what I loved the most helped me get through junior high and set me up as a strong independent individual now. If it was not for my brother, I would not be the person I am now. I needed time to truly understand who I was and what I stand for, which my brother understood.

In order to be make a commitment, it is vital to give yourself time to understand what you stand for and not let those around you influence your decisions as well as get the guidance from people who understand you and help you pursue your dreams. Marion’s foster father gave Marion a stethoscope which was only his and not "a pair," which proved to Marion that even though he had a twin, he did not have to be just like him but could commit towards a different goal which brought happiness to him. With the help of my brother’s advice, I also found it easier to do the things I enjoyed rather than forcing myself to become like the majority of my family. By dedicating myself into following my own goals, I have become a stronger person overall.
English Language Arts 30–1 January 2013
Personal Response to Texts Assignment

EXAMPLE PAPER—SATISFACTORY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SCORING CRITERIA</th>
<th>RATIONALE</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ideas and Impressions (S)</td>
<td>As indicated on the <em>Initial Planning</em> page, the student approaches the topic with the central idea that Marion is fortunate to have “a person like Ghosh to guide him towards a path to find himself” (1). This <em>perception</em> about the need for a commitment from both a guide and from oneself is <em>straightforward</em> and <em>relevant</em>. The student selects <em>adequate support</em> from the excerpt regarding Ghosh’s guidance of Marion during “the visits to the hospital” (3), using <em>relevant</em> quotations such as “‘never prying, but knows when I (Marion) needed him’” and “‘you can be you’” (3). The student then uses an <em>adequate</em> personal example of the student’s brother guiding the student with the advice “to follow my heart and do the things I always took interest in, which was Biology” (4), rather than attempting a futile pursuit of engineering and physics. <em>Support</em> from both the excerpt and the student’s personal experience <em>clarifies the student’s ideas</em> about making a “strong commitment towards becoming an independent individual” (3). Ghosh’s guidance leads to “Marion’s dedication” (3) and the “reassurance that Marion could follow his own aspirations” (3), which the student <em>clarifies</em> with the statement “even though he had a twin, he did not have to be just like him” (4). Similarly, the student realizes “I needed time to truly understand who I was and what I stand for” (4) in order to avoid “forcing myself to become like the majority of my family” (4). <em>Exploration of the topic</em> remains <em>generalized</em> with the conclusion that people need to “understand what you stand for” (4), “get the guidance from people who understand you” (4), and “become a stronger person overall” (4).</td>
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S
## English Language Arts 30–1 January 2013
### Personal Response to Texts Assignment

## EXAMPLE PAPER—SATISFACTORY

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<tr>
<th>SCORING CRITERIA</th>
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<td><strong>Presentation (S)</strong></td>
<td>The student approaches the personal response methodically by creating a discussion of Marion in the first paragraph and the student’s own situation in the second paragraph. By employing the functional transition “Similar to Marion’s experience with discovering yourself, I too went through certain events” (3), the student creates an apparent voice. The use of the second person pronoun in the conclusion, “it is vital to give yourself time to understand what you stand for and not let those around you influence your decisions” (4), also contributes to an apparent voice with a conventional tone. <strong>Stylistic choices</strong>, such as “trying to find who he really was” (3) and “If it was not for my brother, I would not be the person I am now” (4), are adequate. Occasional proofreading errors, such as the capitalization of “Engineer” (3), and vocabulary irregularities, such as “Feeling pressurized” (3) and “In order to be make a commitment” (4), are understandable under the circumstances of timed, first-draft writing and do not interfere with the conventional tone of the response. The student <strong>appropriately develops the unifying effect</strong> by paralleling Marion’s and the student’s similar “great determination” (3) to “commit towards a different goal”(4) through the assistance and support of a helpful and kind-hearted guide to “help you pursue your dreams” (4).</td>
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S
Initial Planning

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

The Fall of Superman Near Bliss Street Station

It is part of human nature to feel a need to make a commitment or renounce a course of action, and more often than not it leads to one’s demise.

What idea do you intend to explore and how does it address the topic?

When humans feel obliged to make a commitment or renounce a course of action, they believe they are doing the right thing, although more often than not this decision will lead to their demise.

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.

Critical Analytical Response
Humans are unique in nature, being that we can think deeply on an issue or topic and act according to what our views and beliefs shape to be the best possible course of action. When someone deals with a moral dilemma, they have to dig deep into themselves and come up with the ideal situation. When humans feel obliged to make a commitment or renounce a course of action they believe that they are doing the right thing and are one step closer to happiness or bliss, although more often than not this decision will lead to their demise. Every time someone makes a commitment or resents a decision, they believe that it brings them one step closer to the happiness that they so desire. Is this happiness, the proverbial Elysian Fields, really what it has been made out to be? In the photo, 'The Fall of Superman Near Bliss Street Station', Superman, viewed as one of the greatest heroes of all time, not to mention unstoppable, is depicted plummeting to the ground just before he reaches a place named Bliss Street Station.

Faster than a speeding bullet, able to jump over tall buildings; this is the Superman people know and love, definitely not the one that is falling to his demise just short of Bliss Street Station. Superman is a hero, which means that he embraced his unique situation, and dedicated his life to helping those around him. In doing this, he is committing to a certain course of action to try and draw nearer to a sense of self-fulfillment and inner bliss. Although as depicted in the picture he is very close to this place, but falls to his ultimate demise just short of it. This is what happens no matter what anyone does, they search and make decisions their whole lives striving for that final eternal happiness, but such a thing does not exist. In the case of not only Superman, but all humans, people feel a need to commit or reject something. This fills us as a collective with a sense of purpose and meaning; if everyone on the planet sat on the fence for every decision that needed to be made, nothing would get done. It is this difference of opinion that creates a sense of
Example Scored Proficient–1 (Pf)

purpose in individuals and collectives, it gives them a sense of meaning to their lives instead of sitting idly by. They are all making these decisions and taking these sides though searching for one thing, bliss.

Is this bliss something to strive for though, or is it just a mere idealist thought that something so perfect really exists in the world? In the illustration the Bliss Street Station's name is deceiving, in that it is not all that blissful when you actually get there. The people look hunched over and walk with a slouch that can only give the impression that all is not well. The streets are littered with garbage and stray animals, including snakes. These snakes represent deceit and trickery; although Bliss Street Station sounds like the place to be, in reality it is just as bad if not worse than the rest of the world. The age old saying, "the grass is always greener on the other side of the fence", is a great interpretation of what this carton is saying. Even though people make commitments or renounce decisions no matter where you end up it will never be good enough, and this represents someone's ultimate demise. If a person strives their whole life to get to a place that they think is perfect, but when they finally get there it is not what it was made out to be, then they have nothing left to live for. People's primal need and desire to commit to something or disregard it, is what eventually leads to their demise.

In pursuit of doing the 'right' thing and trying to find eternal happiness through filling our lives with commitments and rejections, we as humans are just acting upon our nature. We feel the need to do these things and act the way we do because we believe that it will bring us to a better place, but in reality it just leads us to our ultimate downfall. Maybe evolution can change our
physical features to make us more adaptable to our surroundings, but one thing it can never do is change our primal nature; our need to fill our lives with commitment and rejection, that will never change.
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<th>SCORING CRITERIA</th>
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<tr>
<td>Ideas and Impressions (Pf)</td>
<td>In the introduction, the student establishes a <strong>thoughtful and considered</strong> controlling idea: “When humans feel obliged to make a commitment or renounce a course of action they believe that they are doing the right thing and are one step closer to happiness or bliss, although more often than not this decision will lead to their demise” (2). The student links the futile pursuit of bliss to Superman by posing the question “Is this happiness, the proverbial Elysian Fields, really what it has been made out to be?” (2) and then considering how Superman “is depicted plummeting to the ground” (2). In echoing the traditional description of Superman, “Faster than a speeding bullet, able to jump over tall buildings” (2), the student <strong>thoughtfully</strong> notes that “this is the Superman people know and love, definitely not the one that is falling to his demise just short of Bliss Street Station” (2). What follows is a <strong>purposeful exploration of the topic</strong> as the student addresses how people “search and make decisions their whole lives striving for that final eternal happiness” (2); however, the student proposes that this quest is folly: “the Bliss Street Station’s name is deceiving, in that it is not all that blissful” (3). To emphasize the failure of the pursuit of bliss, the student uses the <strong>specific support</strong> of “The people look hunched over and walk with a slouch that can only give the impression that all is not well” (3). <strong>Specific support</strong> for the student’s questioning of bliss’s true nature is offered: “The streets are littered with garbage and stray animals, including snakes” (3) which “represent deceit and trickery” (3). The student presents the <strong>thoughtful</strong> perception that “If a person strives their whole life to get to a place that they think is perfect, but when they finally get there it is not what it was made out to be, then they have nothing left to live for” (3). In the conclusion, the student reflects on the topic when stating that “through filling our lives with commitments and rejections, we as humans are just acting upon our nature” (3) and returns to the idea that “in reality it just leads us to our ultimate downfall” (3), a <strong>perception that is thoughtful and considered.</strong></td>
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# English Language Arts 30–1 January 2013
## Personal Response to Texts Assignment
### EXAMPLE PAPER—PROFICIENT–1

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>SCORING CRITERIA</th>
<th>RATIONALE</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Presentation (Pf)</strong></td>
<td>The student creates a <strong>distinct voice</strong> that is evident in the opening statement: “Humans are unique in nature, being that we can think deeply on an issue or topic and act according to what our views and beliefs shape to be the best possible course of action” (2). <strong>Stylistic choices are specific</strong>, as in the following sentence structures and rhetorical questions: “Every time someone makes a commitment or resents a decision, they believe that it brings them one step closer to the happiness that they so desire” (2) and “Is this happiness, the proverbial Elysian Fields, really what it has been made out to be?” (2). The <strong>student’s creation of tone is competent</strong>, as in “Is this bliss something to strive for though, or is it just a mere idealist thought that something so perfect really exists in the world?” (3) and “Maybe evolution can change our physical features to make us more adaptable to our surroundings, but one thing it can never do is change our primal nature” (3–4). <strong>The unifying effect is capably developed</strong> and maintained through the interpretation of the visual prompting text and the sustained philosophical discussion. The student <strong>capably</strong> returns to the controlling idea at the start of each body paragraph, brings in supporting evidence from the prompting text, and concludes with the interpretation of the evidence as it relates to the controlling idea about the ambiguity of pursuing bliss through commitment to or rejection of courses of action.</td>
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<td>Pf</td>
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English Language Arts 30–1, January 2013
Personal Response to Texts Assignment

Example Scored Proficient–2 (Pf)

Initial Planning

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

Responding to “Useless Boys” by Barry Dempster.
Connection is in the generations teaching
how to dream to their children while still
dreaming to the extent that they can as adults

What idea do you intend to explore and how does it address the topic?

Growing up shouldn’t require you to give
up your dreams for something more practical
or useful, but parenting requires you to give the
same opportunity to your kids. As the children, it’s
our responsibility to take that opportunity, until the time
when it’s our turn to inspire dreams in our own children,
and support those dreams.

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.

Short story

Never too late to
renew commitment to a
lifestyle you don’t enjoy.

(Page 1 of 4)
To my father

I don't think I've ever properly thanked my dad. For all his awkward hugs and quiet, halting pep talks, he's the reason I'm not one of them. One of him, I suppose. Maybe that's why he did it.

I'm a dancer. Nobody knows why, both my parents are lawyers and my brother is at law school. But I am, and there's no denying it. Not now at least. There may have been some time around the end of high school when I wasn't so certain. I like to refer to it as my mid-life crisis, at the ripe age of seventeen.

I was an academic. I liked school, weird as that seemed to all my friends. I was part of that ten percent who really tried in school. Keeners, that was the term. I was getting high grades when it seemed like everyone else was just getting high. Community service hours, part-time job to help pay for university, all that jazz. I did dance on the side, but not to the extent I would later have to commit to it to make it as a professional. I was committed, heart and soul, to school. I had my university applications all sent out, including McGill, of which my dad was an alumni.

It was when I got my acceptance letter back that everything changed. Not McGill's acceptance letter, though that was a major factor in the decision, trust me. Royal Ballet School's acceptance letter. A ballet school. A world renown ballet school. Here I was thinking I was going into international relations with the eventual goal of pre-law, and suddenly I was considering moving halfway across the world to dance for six hours a day.
Example Scored Proficient–2 (Pf)

I thought I had known my dreams. Or my aspirations, anyway. My goals? I wasn’t even sure they were mine anymore. Not even eighteen, I sat down on my day-bed beside my teddy bear and considered the rest of my life. I had a hard time deciding what to wear in the mornings, let alone what to do with my life. I had been following the formula, the secret family recipe, a two cups of high school, one cup of university, and maybe a dash of extracurricular activity on the side for flavour. I hadn’t even been the one to pick dance. That was my parent’s doing. But falling in love with it? That was my dad’s doing.

He took me to my first ballet, The Nutcracker, and propped me up on the top of the unfolded theater seat, since I was too short to see over the throngs of high-class women with their enormous hair-dos. He bought me every pair of pointe shoes I needed, and had my first pair bronzed and signed by Celia Franca herself. He rushed me to my recitals and struggled in vain to do my bun until I was old enough to do my own hair. Whether in the wings or in the audience he’d always been the one to applaud the loudest, and get the biggest bouquet of roses he could find, and mumble some heartfelt words of congratulation.

But what really saved me was before I could even remember. My mom talks about it sometimes, my dad would never admit to have done it. I was three, and I was crying. I’ve always been a perfectionist, in school and in dance. I couldn’t get the steps just right, and I was ready to give it up and go home. So what did my shy, self-conscious father do? He got in there and showed me how it was done. Never letting my hand slip from his, it was my father who taught me how to pirouette. He didn’t look nearly as pretty as I did, his tie and slacks dull compared to my fluffy pink everything. His face was anything but dull, though. Smile to his ears and laughter all but drowning out the music, it was the best
father-daughter dance anyone could ever ask for.

But when I asked him if he was coming to dance class again with me the next day, his face fell, his voice lowered back to its usual volume and tone, and he said he couldn't. I asked why, and he "So that you can." And that's what I do now. Every once in a while I catch him (in the wings or in the audience) tie loosened, with that same grin on his face, feet tapping along in time with the music.

Thanks, Dad.
## SCORING CRITERIA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ideas and Impressions (Pf)</th>
<th>RATIONALE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• The student’s exploration of the topic is purposeful.</td>
<td>The student <strong>purposefully explores the topic</strong> through a creative first-person narrative of a young woman whose commitment to dancing is fostered by her father, the man to whom the piece is dedicated. She reflects on why her father is “the reason” (2) that she is the person she is, as opposed to being “one of them. One of him” (2), and she recounts the conflict between her desire to dance and her commitment “heart and soul, to school” (2).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Perceptions and/or ideas are thoughtful and considered.</td>
<td>Torn between studying law and studying dance at a “world renown ballet school” (2), the narrator recalls the time when she no longer understood her aspirations or goals. Reflecting on her love of dance, she recognizes that it was her “dad’s doing” (3) given that he had taken her to see “The Nutcracker” (3) and, when she was three years old, taught her “how to pirouette” (3). When she asked him “if he was coming to dance class again” (4), he responded that he could not. Asked why, he said, “‘So that you can’” (4). This detail, implying that the father needed to work to support his daughter’s dance career, reveals a <strong>considered perception</strong> of a theme developed in “Useless Boys.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Support is specific and strengthens the student’s ideas and impressions.</td>
<td><strong>Support is specific and strengthens the student’s ideas and impressions</strong> throughout, such as “I had been following the formula, the secret family recipe, a two cups of high school, one cup of university, and maybe a dash of extracurricular activity on the side for flavour” (3) and “He bought me every pair of pointe shoes I needed, and had my first pair bronzed and signed by Celia Franca herself” (3).</td>
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</table>

As the story concludes, the narrator shows how her father still supports her by showing up at her performances. This narrative fulfils the student’s intention of developing the **thoughtful idea** stated on the *Initial Planning* page: “Growing up shouldn’t require you to give up your dreams for something more practical or useful, but parenting requires you to give the same opportunity to your kids. As the children, it’s our responsibility to take that opportunity, until the time when it’s our turn to inspire dreams in our own children” (1).
### SCORING CRITERIA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Presentation (Pf)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- The voice created by the student is distinct.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Stylistic choices are specific and the student’s creation of tone is competent.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- The unifying effect is capably developed.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

### RATIONALE

The student creates a **distinct voice** for a character looking back on her formative childhood and teenage years, remembering the internal conflict she felt with regards to her future, and recognizing the role her father played in guiding her toward her destiny: “I don’t think I’ve ever properly thanked my dad. For all his awkward hugs and quiet, halting pep talks, he’s the reason I’m not one of them” (2).

The **tone** is controlled and **competent** as a result of **specific stylistic choices** employed by the student to characterize the narrator and the crucial events of her childhood and adolescence: “I was getting high grades when it seemed like everyone else was just getting high” (2), “He rushed me to my recitals and struggled in vain to do my bun until I was old enough to do my own hair” (3), and “So what did my shy, self-conscious father do? He got in there and showed me how it was done. Never letting my hand slip from his, it was my father who taught me how to pirouette” (3).

The **unifying effect is capably developed** through the student’s deliberate and effective use of a non-linear narrative that establishes the narrator’s profession and alludes to the role her father played. The narrator explores the tension she experienced in trying to decide her path in life in her teenage years, details her childhood experiences with her father and dancing, and effectively concludes with the reinforcement of her father’s unwavering commitment to his daughter’s pursuit of her dream: “Every once in a while I catch him (in the wings or in the audience) tie loosened, with that same grin on his face, feet tapping along in time with the music” (4).
Initial Planning

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

I am responding to...

"The Fall of Superman Near Blood Station (V4)", it addresses the human need to make a commitment in that if not committing to anything, we lose all that is great in humans (represented by Superman) lose the possibility to attain greatness (the unrowable stones on the road).

What idea do you intend to explore and how does it address the topic?

That without commitment, humans are displaced and pitiful creatures since in spreading our intellect over so many things instead of just one we are essentially having no effect for the world.

It addresses the topic in that as humans we need to commit in order to accomplish anything great.

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.

Elements of

---

Personal Essay / Creative
Why did Superman Fall?

Assignment 1

Light dances at the edge of a man's eyes as he practically slides down the ever changing streets. Everything intrigues him; the architecture of the station, the breath of the wandering masses, the spiders weaving at the corners of the stairs above him. He, like his fathers before him, had been sliding from place to place, swishing back and forth from one idea to the next like a boat in rough waters. As a young man he was the jack of all trades, yet the master of none. A moth attracted to the light of many possibilities, he was shocked when he failed to accomplish anything in any of them. So now we find him, frozen in time on the set of "The fall of Superman near Bliss station" by Simon Donikian, staring at a newspaper; the latest thing to catch his fancy. I have often felt like this man, reaching for every realm of greatness but not quite touching any; my arms overstretched from extending in all directions. Ultimately, commitment is what makes humans great; scientists, politicians and athletes did not become great at what they do because they attempted to attain excellence in all three fields. In attempting to reach for the upper echelons of athleticism, academia and the work force, am I really sequestering myself away from all three? Unlike this man, prodigies are birthed in the furnaces of one passion, not slowly baked in the interest of many. Superman falls when there is no human greatness, in the world of today, with so many people falling prey to the attractive idea of attaining a wide area of interest, the idea of someone like Superman with but one mission, to protect, is inconceivable. How could someone dedicate his life to one thing? If you were Superman, why wouldn't you go visit other galaxies? Research the depths of the ocean? Win every athletic event? Superman gains his power in doing but one thing,
he can't be everywhere at once. We, like Superman, need to make a commitment in order to accomplish anything great. Yet like the unguided figures that are the subject of the setting of Bliss Street Station, people continuously believe that ambition is born out of a wide understanding, and that is doing a wide survey of everything that world has to offer that they will find their true calling. The folly of this is evident, ambition must be born out of passion, and passion cannot concentrate on so many things. Therefore Superman crashes spectacularly into the arches of Bliss Street station; the minds of the everyday man cannot fantasize about him anymore, his commitment is so alien to them. The crash seems to awaken the man, he seems to recognize the great injustice that has just been done to the minds of the people around him. These people have been wandering for so long, that they have forgotten how to assert themselves. They have forgotten how to accomplish anything but getting by. Eerily, they have forgotten where they were because it oddly didn't matter to them, they just knew this was where they were always going to be. The man stretches his back, and looks up. He notices the stairs. Just the stairs. He starts climbing. He won't ever come back to this life of drudgery, as he sees that great men and women apply themselves to but one thing. Yet one thing, across the ever expanding population is enormous. If every great human mind undertook one mission, we would accomplish so much in one fell swoop. Instead, we accomplish the minimum in everything, taking what we can get from the little intellectual, athletic or spiritual mining we do. In Skirting the edges of the lake of greatness, we have no concept of how deep every single little section goes, and like the lake, life is not something to be casually surveyed. Life must be devoured, one section taken and dissected so thoroughly that it becomes that person. I do not want to be remembered as someone who was here on earth
knowing all it had to offer, I want to be remembered as someone who discovered one
great secret about the world, who perfected one form of sport or who debated so
passionately as to make life better for but one section of the population. With
specialization comes greatness, recognition and tangible impact. With commitment
reawakens Superman. Nor a bird, nor a plane, Superman follows the greatness of the
once distracted man up the never-ending staircase of commitment and ambition., light
shining just ahead. Only ahead.
### EXAMPLE PAPER—EXCELLENT–1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>IDEAS AND IMPRESSIONS (E)</th>
<th>RATIONALE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>The student’s exploration of the topic is insightful.</strong></td>
<td>Having internalized the visual text and married it with a personal understanding, the student offers a philosophical approach that creates an <strong>insightful exploration</strong> of the idea that “We, like Superman, need to make a commitment in order to accomplish anything great” (3).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Perceptions and/or ideas are confident and discerning.</strong></td>
<td>On the <em>Initial Planning</em> page, the student identifies the chosen prose form as a “Personal Essay” (1) with “Elements of Creative” (1). The student opens <strong>confidently</strong> with a fictional version of a figure from the visual text, highlighting the idea that this man, “like his fathers before him, had been sliding from place to place, swishing back and forth from one idea to the next like a boat in rough waters” (2), but failing to “accomplish anything” (2), simply “frozen in time” (2). The student follows with a <strong>discerning</strong> self-reflective <strong>perception:</strong> “I have often felt like this man, reaching for every realm of greatness but not quite touching any; my arms overstretched from extending in all directions” (2).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Support is precise and aptly reinforces the student’s ideas and impressions.</strong></td>
<td>The student also <strong>perceptively</strong> examines the juxtaposition of Superman and the people in the street, noting confidently that the apparent demise of Superman, the epitome of focused commitment, accentuates how these people “have forgotten how to assert themselves. They have forgotten how to accomplish anything” (3). Finally the man in the visual text awakens and realizes that “He won’t ever come back to this life of drudgery, as he sees that great men and women apply themselves to but one thing” (3). The student again connects personally to the text: “I do not want to be remembered as someone who was here on earth knowing all it had to offer, I want to be remembered as someone who discovered one great secret about the world” (3–4).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The student offers **precise support** that **aptly reinforces the student’s ideas.** In drawing attention to the man who is “staring at a newspaper; the latest thing to catch his fancy” (2), the student illustrates the folly of pursuing many fleeting possibilities instead of committing to one. As well, the student uses the moment when “Superman crashes spectacularly into the arches of Bliss Street station” (3) as the catalyst that “seems to awaken the man” (3) to a different, more purposeful way to direct his life.
### SCORING CRITERIA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RATIONALE</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Presentation (E)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The voice created by the student is convincing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Stylistic choices are precise and the student’s creation of tone is adept.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The unifying effect is skillfully developed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The student creates a <strong>convincing voice</strong> through the sophisticated use of language and controlled transitions between the analytic, philosophic and personal: “Everything intrigues him; the architecture of the station, the breath of the wandering masses, the spiders weaving at the corners of the stairs above him” (2). Integral to the creation of <strong>voice</strong> and contributing to an <strong>adept tone</strong> are the student’s <strong>precise stylistic choices</strong>, which include control of syntax: “Ultimately, commitment is what makes humans great; scientists, politicians and athletes did not become great at what they do because they attempted to attain excellence in all three fields” (2); figurative language: “Unlike this man, prodigies are birthed in the furnaces of one passion, not slowly baked in the interest of many” (2); and well-chosen diction and phrasing: “echelons” (2), “sequestering” (2), “folly” (3), “Eerily” (3), “the little intellectual, athletic or spiritual mining we do” (3). The student’s single paragraph response is <strong>skillfully unified</strong> not only through the use of internal transitions but also by returning repeatedly to the images of Superman and the man on the street in phrases such as “So now we find him, frozen in time” (2), “Superman falls when there is no human greatness” (2), “The folly of this is evident” (3), and “Instead we accomplish the minimum” (3). Embedded in these transitions is an evolution of the opening interpretation of the visual text: “Light dances at the edge of a man’s eyes” (2). The student moves the discussion from a focus on the man intrigued by everything to a consideration of the importance of making “a commitment in order to accomplish anything great” (3), back to the moment of renewal for the man who “starts climbing” (3) the stairs, and finally to the conclusion that “Superman follows the greatness of the once distracted man up the never-ending staircase of commitment and ambition., light shining just ahead. Only ahead” (4).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Initial Planning

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

Responding to "Useless Boys" - connection in the frustration & disappointment of factory work after the hopes and dreams of youth.

What idea do you intend to explore and how does it address the topic?

I intend to explore commitments that prevent an individual from reaching happiness. The choice to either pursue happiness or remain bound by said commitments. The question presented by the response - will their need for commitment win out over his desire for happiness.

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.

Creative response
The American Dream

A man stood on the curb of an empty street. The man was not elderly, perhaps only a little over fifty years of age, but his leathery face was wrinkled and his gait slow, the result of three and a half decades of hard work and dissatisfaction. His mouth was downturned, a permanent frown slowly etched into his stony face by the long years. This was not to say that this man did not smile, but it was a rare occurrence, and when he did, the grin looked out of place. He looked at his watch, reading it to be a quarter after noon, then resumed his forlorn stare across the deserted street. Finally, after another several minutes, the man steeled his gaze, lifted his foot, and began his slow walk across the road. He had walked less than halfway across when he stopped suddenly, paused for several seconds, then hurriedly shuffled back to where he had begun. It would have seemed a very strange scene if anyone had been watching, but the man had chosen this spot for its privacy. He needed to be alone in this moment. When he reached the curb once again, he turned around, stared once more across the road, and drifted back into deep thought.

Some distance behind the man was a factory, indistinguishable from any other in the vast industrial zone where the fine blue-collar citizens of the city flocked to work every day. This factory was where the man had spent five days a week, ten hours a day very nearly every week for the past thirty-five years. When the man first arrived at the factory he was young, freshly dropped out of high school and eager to make himself some money. Of course, he never intended to stay there for long, just until he was able to build up his writing career and become the next great American author. For the first year it seemed like a dream. He was making more than any of his friends who were still in school could know what to do with. His writing fell by the wayside, between ten-hour days at work and partying frequently with his old friends, but he
promised himself he would pick it back up the next year, once all of his friends were graduated and either went to college or got jobs of their own. He did make an attempt at writing over the next few years, but he found his time limited, often exhausted after a long day at work. After seven long years he found his first novel complete, pieced together through many late nights and bottles of whiskey. He recognized that it was not his great American novel, but told himself that it was just a start, and that the next one would finally fulfill his dream. He took a break from writing over the next year, although he did send his novel in to nearly every available publisher. Letter after letter flowed in from each of these publishers, all starting in the same way - "We regret to inform you..." This dejection discouraged the man, so he extended his break from writing from one year to two, and then to three, and so it continued until he gave the writing no thought at all. At the time that he stood on the edge of the street, it had been a quarter of a century since he had attempted to write anything at all.

This is not to say, however, that the man had nothing at all in his life but his job and the bottle. He did, at twenty five, meet a woman who would, eventually, become his wife and the mother of his two children. His children were getting old now, and he was proud of them, more so than he ever had been of himself. When he looked at them he saw all that he wished he could have accomplished when he was their age. Both of them had the sense to stay in school, and his daughter was now in college, while his son, who would graduate from high school within the next year, had no intention of attending college, but his completion of high school would at least guarantee him some sort of future. Whenever the man questioned whether or not he had ever done anything meaningful with his life, he but looked at them, and was assured that he had helped to create something more grand than his novel ever could have been.
Despite all of this, the man's life had still been riddled with disappointment and frustration. He had never liked his job, but when he first took it he believed it to only be for a year or two. The conditions were hazardous, the work was back-breaking, the pay was meagre, and every other employee was just as surly and cheerless as he was. He wished he could leave it. More than anything, he wished he could just walk away from it all and make a new life for him and his family. He would, when the frustration built up too much, vent his anger to someone, his wife perhaps, or a close co-worker, and their response was always the same. "So why don't you quit," they would ask, "I'm sure you can do it if you really want!" They were always so cheerful and encouraging. He knew that they didn't understand, that they couldn't understand what the situation was like for him. He couldn't just leave. He couldn't leave this life behind because, no matter how much he hated it, it was all he knew. If he broke from it, and went out to try to find something new for himself, he was certain that he wouldn't know how.

The man had now been standing on the curb of the empty street for only ten minutes, although it felt like it had been an eternity. He was here to make a choice. He could turn around, back to the factory, and pretend that he had been coming back from any other lunch break on any other day. Or he could cross the street, leave the factory behind, and never come back, make something new for himself. Thoughts continued to flow through his head. The largest thought that came to him was his youthful dream - the dream of becoming a great American author, a Mark Twain for his time. Yes, he thought suddenly, I can do it. That is my destiny. But then other thoughts came rushing in. He thought of the debt that he would be leaving his wife and children if he failed. At the factory it would take him the rest of his life to pay off his debt, in all likelihood, but if he failed again at writing, what then? Could he do that to them? Or what if he were to die before he finished his novel? He knew that his health was poor, and that it was
unlikely that he would even make it far past seventy. These thoughts battled viciously in his head until finally, at long last, one side emerged victorious. The man checked his watch again. Five minutes until his lunch break was over. He turned around, and began his slow shuffle back towards the factory. He would work there for fifteen more years, until the day he died.
In this creative response, the student invents a version of the father in “Useless Boys,” but a father who also has the son’s desire to “build/a better world on paper” through writing. On the Initial Planning page, the student identifies the central character’s internal debate about “the choice to either pursue happiness or remain bound by said commitments” (1). Through a detailed description of the man’s fateful lunch-hour contemplation, the student demonstrates an insightful exploration of the topic. The student offers the discerning idea that a choice of convenience—working at the factory “until he was able to build up his writing career” (2)—has become for the man a commitment that has sabotaged his dream of becoming “the next great American author” (2).

In the opening paragraph, the student offers precise support that aptly reinforces the student’s ideas about the physical and spiritual price that the man has paid in the factory: “his leathery face was wrinkled and his gait slow, the result of three and a half decades of hard work and dissatisfaction” (2). The student notes, through the man’s memories, how he struggled, early on, both to work and to write, his first novel a labour of “seven long years” (3), one “pieced together through many late nights and bottles of whiskey” (3). In this section, the student confidently shows how the man’s goal to be a writer is compromised by work, rejection letters and time: “it had been a quarter of a century since he had attempted to write anything at all” (3). As well, the student offers the discerning perception that, although the man sees his children as “something more grand than his novel ever could have been” (3) and although his wife might encourage him to leave his job and write, they “couldn’t understand what the situation was like for him” (4), the complex web of commitments, duties, and desires. The student concludes with the man’s mental and spiritual struggle with ironic misdirection: “one side emerged victorious” (5). The unsentimental victory the student offers is “fifteen more years” (5) of hard labour followed by death. The man’s awareness of the implications of his continued sacrifice is precisely and aptly supported by the action: “He turned around, and began his slow shuffle back towards the factory” (5).
Presentation (E)

- The voice created by the student is convincing.
- Stylistic choices are precise and the student’s creation of tone is adept.
- The unifying effect is skillfully developed.

In this fictional piece, **the student creates a strong, convincing narrative voice**: “This was not to say that this man did not smile, but it was a rare occurrence, and when he did the grin looked out of place” (2) and “Finally, after another several minutes, the man steeled his gaze, lifted his foot, and began his slow walk across the road” (2).

The student’s **stylistic choices are precise**, as in “The conditions were hazardous, the work was back-breaking, the pay was meagre, and every other employee was just as surly and cheerless as he was” (4). **The student’s creation of tone is adept** and much of the student’s strength as a writer emerges through spare, functional prose that does not overelaborate or draw attention to itself: “He knew that they didn’t understand, that they couldn’t understand what the situation was like for him. He couldn’t just leave. He couldn’t leave this life behind because, no matter how much he hated it, it was all he knew” (4).

The student develops a **skillful unified effect** by using one pivotal lunch hour as the frame for the man’s reflections on his whole adult life: “He looked at his watch, reading it to be a quarter after noon, then resumed his forlorn stare across the deserted street” (2). The references to time, whether as focused as “paused for several seconds” (2) or as detailed and long as “five days a week, ten hours a day very nearly every week for the past thirty five years” (2), are intentional and deliberate since time has been both the man’s friend and his enemy: “The man checked his watch again. Five minutes until his lunch break was over” (5). The student has, intuitively or otherwise, internalized the sentiment in the lines from the poem: “clocks stretched around/his legs.”

The student’s ability to move the narrative confidently back and forth from the present introspective moment on the street to crucial times in the past and then back again to the present is the sign of an excellent, **skillful** writer.
Examples of Students’ Writing with Teachers’ Commentaries

English Language Arts 30–1, January 2013
Critical/Analytical Response to Literary Texts Assignment

Example Scored Satisfactory (S)

Permission denied.
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

The Wars by Timothy Findley

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.

I have chosen to write my critical essay on ‘The Wars’ because of the protagonist’s deep commitment to preserving innocence and his belief in humanity. Robert Ross experiences severely traumatic things during his time serving in World War I that force him to lose faith in humanity, but he never renounces his commitment to preserving life. He struggles with this commitment as an officer because his benevolent spirit only hinders him in the army, but he inevitably retains his original commitment and stays true to himself.
Example Scored Proficient (Pf)

Planning

CONFLICT - Robert feels a strong connection to animals and to protecting the innocent; he is a benevolent spirit. After the death of Rowena, of whom he was guardian, he enlists in the war - makes a COMMITMENT - in order to escape accepting Rowena's death and his guilt. "Space is asylum."

REACTION - Throughout the war, Robert gradually realizes the absolute horror of atrociously inhumane life that he is living as an officer. Redwell, the rape, burning Rowena's picture, he is losing his inculcated humanity, and there is conflict between his commitment to his duty as a soldier & his commitment to innocence and purity.

OUTCOME - Robert finally realizes that the war is madness, being led by insanity (Captain Leather). He leaves army, saves horse, is arrested & burned in fire. This is his need to restore his commitment to the values that matter to him, renouncing army.
Example Scored Proficient (Pf)

Planning

THESIS - Timothy Findley develops the idea that, particularly in conflicting circumstances, an individual’s need to commit to themselves and their values will be apparent and will persevere in their decision making and actions.
Conflicting Commitments

Human beings are naturally drawn to certain values and ideas based on their
genetics as well as their upbringing. People choose to commit themselves to preserving
certain ethics throughout their life and these commitments become ingrained in one's
identity. One's chosen path or course of action is often influenced by the commitments
one makes to specific ideals, thereby affecting the individual's life and experiences. In
"The Wars", written by Timothy Findley, the protagonist, Robert Ross has a deep
commitment to preserving innocence and he also has a strong belief in humanity. These
values come from his lifelong dedication to his duty as his sister Rowena's guardian.
After the death of Rowena, Robert Ross joins the army in order to escape accepting
Rowena's death and his own guilt. Thus begins a horrendous journey as a soldier and then
an officer in World War 1, an environment of terror and insanity. Robert struggles with
his original commitment in the awful warzone, but he inevitably retains his values and
chooses a course of action that remains true to his identity. Timothy Findley develops the
idea that, particularly in conflicting circumstances, an individual's need to commit to
themselves and their values will be apparent and will persevere in their decision making
and actions.

The character of Robert Ross is established, from the very beginning, as an
individual who has a strong connection to animals and nature and who is also dedicated
to protecting the innocent. His sister Rowena, a hydrocephalic who is confined to a
wheelchair, is a symbol of innocence and purity and Robert chooses to become her
guardian. This role becomes deeply rooted in his identity and will affect his actions for
the rest of his life. After Rowena's death, Robert escapes to the army in order to avoid
grieving Rowena, mainly because he feels a tremendous amount of guilt and responsibility. Robert Ross has not given up his commitment to protecting the innocent, he has simply made a commitment to the army. He is unaware that these two duties will soon come into conflict, as a benevolent spirit is not useful to a soldier. Robert simply needs to escape the atmosphere of death and he finds that, "space is an asylum," during his training in Lethbridge, Alberta. He chooses to begin serving in the army as a way to avoid accepting that a part of his identity has been lost with the loss of Rowena, and his responsibility to the values of war starts.

After Robert makes a commitment to his role as a soldier, he gradually experiences the inhumane horror as the war unfolds. He realises that his original values are not helpful to him if he wants to be a successful officer, and he is forced to renounce his values temporarily in order to act in accordance with the war. Evidence of this is when Robert is ordered by Captain Leather to install artillery in a crater situated in No Man's Land. Robert, accompanied by Bates and several soldiers, is surprised by a gas attack and then a German sniper. However, the German sniper shares Robert's commitment to appreciating nature and allows Robert and his men to return to their trenches without being harmed. At the last second, the German sniper reaches for his binoculars, but Robert interprets this as a threat and kills the sniper without thinking. This has a deeply saddening effect on Robert as he shared similar values with the sniper, but due to his commitment to his role as an officer, he acted contrarily to his beliefs. Robert also meets Captain Rodwell who is a symbol of humanity and innocence, comparable to Rowena. Robert relates to Rodwell but after Rodwell is forced to watch a group of soldiers torture a cat, he shoots a bullet through his head. This is yet another example of
Example Scored Proficient (Pf)

how loving individuals have difficulty with their conflicting obligations to values of war and to preserving innocence. Robert is steadily realizing the insanity of war and he is struggling to maintain his commitment to his identity while he makes decisions on how to act.

A specific moment in Robert's journey as an officer in World War 1 triggers him to finally commit to his original values in order to act in accordance with them. Robert recognizes that the war is complete madness and it is being led by the insane, as shown by Captain Leather. When a barn filled with horses and mules is being bombed, Robert requests to save the animals by letting them out. Captain Leather, while hiding under a table, rejects Robert's request because it would seem cowardly. This enrages Robert and forces him to choose his next course of action according to what is important to him: the commitment he originally made to himself. He tries and fails to save the animals and when he observes the mangled, dead carcasses left after the bombing, he thinks that if an animal had done this, it would be declared mad and put out of its misery. Robert shoots Captain Leather, tears off his lapels and commits to the values that matter to him. Those values could not be maintained in the atrocious war, so Robert leaves the army and begins to act in a way that is true to his identity. This choice was inevitable from the beginning, as it was impossible for a man like Robert to thrive in the conditions of war. Robert needed to renounce his commitment to the army because his previous commitment to his beliefs was far more important to him. Robert's faith in humanity was lost, but his need to be a guardian of the innocent, such as animals, prevailed despite the deplorable things he experienced during the war.

(Page 6 of 7)
Example Scored Proficient (Pf)

In conclusion, Robert Ross's values and beliefs forced him to commit to a course of action that conflicted with his duties as a soldier. Since Robert was a child, he had the responsibility of preserving innocence and purity, specifically with his role as Rowena's guardian. After Rowena's death, which Robert felt extremely accountable for, Robert escapes in the only way he knew how: by joining the army. Robert chooses to enter into conditions that completely contradict his original values, and he begins acting in ways that oppose his identity. When the insanity of war is finally bluntly shown to Robert, he makes the decision to abandon his duties and commit to acting in ways that are true to himself. This illustrates the human need to bind themselves to values that resonate with their identity in order to choose their course of action. In circumstances that conflict with a person's values, one must make a decision on how to act while staying true to what is individually important. This can be difficult and often individuals are forced to act in ways that do not feel authentic or right. Inevitably, humans need to choose how they are going to act based on what they believe in even if that course of action is seen as lunacy by others.
EXAMPLE PAPER—PROFICIENT

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>SCORING CRITERIA</th>
<th>RATIONALE</th>
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| **Thought and Understanding (Pf)** | By choosing Timothy Findley’s novel *The Wars* for this response, the student reveals a **competent comprehension of the topic** and this novel’s relevance. In the introduction, the student crafts a controlling idea focused on Robert Ross: “Timothy Findley develops the idea that, particularly in conflicting circumstances, an individual’s need to commit to themselves and their values will be apparent and will persevere in their decision making and actions” (4). The student is aware of the complicated nature of humans and what Findley seeks to reveal through the protagonist. Through an examination of Ross, the student offers a **revealing and sensible** interpretation that notes how Robert’s initial “commitment to preserving innocence” (4) is jeopardized by his joining the army and his “horrendous journey as a soldier” (4).

The student recognizes not only that Robert feels dedicated in his role as guardian to his “hydrocephalic” (4) sister, Rowena, but also that “This role becomes deeply rooted in his identity and will affect his actions for the rest of his life” (4). **Literary interpretations are revealing** when the student recognizes Robert’s “tremendous amount of guilt” (5) when Rowena dies, but that he “has not given up his commitment to protecting the innocent, he has simply made a commitment to the army” (5) in an effort to find some solace from his emotional pain. The student **thoughtfully** expresses the truth of Robert’s conflicted nature as “he gradually experiences the inhumane horror as the war unfolds” (5) and “realises that his original values are not helpful to him” (5). To survive, Robert “is forced to renounce his values temporarily” (5). This cause-and-effect discussion reveals the student’s **competent comprehension of the literary text**: “This choice was inevitable from the beginning, as it was impossible for a man like Robert to thrive in the conditions of war” (6) and, ultimately, “Robert needed to renounce his commitment to the army because his previous commitment to his beliefs was far more important to him” (6). |

Pf
### SCORING CRITERIA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Supporting Evidence (Pf)</th>
<th>RATIONALE</th>
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<tr>
<td>• Support is specific and well chosen to reinforce the student’s ideas in a persuasive way.</td>
<td>The student utilizes support that directly <strong>reinforces</strong> the discussion in a <strong>persuasive way</strong>. By selecting key moments in the novel that demonstrate the turmoil and burden of Robert’s guilt at home, “After Rowena’s death, Robert escapes to the army in order to avoid grieving Rowena” (4–5), and at the front, where Robert finds himself thrust into “an environment of terror and insanity” (4), the student capably maintains a sound connection to ideas. The student also incorporates the symbolic significance of Rowena as she “is a symbol of innocence and purity” (4) to Robert, and her death initiates the course of action of the novel. Although forever committed to her, Robert “needs to escape the atmosphere of death” (5) and so begins “his training in Lethbridge” (5). By noting how Robert exchanges one commitment for another, from Rowena “to his role as a soldier” (5), the student <strong>persuasively reinforces the idea</strong> that Robert’s “original values are not helpful to him” (5) in war. Renouncing his original values proves devastating for Robert as he must “act in accordance with the war” (5). The student focuses on the incident “when Robert is ordered by Captain Leather to install artillery in a crater” (5). Robert proves “to be a successful officer” (5) in saving his men, but ultimately “he acted contrarily to his beliefs” (5). The <strong>well-chosen details</strong> are complimented by the student’s equally <strong>persuasive</strong> use of the character Rodwell, “a symbol of humanity and innocence, comparable to Rowena” (5). Hearing of Rodwell’s suicide, “Robert is steadily realising the insanity of war” (6). For the final outcome of Robert’s journey, the student explores the irony of his commanding officer “hiding under a table” (6) while “a barn filled with horses and mules is being bombed” (6). The student uses the details of Robert leaving the army and the battlefield following this incident to <strong>maintain capably a sound connection</strong> to the idea that “This choice was inevitable from the beginning, as it was impossible for a man like Robert to thrive in the conditions of war” (6).</td>
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<tr>
<td>• A sound connection to the student’s ideas is capably maintained.</td>
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### Scoring Criteria

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<tr>
<th><strong>Form and Structure (Pf)</strong></th>
<th><strong>Rationale</strong></th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>• A purposeful arrangement of ideas and details contributes to a controlled discussion that is developed capably.</strong></td>
<td>On the extensive planning pages the student identifies the following organizational method: “CONFICT”, “REACTION”, and “OUTCOME” (2) that becomes the guiding outline for each body paragraph. Within each body paragraph, the student adheres to a structure of point – proof – connect. This <strong>purposeful arrangement of ideas and details</strong> lends itself to a <strong>controlled discussion that is developed capably.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>• The unifying effect or controlling idea is coherently sustained and presented.</strong></td>
<td>The controlling idea established by the student that “Robert struggles with his original commitment in the awful warzone, but he inevitably retains his values and chooses a course of action that remains true to his identity” (4) is anchored to the main character of Robert Ross, and the <strong>student purposefully arranges ideas and details</strong> from the novel by analyzing Robert’s emotional and moral choices and changes.</td>
</tr>
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</table>

The student introduces Robert Ross “as an individual who has a strong connection to animals and nature and who is also dedicated to protecting the innocent” (4). The choice of a character-driven essay structure allows the student to further develop the idea that Robert “is unaware that these two duties will soon come into conflict, as a benevolent spirit is not useful to a soldier” (5). The student then **purposefully** considers Robert’s “commitment to his role as a soldier” (5). Next, the student offers an exploration of the eventual outcome of “realising the insanity of war” (6) and how that leads Robert “to finally commit to his original values in order to act in accordance with them” (6), illustrating a **purposeful arrangement of ideas and details**.

To conclude, the student discusses how Robert Ross “illustrates the human need to bind themselves to values that resonate with their identity in order to choose their course of action” (7), contributing to a unifying effect that is **coherently sustained and presented.**
### SCORING CRITERIA

**Matters of Choice (Pf)**

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

### RATIONALE

The student frequently employs **specific diction** in phrases such as “This role becomes deeply rooted in his identity” (4) “conflicting obligations” (6), and “observes the mangled, dead carcasses” (6). The student’s word choices enhance the overall effectiveness of communication.

The student employs a variety of **syntactical structures** that are generally effective; for example, “Robert’s faith in humanity was lost, but his need to be a guardian of the innocent, such as animals, prevailed despite the deplorable things he experienced during the war” (6), and “In circumstances that conflict with a person’s values, one must make a decision on how to act while staying true to what is individually important” (7).

The student establishes a formal and somewhat philosophical **voice** with expressions such as “People choose to commit themselves to preserving certain ethics throughout their life and these commitments become ingrained in one’s identity” (4), “Those values could not be maintained in the atrocious war, so Robert leaves the army and begins to act in a way that is true to his identity” (6), and “Inevitably, humans need to choose how they are going to act based on what they believe in even if that course of action is seen as lunacy by others” (7), creating a **considered composition with a capable voice**.
**EXAMPLE PAPER—PROFICIENT**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Matters of Correctness (Pf)</td>
<td><em>This writing demonstrates competence in control of correct sentence construction, usage, grammar, and mechanics.</em> Examples include “These values come from his lifelong dedication to his duty as his sister Rowena’s guardian” (4) “After Robert makes a commitment to his roles as a soldier, he gradually experiences the inhumane horror as the war unfolds” (5), and “This enrages Robert and forces him to choose his next course of action according to what is important to him: the commitment he originally made to himself” (6).</td>
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<td></td>
<td><em>Minor errors in complex language structures are understandable considering the circumstances.</em></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Minor errors in complex language structures are understandable considering the circumstances</em> of timed, first-draft writing. These errors in no way impede the reader’s ability to follow the student’s ideas. For example, the shift from plural to singular: “People choose to commit themselves to preserving certain ethics throughout their life and these commitments become ingrained in one’s identity” (4). Given the overall complexity of the student’s ideas and the length of this response, the presence of minor errors is understandable considering the circumstances.*</td>
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</table>
English Language Arts 30–1, January 2013
Critical/Analytical Response to Literary Texts Assignment

Example Scored Excellent (E)

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).

Chris

Bleak House
- tries to become an engineer
- doesn't do house work
- consists of...it
  The Depression
  - becomes a travelling salesman (in the Depression)
  - tries to sell things to his Mormon relatives
  - passes away

Shallow Ike
- pretty much (well a man)
Literary Text and Text Creator  

"House of the Night" by Margaret Laurence

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.

The character Chris, in Margaret Laurence's short story, "House of the Night" is unable to adapt to his harsh environment, as his personality indicates he complete contrast to his environment. He is unable to acknowledge the need to be practical and plan ahead, making decisions that are reasonable. As a result, he is an extreme case of one that is unable to regain control of his or practically correct.
Example Scored Excellent (E)

When one makes decisions, the success of the outcomes are determined by the decision-maker's ability to balance both the desire to follow ambitious dreams, but also the need to be pragmatic and practical, in given circumstances where idealistic choices are not considered to be the 'best' options. The inability to acknowledge this balance, however, by acting solely on dreams or ambitions while neglecting all external factors, can cause dire consequences and ultimately, failure. An example of this is seen in Margaret Laurence's "Horses of the Night", in which the fatherless protagonist Chris, an idealistic and sensitive individual, is born into a ruthless world that requires one to be pragmatic, in order to survive and thrive. Chris, throughout his life, moves into four different environments -- Brick House, The Great Depression, Shallow Creek, and the War -- each one posing their own external obstacles and threats that realistically wring out all optimism and room for aspiration. However, rather than renouncing his idealistic courses of action in these circumstances, Chris chooses to continue pursuing them instead, causing him to dig his own grave deeper and deeper, with each environment. Through "Horses of the Night", Laurence suggests the crucial need to balance between pragmatism and optimism in one's life, and that the failure to maintain this balance, whether it is to renounce unsuitable courses of action or to commit to practical decisions, will cause ultimate failure in the end.

The first environment that Chris resides in is at Grandfather Connor's Brick House in Manawaka. Chris is forced to move away from his northern home of Shallow Creek, in order to attend high school. During this time, Chris is thirteen-years old, and at the peak of his adolescent years. He desires not only to successfully complete high school and gain a scholarship for university, but to be accepted by his extended family at Brick House, consisting of narrator Vanessa's family, as well as his grandparents. Furthermore, Chris yearns for a father figure in his life, due to his own father's death prior to the events of "Horses of the Night", with Grandfather
Connor being the only suitable candidate. However, upon arrival, Chris is thrown into unsuitable circumstances, specifically an unwelcoming family, whether it is Grandfather Connor proclaiming dark comments about how Chris' family doesn't "have two cents to rub together," or how Chris' father was a simpleton, and "the boy will be a poor lookout" if he turns out the same way. Aunt Bess, upon first impressions, did not know whether to shake hands or to kiss him, "finally did neither" afterwards. In terms of his aspiration to win a scholarship to pay for university, there are unfavorable odds against Chris as well, with his Uncle Ewen pointing out that even if "[the scholarship] will pay for tuition and books, there is still the cost for room and board," which Chris clearly cannot afford. In order to comprehend all these external obstacles that prevent him from being accepted into his family and from attending university, Chris develops a coping mechanism, where he withdraws "as though he were absent," whenever "bludgeoning words" were directed to him. Not only does Chris withdraw in order to cope with unfair circumstances, he also unwittingly withdraws to his even more idealistic dreams, or 'visions' of the future, where he sees himself running his imaginary ranch named "Criss-Cross", with two racehorses, or seeing himself as a civil engineer building bridges to connect people. Instead of renouncing his determination to attend university within the three years he resides in Brick House, Chris remains naively optimistic that his dream will become reality, even if he prefers to entertain his six-year old cousin, Vanessa, rather than do his homework. At the end of his senior year in high school, Chris does not receive a scholarship, but instead moves forward from his dream of attending university, to his dream of becoming a traveler. Chris also articulates to Vanessa his philosophy: if one were to put the entirety of the mental focus towards a dream or goal, they are able to negate all external factors or obstacles, and achieve it.
Unfortunately, Chris leaves Brick House with the same naive determination he arrived with, and passionately attempts to make his dream of becoming a traveler come true, even cashing in his train ticket home and thumbing for a ride out west. However, instead of becoming a stereotypically traveler that journeys far away to restore peace to the homeland, Chris ironically becomes a travelling salesman in a world that is at the peak of the Great Depression. Rather than allowing the environment to allow his newfound ambition to falter, he instead chooses to commit to this path, and returns to his cousins in Brick House on three separate occasions to try sell them his products: expensive vacuum cleaners, which aren't considered as new, innovative inventions by his family, magazines, a luxury that cannot be afforded by anyone at the time, and sock-knitting machines, in which his target audience is the 'huge abundance' of laborers that work during a Depression. On each occasion, Chris attempts to sell to his family, in hopes that they will support his career, but as he failed to learn in Brick House, his pragmatic family does not support his idealistic ambitions, and Chris is forced to withdraw and leave after each unsuccessful attempt.

Chris eventually loses his job and is grudgingly forced to return to his home in Shallow Creek, a place that symbolizes the poverty and hopelessness that he had come from, where the farmlands are unsuitable for cash crops and Shallow Creek is only a deserted "name on the map." However, returning home penniless and out of work, Shallow Creek further signifies to Chris that, despite the optimism he maintains throughout all his endeavors, he is an ultimate failure. This is physically seen by Vanessa, who visits him, only to find an empty shell of a man that ignores all the chaos of his wailing, screaming sisters or his mother, trumpeting "tentative overtures." The world of Shallow Creek itself is incredibly depressing, as there is barely any sign of life, and is close to a cold, distant grey sea that infinitely extends. For Chris, the return of
Shallow Creek is what opens his eyes to the impracticality of his decisions, and he is so depressed that he resorts to venting out his anger and angst to the naive, thirteen-year old Vanessa. Chris also begins to release his anguish that he has bottled up as a result of his constant mental and physical withdrawal from the circumstances he escapes and does not confront, never showing his negative emotions outwardly or breaking down in anger. However, Chris still clings to his impossible optimism as his life choices grow narrower and narrower, and eventually joins the Army to fight in World War II in order to travel, and escape Shallow Creek, the wallowing pit of his great failures.

Chris' experiences in the War is what proves to be the 'straw that breaks the camel's back,' as it is revealed to the reader (via a letter sent to Vanessa), that Chris had become mentally unstable, violent and had been discharged and sent to a mental institute, now living emptily with a blank expression on his face, the final consequence for his final withdrawal from the circumstances of war. Chris had naively believed that the War was a "godsend", and that he was able to not only leave poverty-stricken Shallow Creek, but finally be able to travel as well, all while doing something he knows will finally give him acknowledgement and acceptance. However, Chris underestimated the horrifying chaos that war brought, and the inability to mentally withdraw or physically anywhere else results in him finally confronting his problems, an action that "he dreaded more than he knew," and leads to his final withdrawal to insanity.

Through Margaret Laurence's short story, "Horses of the Night", the reader is exposed to the life of a sensitive, idealistic individual that is unable to find the balance of practicality in his life, and pays the ultimate price. Chris is born into an entirely obscure world with harsh environments, and his inability to confront the reality or obstacles each environment brought forth to him, proved to be distressing. He copes by disguising his mindset with optimism of a
good future and starts to mentally/emotionally withdraw, as he is discouraged each time. The events regarding Chris and his eventual, tragic outcome is an extreme result of one not being able to renounce a course of action, as well as acting too blindly in accordance to ambition or dreams. Though Chris was born into a completely opposite environment, his inability to adapt according to the balance his environments called for is what separates him from one who makes effective decisions. There is an innate human need to make a commitment, and the environment is a crucial factor that one must consider in order to make effective life decisions.
## EXAMPLE PAPER—EXCELLENT

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<th>RATIONALE</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Thought and Understanding</strong> <em>(E)</em></td>
<td>The student’s response consistently demonstrates an <strong>insightful comprehension</strong> of Margaret Laurence’s short story “Horses of the Night” in relation to the given topic. The student <strong>perceptively</strong> analyzes the transformative process that Chris undergoes in “four different environments -- Brick House, The Great Depression, Shallow Creek, and the War” (3) to develop the <strong>carefully considered idea</strong> that “Laurence suggests the crucial need to balance between pragmatism and optimism in one’s life, and that the failure to maintain this balance, whether it is to renounce unsuitable courses of action or to commit to practical decisions, will cause ultimate failure in the end” (3).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>• Ideas are insightful and carefully considered, demonstrating a comprehension of subtle distinctions in the literary text(s) and the topic.</strong></td>
<td>A <strong>comprehension of subtle distinctions in the literary text and topic</strong> is revealed in the student’s discussion of Chris’ experiences at the Brick House and the “unsuitable circumstances” (4) he faces there “that prevent him from being accepted into his family and from attending university” (4). Rather than pragmatically “renouncing his determination” (4), “Chris remains naively optimistic that his dream will become reality” (4). The student then explores the futility of Chris’ aspirations as he “becomes a travelling salesman in a world that is at the peak of the Great Depression” (5), followed by a <strong>perceptive</strong> examination of the circumstances Chris so desperately wishes to liberate himself from when he “is grudgingly forced to return to his home in Shallow Creek, a place that symbolizes the poverty and hopeless that he had come from” (5). Although this return “opens his eyes to the impracticality of his decisions” (6), he “still clings to his impossible optimism as his life choices grow narrower and narrower, and eventually joins the Army” (6) as a desperate means of escaping “the wallowing pit of his great failures” (6).</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>• Literary interpretations are perceptive and illuminating.</strong></td>
<td>In a <strong>perceptive and illuminating literary interpretation</strong>, the student asserts that having “underestimated the horrifying chaos that war brought” (6), Chris can no longer avoid “confronting his problems” (6) and, in doing so, makes “his final withdrawal to insanity” (6).</td>
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### SCORING CRITERIA

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<td>Supporting Evidence (E)</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Support is precise, and astutely chosen to reinforce the student’s ideas in a convincing way.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• A valid connection to the student’s ideas is efficiently maintained.</td>
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In each of the body paragraphs the student confidently and correctly employs **precise and astutely chosen support** in the form of embedded quotations from the story in sentences such as “Aunt Bess, upon first impressions, did not know whether to shake hands or to kiss him, ‘finally did neither’ afterwards” (4), “Chris develops a coping mechanism, where he withdraws ‘as though he were absent,’ whenever ‘bludgeoning words’ were directed to him” (4), and “This is physically seen by Vanessa, who visits him, only to find an empty shell of a man that ignores all the chaos of his wailing, screaming sisters or his mother, trumpeting ‘tentative overtures’” (5). The student provides supporting evidence that consistently has a **valid connection to the ideas** being developed. For example, when discussing the merchandise that Chris sells during his time as a salesman, the student identifies the various items and provides commentary to reveal how they function in developing irony: “expensive vacuum cleaners, which aren’t considered as new, innovative inventions by his family, magazines, a luxury that cannot be afforded by anyone at the time, and sock-knitting machines, in which his target audience is the ‘huge abundance’ of laborers that work during a Depression” (5). The student’s ideas are further supported in a **convincing way** through the density of evidence that occurs in myriad sentences throughout the body of the paper. For example, “However, upon arrival, Chris is thrown into unsuitable circumstances, specifically an unwelcoming family, whether it is Grandfather Connor proclaiming dark comments about how Chris’ family doesn’t ‘have two cents to rub together,’ or how Chris’ father was a simpleton, and ‘the boy will be a poor lookout’ if he turns out the same way” (4) and “For Chris, the return of Shallow Creek is what opens his eyes to the impracticality of his decisions, and he is so depressed that he resorts to venting out his anger and angst to the naive, thirteen-year old Vanessa” (5–6).
### SCORING CRITERIA

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<tr>
<td>• A judicious arrangement of ideas and details contributes to a fluent discussion that is developed skillfully.</td>
<td>The student skillfully employs a judicious arrangement of ideas and details to establish an essay structure that examines how characterization develops theme. The controlling idea is effectively foreshadowed in the student’s general opening statement: “When one makes decisions, the success of the outcomes are determined by the decision-maker’s ability to balance both the desire to follow ambitious dreams, but also the need to be pragmatic and practical, in given circumstances where idealistic choices are not considered to be the ‘best’ options” (3). Having effectively established a context to explore the topic, the student’s controlling idea aptly states that “Laurence suggests the crucial need to balance between pragmatism and optimism in one’s life, and that the failure to maintain this balance, whether it is to renounce unsuitable courses of action or to commit to practical decisions, will cause ultimate failure in the end” (3). A focused and shaped chronological analysis of Chris and his choices, seen through the lens of the four distinct environments, provides a unifying effect for the student’s four body paragraphs and contributes to a fluent discussion that is developed skillfully.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The unifying effect or controlling idea is effectively sustained and integrated.</td>
<td>As a result of the student’s perceptive understanding of the text, precisely chosen supporting details, and confident writing skills, the student’s reiteration of the thesis statement in the conclusion that “Through Margaret Laurence’s short story, ‘Horses of the Night’, the reader is exposed to the life of a sensitive, idealistic individual that is unable to find the balance of practicality in his life, and pays the ultimate price” (6) is revealed to be a controlling idea that is effectively sustained and integrated throughout the response.</td>
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### EXAMPLE PAPER—EXCELLENT

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<tr>
<td>Matters of Choice (E)</td>
<td>The student uses <strong>precise diction</strong> such as “unwittingly withdraws” (4), “articulates to Vanessa his philosophy” (4), “to negate all external factors or obstacles” (4), “infinitely extends” (5), “the wallowing pit of his great failures” (6), and “innate human need” (7). <strong>Syntactic structures are effective and sometimes polished</strong>; for example, “The inability to acknowledge this balance, however, by acting solely on dreams or ambitions while neglecting all external factors, can cause dire consequences and ultimately, failure” (3), “He desires not only to successfully complete high school and gain a scholarship for university, but to be accepted by his extended family at Brick House, consisting of narrator Vanessa’s family, as well as his grandparents” (3), and “In terms of his aspiration to win a scholarship to pay for university, there are unfavourable odds against Chris as well, with his Uncle Ewen pointing out that even if ‘[the scholarship] will pay for tuition and books, there is still the cost for room and board,’ which Chris clearly cannot afford” (4). <strong>Stylistic choices</strong> such as “Not only does Chris withdraw in order to cope with unfair circumstances, he also unwittingly withdraws to his even more idealistic dreams, or ‘visions’ of the future, where he sees himself running his imaginary ranch named ‘Criss-Cross’, with two racehorses, or seeing himself as a civil engineer building bridges to connect people” (4) and “Chris had naively believed that the War was a ‘godsend’, and that he was able to not only leave poverty-stricken Shallow Creek, but finally be able to travel as well, all while doing something he knows will finally give him acknowledgement and acceptance” (6) <strong>contribute to the creation of a skillful composition with a convincing voice</strong>.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

E
**EXAMPLE PAPER—EXCELLENT**

| SCORING CRITERIA | RATIONAL |E|
|-------------------|----------|
| Matters of Correctness (E) | In this response, the writing demonstrates confidence in control of correct sentence construction, usage, grammar, and mechanics. There are plentiful examples, such as “Instead of renouncing his determination to attend university within the three years he resides in Brick House, Chris remains naively optimistic that his dream will become reality, even if he prefers to entertain his six-year old cousin, Vanessa, rather than do his homework” (4) and “Unfortunately, Chris leaves Brick House with the same naive determination he arrived with, and passionately attempts to make his dream of becoming a traveler come true, even cashing in his train ticket home and thumbing for a ride out west” (5). Although there are some minor errors, the relative absence of error in impressive considering the complexity of the response and the circumstances. |  |

E
Scoring Categories and Criteria for 2012–2013
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.


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.”


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 quality of

- the student’s exploration of the topic
- 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 underdeveloped 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
**Scoring Categories and Scoring Criteria for 2012–2013**

**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 of language and expression) and the student’s creation of **tone**
- the student’s development of a **unifying effect**

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Excellent</th>
<th>The voice created by the student is convincing. Stylistic choices are precise and the student’s creation of tone is adept. The unifying effect is skillfully developed.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>E</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proficient</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 effect is capably developed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Pf</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfactory</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 effect is appropriately developed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>S</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limited</td>
<td>The voice created by the student is indistinct. Stylistic choices are imprecise and the student’s creation of tone is inconsistent. The unifying effect is inadequately developed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>L</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>The voice created by the student is obscure. Stylistic choices impede communication and the student’s creation of tone is ineffective. A unifying effect is absent.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>P</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Scoring Categories and Scoring Criteria for 2012–2013 Critical / Analytical Response to 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.


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.”


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 and understanding

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

Poor 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 2012–2013
Critical / Analytical Response to Texts Assignment (continued)

**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 how effectively the student’s organizational choices result in

- a coherent, focused, and shaped arrangement and discussion in response to the assignment
- a unifying effect or a controlling idea that is developed and maintained

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Excellent</th>
<th>A judicious arrangement of ideas and details contributes to a fluent discussion that is developed skillfully. The unifying effect or controlling idea is effectively sustained and integrated.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proficient</td>
<td>A purposeful arrangement of ideas and details contributes to a controlled discussion that is developed capably. The unifying effect or controlling idea is coherently sustained and presented.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pf</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfactory</td>
<td>A straightforward arrangement of ideas and details provides direction for the discussion that is developed appropriately. The unifying effect or controlling idea is presented and maintained generally; however, coherence may falter.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limited</td>
<td>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.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>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.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Scoring Categories and Scoring Criteria for 2012–2013 Critical / Analytical Response to Texts Assignment (continued)

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**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Excellent</td>
<td><strong>E</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proficient</td>
<td><strong>Pf</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfactory</td>
<td><strong>S</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limited</td>
<td><strong>L</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor</td>
<td><strong>P</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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 confidence in control of correct sentence construction, usage, grammar, and mechanics. The relative absence of error is impressive considering the complexity of the response and the circumstances.

**Proficient**

**Pf**

This writing demonstrates competence in 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.