Some Common Sense For The Common Core

Katherine M. Maciaszek

Graduate Center, City University of New York

How does access to this work benefit you? Let us know!

Follow this and additional works at: https://academicworks.cuny.edu/gc_etds

Part of the Education Commons

Recommended Citation
https://academicworks.cuny.edu/gc_etds/1030

This Thesis is brought to you by CUNY Academic Works. It has been accepted for inclusion in All Dissertations, Theses, and Capstone Projects by an authorized administrator of CUNY Academic Works. For more information, please contact deposit@gc.cuny.edu.
This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in Liberal Studies satisfying the thesis requirement for the degree of Master of Arts.

Terrie Epstein, Professor of Education

___________________________________________________

Dr. Matthew K. Gold

___________________________________________________

THE CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK
Abstract

SOME COMMON SENSE FOR THE COMMON CORE

by

Katherine Maciaszek

Advisor: Professor Terrie Epstein

The arrival of the Common Core Curriculum has brought many changes into the educational world. These changes have been subtle in some cases and controversial in others. Much of the controversy lies in the testing policies put forward by the proponents of this new era in educational policy. In this thesis, I examine the causes, effects and value of one new test in particular: the new Common Core English Regents. Created by the New York State Board of Regents, this exam now functions as one of the benchmarks that students need to reach in order to obtain a high school diploma. But is that ultimately a good thing? Is the test now being offered to students testing them in ways that guarantee that they are college and career ready? My argument is that it does not. Looking at the history of the Common Core Curriculum, including its birth, implementation, and impact on test takers, I dissect this new exam and examine its standards and come to the conclusion that the Common Core English Regents does not meet the goals it sets for challenging students; instead, it undermines its own efforts by offering students less diverse and rigorous material.
# Table of Contents

I: Introduction: Me, My State, New York State and My Students  
II: A Brief History Explaining a Long List of Change  
III: One Career, Three English Regents Examinations  
IV: The Loss of the Listening Section and its Implications  
V: Losing Control and Becoming Centralized  
VI: The Critical Differences Between a Lens and an Argument  
VII: Some Needed Reflection  
Appendix A  
Appendix B  
Appendix C  
Works Cited
Table of Charts, Tables, and Figures

Figure 1. Directions for Proctors – Listening Section, English Regents Exam 2011 15

Table 1. The figure below represents the original rubric for the Comprehensive English Regents Exam Task III Controlling Idea Prompt 30

Figure 2. Response on Question 27 – Anchor Level 2 - B of the Jan. 2011 Scoring Key and Rating Guide. 34

Figure 3. Response on Question 26 – Practice Paper D of the Jan. 2011 Scoring Key and Rating Guide 35

Figure 4. Anchor Paper - Question 28 – Level 6 - A of the June 2013 Scoring Key and Rating Guide 45
Introduction: Me, My State, New York State and My Students

I

“Education is the true foundation of civil liberty.” – James Madison

The implementation of the Common Core State Standards has altered much of what is expected from New York’s students and teachers. These expectations are clearly outlined not only by the standards themselves, but also in the changes made on the exit exams being distributed to schools across the state. From early elementary school on to high school graduation, children and young adults are now being provided with Common Core-aligned state examinations—tests that are designed to measure student retention of classroom curriculum and one’s ability to perform the skills demanded by standards set by the Common Core Curriculum. This alone has brought about numerous voices of protest from both within and without the classroom, leaving many concerned teachers, students and parents asking the question: is Common Core good for America’s education system and the students that belong to it? Are the exit exams being given to our county’s youth helping or impeding the learning taking place in the classroom?
For many, the answer to this question depends greatly on one’s personal attitude toward the testing requirements that have come with the implementation of Common Core. In general, increasing the amount of standardized testing is not a form of public policy that is particularly favored in the United States, not just by the students who actually take the exams, but also the adults charged with the responsibility of preparing kids for them. A recent Gallup poll taken in 2013 makes this more than clear, as its findings show that a considerable majority of Americans (seventy-seven percent) believe that “increased testing has either hurt or made no difference in improving schools” (“Testing”). Among those adults who are most fiercely opposed with this assessment policy are the people whose jobs depend on their ability to raise student achievement in a way that meets the Common Core’s standards: America’s educators. Teachers’ unions have made their concerns about Common Core and its testing requirements known through what has become fierce political protest and through targeted lobbying efforts. Just last year, the NEA (or the National Education Association), the “largest professional employee organization” in the country, has voted on a referendum calling for the removal of the current Secretary of Education, Arne Duncan. Their reasons for doing this, though multifaceted, are tied largely to the Obama administration’s advocacy for and support of high-stakes standardized tests in America’s schools. The resolution that the NEA passed blamed Duncan for implementing a “failed education agenda,” which the organization says consists of policies that “undermine public schools and colleges, the teaching education professionals, and education unions” (Simon and Emma). In other words, the NEA’s problems with the Common Core are derived from the problems it sees in its testing policy. More testing is not the solution for the NEA; it is only a burden—one that they believe hurts both teachers and students alike (“Testing”).
Complaints of this kind emanate from other groups within America’s citizenry. Indeed, the outcries of parents have been equally vociferous, as have been their protest efforts against the Common Core. Many parents across the country have been taking part in what has been called an “opt out movement”—a form of political protest in which parents refuse to allow their children to participate in high-stakes exit exams created by the proponents of the Common Core agenda (deMause). While taking part in these demonstrations of defiance, parents of children enrolled in New York City’s public schools are airing many grievances, some of which have been directed at the newest English Language Arts (ELA) tests that were given to 8th grade students during the 2013-14 academic school year. Some of these parents targeted their protests against the ways in which the states have organized and constructed the exams. Others have based their complaints on the very idea that their sons and daughters are being in effect quantified and categorized as students through these exams. “My child is not test score,” said one disgruntled parent from Queens, whose anger towards the ELA standardized testing measures enacted by New York State (when combined with the arguments compiled by the teachers of the NEA), ultimately encourage one to take a closer look at the assessments created by the proponents of the Common Core curricula, so that one can not only determine the quality and effectiveness of the exams, but also whether or not the assessments being given to today’s students can be considered an improvement from previous assessments (Brown).

Such an investigation is the main focus and objective of this essay. In the pages that follow, I will distinguish, outline, and analyze the many changes that have taken place in the English Regents examinations given to New York State’s high school students over the last decade. In this short span of time, principals, teachers, and teenage students have all been subjected to numerous education policy modifications. As is the case with the current changes
with the new Common Core assessments, the changes made during these earlier waves of education reform carried with them ambitious goals seeking to raise student skill levels in English Language Arts. In 2001, when President George W. Bush signed his signature education reform effort (otherwise known as No Child Left Behind), which laid the groundwork for the current push which increased standardized testing, he forecasted nothing less than society’s triumph in “the war against illiteracy here at home” (“President Signs Landmark”). President Barack Obama, during his 2012 speech at the Democratic National Convention, used equally ambitious rhetoric, promising to satisfy the hopes of all those who believe “that new schools can provide ladders of opportunity to this nation of dreamers” (“Transcript: President Obama”). Such are the hopes and standards set by America’s top politicians, and yet, despite the sincerity behind these promises, some of the assessments that have been given to improve classroom standards have, I submit, undermined the efforts of educators to fulfill them. Rather than working to raise education standards in states like New York and increase the rigor found in high school courses, the new Common Core English Regents has narrowed its scope—assessing a much more limited set of skills while simultaneously omitting many others that are required for students to perform thorough, college-level literary analysis. By the end of this essay, I will have enumerated each of the skill sets that have been lost with the changes that have been made to make room for the new Common Core English Regents exam with the intent to show that, far from providing students with more challenging testing material, these recently created assessments have decreased the rigor of New York State’s exit exams and undermined one of the primary objectives of the Common Core Curriculum: to provide students with the skills that they will need to be “college and career” bound graduates (“New York State P-12”).
Before undertaking the task of highlighting the lost rigor in the new Common Core English Regents, it should be noted that the measures I take in analyzing this subject are informed by personal experiences as much as they are by scholarly research. Being a high school English teacher who is currently working in one of Brooklyn’s larger comprehensive high schools, I have been privileged with a front row seat that has enabled me to have a first-hand look into the rollout of the Common Core and its effects on the teaching profession. While living with this vantage point, I have seen and heard things that have eventually found their way into news articles and scholarly journals. During department conferences and faculty meetings, I have listened to the concerns of colleagues worried about what a future with Common Core will mean for their profession. I have also been on the receiving end of phone calls from worried parents, who fear that the implementation of Common Core might harm their child’s chances of meeting the promotional criteria required to graduate from high school. This essay is my response to these troubled members of my school community. My analysis will focus on all of the changes in New York’s education system that my students and colleagues have been grappling with, and it is for the sake of improving their lives in the classroom that I intend to argue that the Common Core English Regents has not only diminished the rigor of the Regents exam; it has lowered its standards in ways that, if unchanged, will undermine the goals for progress that we all share. It will, in other words, turn into a feature of New York’s public education system that does a disservice to those students it was designed to serve.
A Brief History Explaining a Long List of Change

II

It is well known that the present moment is manufactured and prepared by the past, yet, for whatever reason, it hardly ever fails to amaze even the most stoic of persons whenever one looks back at the progression of a career and sees how much has taken place in order to bring things to the here and now. The journey to Common Core has been slow and gradual, but, when the final analysis becomes clear, one thing becomes apparent: a change in who we are as a nation has taken place. What we care about and value in education is different. What once defined the state’s education curriculum has been modified to a great extent, and in the process, New York State’s education system has managed to bring about changes that ultimately undermine its efforts to provide meaningful challenges to students.

The first domino in this latest wave of change fell with the passage of No Child Left Behind. On January 8th 2002, President George W. Bush signed the bill into law. The legislation itself passed without a shortage of promises. It was meant to be a sweeping reform for the American public educational system—a system which (it was clear) had been failing and falling behind its peers and competitors (“A Nation at Risk”). In their best efforts to turn the tide of dysfunction, President George W. Bush and the supporters of NCLB promised to increase the role of the federal government by providing more funding for poor school districts. Schools
would also be held accountable for the progress of their students, which would now be measured by expanded standardized testing in classrooms across America. The law and the now-former president promised that schools whose students did well would be rewarded, and likewise, schools who failed their students—or rather, schools where students failed to pass a standardized test—would be punished (“The New Rules”).

In the end, No Child Left Behind passed with bipartisan support. The board and the pieces of America’s education system were set for change, and the atmosphere surrounding this historical piece of legislation was being saturated with high hopes and great levels of anticipation. The expectations for the law were grand. You saw it everywhere in the rhetoric and political promises of its proponents. In a speech delivered on the promise and scope of the legislation, President George W. Bush told the nation, “It’s time to come together to get it done. So that we can truthfully say in America, no child will be left behind. Not one single child… When schools do not teach. And will not change. Parents and students must have other meaningful options” (“Remarks on the Education”). The then-education Undersecretary, Eugene Hickock, was even more optimistic, saying that “[t]he heart of the bill – the testing – probably has more potential to drive change and reform down the road than anything else…Once you get information available in a public way – the status of schools and students – things start changing pretty dramatically” (“Why the Education”).

Years after its passage, the sense of optimism that came with the passage of No Child Left Behind started to dwindle. Reality, in a sense, had kicked in. Eventually, a point in time came when the mandates and requirements the law set for schools could no longer stand. By 2011, President Barak Obama asked Congress for a major overhaul of the measure. He contended that the focus on testing “for reading and math between third and eighth grades and
once in high school … simply doesn’t work for many schools” (Jacobson). The president’s remarks certainly had their fair share of evidence. Obama’s Secretary of Education Arne Duncan announced that “more than 80,000 of the nation’s 100,000 public schools could be labeled as failing under No Child Left Behind” (Dillon). This announcement, when coupled with President Obama’s promulgations, made it possible for one to reach a verdict on No Child Left Behind: it was not, it seemed, working in the ways it was intended. Schools simply could not reach its demands.

One of the demands of No Child Left Behind that ended up burdening many states astronomically was the literacy benchmark that the law set for students. By 2014, all schools were expected to have 100% of their students proficient in both reading and math. As the deadline to reach this benchmark moved closer and closer, the goal, which was admirable in being so lofty, started looking unrealistic. Changes needed to be made, but, even with those changes, residual effects of the law and its demands would remain. With schools forced to make AYP (Adequate Yearly Progress) each year, and reach 100% proficiency by 2014, the curriculum, standards, and tests were often modified by the states to help the children and ultimately the schools meet these standards. States decided what was “proficient” and what was to be considered “adequate yearly progress” for the different groups of students. (“The New Rules”)

By July 2010, New York State had joined over two-dozen states in adopting the Common Core State Standards to meet the educational benchmarks and set the goals it had to set. In January 2011, a “new” New York State Comprehensive English Regents exam was administered, and it was at this moment when the Common Core Curriculum truly became a force to be reckoned with by New York City public school teachers, including the one that is writing to you
now. Both my colleagues and I were informed about this new English Regents exam in department meetings. We were told by administrators that the test was “Common Core-aligned,” and that, while this exam was being administered, the Board of Regents would continue to work on what would be the Common Core English Regents examination. Thus, the waves of change had finally reached our shores. My colleagues and administrators had to find ways to brace for this tsunami. Curriculum, we knew, had to be redesigned, instructional methods needed to be tweaked, and students had to be prepared for a new set of scholastic requirements determined by the state. Reader, I am happy to report that the transition, though sometimes difficult, was done and done with success in my school, and now many of us in education have the benefit of looking back on the process. The teachers who have brought students down the path of Common Core can now look back at the journey that has made the present state of education what it is, and, when doing this, we find an unsettling fact—that the progress promised to us in political speeches and legislation may in fact be compromised by the very measures we have taken to fulfill them. The Common Core English Regents does not provide the rigor and high benchmarks for success that it has been expected to give students, and what follows below is a detailed outline and explanation of each of these changes, which, analysis will show, have made the threshold that New York State high school students must cross to graduate less demanding.
As indicated above, when looked at through a historical lens, one comes to see that the Common Core curriculum represents just one phase in what has become a long and predictable trend in the New York education system. Around two or three years or so ago, a new edict comes from either the state’s Department of Education or the Board of Regents mandating changes in school year procedures or protocol. “Something from last year’s curriculum has been refined,” teachers are told. “There’s been a new tweak of sorts on the Regents Exam.” (In a seven-year career, this will be the third iteration of the English Regents examination I will have encountered.) The causes of these changes are not often directly or explicitly discussed, but the general reasons for their implementation are well known to most people: America’s education system is struggling and needs help. Each year, the United States graduates roughly three million high school students. According to data provided by the National Assessment of Education (NAEP)—“the largest nationally representative and continuing assessment of what America’s students know and can do in various subject areas”—many of those graduating high school seniors are not entering college—society’s most important stepping stone to a successful career—with the skills they need to succeed. According to Andrea Venezia and Laura Jaeger, in their work “Transitions from High School to College,” “In 2009, only 38 percent of twelfth-grade students performed at or above the proficient level on the NAEP’s reading assessment; even fewer, 26 percent were at or above the proficient level in mathematics (Venezia and Jaeger 118-119). So America’s schools needed change; they needed to find ways of altering the policy
trends that threatened the aspirations of students and the hopes of parents who dreamed of better lives for their children.

In the late 1990s, serious efforts were made by the New York State Board of Regents to provide students with the support and rigorous academic content that society demanded for them. What the board unveiled was reported by many in the press as monumental change, that is, a new dramatic “plan to raise high school standards.” In an article entitled “Tough New Regents Exams Are Unveiled in New York,” a New York Times reporter outlined the then recently announced changes to the New York State English Regents exam, which included, among other things, an extension in the span, scope and length of the test. Replacing a one-day, three-hour exit exam, this new, more time-consuming version of the English Regents was designed to require two-three hour sessions to completed over the span of two days. The tasks to be assessed during this time period would be wide in range. Students would be expected to analyze and write essays on literary texts they read in school or at home, write a comparative essay on other pieces of literature found on the exam itself, craft a written response to a listening passage, and craft a written response to a variety of informational texts. When viewed in its totality, the new English Regents exam was thought to have been a decisive push for more rigorous assessment and learning. Prior to its creation, only students who were considered college-bound had to take and pass an English Regents exit exam. All that was now changing. This new exam was one that had to be universally distributed. All students, in other words, were now required to take “the longest and most comprehensive high school English test requirement of any state in the country” (Segupta).

The time that has lapsed since the distribution of this major comprehensive exit exam has brought with it many changes. In January 2011, the Comprehensive English Regents
examination was condensed back into a one-day three-hour exam, stripping the exam of many of its rich and diverse components. And again, with the advent of the Common Core State Standards, during the 2013-2014 academic school year the English Regents exam undertook yet another major “reformation.” And instead of taking the shortened and Common Core-aligned Comprehensive English Regents exam alone, students were also given a new Regents exam, the Common Core English Regents exam. Along with a great deal of controversy, this new exit exam brought new questions and new test formats, many of which have lowered the expectations, standards and rigor in which students are required to engage. The Common Core English Regents exam is also half the length of the original Comprehensive two-day, six-hour Regents English exam. This is not to say that a longer test signifies a better exam, but the condensing of the New York State English Regents exam has been done in ways that have sacrificed much of its rigor. All in all, what the Common Core English Regents exam ultimately represents is the most recent phase in the long history of education reform, only in this particular phase the exams being given to students are undermining their primary objective: to bring students challenges that lead them to higher levels of understanding.

In order to properly illustrate the loss of rigor in the recent changes made in the New York State English exit exam, one must first determine the differences between performance skills and content knowledge being measured on both the Common Core-aligned English Regents exam and the Common Core English Regents exam, and the older Comprehensive English Regents exam. This can be done in a variety of ways. A thorough breakdown of each exam along with the juxtaposition of their questions and content will ultimately help show the differences among the three assessments and more clearly illustrate the ways in which the
Common Core assessment lessens the rigor that students were once expected to engage with during the time when the Comprehensive English Regents was rolled out.

The Loss of the Listening Section and its Implications

IV

In Task I of the Comprehensive Regents Examination, students were required to tackle a task that tested both their writing skills and their auditory processing capabilities; it was called The Listening and Writing for Information and Understanding section. In order to properly and successfully meet this challenge on the assessment, students were told to listen to a passage, which was often referred to as an “account” or “speech.” They were encouraged to take notes while listening and for a few brief minutes afterwards. Then, they were given another live reading of the passage¹. After the second reading by the proctor was completed, students were then expected to answer six multiple-choice questions based on the information that was delivered during the read aloud. (It should be noted that students were not allowed to look ahead at the multiple-choice questions until after the second and final reading of the listening passage

¹ English Language Learners were given three opportunities to listen to the account or speech.
was delivered). After answering the multiple-choice questions, the students would then move on and write a response to the “situation” section of this task. Before going into detail about how this written assignment was assessed and administered, it is important to describe what exactly a “situation” on the Comprehensive English Regents was and explain what type of writing processes it required students to complete. The “situations” called upon students to develop a wide variety of written responses over the years as it was administered. Sample “situation” responses included writing documents of different genres for different audiences, like a speech, a letter, a position paper, an essay, a report, a proposal, a feature article, a presentation, or an instruction manual. The exact kind of situation that a student would tackle in writing remained a mystery to the test’s administers and participants alike, until, that is, the exam itself was actually distributed. In the end, keeping the situation on the exam hidden from these parties required both teachers and students to conceive of and teach writing in ways more diverse, creative and (in some cases) fun.

For years, this conception of writing—that is, with all its diversity and versatility—was part of the teaching curriculum of New York’s Public High Schools, as teachers had to prepare students to be able to think on their feet and readily handle whatever “situation” would come their way. However, in the transition years leading up to rollout of the Common Core Regents (January 2011 – June 2014), things began to change on the Common Core-Aligned Regents Examination. A newer version of the test arrived that completely dropped the written response to the Task I Listening portion of the test. This is to say that students were no longer required to develop a written response to the “situation,” because there was no longer a “situation” required for students to consider. Further, students were no longer prohibited from looking ahead at the multiple-choice questions until after the second and final reading of the listening
passage (see fig. 1). Instead, they were, in fact, informed by the proctors of the exam that they would be given an opportunity to look at the questions.

Figure 1. Directions for Proctors – Listening Section, English Regents Exam 2011.

4 After the students have filled in all headings on their essay booklets, say:

You will listen to a passage and answer some multiple-choice questions. You will hear the passage twice.

I will read the passage aloud to you once. Listen carefully. You may take notes on page 3 of your examination booklet. Then I will tell you to open your examination booklet to page 4. You will be given a chance to read the questions before the second reading. Then I will read the passage a second time. You may also take notes during the second reading or answer the questions.

Now I will read the passage aloud to you for the first time. Open your examination booklet to page 3.

Source: New York State Education Department, Office of State Assessment

At first, these modifications on the Regents exam might be seen as mere amendments only—that is, as changes made to shorten a lengthy exit assessment. But all changes have their consequences and those that followed the alterations made to this state exam are worthy of consideration. Because students no longer had to prepare for a situation in this section of the test, they were no longer encouraged and compelled to take copious notes for the sake of informing a written response. Because they had permission to view the multiple-choice questions during the read aloud, students now were given permission (in a sense) to only listen to the passage for the sake of finding the correct answer to a multiple-choice question. To put it simply: the students were not actively engaged in listening for general information from the passage during this section of the exam; they were instead simply listening to the bits of information needed to bubble in a circle on a multiple-choice question. This too brings up its own set of problems. As Irene Thompson points out in her article entitled “Testing Listening
Comprehension,” “First, multiple-choice items invite guessing. Secondly, important parts of a passage sometimes cannot be tested simply because three plausible distracters cannot be found” (27). When viewed in this light, one can see that the changes made to this section of the exam not only took away the responsibility of demonstrating one’s critical thinking skills on a challenging and in some ways unpredictable written assessment; it also allowed students to avoid having to listen closely and retain general information on a passage, leaving them only with the target goal of completing a multiple-choice section for its own sake and listening only for those sections tested by this portion of the exam.

With time, the modifications made to the Listening Section of the exam only continued and worsened with the rollout of the Common Core version of the English Regents. After years of providing students with this greatly diminished version of the Listening Section, the New York State Board of Regents finally decided that the new Common Core English Regents examination would eliminate the Listening Section of the Regents in its entirety! This meant that students would no longer be required to demonstrate mastery or even competency in their ability to record and process information presented orally, and with that simple change in policy came a more vociferous edict from the state’s education department—one that has and would forever outline the priorities of New York’s public schools: listening skills, it would seem, were now no longer worthy being assessed, monitored, and recorded by The New York State Board of Regents. The data that would be drawn from this line of testing was not worth collecting; holding students accountable for their ability to hear and process information was no longer a necessity to the powers-that-be in New York’s education system.

Not surprisingly, this grand omission brought along with it many causes for concern, and, while considering the choice to eliminate this section of the Regents exam, one must ask the
questions that first came to teachers, parents and school administrators at the announcement of the Listening Section’s omission: What has potentially been lost with these changes? Are those things which have been removed at all valuable and necessary for the students whose minds we all are working to enhance?

The answers to these questions come with the mere use of common sense. The link between effective listening and success in school is not all that new of a concept. Educators and researchers have long understood the importance of developing the listening skills of students as a means for promoting academic success. Students need to listen, just as much as teachers need to provide information. If ever a teacher encourages a sleepy or disengaged student to pay attention, it is for no other reason other than that instructor understands that content can only be absorbed when it is effectively processed. Thompson herself attests to this idea as she enumerates all the various skill sets that are being assessed when students are having their auditory processing skills tested. While giving teachers advice on how properly format and structure a listening comprehension test, she writes:

When developing tests of listening comprehension you should consider the special qualities of the aural medium. To begin with, listeners, unlike readers, cannot review and reevaluate information presented to them. They must comprehend the text as they listen to it, retain information in memory, integrate it with what follows, and continually adjust their understanding of what they hear in the light of prior knowledge and of incoming information. This heavy processing load makes listening comprehension different from reading comprehension in a number of significant ways. (24)
Here, as she lists the skills being tested on a listening comprehension assessment, Thompson also allows one to more clearly see all skills that the Board of Regents leaves unassessed through its new Common Core exit exam. They are as follows:

1) “Comprehend the text as they listen to it.” Before students were required to listen to a passage that was read aloud in order to demonstrate their comprehension skills on a written and multiple-choice assessment. Now the new Common Core English Regents examination no longer requires students to demonstrate comprehension of any text they hear. This processing skill set is no longer to be assessed, and now students are not even given the chance to prove that they can successfully process information that they hear.

2) “Retain information in memory.” With the release of the Common Core English Regents exam has come the loss of any requirement of students to demonstrate that they can in fact retain information presented to them orally. Their memory skills are completely taken out of consideration with the omission of this section. All the information on the exam is presented to them in a written format and is readily available for students.

3) “Integrate it with what follows.” In the case of the old Comprehensive English Regents Exam—that is, the one containing the “situation” response—students had to demonstrate their memorization skills both in a creative manner and through a multiple-choice assessment. Now, the Common Core English Regents exam offers no means for students to provide the state with evidence that they can in fact manage a challenge of this kind. Simply stated: there is no product by which teachers and
those in charge of our state’s education system can measure the ability of a student to take the information they hear and use it to tackle a creative challenge independently.

Thus, one can see that the changes brought on by the Common Core English Regents exam required the removal of several rigorous academic challenges, challenges which ultimately allowed students to demonstrate their knowledge and skills on a focused task with measurable and meaningful objectives. Such losses would be enough for one to rest comfortably with the idea that the new state exam lessoned the rigor that students were expected to grapple with on a Regents examination. However, this idea alone does not do enough to point out one of the major problems arising from the decision to eliminate the Listening Section. Interesting, the decision on its own represents in part the key paradox that lies behind the Board of Regents’ decision to install the Common-Core aligned assignment: the exam itself undermines its own standards and removes some of its own benchmarks for success, leaving the students it was designed to serve without a suitable means of proving that they have the knowledge and skill sets necessary for college and career readiness.

Before explaining how the Common Core English Regents exam undermines its own goals for serving and challenging New York State’s youth, it is first important to outline the ways in which the state emphasizes the importance of teaching students effective communication and listening skills. In the end, doing so will show the extent to which the state has managed to undercut its ability to teach and motivate students through its own prescribed methods. Yes, it is true; the Common Core State Standards does acknowledge that schools must recognize the importance of teaching listening skills. The omission of the Listening Section belies this fact. Nevertheless, the state does encourage schools to teach students how to work within and contribute to academic discussions. For proof, one need only look at eleventh and twelfth grade
Listening and Speaking Standards created by the state’s education department, which unequivocally ask that students be able to effectively participate in conversations appropriate for course material and lesson objectives. The standard reads as follows:

[Students will be able to] Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grades 11-12 topics, texts, and issues, building on others’ ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.” (“Core Standards”)

Here, one can see that there are indeed benchmarks created for teachers to address and for schools to implement. Listening skills, the state argues, are important for teachers to teach and for students to obtain. Even if it is not being properly assessed, students can and should know how to take part in an engaging and thought-provoking discussion about an idea or text (“Core Standards”).

The high regard that New York State has for teaching listening skills is expressed in more ways than one and through several official state documents. In the *New York State P-12 Common Core Learning Standards for English Language Arts & Literacy*, a document that New York State English teachers are encouraged to use as a reference when developing curricula, listening comprehension is described as an area in which students must demonstrate mastery, not just for the sake of graduating from high school, but also so that they can be prepared for whatever careers and professional experiences await them in their upcoming post-secondary lives:

Whatever their intended major or profession, high school graduates will depend heavily on their ability to listen attentively to others so that they are able to build
on others’ meritorious ideas while expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

(“New York State P-12”)

Again, here we see the state outlining on official policy documents what the Comprehensive English Regents exam made clear by the nature of its structure and organization: listening skills matter and need to be taught and refined within the classroom. Teachers, according to the state, need to bear importance of listening comprehension in mind as they create course specific goals, daily lesson plans, and assessments so that they might be better able to equip students with what they need to succeed.

Such are the tenets of New York State’s education system. While looking at and thoroughly analyzing them, it would seem only natural for an education department espousing the critical importance of listening comprehension in this manner to provide its youth with a threshold for students to cross in order to demonstrate competency in this area. However, as indicated earlier, this is not the case. The state has done away with all means of officially assessing a student’s ability to process information through one’s auditory functions. Despite its vociferous advocacy for student development in this category, it relinquishes its responsibility to measure the extent to which students can learn and process what they hear. Faced with these seemingly contradictory actions and beliefs, a naturally confused spectator can only ask: why omit this task on the Common Core English Regents examination? How can the Common Core insure that we will be graduating students proficient in these very valuable skills? Does this elimination not contradict the espoused idea that with the implementation of the Common Core curriculum comes the implementation of academic accountability and rigor?

The work of scholars and the demands set by the 21st century workforce suggest that the omission of the Listening Section lessens the level of academic accountability that students are
held to in ways more harmful than beneficial. For starters, it has been accepted by many that listening is one of the keys to effective communication. In order for students to, as the state demands, “initiate and participate effectively” in an academically meaningful and challenging discussion, they must possess excellent listening skills. To put it simply, students cannot “propel” conversations and further academic discourse without effective listening skills, which include but are not limited to the ability to track ideas, process them as they are developed through discussions, and (if necessary) modify them in order to infuse as lesson with proficient higher-order critical thinking skills. In her article “Listening Is a Skill,” Eva A. Moore bolsters many of these ideas. While making it clear that “[t]he whole field of critical thinking begins with listening,” she also states that listening cannot be something left unassessed; it must instead be something taught, developed and measured with a notable degree of purpose. She writes, “We do not question that reading is a skill that must be taught. We approve of spending many school hours to develop that skill. Surely we should recognize that listening also is a skill, a skill that is not effectively learned by accident” (379). Here, as she points out that listening is something that must be one of the immediate concerns of a teacher, she also makes it clear that there is indeed an inherent danger in leaving listening comprehension skills in states like they are in today. Presently, a student can go through high school in New York without ever having to prove that he or she can process information provided orally, that is, through conversation. If that skill is to be learned, it would have to be learned, to borrow a phrase from Moore, “by accident.” Without an effective and meaningful assessment tracking this skill, there is no policy in the state’s education system forcing teachers and students to feel accountable in this specific learning category. Yes, as stated above, teachers are encouraged to have their students take part
in academically focused conversations. However, this does not guarantee that all teachers will ultimately meet and teach to this standard.

It is not enough to merely reach for and hope to achieve the goal of having students develop proficient listening skills. Without the Listening Section on the Regents examination, how can we collectively demonstrate that a student has achieved this standard? Speaking as an instructor who wishes the best for her students, I often recognize that some of my brightest students lack the confidence to actively initiate and propel discussions in the classroom. It is not easy being a shy teenager with a reticence to participate in whole class discussions. These students can easily get lost in the background of a fast-paced and challenging lesson, and though many are in fact engaged during a lesson, there are students that often remain quiet, attentively tracking speakers throughout discussions without ever contributing ideas themselves. The only way to make sure that these students have indeed retained the main ideas of a lesson is through their, the students’, written work on subject tests. Is that a sufficient means of testing all students? What about the student who does not succeed when given only this sole platform to demonstrate his or her knowledge? In an ICT (or integrated co-teaching) class, many of the students present are classified as those who require special education services. These students often have a wide range of learning styles and academic abilities. Throughout my professional career, I have worked with a variety of special education students and have designed innumerable lesson plans designed to meet the needs of these kinds of learners, and my first-hand experience in the ICT classroom has shown me what Joseph R. Boyle makes clear in “Strategic Note-Taking for Middle-School Students with Learning Disabilities in Science Classes.” He says, “Researchers have shown that students with LD [learning disabilities] demonstrate both poor listening skills and poor note-taking skills” (94). Suppose that a student
of this kind does not do well on a brief assessment or a pop quiz at the end of a class. As an educator, I have no idea if the student’s problems with the learning material are a result of his or her disability, or if the lesson material itself is difficult for the student to comprehend through the act of listening. Only an assessment specifically designed to measure a child’s ability to learn or process information through his or her auditory functions could provide me the information I need to know this. Today, no such form of assessment is given, leaving students with no official threshold to pass and instructors with nothing that would hold them accountable for teaching skills that are required for one to truly be college and career ready.

The phrase “career ready” is one that is often used today in school, as it has become a primary focus of instruction. Every lesson in some way should and indeed must bring students incrementally further along on the path to a profession of his or her choosing. Consider this when looking at the knowledge and skills “needed for success” as they are outlined in Anna Rosefsky Saavedra’s and V. Darleen Opfer’s article “Learning 21st-century skills requires 21st-century teaching.” The paper includes Tony Wagner’s seven “survival skills” developed and addressed in his 2008 work The Global Achievement Gap: Why even our best schools don’t teach the new survival skills our children need – and what we can do about it. Wagner’s seven proposed skills are:

- Critical thinking and problem solving;
- Collaboration and leadership;
- Agility and adaptability;
- Initiative and entrepreneurialism;
- Effective oral and written communication;
- Accessing and analyzing information; and
• Curiosity and imagination (qtd. in Saavedra and Opfer 8).

When looking at these “survival skills,” it soon becomes clear that many of them require that one be proficient at listening. Thus, it becomes clear: being able to think critically and problem solve in a classroom and workplace can determine how successfully one can genuinely listen to and understand the problems that will come with professional life. Effective collaboration and leadership simply demands excellent listening skills. Speaking and listening are by their very nature intertwined, and effective oral communication therefore necessitates effective listening.

Understanding this, one can see that there are dangers in the omission of the Listening Section in the Common Core English Regents examination. Not only does this omission fly in the face of the Common Core’s own standards and goals, it is lowering the bar on New York State’s English exit exam. We run the risk of graduating students who do not have proficient listening skills even though it is understood as a skill necessary for success in the 21st century workplace, thereby harming the very same people that Common Core was designed to serve, America’s future.
Losing Control and Becoming Centralized

V

If the transformations of the English Regent’s listening requirements reveals anything, it shows that omitting entire sections of an exam has its disadvantages, but so does compressing a Regents task in the ways done to Controlling Idea section of the Comprehensive English Regents exam. Like the Listening Section, this portion of the exam was greatly modified, leaving students with less rigorous challenges by which they could demonstrate their knowledge and skills in certain areas.

Task III of the Comprehensive Regents Examination assigned students with Reading and Writing for Literary Response. In this section of the exam, students were instructed to read two passages. The passages were most often an excerpt from a full-length literary work coupled with a poem. Students were then directed to answer ten multiple-choice questions based on the two passages, and then finally they had to write a unified essay (emphasis added) developing a “controlling idea” from a topic supplied in the directions for the task. Before explaining the high standards set and the rigor demanded of test takers, we should first examine the task itself. What is a controlling idea? A controlling idea is a single word or concept given to students to use as they examine the themes embedded within two literary texts. The task of a student is to develop a controlling idea into a workable and provable thesis or thematic statement on the two works provided to them on the examination. In the most basic sense, a controlling idea written response is an answer to the question, “What are the passages saying about the topic/idea provided?” For
instance, in June of 2010, students were given the following controlling idea: separation. Before students framed their essays and began actually constructing their response, they had to first ponder, “What are these passages saying about separation?” After determining an answer to this for themselves, students then had to find text-based proof or evidence supporting their interpretation or understanding of the controlling idea’s application to the two literary works. This task in particular required students to demonstrate their ability to handle rigorous academic skills. A well-developed essay on this section of the Comprehensive English Regents exam demanded that students provide textual evidence from both passages to demonstrate their ability to develop a controlling idea in an essay. While outlining their controlling idea essay, students would have to ask themselves, “What evidence - from both texts - can I identify and explore in my writing to support my controlling idea? What in the texts supports the claims that I am making about them using the controlling idea?”

Such were the questions students had to ask in order to demonstrate mastery in skill on this portion of the exam. Students had to comprehend, utilize, and write explicitly and thoroughly about both sources and moreover, meet these challenges by using relevant and sufficient textual evidence to back up their claims. This, again, was the version of the task provided on the original Comprehensive English Regents exam, which quite accurately was referred to as the “longest and most comprehensive” Regents exam. However, and unfortunately, with time this task was reworked and greatly truncated in January 2011(Sengupta). The changes made to the English Regents exam could hardly escape notice, nor did they go without their due criticism from media and school officials alike. One journalist, Michael Winerip of The New York Times, was particularly sharp in his critique of the new, Common Core-aligned, exit test, reporting that this “new” English Regents exam “appear[ed] to be the easiest in memory.” What
One can comfortably assume that part of what inspired such criticism from him and others had to do with what was now being asked of student test takers in this Task III portion of the exam. Unlike on earlier versions of the test, students were no longer required to write a *unified essay* comparing two short passages of literature; instead, they now had to answer two questions that necessitated short responses “that are each supposed to be a paragraph long” (Winerip). (These short response questions were to become known as Question 26 and Question 27 among English teachers in the New York State public high school system). Ultimately, with these changes, the diminishment of rigor and the overall “watering down” of the Comprehensive English Regents examination reached new and unfortunately impressive heights.

A close look at the two versions of the assignment given to test takers will outline and highlight just how sharp a fall the English Regent exam’s standards took once the shift from the original Comprehensive to the modified Common Core-Aligned English Regents took place. If one were to turn his or her attention to the rubric for the first Comprehensive English Regents exam attached (see table 1), one notices that there is a long and impressive list of challenging skills being asked of students to complete—the very type of skills, one should add, that should be asked of students who look to graduate with an arsenal full of college and career ready skill sets. Looking at the rubric for the original Comprehensive English Regents exam, one sees that, beyond merely identifying and providing evidence from the texts, students taking this version of the exam were also asked to draft a section in their essays “show[ing] how [an] author uses specific literary elements or techniques to convey that [controlling]idea” (*New York State*). Doing so would grant a tested student a minimum score of a 4—one that would be considered respectable by graders or at least good enough for a student to say that he or she had met the
challenges on this section of the exam admirably. In addition to this, student essays were also expected to “reveal an in-depth analysis of both texts” and provide “insightful connections between the controlling idea and the ideas in each text.” In other words, students’ essays had to “develop ideas clearly and fully” as they, the students, explored the ways that the literary techniques or devices used by the author develop the controlling idea in the texts (New York State).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality</th>
<th>Level 1</th>
<th>Level 2</th>
<th>Level 3</th>
<th>Level 4</th>
<th>Level 5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Meaning: the extent to which the response exhibits sound understanding, interpretation, and analysis of the task and text(s)</td>
<td>- establish a controlling idea that reveals an in-depth analysis of both texts - make insightful connections between the controlling idea and the ideas in each text</td>
<td>- establish a controlling idea that reveals a thorough understanding of both texts - make clear and explicit connections between the controlling idea and the ideas in each text</td>
<td>- establish a controlling idea that shows a basic understanding of both texts - make few or superficial connections between the controlling idea and the ideas in each text</td>
<td>- convey a confused or incomplete understanding of the texts - make no connections but fail to establish a controlling idea</td>
<td>- provide minimal or no evidence of textual understanding - make no connections between the texts or among ideas in the texts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development: the extent to which ideas are elaborated using specific and relevant evidence from the text(s)</td>
<td>- develop ideas clearly and fully, making effective use of a wide range of relevant and specific evidence and appropriate literary elements from both texts</td>
<td>- develop ideas clearly and consistently, with reference to relevant and specific evidence and appropriate literary elements from both texts</td>
<td>- develop some ideas more fully than others, with reference to specific and relevant evidence and appropriate literary elements from both texts</td>
<td>- develop ideas briefly using some evidence from the texts - may rely primarily on plot summary</td>
<td>- are incomplete or largely undeveloped, hinting at ideas, but references to the text are vague, irrelevant, repetitive, or unjustified</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organization: the extent to which the response exhibits direction, shape, and coherence</td>
<td>- maintain the focus established by the controlling idea - exhibit a logical and coherent structure through skillful use of appropriate devices and transitions</td>
<td>- maintain the focus established by the controlling idea - exhibit a logical sequence of ideas through use of appropriate devices and transitions</td>
<td>- maintain a clear and appropriate focus - exhibit a logical sequence of ideas but may lack internal consistency</td>
<td>- establish, but fail to maintain, an appropriate focus - exhibit a rudimentary structure but may include some inconsistencies or irrelevancies</td>
<td>- lack an appropriate focus but suggest some organization, or suggest a focus but lack organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language Use: the extent to which the response reveals an awareness of audience and purpose through effective use of words, sentence structure, and sentence variety</td>
<td>- are stylistically sophisticated, using language that is precise and engaging, with a notable sense of voice and awareness of audience and purpose - vary structure and length of sentences to enhance meaning</td>
<td>- use language that is fluent and original, with evident awareness of audience and purpose - vary structure and length of sentences to control rhythm and pacing</td>
<td>- use appropriate language, with some awareness of audience and purpose - occasionally make effective use of sentence structure or length</td>
<td>- rely on basic vocabulary, with little awareness of audience or purpose - exhibit some attempt to vary sentence structure or length for effect, but with uneven success</td>
<td>- use language that is imprecise or unsuitable for the audience or purpose - reveal little awareness of how to use sentences to achieve an effect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conventions: the extent to which the response exhibits conventional spelling, punctuation, paragraphing, capitalization, grammar, and usage</td>
<td>- demonstrate control of the conventions with essentially no errors, even with sophisticated language</td>
<td>- demonstrate partial control of the conventions, exhibiting occasional errors that do not hinder comprehension</td>
<td>- demonstrate control over the conventions, exhibiting occasional errors that do not hinder comprehension</td>
<td>- demonstrate emerging control, exhibiting frequent errors that make comprehension difficult</td>
<td>- demonstrate a lack of control, exhibiting frequent errors that make comprehension difficult</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- If the student addresses only one text, the response can be scored no higher than a 3.
- If the student writes only a personal response and makes no reference to the text(s), the response can be scored no higher than a 1.
- Responses totally unrelated to the topic, illegible, incoherent, or blank should be given a 3.
- A response totally copied from the text(s) with no original student writing should be scored a 0.
Thus, one can see the high expectations set for Task III portion of the Comprehensive English Regents exam. Not only did students have to organize well-developed literary responses in the form of a unified comparative essay; they also had to show how a single concept or theme was developed throughout the course of two literary works, while at the same time analyzing how an author’s use of a particular literary element or poetic device contributed to the development of two passages. Any effort that displayed anything less than what was required by the exam was graded as such. An essay that only addressed only one of the two passages, no matter how expertly executed, could not be graded higher than a 3 out of 6. If an essay did not satisfactorily articulate how an author’s compositional choices contributed to the themes of the piece, then a student could not earn the highest score allotted by the rubric (see table 1).

In the end, the high standards set by this iteration of the English Regents exam would not last. By 2011, several changes were made to the test for the worse. On the exam in January of that year, students were no longer required to write full-length essay response. Instead the Board of Regents made it so students only now had to answer two writing questions that required just two short paragraph-long responses (Winerip). One prompt (referred to as Question 26) asked students to:

Write a well-developed paragraph in which you use ideas from both Passage I (the biography excerpt) and Passage II (the poem) to establish a controlling idea about work. Develop your controlling idea using specific examples and details from both Passage I and Passage II (New York State).

In addition to this, students had to write a response to the following prompt (referred to as Question 27) that tasked students in a single paragraph to simply:
Choose a specific literary element (e.g., theme, characterization, structure, point of view, etc.) or literary technique (e.g., symbolism, irony, figurative language, etc.) used by one of the authors. Using specific details from either Passage I (the biography excerpt) or Passage II (the poem), in a well-developed paragraph, show how the author uses that element or technique to develop the passage (New York State).

When looking over the language in each of these prompts, one can certainly notice some similarities between these questions and the original Task III assignment. As with the former exam, before crafting their response, test takers had to ask themselves, “What are the passages saying about the controlling idea?” They also had to think of ways of explaining how a literary element or device contributed to the development of a passage. However, students no longer had to explain how elements developed both passages but could now merely discuss the use of a literary element in one passage. In other words, rather than having to incorporate analysis of literary elements into a fully developed essay, students now could generate a perfect response (a 2 out of a possible 2) by analyzing just one literary element in a response that could consist of as few as 5 sentences (see fig. 2).

Ultimately, the reworking of Questions 26 and 27 greatly diminished the rigor of the English Regents examination. Both figures 2 and 3 below demonstrate the extent of this diminishment by highlighting the sample student responses to these questions. The responses presented here are known as anchor papers, or the model responses that the graders of the January 2011 English Regents exam were given so that they would have clear examples of what the New York State Board of Regents deemed was a response meriting a score of 0, a 1 or a 2.
Similar to fig. 2 (an anchor paper for Question 27), fig. 3 (an anchor paper for Question 26) shows that students could gain a perfect score through the submission of a handful of sentences.
Anchor Paper – Question 27 – Level 2 – B

In the author uses the literary element of point of view to help develop his passage. The story is narrated by the author. This allows the reader to gain a deeper understanding of the narrator because the reader is given a direct window into the mind of the author. This window gives the reader an opportunity to understand his thought process when the narrator starts discussing how his obligation to shovel his sidewalk was passed on to him by his grandfather. The reader has an easier time understanding and connecting to it than they would if the narrator was someone other than the author.

Anchor Level 2–B

The response presents a well-developed paragraph that provides an appropriate explanation of the use of point of view in Passage 1 (the reader is given a direct window into the mind of the author), supported with clear and appropriate evidence from the text (his obligation to shovel ... was passed on to him by his grandfather). Language use is appropriate, and errors in conventions (the reader ... they would) do not hinder comprehension.

Fig. 2 Response on Question 27 – Anchor Level 2 - B of the Jan. 2011 Scoring Key and Rating Guide which merited a score of 2 out of 2. New York State Education Department. Office of State Assessment. Web. 8 Mar. 2015.
Question 26 – Practice Paper D

Manual labor is strenuous and tiring, but very rewarding experience. Both in the passage and the poem, the hard work that the narrator does allows them to feel feelings of great accomplishment. Although the narrator in the first passage states the daunting task of shoveling his massive sidewalk, he is awarded a feeling of achievement. He remembers his grandfather shoveling and feels that he has lived up to his grandfather's name. The narrator of the poem treats labor a different way but also gets pleasure from work being done. He writes, "I love people who... do what needs to be done, again and again." Unlike the author of passage one, who only enjoys the end result, the writer of the poem feels the actual process is what matters. Though the feelings are brought about in different ways, at the end of the day, happiness is achieved.

Practice Paper D — Score Level 2

The response presents a well-developed paragraph, demonstrating a basic understanding of the texts. An appropriate controlling idea (Manual Labor is a ... rewarding experience, which leads to feelings of great accomplishment) is supported with clear and appropriate details from both texts (Although the narrator ... hates ... shoveling ... he is awarded a feeling of achievement and The narrator of the poem ... also gets pleasure from work). Language use is appropriate, and there are no errors in conventions.

Fig. 3 Response on Question 26 – Practice Paper D of the Jan. 2011 Scoring Key and Rating Guide which merited a score of 2 out of 2. New York State Education Department. Office of State Assessment. Web. 8 Mar. 2015.
in lieu of what was once a much more rigorous task requiring students to produce a unified essay. No longer were students required to develop and expand upon their ideas over the course of an entire essay. Now test takers were not required to meet a rigorous standard in Reading and Writing for Literary Response, and, to many educators, these changes signified that too much was being lost. The Board of Regents’ pathway to making high school students college and career ready was being narrowed in disagreeable ways, and, much to the dismay of many educators, this narrowing would only continue through the adoption of the Common Core version of the Controlling Idea section.

In June 2014 the rollout and first administration of the Common Core English Regents exam took place. This test once again took the standards and expectations for the Controlling Idea Section and modified it yet again; only now the Controlling Idea Section became the Central Idea Section. Along with the changes in name, the Common Core version of the controlling idea came with several other modifications that, I contend, ultimately undermine the true potential for a rigorous assessment of a student’s ability to read and write a literary response.

The minimization of the rigor to this test can be seen when one looks at the directions on this portion of the Common Core English Regents exam. On the Part 3 Text-Analysis Response section (what was the former Reading and Writing for Literary Response or the “Controlling Idea” section) students are now given one passage to read instead of the two passages assigned in previous English Regents examinations. On the three Common Core English Regents examinations administered up to the writing of this essay, which is to say, from June 2014, August 2014 to January 2015, test takers have been given a speech by Anna Howard Shaw excerpted from “The Fundamental Principle of a Republic,” an excerpted and adapted passage from Mark Twain’s Life on the Mississippi, and an excerpt from Henry D. Thoreau’s Walden.
Each of these readings is rigorous in their own right, but they are all still singular reads nonetheless. So, the transformation, up until this point at least, is complete: the educators of New York went from preparing students to write a full essay on two passages to ultimately asking students to draft one two-to-three simple paragraph response on just one passage.

What do we lose when we no longer ask students to deepen and expand their thoughts on paper in order to explicitly articulate and develop their ideas into essays? Answering this question is what helps one determine if this newly truncated Common Core Central Idea task is truly preparing students for the world of “college and career readiness.” When we look at the value of developing one’s craft as a writer, it becomes clear that, once again, the Common Core English Regents has undermined its goal of providing students with rigorous testing material. When you strip the demand from students to articulate expanded ideas and demonstrate substantial analysis through their writing craft, you are setting the bar far too low for the futures these young minds will encounter after graduation from high school. According to The Washington Post, once teenagers must navigate and participate in the adult world, writing skills appear to be what they are. As one columnist writes, “[W]riting skills] are thinking skills of the type the students will need to succeed in college, on the job or even just to dispute a charge on a credit card bill — and to knowledgeably exercise their right to vote” (Wexler). Further, David Driscoll, chairman of NAEP’s governing board, cautions us to remember that "[w]riting is fundamental to effective communication, especially in an era in which email and other word-processed documents are the norm rather than the exception" (Leal).

One cannot understate just how important it is for students to seize and receive every opportunity offered to improve and develop their writing. In both the workplace and in the college classroom, employers and professors are finding that students are less capable of clearly
developing and articulating their thoughts on paper. Kelley Holland, a business journalist for CNBC, explains the magnitude of the American student’s writing skills deficit in her piece called “Why Johnny can’t write, and why employers are mad.” She notes,

> Despite stubbornly high unemployment, many employers complain that they can’t find qualified candidates for the jobs they do have. Often, it turns out, the mismatch results from applicants’ inadequate communication skills. In survey after survey, employers are complaining about job candidates’ inability to speak and write clearly.

If employees increasingly are unable to demonstrate that they can clearly articulate their thoughts, why are we then demanding less of our future college students and workplace employees on high school exit exams? Are we therefore not complicit in the exacerbation of this problem? Why ask for less when the world demands more? We must not ignore the demands of the 21st century workplace. And in acknowledging this, one can see that what we are doing by reducing size and scope of writing assessments is reducing our collective potential to prepare today’s students for the jobs of tomorrow.

We are also taking away our ability to more comprehensively prepare students for a spot in the college and university coursework of the future. The unified essay, even the standard five-paragraph essay, is turned into an underrated form of expression in both writing ability and critical analysis skills by Common Core English Regents exam. The changes made by the Board of Regents to the Controlling Idea Section do a disservice to our students who want to not only gain entry into but also thrive in university coursework. In her piece “Speaking My Mind: In Defense of the Five-Paragraph Essay,” Professor Kerri Smith of Fairleigh Dickinson University
notes that, quite tragically, those who populate her classroom are not prepared for the demands set by university standards for students. This is due to the fact that many students are not prepared to write even a five-paragraph essay. She says,

“As a professor of first-year composition, I would be thrilled if, every September, more students could put their ideas together in [a] coherent fashion...because, almost without exception, students who know the five-paragraph essay intimately are more prepared to take on the challenge of college level writing. The tragedy happens when students can’t organize their thoughts at all” (16).

When we no longer ask that our students demonstrate proficiency in essay composition, is it any wonder that we both are graduating and will continue to graduate students who are not college and career ready? Also, in reducing the length of the response required to score well in the Central Idea portion of the Common Core English Regents exam, one must make recognize that we are in fact losing something. Size, when it comes to essay writing, does matter. As Smith points out, “…length is almost always an expression of complexity and thoroughness…length is a legitimate criterion for excellence in writing” (16). Therefore, by having reduced the Controlling Idea Section to its current state, the Board of Regents in New York fails to see that the requirements it sets are prohibiting students from demonstrating proficiency in a skill that is demanded by the post-secondary education system and the workplace.
So far, we have seen how the New York State Common Core English Regents has limited the opportunity for students to show their knowledge through the composition of a full-length essay. But opportunities to demonstrate their skills in this manner do still exist, only now students are expected to tackle the challenge in a new and, I would argue, less challenging way. One of the more noticeable differences (if not the most) between the Comprehensive English Regents exam and the Common Core English Regents exam is the absence of the “Critical Lens Essay” on the new Common Core Regents. Prior to the implementation of the Common Core curriculum, the New York State Board of Regents required students to write a fully developed essay responding to a quotation, or what the exam directions referred to as the “critical lens.” The content of this quotation would often provide general, but thoughtful insight on some idea or sentiment, such as hope, glory, justice, etc. Using their knowledge of literature and literary elements, students would be required to complete the following assignment:

Write a critical essay in which you discuss two works of literature you have read from the particular perspective of the statement that is provided for you in the Critical Lens. In your essay, provide a valid interpretation of the statement, agree or disagree with the statement as you have interpreted it, and support your opinion using specific references to appropriate literary elements from the two works. You
may use scrap paper to plan your response. Write your essay, beginning on page 3 of the essay booklet (New York State).

This essay task is quite different from the one assigned on the Common Core English Regents. This new version of the exam requires that students examine four informational texts—articles with content that relate closely to each other. Each and every one of these texts is provided on the exam itself. After reading through each article, students tackling the Argument Essay are required to use at least three of the four reading selections attached to the exam in order to construct a “source-based argument” on a given topic. While supporting their ideas, students must (1) establish a claim or thesis and (2) use specific and relevant evidence that both supports this claim and distinguish it “from alternate or opposing claims” (New York State).

Looking at the two essay assignments, one notices right away that the critical lens essay question requires students to demonstrate their ability to recall and discuss major works of literature. The Common Core English Regents, on the other hand, does not. Instead of having to come to the exam with a set of literary works, authors, and characters committed to memory, students taking this version of the Regents examination are expected to demonstrate their analytical skills using texts that are always ready-in-hand.

Understanding this, it becomes clear: one of the key differences between each of these essay formats is the way in which they challenge a student’s memory capacity. On the one hand, the Comprehensive English Regents assesses a student’s memorization skills by testing whether or not students can take what they have read throughout high school and employ it to write a focused piece of literary criticism. The Common Core English Regents does not tax a student’s
memory to this extent. Memorizing stories and literature, it would seem, is not a task of
significance and rigor to the Common Core exam’s designers; mere essay construction is.

The fact that the requirement of memorizing a major work of literature has been omitted
from the Common Core English Regents only shows that, once again, the new English Regents
exam has found a way to lessen the degree to which students are challenged. One test assesses a
student’s memory retention. Another does not. There are many who would argue that the
Common Core exam’s omission of the Critical Lens Essay’s requirements is a positive change to
the New York State English Regents exam. They might defend the Common Core exam’s
Argument Essay by arguing that it relieves students from the unnecessary burden of harnessing
one’s memory for an essay exam. In fact, one of the trending tenets held by many in the
education field is that memorization is an overrated skill. As education scholar Kiernan Egan
says in his article “Memory, Imagination, And Learning: Connected by the Story,” one of the
arguments that has become prominent in today’s educational discourse “is that simply insuring
memorization of knowledge is likely to be educationally useless” (455). Those who are
beholden this point of view, Egan says, often defend their position by arguing that children
ultimately need to become more than just storehouses of information. They suggest that, rather
than teaching students to process information like the memory drive on a personal computer,
educators must instead teach students how to become taskmasters, or students who function more
like independent critical thinkers and less like human databases capable of regurgitating
information on demand. While momentarily assuming the perspective those who hold this
position, Egan develops this perspective: “If we enable students to master such generic skills as
critical thinking, problem solving, and other procedural abilities, we will be doing something that
is more educationally valuable than merely drilling in sequences of facts that will be mostly forgotten anyway” (455).

With this perspective in mind, one can see that one of the driving factors behind the general distaste for emphasizing memorization in education is that, by itself, memorization is not the best instructional method for ensuring student learning. Rather than memorizing something for its own sake, experts in education recommend that students demonstrate their memorization skills in the process of completing a task (Venezia and Jaeger 119). This is exactly the kind of memorization exercise that the Critical Lens Essay question assesses on the Comprehensive English Regents exam. Instead of simply summarizing the plot of a book from memory, students are expected to display a more challenging set of skills as they use their memory for the sake of performing literary analysis.

Consider this when viewing the sample of student work found in fig. 4. The sample of writing depicted there represents one of the anchor papers given to teachers when grading the June 2013 Common Core-Aligned English Regents. As indicated earlier, an anchor paper is a tool used to help guide teachers as they grade student responses to essay questions. Whenever the quality of student’s work is in question and a teacher requires guidance to determine the appropriate score for an essay, anchor papers such as this provide guidance and give one insight into the quality of writing expected for students to reach certain scores. The student whose response is captured on this anchor paper earned a score of 6 on the Critical Lens Essay—the highest score possible for that question. When perusing this student’s response to the essay’s prompt, one can see that his or her response employs both memorization and analysis, particularly in the second paragraph of the selected sample. Here, the anonymous student performs a close reading of Ken Kesey’s masterpiece *One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest*. 
Admittedly, much of what constitutes the content of this response is indeed plot summary. The student focuses on plot points, the characters who shape them, and the consequences that
Fig. 4 Anchor Paper - Question 28 – Level 6 - A of the June 2013 Scoring Key and Rating Guide which merited a score of 6 out of 6. New York State Education Department. Office of State Assessment. Web. 8 Mar. 2015.
follow. In this case, the student begins by focusing on the exposition of the story by describing the main characters who determine much of the plot. But the student’s work doesn’t end there. Mere plot summary from memory is not only the first step. If one were to look at the first sentence at the start of the paragraph, one would see that all of what follows is designed to function as support for an argument based on one of the novel’s main themes: glory. When viewed in this light, one can see that the memory skills being assessed by the Comprehensive English Regents exam are far more than just a test of which student functions as the best storehouse of information. Instead the memory skills being assessed are tested so that a student can show how well he or she is able to take what is read at home or in school and apply it to larger concepts. Critical thinking is the target end of analysis required by the Critical Lens Essay. By the nature of its design, it provides students with rigor that goes beyond a simple display of knowledge—a rigor that requires one to use memory in a targeted, more challenging way.

The Common Core English Regents exam has done away with this rigor and by doing so has once again removed another hurdle on which students can demonstrate their skill and strength. This is not to say that the new exam’s essay is not in any way challenging. Despite the fact that it does not tax the memory of students in the same way as the Critical Lens Essay question does, the Argument Essay does assess one’s ability to perform an important skill that is required from nearly all college students when they engage in university coursework, the skill of writing from sources using evidence. As anyone who has ever taken university coursework knows, conducting research and using one’s findings to compose an essay is an integral part of the process of writing a college essay. (This essay itself functions as proof to this idea). Testing a student’s ability to work with informational texts and compose essays using them, therefore, is
not only important, but also useful, since it requires that students engage in a kind of writing that can only help them on their path to a college degree.

The fact that the Argument Essay assesses students in this manner is something to be celebrated, but it should be noted that this method of assessment is nothing new to the New York State English Regents. Informational texts and other non-fiction material sources were once a major part of the original Comprehensive English Regents exam, until, that is, changes were made to it. In that version of the exam, there was a section on the exam known as Task II, or The Reading and Writing for Information and Understanding. On this portion of the Comprehensive English Regents exam, students were given a task that assessed both their writing skills and reading skills, only on this section of the exam, students were given informational texts and a graphic. In order to demonstrate proficiency on this task, students needed to read and comprehend the texts of this section, answer ten multiple-choice questions and (much like in the Listening and Writing for Information and Understanding Section) respond to a “situation” in writing using the information provided in the texts.

A brief look at an older exam containing a Task II Reading and Writing for Information and Understanding assignment will enable one to get a better understanding of what this section of the Comprehensive English Regents exam required. At the start of my career in January 2007, this section of the exam gave students a “situation” that asked them to write a letter to their state senator. The directions read as follows: “Using relevant information from both documents, write a letter to your state senator in which you recommend whether he/she should vote for or against the bill banning the use of vending machines in New York State schools and explain the reasons for your position” (New York State). The informational text attached to this section explored the sale of junk food in schools. The graphic provided by the test makers was a chart from the
USDA Food and Nutrition Service (see Appendix A pg. 61). This portion of the exam asked that students form an argument and support it with evidence from both texts in the form of a letter. Students were graded on a rubric based on a demonstration of their abilities to analyze the documents and connect those analyses through explicit writing to the task directed by the “situation.”

Understanding the nature of the assignment on Task II Reading and Writing for Information and Understanding, one sees that much of what is now being asked of students writing the Argument Essay—a writing assignment that forced students to grapple with dense informational texts—was actually a part of earlier English Regents examinations. The Argument essay, though new in name, is actually testing students by renaming and redesigning something old. Interestingly, with the introduction of the Common Core-aligned English Regents exam in January 2011, this section of the exam virtually disappeared. Students were still required to read an informational text and answer multiple-choice questions based on that text, but test takers no longer had to demonstrate any proficiency in responding to the informational texts through writing. This elimination at first appeared to be a clear diminishment of the rigor on the exam—that is, until it was announced that informational texts would once again be assessed in the Argument Essay part of the exam.

Understanding this, it becomes quite clear that the Argument Essay does not add anything that was absent from previous exams. It instead does two things. First, it reshapes what was once on the Task II part of the Comprehensive English Regents assessment. Second, it replaces and eliminates the challenges that were once a part of the Critical Lens Essay. When viewed in this manner, it becomes clear that the inclusion of the Argument Essay signifies the removal of certain forms of rigor and the remodeling of others. In other words, more is lost with its
instillation than is ultimately gained. Students addressing this part the Common Core English Regents exam now have a means of demonstrating their ability to work with informational texts, just as the always have. What they lack is what the Critical Lens task once offered—the requirement that they be able to recall a major work of literature from memory and process it through the act of writing a fully developed literary analysis essay.

It should be noted that, though similar, the Task II section of the Comprehensive English Regents exam still does differ from the Argument Essay section of the Common Core English Regents. When writing their Argument Essay response, students are no longer required to demonstrate proficiency with document literacy—a task that was formerly required on the Comprehensive English Regents exam. What is document literacy? According to the U.S. Department of Education’s National Center for Education Statistics, document literacy can be defined as follows: “The knowledge and skills needed to perform document tasks (i.e., to search, comprehend, and use non-continuous texts in various formats). Examples include job applications, payroll forms, transportation schedules, maps, tables, and drug or food labels” (“Literacy Types”). Testing a student’s proficiency in document literacy was a big component of the Task II Reading and Writing for Information and Understanding portion of the Comprehensive English Regents exam. Students were required to demonstrate “document literacy” on the graphics provided on the test. This of course changed with the arrival of the Common Core-aligned version of the English Regents, which removed the use of graphics from the assessment—a move that takes away the chance for students to demonstrate fluency in a skill set that is critical in the for the 21st century worker.

Document literacy is widely understood to be vital for our future graduates’ success in navigating the many facets of the adult world—be it inside or outside of a classroom, at home or
in the workplace. In their studies on the effects of illiteracy on adults, Dale J. Cohen and Jessica L. Snowden emphasize that:

Document literacy is a core component of an individual’s ability to function in modern society. It is essential for effective participation in financial transactions (e.g., filling out checks, deposit slips, and loan applications and comprehending bills and benefit statements from insurance companies), promotion of health and well-being (e.g., understanding nutritional information and risk and dosage information on food and pharmaceutical packaging, respectively), and engaging in transportation and leisure activities (e.g., deciphering bus and television schedules, airport arrival and departure listings, and sports results.) Because of the importance and pervasiveness of documents, an inability to use them effectively can dramatically inhibit societal participation”

(Cohen and Snowden 9).

Looking at this selection, one sees that teaching and testing document literacy is critical for teachers who wish to prepare students for the outside world. By not requiring that our students demonstrate proficiencies in document literacy, we are no longer insuring that they possess the tools needed to be able to adequately, if not skillfully, navigate many of the documents they will face in their lives and throughout their careers.

When viewed in its totality, the new Common Core English Regents exam represents the omission of assessments that test many of the career and college-ready skills that will continue to be demanded of the 21st century citizen. While failing to assess the document literacy skills of students, the Common Core English Regents exam is also taking away students’ ability to
demonstrate that they can harness their memory retention skills and apply them as they work their way through an argument essay on a work of fiction. In the end, not requiring students to express themselves and be tested in these manners shows that, rather than giving every child a chance to succeed in a variety of ways and through a wide-range of writing assignments, the Common Core condenses the field upon which students are tested, leaving them without an exam that tests them in the most comprehensive, meaningful and challenging ways possible.

Some Needed Reflection

VII

The arrival of the Common Core English Regents exam brought along with it the removal of several testing measures and the ability of the state to measure important skills sets. These skills are still available and are free to be measured in classrooms, though, with the removal and omission of so many sections on the exam, we no longer hold teachers directly accountable to assess, teach or even cover these skill areas. As of June 2014, the New York State Board of Regents has made it clear that it will no longer be necessary to test listening comprehension skills, nor will it make it appear as though it is worthy of a student’s time to be tested on graphics and thereby demonstrate their document literacy skills. The Common Core English Regents exam also strips away the relevancy of being tested on one’s ability to use one’s memory of
literature in a literary analysis essay, while at the same time minimizing the opportunity for students to express their writing skills in a variety of contexts.

All of these things, it has been shown, are useful, worthy of assessment and help hold students to standards that will not only make them college and career ready; they will also allow students to demonstrate that they are thinkers, capable of reflection and able to capture their thoughts and critiques in a variety of ways. After it was first distributed, the original Comprehensive English Regents examination showed me that my students and others across the state were being held accountable, that the state’s education department was assessing skills that students would need in life beyond my classrooms and beyond the walls of a school building.

Do I now have that same sense of security and assuredness? No. With the new organization and formatting of the Common Core English Regents examination, how can my colleagues and I be sure that our students will be ready with the skills necessary to take the next steps in life? How do we know, for example, that our students can navigate non-thematically contiguous texts and tease out the information necessary to complete a writing assignment? How can we be sure that they can look at and respond to whatever task they may face, map, chart or graph in hand? How do we know that our students will be able to draw the connections between lengthy, major works of literature and explore the common themes that bind both characters and us, as inhabitants of this world together?

The truth is we can no longer do any of these things, and the weight of that loss cannot be measured by a mere analysis of educational policy. Policy shapes lives and the standards we have in place are shaping the educational experiences of students in ways that are limited, not wide in scope. So the question to answer then becomes, “Where do we go from here?”
The answer might come, like all seemingly plausible answers, with the mere use of common sense. Since omitting sections of the original Comprehensive English Regents exam has left students without a means of properly demonstrating their ability to tackle certain challenges, why not bring back these performance tasks and once again recognize their inherent merit and rigor? Currently, major subject areas being taught in New York City’s Public High Schools have, at the very least, two Regents exams. History has two. Science has five. Math has six. But for whatever reason, English has only one Regents examination offered to students. Why is this? Why is it that our state’s high school students only have one format upon which they can demonstrate their proficiency in English? What is it that makes English class the only one where students are permitted just one opportunity to demonstrate mastery in several skill sets?

In place of this current testing model, students should be offered two opportunities to prove themselves students of literature and be given two English Regents exams containing all of the sections that were omitted and all those that are currently on the new Common Core English Regents exam. As indicated in earlier sections, one of the skills demanded by today’s work force is the ability to write clearly and effectively. Therefore, it seems only fitting that students are given every opportunity to demonstrate their ability to write in response to a variety of topics and essay prompts. Writing an essay in response to a listening passage is certainly a merited assignment, as is writing a full-length essay on a predetermined controlling idea. An Argument Essay, which includes both informational texts and graphics, is a task that is both useful and necessary in preparing students for life after high school, just as a Critical Lens Essay is as well. All mediums of writing assigned and all the documents that have found their way onto the test over time have brought students challenges worthy of their best efforts. Each should find its way
back into the criteria the Board of Regents sets for teenagers to graduate from high school, so that our schools give society more than just children with limited skill sets and a diploma.

It should be known that, in coming up with the suggestions listed above, I do realize how counterintuitive it must seem to ask for more testing at a time when people are protesting all of the testing requirements being heaped on their children. But, I contend, exit exams are not the enemy; weak tests or exams that narrow the range of skills being assessed are. Despite public sentiment to the contrary, some display of skills in reading and writing is necessary before we as a society let a child graduate from high school and move into the adult world. All of the tasks I am recommending that students undertake do not have to be assigned all in one testing session. None of the other Regents exams are designed in such a manner. So the English Regents exams I am recommending should be divided in similar way, providing teachers with more flexibility and students with more opportunity to exhibit growth.

We all want what is best for our students, but the current testing methods given to them are not the best that can be given, nor are they worthy of the 21st century workplace and university that our state’s youth will eventually enter. When all is said and done, it becomes clear that we are narrowing the scope, depth and diversity of our state’s English exit exam, and by lowering the bar on our students, the Common Core English Regents is doing little more than paying lip service to those it promises to turn into college and career ready graduates that will build the future of our country. They deserve more. We can give them more and that should be the task before us now.
Appendix A

Below is a complete copy of the January 2007 Comprehensive English Regents examination. Both Session One January 23, 2007 and Session Two January 24, 2007 are included. It has been altered only for the purpose of having it formatted and fitted to this document. Attached also are the Directions for Teachers for the Task I Listening Section of the exam and the rubrics used for grading each task on the exam.
THE UNIVERSITY OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK

REGENTS HIGH SCHOOL EXAMINATION

COMPREHENSIVE EXAMINATION

IN

ENGLISH

SESSION ONE

Tuesday, January 23, 2007 — 1:15 to 4:15 p.m., only

The last page of this booklet is the answer sheet for the multiple-choice questions. Fold the last page along the perforations and, slowly and carefully, tear off the answer sheet. Then fill in the heading of your answer sheet. Now circle “Session One” and fill in the heading of each page of your essay booklet.

This session of the examination has two parts. Part A tests listening skills; you are to answer all six multiple-choice questions and write a response, as directed. For Part B, you are to answer all ten multiple-choice questions and write a response, as directed.

When you have completed this session of the examination, you must sign the statement printed at the end of the answer sheet, indicating that you had no unlawful knowledge of the questions or answers prior to the session and that you have neither given nor received assistance in answering any of the questions during the session. Your answer sheet cannot be accepted if you fail to sign this declaration.

The use of any communications device is strictly prohibited when taking this examination. If you use any communications device, no matter how briefly, your examination will be invalidated and no score will be calculated for you.

DO NOT OPEN THIS EXAMINATION BOOKLET UNTIL THE SIGNAL IS GIVEN.
Part A

Overview: For this part of the test, you will listen to an account about saving the ocean environment, answer some multiple-choice questions, and write a response based on the situation described below. You will hear the account twice. You may take notes on the next page anytime you wish during the readings.

The Situation: In order to increase membership in the environmental club at your school, you have decided to give a presentation to students in your school on saving the ocean environment. In preparation for writing your presentation, listen to an account about the ocean environment by Peter Benchley, author of the novel *Jaws*. Then use relevant information from the account to write your presentation.

Your Task: Write a presentation for students in your school on saving the ocean environment as a way of persuading students to join the environmental club.

Guidelines:

Be sure to

- Tell your audience what they need to know about saving the ocean environment
- Use specific, accurate, and relevant information from the account to support your discussion
- Use a tone and level of language appropriate for a presentation to students in your school
- Organize your ideas in a logical and coherent manner
- Indicate any words taken directly from the account by using quotation marks or referring to the speaker
- Follow the conventions of standard written English
Multiple-Choice Questions

Directions (1–6): Use your notes to answer the following questions about the passage read to you. Select the best suggested answer and write its number in the space provided on the answer sheet. The questions may help you think about ideas and information you might use in your writing. You may return to these questions anytime you wish.

1. The bodies of sharks whose fins were used for soup were found near
   (1) Newfoundland  (3) Long Island
   (2) Costa Rica     (4) Cape Cod

2. The harvesting of shrimp is used as an example of
   (1) wasteful practices
   (2) growing conservation
   (3) useful technology
   (4) increasing harvests

3. In addition to the shark, sea life noted in the account as being seriously harmed includes
   (1) lobster  (3) scallops
   (2) whales   (4) salmon

4. The greatest source of oil pollution in oceans comes from
   (1) fishing vessels
   (2) oil tankers
   (3) passenger cars
   (4) underwater pipelines

5. As used in the text, the phrase “ fouling the breeding grounds” means
   (1) draining them  (3) flooding them
   (2) cultivating them (4) dirtying them

6. The speaker labels mankind’s pollution of the sea as “ suicidal folly” because the pollution
   (1) destroys beaches
   (2) endangers humankind
   (3) fosters environmental legislation
   (4) scatters in ocean water

After you have finished these questions, turn to page 2. Review The Situation and read Your Task and the Guidelines. Use scrap paper to plan your response. Then write your response in Part A, beginning on page 1 of your essay booklet. After you finish your response for Part A, go to page 5 of your examination booklet and complete Part B.
Part B

Directions: Read the text and study the chart on the following pages, answer the multiple-choice questions, and write a response based on the situation described below. You may use the margins to take notes as you read and scrap paper to plan your response.

The Situation: Your state senator is preparing to vote on a bill that would ban the use of vending machines in all New York State schools. Write a letter to your state senator recommending whether he/she should vote for or against the bill and explaining the reasons for your position.

Your Task: Using relevant information from both documents, write a letter to your state senator in which you recommend whether he/she should vote for or against the bill banning the use of vending machines in New York State schools and explain the reasons for your position. Write only the body of the letter.

Guidelines:

Be sure to

- Tell your audience what they need to know about the use of vending machines in schools
- Recommend whether your state senator should vote for or against the bill banning the use of vending machines in New York State schools
- Explain the reasons for your position
- Use specific, accurate, and relevant information from the text and the chart to support your position
- Use a tone and level of language appropriate for a letter to a state senator
- Organize your ideas in a logical and coherent manner
- Indicate any words taken directly from the text by using quotation marks or referring to the author
- Follow the conventions of standard written English
For countless American children, breakfast or lunch drops out of a vending machine at school: a can of soda, perhaps, washing down a chocolate bar or a bag of potato chips. Now, a growing number of states are striking back, trying to curb the rise in childhood obesity by placing strict limits on the sale of candy, soft drinks and fatty snacks in schools. Nearly a dozen states are considering legislation to turn off school vending machines during class time, strip them of sweets or impose new taxes on soft drinks to pay for teacher salaries and breakfast programs.

In California, legislators appear close to passing a law that would prohibit any drinks but milk, water or juice from being sold in elementary schools, and curtail the hours older students can fuel up at vending machines. In Hawaii, legislators are pushing to oust sodas from school machines altogether.

The wave of legislation, unusual both for its breadth and its assertiveness, grew out of the newest statistics on child obesity from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Teenagers today are almost three times as likely to be overweight as they were 20 years ago, the agency announced this year, prompting many lawmakers to take aim at the junk food they believe is to blame.

“It can’t help when a child is eating chips and soda at 8 in the morning,” said Martha Escutia, a state senator who backed California’s bill.

The food industry says children need more exercise, not fewer choices. The bills have also angered school administrators nationwide, intensifying an already heated debate over the prevalence of commercialism in the education system.

Once little more than a novelty in schools, vending machines have become a principal source of extra money for districts across the nation, bringing in hundreds of millions of dollars for extracurricular activities each year. With dozens of machines lining their hallways, some schools annually earn $50,000 or more in commissions, then use the money for marching bands, computer centers and field trips that might otherwise fall by the wayside.

To keep such programs going, schools are emerging as the staunchest opponents of the proposed restrictions, invoking the same principles of local control that the states themselves use to fight federal standards for academic testing. In many cases, the resistance from schools has been vociferous enough to water down or defeat measures, or at least stall them until the next legislative session rolls around.

“Let the parents, the students and the school community sit down and decide how to handle this,” said Robert E. Mecks, legislative director for the Minnesota School Boards Association, which has organized against legislation to curtail soda sales. Mr. Meeks added that Minnesota schools earn roughly $40 million a year from vending machines. “The states only seem to be interested in local control when it suits them,” he said.

Many lawmakers say they find it odd that educators are their biggest foes, considering that the schools are supposed to look after the welfare of their students.

Half the students in some Texas and California districts are overweight, officials say.

“I can understand why school districts go in search of extra resources,” said Jaime L. Capelo Jr., a state representative in Texas who introduced a measure to pare down the amount of junk food in schools. “But it’s shameful when they obtain additional resources through contracts with soda companies with little or no regard to the health of their students.”

vociferous — characterized by an insistent outcry
Even some students express concern over the abundance of snack foods in their schools. Nell S. Geiser, a 17-year-old senior at New Vista High School in Boulder, Colo., says the vending machines in the building never shut down. At 7:30 a.m., outside classrooms with corporate symbols like I.B.M. painted on the walls, she says her fellow students gather in front of the humming machines, comparing schedules on daily planners with logos of the WB network, courtesy of a local television station.

“Plenty of kids make their breakfast from a Mountain Dew and a bag of Doritos,” said Nell, who organizes fellow students to oppose soda contracts in schools. “You’re brought up thinking it’s all right to be constantly bombarded with ads and junk food because they’re in your school.”

Educators, in turn, say that it is the lawmakers who are hypocritical, because as tax revenues sag in tandem with the economy, state legislatures are cutting school budgets, leaving districts with few choices but to search for substitute funds.

“Maybe it’s not the best way of making money,” said Paul D. Houston, executive director of the American Association of School Administrators. “But who is responsible for providing funding for schools? The very people who are now saying that we can’t engage in creative ways of raising money.

Though they are often sympathetic to the economic woes of school districts, many lawmakers argue that encouraging children to indulge at an early age is ultimately fiscally irresponsible. As students become heavier and their health deteriorates, more serious ailments like diabetes can arise, leading to higher health care costs over time.

The Department of Agriculture tried to ban soda and candy sales in schools more than two decades ago, but was thwarted by a federal appeals court in 1983. Now, federal regulations simply require schools to turn off soda and candy machines in the cafeteria during meal times. Those that sit outside in the hallways can stay on all day.

Several states go further. New York, which, like a handful of other states, is considering ways to increase exercise in schools, already prohibits food of “minimal nutritional value” from being sold until after lunch. New Jersey and Maryland have similar policies. But lawmakers say that such rules often make little difference.

“They’re totally ignored,” said Paul G. Pinsky, a state senator in Maryland and former high school teacher who introduced a bill this year to switch off vending machines during the school day. “After the sugar high wore off and they were finished bouncing off the walls, my students’ heads would fall on the desk,” he said. “It made it really difficult to teach.”

Part of the problem, legislators say, is that the agreements between schools and soda companies sometimes deter principals from following state policy, especially since how much schools make is often tied to how much they sell.

One contract between the Pepsi-Cola Company and the Montgomery Blair High School in Silver Spring, Md., stated that “if the Board of Education actively enforces the policy in which vending machines are turned off during the school day,” the school will not get its guaranteed commission. But the company is now taking a more conciliatory stand. Officials of Pepsi, a unit of PepsiCo, say they have redrawn the contract and others like it over the last year, so that they reflect what the company calls the “spirit and the letter” of state policies.

In other states, legislators question whether schools have disregarded state guidelines simply by allowing soda machines on campus. In recent years, North
Carolina schools have signed vending contracts with soft drink companies, even though the state’s official policy allows only sales that “contribute to the nutritional well-being of the child and aid in establishing good food habits.”

“It’s a bit of a conflict, isn’t it?” said Ellie G. Kimnaird, a state senator in North Carolina who is seeking a moratorium on soft drink contracts in schools.

Six months ago, the Coca-Cola Company said that it would scale back on binding contracts with schools. But the new guidelines do not pertain to existing contracts, and may not affect future ones either.

On average, Americans drink nearly 60 gallons of soda each year, almost 8 gallons more than they did just 10 years ago. For many lawmakers, it is a given that the increase has worsened childhood obesity. To the food industry, assigning the blame to any one type of food is simplistic.

“There are no such things as good foods and bad foods,” said Chip Kunde, a legislative director for the Grocery Manufacturers of America, a food industry trade group. “There are just good diets and bad diets.”

Researchers vacillate, pointing out that children are eating more of almost everything, not just sweets, while exercising less. In fact, only 29 percent of students attended daily physical education classes in 1999, compared with 42 percent in 1991, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, making it harder for them to burn off the extra calories they have put on.

---

vacillate — change point of view

— Greg Winter
excerpted from “States Try to Limit Sales of Junk Food in School Buildings”
Students have choices
Percentage of schools offering food in addition to the National School Lunch Program during school hours:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Option</th>
<th>All schools</th>
<th>Elementary</th>
<th>Middle</th>
<th>High</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A la carte* offerings</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vending machines in/near cafeteria</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vending machines in different area</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School store or snack bar</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opportunity to leave campus for lunch</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student sales/ fund-raisers</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* A la carte offerings are any foods sold in the cafeteria that are not part of the National School Lunch Program menu of the day. These include items such as pizzas, candy, brownies and milk or other items purchased to consume with a lunch brought from home.

Source: USDA Food and Nutrition Service, “School Nutrition Dietary Assessment Study II”, April 2001 and Jeff Boyer/Times Union
Multiple-Choice Questions

Directions (7–16): Select the best suggested answer to each question and write its number in the space provided on the answer sheet. The questions may help you think about ideas and information you might want to use in your writing. You may return to these questions anytime you wish.

7 The text indicates that the move to ban vending machines in schools came about as a reaction to
(1) parental pressure
(2) health concerns
(3) legal opinions
(4) funding uncertainty

8 According to the text, the proposed California law (lines 9 through 11) would prohibit the sale of
(1) junk food in elementary schools
(2) milk or juice in elementary schools
(3) soft drinks in high schools
(4) soft drinks in elementary schools

9 According to the text, food industry representatives argue that schools are failing to provide students with adequate
(1) counseling sessions
(2) economic awareness
(3) physical education
(4) legislative protection

10 According to lines 29 through 40, schools often view “junk food” legislation as conflicting with their right to
(1) make decisions
(2) teach nutrition
(3) enforce standards
(4) monitor student health

11 According to the text, vending machines in schools send students a conflicting message about
(1) educational opportunity
(2) user convenience
(3) physical activity
(4) good nutrition

12 The text implies that lawmakers feel the availability of “junk foods” in schools is
(1) shortsighted
(2) essential
(3) acceptable
(4) declining

13 Paul G. Pinsky’s opinion (lines 85 through 89) is most probably cited because of his experience as a
(1) food distributor
(2) high school teacher
(3) cafeteria worker
(4) school board member

14 According to the text, contracts between schools and soda companies may pressure schools to
(1) ignore existing legislation
(2) become creative fund-raisers
(3) reduce variety in cafeterias
(4) raise beverage prices

15 The chart indicates that the availability of food choices in addition to foods which are part of the National School Lunch Program generally increases with the
(1) number of lunches sold
(2) location of vending machines
(3) age of students
(4) length of school day

16 According to the chart, more elementary schools than middle schools allow their students to
(1) hold fund-raisers
(2) use vending machines
(3) visit snack bars
(4) leave for lunch

After you have finished these questions, turn to page 5. Review The Situation and read Your Task and the Guidelines. Use scrap paper to plan your response. Then write your response to Part B, beginning on page 7 of your essay booklet.
The University of the State of New York
REGENTS HIGH SCHOOL EXAMINATION

COMPREHENSIVE EXAMINATION IN ENGLISH
SESSION ONE

Tuesday, January 23, 2007 — 11:15 to 4:15 p.m., only

ANSWER SHEET

Student .................................................... Sex: □ Male □ Female
School .................................................... Grade ............... Teacher .........................

Write your answers to the multiple-choice questions for Part A and Part B on this answer sheet.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Part A</th>
<th>Part B</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

HAND IN THIS ANSWER SHEET WITH YOUR ESSAY BOOKLET,
SCRAP PAPER, AND EXAMINATION BOOKLET.

Your essay responses for Part A and Part B should be written in the essay booklet.

I hereby affirm, at the close of this examination, that I had no unlawful knowledge of the questions or answers prior to the examination and that I have neither given nor received assistance in answering any of the questions during the examination.

________________________________________
Signature
Attached below are the Directions for Teachers to be used by proctors during the Session One Task I Listening Section of the exam.
SESSION ONE

DIRECTIONS FOR TEACHERS

LISTENING SECTION

COMPREHENSIVE EXAMINATION IN ENGLISH

Tuesday, January 23, 2007—1:15 to 4:15 p.m., only

BE SURE THAT THE LISTENING SECTION IS ADMINISTERED TO EVERY STUDENT.

1. Before the start of the examination period, say:

Do not open the examination booklet until you are instructed to do so.

2. Distribute one examination booklet and one essay booklet to each student.

3. After each student has received an examination booklet and an essay booklet, say:

Tear off the answer sheet, which is the last page of the examination booklet, and fill in its heading. Now circle “Session One” and fill in the heading on each page of your essay booklet.

4. After the students have filled in all headings on their answer sheets and essay booklets, say:

Look at page 2 of your examination booklet and follow along while I read the Overview and The Situation.

Overview:
For this part of the test, you will listen to an account about saving the ocean environment, answer some multiple-choice questions, and write a response based on the situation described below. You will hear the account twice. You may take notes on the next page anytime you wish during the readings.

The Situation:
In order to increase membership in the environmental club at your school, you have decided to give a presentation to students in your school on saving the ocean environment. In preparation for writing your presentation, listen to an account about the ocean environment by Peter Benchley, author of the novel Jaws. Then use relevant information from the account to write your presentation.

Now I will read the passage aloud to you for the first time.

5. Now read the passage aloud, including the attribution at the end. Read with appropriate expression, but without added comment.
Listening Passage

More than twenty years ago, I set out to write a story about a town menaced by a marine predator. Intrigued by a newspaper item about a fisherman who had caught a 4,550-pound great white shark off the coast of Long Island, I wondered what would happen if such a creature were to visit a resort community ... and wouldn’t go away...

My ambitions for the story were modest, my expectations for its commercial prospects were nil. For one thing, it would be a first novel, and conventional wisdom held that nobody read first novels. For another, it was a first novel about an unlikely subject, a fish. I knew the story couldn’t be filmed; no one could catch and train a shark to perform for the cameras, and movie technology wasn’t sophisticated enough to create a credible animal.

So much for what I knew.

I’ve often been asked why Jaws became the weird cultural phenomenon it did, and to this day I have no satisfactory answer. Luck played a part, certainly; so did timing; so did my inadvertent tapping of a profound, subconscious, atavistic (natural) fear in the public, fear not only of sharks but of the sea itself, of deep water and of the unknown.

I do know one thing, however: if I were to try to write Jaws today, I couldn’t do it. Or, at least, the book I would write would be vastly different and, I suspect, much less successful. I see the sea today from a new perspective, not as an antagonist but as an ally, rife less with menace than with mystery and wonder.

And I know I am not alone. Scientists, swimmers, scuba divers, snorkelers, and sailors all are learning that the sea is worthy more of respect and protection than of fear and exploitation.

Twenty years may be but a wink in the long span of humanity’s relationship with the sea, but since the early 1970s our knowledge of and attitude toward the oceans and the animals that live in them have grown and changed more than at any time in history.

Today I could not, for instance, portray the shark as a villain, especially not as a mindless omnivore that attacks boats and humans with reckless abandon. We know now as we didn’t then, that the majority of shark attacks on human beings are accidents (often cases of mistaken identity); that a person has a much greater chance of being killed by lightning, bee stings, or feral pigs than by sharks, and that even the most formidable great white shark does not attack boats: rather, responding to complex and confusing electromagnetic signals in the water, it tests a boat, exploring it with its mouth to determine if it is edible. (Of course, if a 3,000-pound shark chooses to sample a scuba diver, believing it to be a sea lion, apologies may be a bit late to mean much.)

No, the shark in an updated Jaws could not be the villain; it would have to be written as the victim, for, worldwide, sharks are much more the oppressed than the oppressors. Every year, more than a hundred million sharks are slaughtered by man. It has been estimated that for every human life taken by a shark, 4.5 million sharks are killed by humans. And rarely for a useful purpose.

Many are killed because they are perceived as a nuisance; others are drowned on lines or in nets and discarded as waste. I have seen the sea bottom off Costa Rica littered with the bodies of sharks that were stripped of their fins — to make soup in Asia — and thrown back into the water to die.

Sharks are far from being the only animals subject to this waste of precious resources; in the shrimp trawl fishery, for example, nine pounds of sea life are killed and discarded for every pound of shrimp harvested.

Warning flags are already flying. In 1989, after forty years of steady increase, the world’s fish catch declined as a direct result of overfishing. Salmon have disappeared from parts of the Pacific. Catches of cod and bass have been severely limited, in desperate hope of preventing the extinction of entire species. In 1992, the Canadian Government closed down the cod fishery off Newfoundland, and 50,000 people were thrown out of work....
Overfishing is not the only threat to the oceans, nor is it only those whose lives depend on the sea who are at risk and at fault. We are all guilty, and we will all pay the price of ignorance, neglect, and abuse.

When we flush our untreated waste into streams, rivers, and the sea, nitrogen and phosphorus disrupt nature's balance by supporting algal blooms and a consequent depletion of oxygen to the point where marine life cannot survive. Parts of many bays and sounds are already practically dead zones.

When toxic chemicals, from those under our kitchen sinks to the by-products of industry, run off into coastal waters, they may enter the food chain and contaminate the fish we eat — sometimes with devastatingly tragic results.

When we drive our cars on roads that border waterways, rain washes oil residue into the water, causing more widespread, long-term pollution than any spill from a grounded tanker, pollution that weakens marine wildlife when it doesn't kill directly. Overall, spills from ships account for only 5 percent of the oil in the oceans. The yearly runoff of petroleum products from a metropolitan area of five million people is approximately the same — 11 million gallons — as the amount of oil spilled from the Exxon Valdez.

When we build along precarious coastlines and estuaries, the wetland borders where rivers meet the ocean, we often destroy habitats that support a multitude of useful and beautiful creatures. In the United States, crabs, oysters, clams, and shrimp that were once plentiful are no longer.

When we cut down trees and strip hillsides bare, rains wash soil into rivers and streams and out to sea, fouling the breeding grounds of salmon and trout and other animals. Silt from tropical deforestation chokes the living coral that makes up barrier reefs, the habitat of thousands of species whose ultimate value has not even been explored by science.

The ways we are nourished by the sea, the ways our lives benefit from the sea — materially as well as spiritually — are nearly infinite. And we are well on our way to ruining it all. What madness that would be. What suicidal folly.

With luck, the tide of devastation can be turned before it results in irreversible catastrophe. There are already a few hopeful signs.

Thanks to environmental legislation, the water quality of some of our rivers and bays has begun to recover.

Some fish stocks have been renewed. Restrictions on the catching of striped bass, for example, have brought the species back from what may have been the brink of extinction.

Ocean-dumping regulations have been tightened. The use of enormous drift nets — some as much as forty miles long — has been banned on the high seas.

Modern telecommunications allow scientists to assess the size and locations of fish stocks, and to detect problems such as silting and pollution earlier than ever before.

To be successful, however, more and more of us will have to change our attitude toward the sea, away from our sense of species superiority and our conviction that every living thing on the planet exists solely to satisfy our caprices, wants and needs, and toward an appreciation of the commonweal and of the unity and mutual dependence inherent in nature's design.

— excerpted from “Oceans in Peril”
Ocean Planet, 1995
6 After reading the passage aloud once, say:

You may take a few minutes to look over The Situation and your notes. (Pause) Now I will read the passage aloud a second time.

7 Read the passage a second time.

8 After the second reading, say:

Now turn to page 4 of your examination booklet, read the directions, and answer the multiple-choice questions. Be sure to follow all the directions given in your examination booklet and your essay booklet. You may now begin.
Attached below is Session Two of the January 2007 Comprehensive English Regents Exam.
COMPREHENSIVE ENGLISH

SESSION TWO

The University of the State of New York

REGENTS HIGH SCHOOL EXAMINATION

COMPREHENSIVE EXAMINATION

IN

ENGLISH

SESSION TWO

Wednesday, January 24, 2007 — 1:15 to 4:15 p.m., only

The last page of this booklet is the answer sheet for the multiple-choice questions. Fold the last page along the perforations and, slowly and carefully, tear off the answer sheet. Then fill in the heading of your answer sheet. Now circle “Session Two” and fill in the heading of each page of your essay booklet.

This session of the examination has two parts. For Part A, you are to answer all ten multiple-choice questions and write a response, as directed. For Part B, you are to write a response, as directed.

When you have completed this session of the examination, you must sign the statement printed at the end of the answer sheet, indicating that you had no unlawful knowledge of the questions or answers prior to the session and that you have neither given nor received assistance in answering any of the questions during the session. Your answer sheet cannot be accepted if you fail to sign this declaration.

The use of any communications device is strictly prohibited when taking this examination. If you use any communications device, no matter how briefly, your examination will be invalidated and no score will be calculated for you.

DO NOT OPEN THIS EXAMINATION BOOKLET UNTIL THE SIGNAL IS GIVEN.
Part A

Directions: Read the passages on the following pages (a poem and an excerpt from a memoir). Write the number of the answer to each multiple-choice question on your answer sheet. Then write the essay in your essay booklet as described in Your Task. You may use the margins to take notes as you read and scrap paper to plan your response.

Your Task:

After you have read the passages and answered the multiple-choice questions, write a unified essay about the influence of grandmothers as revealed in the passages. In your essay, use ideas from both passages to establish a controlling idea about the influence of grandmothers. Using evidence from each passage, develop your controlling idea and show how the author uses specific literary elements or techniques to convey that idea.

Guidelines:

Be sure to

- Use ideas from both passages to establish a controlling idea about the influence of grandmothers
- Use specific and relevant evidence from each passage to develop your controlling idea
- Show how each author uses specific literary elements (for example: theme, characterization, structure, point of view) or techniques (for example: symbolism, irony, figurative language) to convey the controlling idea
- Organize your ideas in a logical and coherent manner
- Use language that communicates ideas effectively
- Follow the conventions of standard written English
Passage I

Lineage

My grandmothers were strong.
They followed plows and bent to toil.
They moved through fields sowing seed.
They touched earth and grain grew.
5 They were full of sturdiness and singing.
My grandmothers were strong.

My grandmothers are full of memories:
Smelling of soap and onions and wet clay
With veins rolling roughly over quick hands
10 They have many clean words to say.
My grandmothers were strong.
Why am I not as they?

—Margaret Walker:
from *For My People, 1942*
Yale University Press
Passage II

...With my grandmother there was a brief ritual phrase in her dialect mouthed by us children when we went to the old Queen Anne style house in Utica where my mother and all her brothers and sisters grew up. My grandmother was always in the kitchen, dressed in black, standing at a large black coal range stirring soup or something. My brothers and I, awkward in the presence of her foreignness, would be pushed in her direction by our mother during those holiday visits, and told, “Go say hello to Granna.”

We’d go to the strange old woman who didn’t look like any of the grandmothers of our friends or like any of those on the covers of the Saturday Evening Post around Thanksgiving time. Granna didn’t stuff a turkey or make candied sweet potatoes and pumpkin pies. She made chicken soup filled with tiny pale meatballs and a bitter green she grew in her backyard along with broad beans and basil, things that were definitely un-American in those days. Her smell was like that of the cedar closet in our attic. She spoke strange words with a raspy sound.

When we stepped into her kitchen to greet her she smiled broadly and twinked our cheeks. We said in a rush the phrase our mother taught us. We didn’t know what it meant. I think we never asked. And if we were to know it meant “how are you?” what difference would it have made? What further knowledge would we have had of the old woman in the shapeless black garment, with her wisps of gray hair falling out of the thick knob crammed with large old-fashioned tortoise-shell hairpins? None. We were strangers.

When on a visit uptstate I had occasion to drive through Cazenovia, a village on the shores of Lake Cazenovia, it appeared to me as if in a dream. I saw again the lakeshore meadow that has always remained indelibly imprinted on my mind from childhood, but that I had thought must, by now, have vanished from the real world. That meadow, now called Gypsy Bay Park, was the site of family picnics to which we and Aunt Mary’s family proceeded from Syracuse, while the other contingent (which was by far the greater number—my mother’s three brothers, two other sisters and all their families plus our grandmother) came from Utica. Cazenovia was the approximate half-way point, and there in the meadow on the lake the cars would all pull up and baskets of food would be unloaded for the great summer reunion....

It was Granna who had decreed this annual outing. When two of her daughters married and moved from Utica, she had made known her wish: that the family should meet each summer when travel was easier and eat together al fresco. It was her pleasure to have all her children, and their children, convene in the meadow, and spend the day eating, singing, playing cards, gossiping, throwing ball, making jokes and toasts. It was a celebration of her progeny of which she, long widowed, was the visible head, the venerable ancestor, the symbol of the strong-willed adventurer who had come from the old world to make a new life and to prosper.

She was monumental. I can see her still, an imposing figure, still dressed in black although it was summer, seated on a folding camp chair (just for her) under the shade of a large, leafy elm tree. She sat there as silently as a Sioux chief and was served food, given babies to kiss, and paid homage to all day. The others

1al fresco — in the open air
2progeny — offspring
spread around her, sitting on blankets on the grass, or on the running boards of their Oldmobiles and Buicks. What made my grandmother so intriguing was the mystery of her. For, despite its gaiety, the family picnic was also a time of puzzlement for me. Who was this stranger in black with whom I could not speak? What was her story? What did she know?

What I knew of my grandmother, I heard from my mother: she believed in good food on the table and good linen on the bed. Everything else was fripperies and she had the greatest scorn for those who dieted or got their nourishment through pills and potions. She knew you are what you eat and she loved America for the great range of foods that it provided to people like her, used to so little, used to making do. She could not tolerate stinginess; she lived with her eldest son and his family of eleven and did all the gardening and cooking, providing a generous table. 

We were about fifty kin gathered in that meadow, living proof of the family progress. Gramma’s sons and daughters vied to offer her their services, goods, and offspring—all that food, those cars, the well-dressed young men who would go to college. And Butch, an older cousin, would take me by the hand to the water’s edge and I’d be allowed to wade in Cazenovia’s waters, which were always tinging cold and made me squeal with delicious shock.

And yet with all that, for all the good times and good food and the happy chattering people who fussed over me and my brothers, I still felt a sense of strangeness, a sense of my parents’ tolerating with an edge of disdain this old world festa only for the sake of the old lady. When I asked my mother why Gramma looked so strange and never spoke to us, I was told, she came from the old country … she doesn’t speak our language. She might as well have been from Mars.

I never remember hearing our own mother speak to her mother, although she must have, however briefly. I only recall my astonishment at mother’s grief when Gramma died and we went to Utica for the funeral. How could mother really feel so bad about someone she had never really talked to? Was it just because she was expected to cry? Or was she crying for the silence that had lain like a chasm between them?...

—Helen Barolini

excerpted from “How I Learned to Speak Italian”

Southwest Review, Winter 1997
Multiple-Choice Questions

Directions (1–10): Select the best suggested answer to each question and write its number in the space provided on the answer sheet. The questions may help you think about the ideas and information you might want to use in your essay. You may return to these questions anytime you wish.

**Passage I** (the poem) — Questions 1–5 refer to Passage I.

1. The narrator implies that the strength of grandmothers results from their:
   (1) cheery songs
   (2) long lives
   (3) large bodies
   (4) hard work

2. “They touched earth and grain grew” (line 4) suggests the grandmothers’ role of:
   (1) protector
   (2) provider
   (3) teacher
   (4) entertainer

3. In order to emphasize her feelings about her grandmothers, the narrator uses:
   (1) repetition
   (2) onomatopoeia
   (3) smile
   (4) symbolism

4. The narrator’s feeling toward her grandmothers is best described as:
   (1) resentment
   (2) embarrassment
   (3) admiration
   (4) concern

5. In comparison to the grandmothers, the narrator is seen as:
   (1) more nurturing
   (2) more religious
   (3) less intelligent
   (4) less capable

**Passage II** (the excerpt from a memoir) — Questions 6–8 refer to Passage II.

6. According to the narrator, the “annual outing” celebrated the importance of:
   (1) solitude
   (2) responsibility
   (3) family
   (4) travel

7. The comparison between the Native American chief and the grandmother (line 45) characterizes her as:
   (1) courageous
   (2) respected
   (3) intelligent
   (4) kind

8. The narrator’s description of her mother’s reaction to the death of “Gianna” is an example of:
   (1) irony
   (2) personification
   (3) alliteration
   (4) humor

Questions 9 and 10 refer to both passages.

9. Both passages reveal the theme of:
   (1) grandparents’ trust
   (2) generational difference
   (3) social conflict
   (4) family rivalry

10. The grandmothers of Passage I differ from the grandmother in Passage II in the ability to:
    (1) discipline
    (2) heal
    (3) survive
    (4) communicate

After you have finished these questions, turn to page 2. Review Your Task and the Guidelines. Use scrap paper to plan your response. Then write your response to Part A, beginning on page 1 of your essay booklet. After you finish your response for Part A, go on to page 7 of your examination booklet and complete Part B.
Part B

Your Task:
Write a critical essay in which you discuss two works of literature you have read from the particular perspective of the statement that is provided for you in the Critical Lens. In your essay, provide a valid interpretation of the statement, agree or disagree with the statement as you have interpreted it, and support your opinion using specific references to appropriate literary elements from the two works. You may use scrap paper to plan your response. Write your essay in Part B, beginning on page 7 of the essay booklet.

Critical Lens:

“The human heart has ever dreamed of a fairer world than the one it knows.”
—Carleton Noyes

“Poetry: General Introduction”
from Lectures on the Harvard Classics, 1914

Guidelines:

Be sure to

• Provide a valid interpretation of the critical lens that clearly establishes the criteria for analysis
• Indicate whether you agree or disagree with the statement as you have interpreted it
• Choose two works you have read that you believe best support your opinion
• Use the criteria suggested by the critical lens to analyze the works you have chosen
• Avoid plot summary. Instead, use specific references to appropriate literary elements (for example: theme, characterization, setting, point of view) to develop your analysis
• Organize your ideas in a unified and coherent manner
• Specify the titles and authors of the literature you choose
• Follow the conventions of standard written English
The University of the State of New York

REGENTS HIGH SCHOOL EXAMINATION

COMPREHENSIVE EXAMINATION IN ENGLISH

SESSION TWO

Wednesday, January 24, 2007 — 1:15 to 4:15 p.m., only

ANSWER SHEET

Write your answers to the multiple-choice questions for Part A on this answer sheet.

Part A

1 ______ 6 ______
2 ______ 7 ______
3 ______ 8 ______
4 ______ 9 ______
5 ______ 10 ______

HAND IN THIS ANSWER SHEET WITH YOUR ESSAY BOOKLET, SCRAP PAPER, AND EXAMINATION BOOKLET.

Your essay responses for Part A and Part B should be written in the essay booklet.

I hereby affirm, at the close of this examination, that I had no unlawful knowledge of the questions or answers prior to the examination and that I have neither given nor received assistance in answering any of the questions during the examination.

______________________________
Signature

Comp. Eng. — Session Two — Jan. '07

[11]
RUBRICS COMPREHENSIVE ENGLISH REGENTS EXAM

Below are the Rubrics used to grade each section of the Comprehensive English Regents exam.

Task I – Listen and Writing for Information and Understanding
Task II – Reading and Writing for Information and Understanding
Task III – Reading and Writing for Literary Response
Task IV – Reading and Writing for Critical Analysis
### SESSION ONE – PART A – SCORING RUBRIC
### LISTENING AND WRITING FOR INFORMATION AND UNDERSTANDING

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>QUALITY</th>
<th>1 Responses at this level:</th>
<th>2 Responses at this level:</th>
<th>3 Responses at this level:</th>
<th>4 Responses at this level:</th>
<th>5 Responses at this level:</th>
<th>6 Responses at this level:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Meaning: the extent to which the response exhibits sound understanding, interpretation, and analysis of the task and text(s)</td>
<td>-provide minimal or no evidence of textual understanding -make no connections between information in the text and the assigned task</td>
<td>-are minimal, with no evidence of development</td>
<td>-are incomplete or largely undeveloped, hinting at ideas, but references to the text are vague, irrelevant, repetitive, or unjustified</td>
<td>-are minimal or limited in focus, lacking organization</td>
<td>-develop ideas clearly and consistently, using relevant and specific details from the text</td>
<td>-reveal an in-depth analysis of the text -make insightful connections between information and ideas in the text and the assigned task</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development: the extent to which ideas are elaborated using specific and relevant evidence from the text(s)</td>
<td>-establish, but fail to maintain, an appropriate focus -lack an appropriate focus</td>
<td>-show no focus or organization</td>
<td>-are minimal</td>
<td>-use language that is imprecise or unsuitable for the audience or purpose -reveal little awareness of how to use sentences to achieve an effect</td>
<td>-develop ideas clearly and consistently, using relevant and specific details from the text</td>
<td>-develop ideas clearly and fully, making effective use of a wide range of relevant and specific details from the text</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organization: the extent to which the response exhibits direction, shape, and coherence</td>
<td>-are minimal</td>
<td>-use language that is imprecise or unsuitable for the audience or purpose -reveal little awareness of how to use sentences to achieve an effect</td>
<td>-are minimal or limited in focus, lacking organization</td>
<td>-are minimal or limited in focus, lacking organization</td>
<td>-develop ideas clearly and consistently, using relevant and specific details from the text</td>
<td>-develop ideas clearly and fully, making effective use of a wide range of relevant and specific details from the text</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language Use: the extent to which the response reveals an awareness of audience and purpose through effective use of words, sentence structure, and sentence variety</td>
<td>-are minimal or limited in focus, lacking organization</td>
<td>-are minimal</td>
<td>-are minimal</td>
<td>-are minimal</td>
<td>-are minimal</td>
<td>-are minimal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conventions: the extent to which the response exhibits conventional spelling, punctuation, paragraphing, capitalization, grammar, and usage</td>
<td>-demonstrate emerging control, exhibiting occasional errors that do not hinder comprehension</td>
<td>-demonstrate a lack of control, exhibiting frequent errors that make comprehension difficult</td>
<td>-demonstrate emerging control, exhibiting occasional errors that do not hinder comprehension</td>
<td>-demonstrate control of the conventions with essentially no errors, even with sophisticated language</td>
<td>-demonstrate control of the conventions, exhibiting occasional errors only when using sophisticated language</td>
<td>-demonstrate control of the conventions, exhibiting occasional errors only when using sophisticated language</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- If the student writes only a personal response and makes no reference to the text(s), the response can be scored no higher than a 1.
- Responses totally unrelated to the topic, illegible, incoherent, or blank should be given a 0.
- A response totally copied from the text(s) with no original student writing should be scored a 0.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>QUALITY</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Responses at this level:</td>
<td>Responses at this level:</td>
<td>Responses at this level:</td>
<td>Responses at this level:</td>
<td>Responses at this level:</td>
<td>Responses at this level:</td>
<td>Responses at this level:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meaning: the extent to which the response exhibits sound understanding, interpretation, and analysis of the task and text(s)</td>
<td>- reveal an in-depth analysis of the documents - make insightful connections between information and ideas in the documents and the assigned task</td>
<td>- convey a thorough understanding of the documents - make clear and explicit connections between information and ideas in the documents and the assigned task</td>
<td>- convey a basic understanding of the documents - make implicit connections between information and ideas in the documents and the assigned task</td>
<td>- convey a basic understanding of the documents - make few or superficial connections between information and ideas in the documents and the assigned task</td>
<td>- convey a confused or inaccurate understanding of the documents - allude to the documents but make unclear or unwarranted connections to the assigned task</td>
<td>- provide minimal or no evidence of understanding - make no connections between information in the documents and the assigned task</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development: the extent to which ideas are elaborated using specific and relevant evidence from the document(s)</td>
<td>- develop ideas clearly and fully, making effective use of a wide range of relevant and specific details from the documents</td>
<td>- develop ideas clearly and consistently, using relevant and specific details from the documents</td>
<td>- develop some ideas more fully than others, using specific and relevant details from the documents</td>
<td>- develop ideas briefly, using some details from the documents</td>
<td>- are incomplete or largely undeveloped, hinting at ideas, but references to the documents are vague, irrelevant, repetitive, or unjustified</td>
<td>- are minimal, with no evidence of development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organization: the extent to which the response exhibits direction, shape, and coherence</td>
<td>- maintain a clear and appropriate focus - exhibit a logical and coherent structure through skillful use of appropriate devices and transitions</td>
<td>- maintain a clear and appropriate focus - exhibit a logical sequence of ideas through use of appropriate devices and transitions</td>
<td>- maintain a clear and appropriate focus - exhibit a logical sequence of ideas but may lack internal consistency</td>
<td>- establish, but fail to maintain, an appropriate focus - exhibit a rudimentary structure but may include some inconsistencies or irrelevancies</td>
<td>- lack an appropriate focus, but suggest some organization, or suggest a focus but lack organization</td>
<td>- show no focus or organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language Use: the extent to which the response reveals an awareness of audience and purpose through effective use of words, sentence structure, and sentence variety</td>
<td>- are stylistically sophisticated, using language that is precise and engaging, with a notable sense of voice and awareness of audience and purpose - vary structure and length of sentences to enhance meaning</td>
<td>- use language that is fluent and original, with evident awareness of audience and purpose - vary structure and length of sentences to control rhythm and pacing</td>
<td>- use appropriate language, with some awareness of audience and purpose - occasionally make effective use of sentence structure or length</td>
<td>- rely on basic vocabulary, with little awareness of audience or purpose - exhibit some attempt to vary sentence structure or length for effect, but with uneven success</td>
<td>- use language that is imprecise or unsuitable for the audience or purpose - reveal little awareness of how to use sentences to achieve an effect</td>
<td>- use language that is imprecise, pronominal, inappropriate, or copied directly from the text</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conventions: the extent to which the response exhibits conventional spelling, punctuation, paragraphing, capitalization, grammar, and usage</td>
<td>- demonstrate control of the conventions with essentially no errors, even with sophisticated language</td>
<td>- demonstrate control of the conventions, exhibiting occasional errors that do not hinder comprehension</td>
<td>- demonstrate partial control, exhibiting occasional errors that do not hinder comprehension</td>
<td>- demonstrate emerging control, exhibiting occasional errors that make comprehension difficult</td>
<td>- demonstrate a lack of control, exhibiting frequent errors that make comprehension difficult</td>
<td>- are minimal, making assessment of conventions unreliable - may be illegible or not recognizable as English</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- If the student addresses only one text, the response can be scored no higher than a 3.
- If the student writes only a personal response and makes no reference to the text(s), the response can be scored no higher than a 1.
- Responses totally unrelated to the topic, illegible, incoherent, or blank should be given a 0.
- A response totally copied from the text(s) with no original student writing should be scored a 0.
### SESSION TWC – PART A – SCORING RUBRIC
### READING AND WRITING FOR LITERARY RESPONSE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>QUALITY</th>
<th>6 Responses at this level:</th>
<th>5 Responses at this level:</th>
<th>4 Responses at this level:</th>
<th>3 Responses at this level:</th>
<th>2 Responses at this level:</th>
<th>1 Response at this level:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Meaning: the extent to which the response exhibits sound understanding, interpretation, and analysis of the task and text(s) | -establish a controlling idea that reveals an in-depth analysis of both texts
- make insightful connections between the controlling idea and the ideas in each text | -establish a controlling idea that reveals a thorough understanding of both texts
- make clear and explicit connections between the controlling idea and the ideas in each text | -establish a controlling idea that shows a basic understanding of both texts
- make implicit connections between the controlling idea and the ideas in each text | -establish a controlling idea that shows no basic understanding of the texts
- make few or superficial connections between the controlling idea and the ideas in each text | -convey a confused or incomplete understanding of the texts
- make few or superficial connections but fail to establish a controlling idea | -provide minimal or no evidence or textual understanding
- make no connections between the texts or among ideas in the texts |
| Development: the extent to which ideas are elaborated using specific and relevant evidence from the text(s) | -develop ideas clearly and fully, making effective use of a wide range of relevant and specific evidence and appropriate literary elements from both texts | -develop ideas clearly and consistently, with reference to relevant and specific evidence and appropriate literary elements from both texts | -develop some ideas more fully than others, with reference to specific and relevant evidence and appropriate literary elements from both texts | -develop ideas briefly, using some evidence from the texts
- may rely primarily on plot summary | -are incomplete or largely undeveloped, hinting at ideas, but reference to the text is vague, relevant, repetitive, or unjustified | -are minimal, with no evidence of development |
| Organization: the extent to which the response exhibits direction, shape, and coherence | -maintain the focus established by the controlling idea
-exhibit a logical and coherent structure through skillful use of appropriate devices and transitions | -maintain the focus established by the controlling idea
-exhibit a logical sequence of ideas through use of appropriate devices and transitions | -maintain a clear and appropriate focus
-exhibit a logical sequence of ideas but may lack internal consistency | -establish, but fail to maintain, an appropriate focus
-exhibit a logical sequence of ideas but may lack internal consistency
-coerce or distract | -lack an appropriate focus; fail to suggest some organization, or suggest a focus but lack organization | -show no focus or organization |
| Language Use: the extent to which the response reveals an awareness of audience and purpose through effective use of word, sentence structure, and sentence variety | -are stylistically sophisticated, using language that is precise and engaging, with a notable sense of voice and awareness of audience and purpose
-vary structure and length of sentences to enhance meaning | -use language that is fluent and original, with evident awareness of audience and purpose
-vary structure and length of sentences to control rhythm and pacing | -use appropriate language, with some evidence of audience and purpose
-occasionally make effective use of sentence structure or length | -rely on basic vocabulary, with little evidence of audience or purpose
-exhibit some attempt to vary sentence structure or length for effect, but with uneven success | -use language that is imprecise or unsuitable for the purpose or audience
-reveal little awareness of how to use sentences to achieve an effect | -are minimal
-use language that is incoherent or inappropriate |
| Conventions: the extent to which the response exhibits conventional spelling, punctuation, paragraphing, capitalization, grammar, and usage | -demonstrate control of the conventions with essentially no errors, even with sophisticated language | -demonstrate partial control, exhibiting occasional errors only when using sophisticated language | -demonstrate partial control, exhibiting occasional errors that do not hinder comprehension | -demonstrate emerging control, exhibiting occasional errors that make comprehension difficult | -demonstrate a lack of control, exhibiting frequent errors that make comprehension difficult | -are minimal, making assessment of conventions unreliable
-may be illegible or not recognizable as English |

- **F** the student addresses only one text, the response can be scored no higher than a 3.
- **F** the student writes only a personal response and makes no references to the text(s), the response can be scored no higher than a 1.
- **R**esponses totally unrelated to the topic, illegible, incoherent, or blank should be given a 0.
- A response totally copied from the text(s) with no original student writing should be scored a 0.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>QUALITY</th>
<th>6 Responses at this level</th>
<th>5 Responses at this level</th>
<th>4 Responses at this level</th>
<th>3 Responses at this level</th>
<th>2 Responses at this level</th>
<th>1 Responses at this level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Meaning: the extent to which the response exhibits sound understanding, interpretation, and analysis of the task and text(s)</td>
<td>provide an interpretation of the &quot;critical lens&quot; that is faithful to the complexity of the statement and clearly establishes the criteria for analysis</td>
<td>provide a thoughtful interpretation of the &quot;critical lens&quot; that clearly establishes the criteria for analysis</td>
<td>provide a reasonable interpretation of the &quot;critical lens&quot; that establishes the criteria for analysis</td>
<td>provide a simple interpretation of the &quot;critical lens&quot; that suggests some criteria for analysis</td>
<td>provide a confused or incomplete interpretation of the &quot;critical lens&quot;</td>
<td>not refer to the &quot;critical lens&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development: the extent to which ideas are elaborated using specific and relevant evidence from the text(s)</td>
<td>develop ideas clearly and fully, making effective use of a wide range of relevant and specific evidence and appropriate literary elements from both texts</td>
<td>develop ideas clearly and consistently, with reference to relevant and specific evidence and appropriate literary elements from both texts</td>
<td>develop some ideas more fully than others, with reference to specific and relevant evidence and appropriate literary elements from both texts</td>
<td>develop ideas briefly, using some evidence from the text</td>
<td>are incomplete or largely undeveloped, hinting at ideas, but references to the text are vague, irrelevant, repetitive, or unjustified</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organization: the extent to which the response exhibits direction, shape, and coherence</td>
<td>maintain the focus established by the critical lens; exhibit a logical and coherent structure through skillful use of appropriate devices and transitions</td>
<td>maintain the focus established by the critical lens; exhibit a logical sequence of ideas through use of appropriate devices and transitions</td>
<td>maintain a clear and appropriate focus; exhibit a logical sequence of ideas but may lack internal consistency</td>
<td>establish, fail to maintain, an appropriate focus; exhibit a rudimentary structure but may include some inconsistencies or irrelevancies</td>
<td>lack an appropriate focus or suggest some organization, or suggest a focus but lack organization</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language Use: the extent to which the response reveals an awareness of audience and purpose through effective use of words, sentence structure, and sentence variety</td>
<td>are stylistically sophisticated, using language that is precise and engaging, with a notable sense of voice and awareness of audience and purpose; vary structure and length of sentences to enhance meaning</td>
<td>use language that is fluent and original, with evident awareness of audience and purpose; vary structure and length of sentences to control rhythm and pacing</td>
<td>use appropriate language, with some awareness of audience or purpose; occasionally make effective use of sentence structure or length</td>
<td>rely on basic vocabulary, with little awareness of audience or purpose; exhibit some attempt to vary sentence structure or length for effect, but with uneven success</td>
<td>use language that is imprecise or unsuitable for the audience or purpose; reveal little awareness of how to use sentences to achieve an effect</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conventions: the extent to which the response exhibits conventional spelling, punctuation, paragraphing, capitalization, grammar, and usage</td>
<td>demonstrate control of the conventions with essentially no errors, even with sophisticated language</td>
<td>demonstrate control of the conventions, exhibiting occasional errors only when using sophisticated language</td>
<td>demonstrate partial control, exhibiting occasional errors that do not hinder comprehension</td>
<td>demonstrate emerging control, exhibiting occasional errors that make comprehension difficult</td>
<td>demonstrate a lack of control, exhibiting frequent errors that make comprehension difficult</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- If the student addresses only one text, the response can be scored no higher than a 3.
- If the student writes only a personal response and makes no reference to the text(s), the response can be scored no higher than a 1.
- Responses totally unrelated to the topic, illegible, incoherent, or blank should be given a 0.
- A response totally copied from the text(s) with no original student writing should be scored a 1.
Appendix B

Below is a complete copy of the January 11, 2011 Comprehensive English Regents (Common Core-Aligned) examination. It has been altered only for the purpose of having it formatted and fitted to this document. Attached also are the Directions for Teachers for the Part I Listening Section of the exam and the rubrics used for grading Question 26, Question 27 and, Question 28.
COMPREHENSIVE ENGLISH

The University of the State of New York

REGENTS HIGH SCHOOL EXAMINATION

COMPREHENSIVE EXAMINATION

IN

ENGLISH

Tuesday, January 11, 2011 — 9:15 a.m. to 12:15 p.m., only

Check to make sure that the answer sheet that has been given to you has your name and student ID entered on it. If the information has not been pre-entered, you must do so now. You must also fill in the heading on each page of your essay booklet that has a space for it.

The examination has four parts. Part 1 tests listening skills; you are to answer all eight multiple-choice questions. For Part 2, you are to answer all twelve multiple-choice questions. For Part 3, you are to answer all five multiple-choice questions and the two short constructed-response questions. For Part 4, you are to write one essay response.

When you have completed the examination, you must sign the statement printed at the bottom of the front of the answer sheet, indicating that you had no unlawful knowledge of the questions or answers prior to the examination and that you have neither given nor received assistance in answering any of the questions during the examination. Your answer sheet cannot be accepted if you fail to sign this declaration.

The use of any communications device is strictly prohibited when taking this examination. If you use any communications device, no matter how briefly, your examination will be invalidated and no score will be calculated for you.

DO NOT OPEN THIS EXAMINATION BOOKLET UNTIL THE SIGNAL IS GIVEN.
Part 1

Multiple-Choice Questions

Directions (1–8): Use your notes to answer the following questions about the passage read to you. Select the best suggested answer to each question and record your answer, using a No. 2 pencil, on the separate answer sheet provided for you.

1. As stated by the speaker, letter writing presented Abigail Adams with
   (1) an unexpected friendship
   (2) a trivial pastime
   (3) an emotional release
   (4) a displeasing chore

2. For the speaker, the “journey” through Abigail Adams’ many letters proved to be
   (1) revealing
   (2) sorrowful
   (3) humorous
   (4) tedious

3. Which issue of world concern may have been influenced by Abigail Adams’ letters?
   (1) medical policies
   (2) free trade
   (3) land expansion
   (4) military actions

4. By stating that Abigail Adams “reached beyond the kitchen and the nursery,” the speaker suggests that Abigail
   (1) suffered from boredom
   (2) broke with tradition
   (3) sought new friends
   (4) traveled the country

5. Abigail Adams advised her husband to create laws that would
   (1) protect women
   (2) promote commerce
   (3) enforce treaties
   (4) supply troops

6. According to the account, the comparison of Abigail Adams to a “guiding planet around which all revolved” suggests her ability to
   (1) isolate individuals
   (2) encourage conformity
   (3) initiate action
   (4) criticize others

7. In recognizing that she was a “woman in a man’s world,” Abigail Adams reveals her
   (1) desire for fame
   (2) financial ability
   (3) sense of humor
   (4) political awareness

8. The speaker’s tone in the account can be described as
   (1) harsh
   (2) respectful
   (3) sarcastic
   (4) objective
Part 2

Directions (9–20): Below each passage, there are several multiple-choice questions. Select the best suggested answer to each question and record your answer, using a No. 2 pencil, on the separate answer sheet provided for you.

Reading Comprehension Passage A

...It was late in December, the last busy days of the year. But the seven or eight boys on the windy beach were as lighthearted and free as ever. The eldest was twelve, the youngest nine. They were gathered beneath a dune in lively discussion. Some were standing. Others sat. One rested his chin in his hands, elbows dug deep in the sand. As they talked, the sun went down in the west.

Their talking now over, the boys galloped off along the water’s edge. From inlet to inlet each ran as he pleased. The group was quickly dispersed. One by one they retrieved what the storm had brought two nights before and the ebb tide had left behind: rotted boards, a chipped bowl, bamboo slivers, chunks of wood, an old ladle with the handle torn off. The boys heaped them up on a dry patch of sand away from the lapping waves. All that they gathered was soaking wet. ... The spoils of their hunt they had gathered for burning. With the red flames, wild joy would be theirs. Running and leaping across, they would prove their courage. And now from the dunes they gathered dry grass. The eldest stepped forward and touched it with fire. They stood in a circle and waited to hear the crack of bamboo split by the flames. But only the grass burned. It caught and died, caught and died. A few puffs of smoke floated up, nothing more. The wood, the bamboo were untouched. The mirror frame only was charred here and there. With a weird hiss, steam shot out from the end of the pole. One after another the boys dropped to the sand and blew at the pile as hard as they could. But instead of flames, smoke arose, stinging their eyes. Their cheeks were stained with tears. ... Look, look, one boy shouted, the Izu hill fires! If their fires burn, then why shouldn’t ours? All leaped to their feet, looking out towards the water. Far across the great Bay of Sagami two fires flickered and trembled, so feeble they might be just will-o’-the-wisps. Now that harvest is over, the farmers of Izu must be burning the chaff of their fields in the hills. Surely these are the fires that bring tears to the eyes of winter travellers. Their distant beams tell only of the long, dark road ahead.

The boys danced wildly and clapped and sang, The hills are burning, the hills are burning. Their innocent voices rang through the dusk, down the long, lonely beach. The whispering of the waves blended with their voices. The waves rushed in from the southern tip of the inlet in foaming white lines. The tide was beginning to rise. ... Still vexed by their failure, the eldest boy looked back at the pile as he ran. One more time he looked back from the top of the dune before running down the far side. It has caught, he shouted, Our fire has caught, when he saw the flames on the beach. The others, amazed, climbed back to the top. They stood in a row and looked down.

It was true. The stubborn bits of wood, fanned by the wind, had caught fire. Smoke billowed up and red tongues of flame shot out, disappeared and shot out again. The sharp crack of bamboo joints splitting in the fire, the shower of sparks with each report.1 Indeed, the fire had caught. But the boys stood their ground, clapped and shouted with joy, then turned and raced down the hill for home.

1report — an explosive noise
Now the ocean was dark and from the beach, too, the sun was gone. All that was left was the winter night’s loneliness. And on the desolate beach the fire burned, alone, unattended. …

— Kunikida Doppo
excerpted from “The Bonfire”
The Voyagers’ Press

9 The word “But” (line 1) emphasizes the contrast between
(1) season and activity (3) calmness and anger
(2) age and experience (4) bravery and fear

10 The actions of the boys in lines 6 and 7 suggest a mood of
(1) fear (3) sadness
(2) excitement (4) peacefulness

11 In line 12, “The spoils of their hunt” refers to
(1) large clams (3) horseshoe crabs
(2) colorful rocks (4) beach debris

12 The repetition used in line 16 emphasizes the
(1) sand’s power (3) boys’ hopes
(2) wind’s speed (4) ocean’s beauty

13 In line 31, “vexed” most nearly means
(1) scared (3) embarrassed
(2) threatened (4) frustrated

14 The purpose of lines 40 through 42 is to
(1) personify the Sun
(2) describe the setting
(3) characterize the narrator
(4) demonstrate the action
Reading Comprehension Passage B

Handcycling was developed in the 1980s by people working to create alternate types of human-powered vehicles. So it was almost by accident that a new world of cycling was opened to people with disabilities. …

“The disabled community picked up on it right away,” said Ian Lawless, Colorado regional director and cycling director for Adaptive Adventures. Even people with one working arm can handcycl with some modifications made to the equipment, said Lawless. “Just about anyone can do it. It’s an accessible sport. It’s not just for racing; it’s also for recreational riding. It’s a barrier breaker that allows a disabled rider to participate in cycling with friends and families who may be riding conventional bicycles.”

In the 25 years since its development, handcycling has continued to grow in popularity. It’s been part of the IPC [International Paralympic Committee] cycling program since 1998, and the 2004 Paralympics included handcycling racing for the first time. Today, thousands of people, able-bodied and those with disabilities, have turned to handcycling as a means to improve their cardiovascular health, increase upper-body strength, compete, and ride with friends and family. …

An upright handcycle is an entry-level bike for those who are new to the sport, who just want exercise or recreation, or who don’t want to ride very long distances or go very fast. Because of their higher center of gravity, upright handcycles aren’t suitable for speeds higher than 15 mph. The internal gear systems, borrowed from the cycling industry, usually come in a choice of three or seven speeds, which naturally limits the speed to less than 15 mph. They are easy to transfer in and out of from a wheelchair, and have a natural, fork-type steering system.

Recumbent\(^1\) handcycles come in a few different variations. There are two steering options: fork-steer and lean-to-steer, and two seating options: one where the rider reclines and the other, a “trunk-power” version, where the rider leans forward. They usually come with 27-gear drivetrains,\(^2\) although they can be purchased with three- or seven-gear drivetrains.

The trunk-power handcycle doesn’t have much of a seatback. The cranks are low to the ground and far away from the rider. With this arrangement, riders are able to put the weight of their trunks behind each stroke, allowing them to go faster for longer. The limitation to this type of handcycle, Lawless said, is that the athlete must have control of most or all of his abdominal muscles, so it may not be suitable for all athletes.

With the other seating option, the rider sits in a seat with a reclined back. The cranks are higher and closer, allowing the rider to use the seatback for leverage to rotate the cranks. …

The lean-to-steer version has a two-piece frame where the top frame swivels over the bottom frame. The front wheel turns along with the seat. The rider initiates the turn by leaning his whole body. There is a bit of a learning curve with this type, but many riders prefer this type because they have a feel similar to monoskiing.\(^3\) They’re used primarily, but not exclusively, by people with lower-level disabilities. Lawless said there’s no advantage of one type of steering over the other. It’s primarily a matter of the athlete’s preference. …

— Disabled Sports USA
excerpted from “Handcycling 101”
Challenge Magazine, Spring 2005
http://www.dsusa.org

\(^1\)recumbent — reclining
\(^2\)drivetrain — pedal connected to the gears to make the bike move forward
\(^3\)monoskiing — one ski for both feet, using the whole body to steer
15 The passage includes the quotation about the handcycle being a “barrier breaker” (line 8) in order to stress its
   (1) durability (3) portability
   (2) affordability (4) accessibility

16 The inclusion of handcycling in the 2004 Paralympics demonstrates its
   (1) profitability (2) popularity
   (3) dependability (4) intensity

17 According to the passage, many people have turned to handcycling in order to
   (1) improve their health (2) lower transportation costs
   (3) reduce stress (4) minimize pollution

18 As used in the passage, the phrase “learning curve” (line 38) refers to the
   (1) difficulty of learning a skill (2) responsibility of individual riders
   (3) braking mechanism (4) safety features

19 According to the passage, the type of handcycle one should purchase might depend upon
   (1) unit cost (3) individual weight
   (2) structural defects (4) physical needs

20 In discussing the advantages and disadvantages of various handcycle designs, the author uses which strategy?
   (1) personal anecdote (2) cause and effect
   (3) comparison and contrast (4) chronological order
Passage I

...My house occupies an average-sized lot in the old courthouse town where I grew up, and where I returned to raise my own children, but it's on a corner, and in winter that makes all the difference. The sidewalk stretches 50 feet across the front of the house, a reasonable assignment for one man and a shovel. But then it turns and unspools for 160 feet along the side of the house, a distance that seems to lengthen as the snow deepens.

If I lived in an isolated corner of town, my sidewalk might not beckon me so insistently each snowfall. If I were the only one who needed it to get somewhere, maybe I could let the snow rest undisturbed on it for a while, and admire, at least briefly, the fresh sheet of white billowing out to the curb. But four doors down is the high school, and around the corner in the other direction is the elementary school. A crossing guard stands out front in the morning. I have obligations.

I first learned about the obligations imposed by snow from my grandfather, long before I had a sidewalk of my own. My grandparents lived in the house behind ours when I was a boy, and they, like us, had the requisite 50 feet of sidewalk to care for. But my grandfather worked as the custodian at the savings and loan a few doors away, on a busy stretch of Main Street. It was a corner lot, too, maybe twice as wide and deep as my own; its sidewalk felt miles long when I used to help him clear it.

Before they moved into town, my grandparents had lived nearby on a small farm, which my grandmother never missed and my grandfather never quite got over. She had muscled the farm along while he worked at a factory in town, and she was glad to leave the butchering of chickens behind. But he kept planting fields in his head, and he cultivated his small new patch of land as if it were his sustenance. The white picket fence around his lush backyard garden could barely contain his bountiful crops. He died 25 years ago, but people in town still stop me to talk about his tomatoes...

The farms that once circled my town are all but gone now, including my grandparents’, and in many of the housing developments that replaced them there are no sidewalks at all. Nobody travels by foot anywhere, and nobody is responsible for the safe winter passage of the neighbors. Friends of mine who live out there have a different, narrower obligation when it snows: to shovel their driveways, so their cars can reach the roads.

But children would be walking past my house to school in the morning, and it was my job to make the way clear before they arrived. The snow was feathery, just a couple of inches—nothing like the blizzard that took almost a full day to dig through—and when I was done, I stood leaning on my shovel for a moment, looking with satisfaction down the long path that stretched to the corner. I can’t grow tomatoes anything like my grandfather’s, but my shoveling will suffice. I had cleared the way, as he always had, for whoever might follow.

In the morning, news came of a delayed opening for school: two hours. It was a welcome reprieve, because more snow had fallen through the night. I went out and shoveled again. Later I got up from my desk to watch through the window as the morning
traffic commenced along my sidewalk, where nothing stopped the children—or anyone else—from wherever they needed to go.

— Kevin Coyne
excerpted from “Clearing Paths to the Past”
Passage II
To be of use

The people I love the best
jump into work head first
without dallying in the shallows
and swim off with sure strokes almost out of sight.

They seem to become natives of that element,
the black sleek heads of seals
bouncing like half-submerged balls.

I love people who harness themselves, an ox to a heavy cart,
who pull like water buffalo, with massive patience,
who strain in the mud and the muck to move things forward,
who do what has to be done, again and again.

I want to be with people who submerge
in the task, who go into the fields to harvest
and work in a row and pass the bags along.

who stand in the line and haul in their places,
who are not parlor generals and field deserters
but move in a common rhythm
when the food must come in or the fire be put out.

— Marge Piercy
from To Be of Use, 1973
Doubleday & Company, Inc.
Multiple-Choice Questions

Directions (21–25): Select the best suggested answer to each question and record your answer, using a No. 2 pencil, on the separate answer sheet provided for you.

Passage I (the essay excerpt) — Questions 21–23 refer to Passage I.

21 The author lists the length of his sidewalk in order to
(1) complain about his neighbors
(2) exaggerate his importance
(3) emphasize his efforts
(4) show off his property

22 The author’s feelings about his grandfather can best be described as
(1) indifferent
(2) admiring
(3) troubled
(4) envious

23 The author’s attitude about shoveling can best be summed up by which statement?
(1) “I have obligations” (line 11)
(2) “its sidewalk felt miles long” (lines 16 and 17)
(3) “nobody is responsible” (line 27)
(4) “It was a welcome reprieve” (lines 37 and 38)

Passage II (the poem) — Questions 24–25 refer to Passage II.

24 The narrator uses the phrases “who harness” (line 8), “who pull” (line 9), “who strain” (line 10), and “who do” (line 11) to emphasize the
(1) repetitious nature of labor
(2) rewards of hard work
(3) perils of farm chores
(4) slow pace of rural life

25 As used in the poem, the phrase “parlor generals” (line 16) suggests those who
(1) lead naturally
(2) ignore advice
(3) follow carefully
(4) avoid participation
Short-Response Questions

Directions (26–27): Write your response to question 26 on page 1 of your essay booklet and question 27 on page 2 of your essay booklet. Be sure to answer both questions.

26 Write a well-developed paragraph in which you use ideas from both passages to establish a controlling idea about work. Develop your controlling idea using specific examples and details from each passage.

27 Choose a specific literary element (e.g., theme, characterization, structure, point of view, etc.) or literary technique (e.g., symbolism, irony, figurative language, etc.) used by one of the authors. Using specific details from that passage, in a well-developed paragraph, show how the author uses that element or technique to develop the passage.
Part 4

Question 28

Your Task:

Write a critical essay in which you discuss two works of literature you have read from the particular perspective of the statement that is provided for you in the Critical Lens. In your essay, provide a valid interpretation of the statement, agree or disagree with the statement as you have interpreted it, and support your opinion using specific references to appropriate literary elements from the two works. You may use scrap paper to plan your response. Write your essay beginning on page 3 of the essay booklet.

Critical Lens:

“...although the world is full of suffering, it is full also of the overcoming of it.”

—Helen Keller

Optimism, 1903

Guidelines:

Be sure to

• Provide a valid interpretation of the critical lens that clearly establishes the criteria for analysis
• Indicate whether you agree or disagree with the statement as you have interpreted it
• Choose two works you have read that you believe best support your opinion
• Use the criteria suggested by the critical lens to analyze the works you have chosen
• Avoid plot summary. Instead, use specific references to appropriate literary elements (for example: theme, characterization, setting, point of view) to develop your analysis
• Organize your ideas in a unified and coherent manner
• Specify the titles and authors of the literature you choose
• Follow the conventions of standard written English
Attached below are the Directions for Teachers to be used by proctors during the Part I Listening Section of the exam.
DIRECTIONS FOR TEACHERS

LISTENING SECTION

COMPREHENSIVE EXAMINATION IN ENGLISH

Tuesday, January 11, 2011 — 9:15 a.m. to 12:15 p.m., only

BE SURE THAT THE LISTENING SECTION IS ADMINISTERED TO EVERY STUDENT.

1 Before the start of the examination period, say:

Do not open the examination booklet until you are instructed to do so.

2 Distribute one examination booklet, one essay booklet, and scrap paper to each student. Then distribute to each student an answer sheet with his or her name already filled in.

3 After each student has received an examination booklet, an essay booklet, scrap paper, and his or her answer sheet, say:

Check to make sure that the answer sheet that has been given to you has your name and student ID entered on it. If the information has not been pre-entered, you must do so now. You must also fill in the heading on each page of your essay booklet that has a space for it.

4 After the students have filled in all headings on their essay booklets, say:

You will listen to a passage and answer some multiple-choice questions. You will hear the passage twice.

I will read the passage aloud to you once. Listen carefully. You may take notes on page 3 of your examination booklet. Then I will tell you to open your examination booklet to page 4. You will be given a chance to read the questions before the second reading. Then I will read the passage a second time. You may also take notes during the second reading or answer the questions.

Now I will read the passage aloud to you for the first time. Open your examination booklet to page 3.

5 Note the time you start reading the listening passage. The three-hour examination starts now. Read both the introduction and the passage aloud, including the attribution at the end. Read with appropriate expression, but without added comment.
Listening Passage

The following passage is from an article entitled “Abigail Adams: Witness to a Revolution” by Natalie Bober, published in The Horn Book Magazine in January/February 1996. In this excerpt, Bober discusses the letters Abigail Adams wrote to her husband John Adams during the American revolutionary period.

Early in her marriage, as Abigail Smith Adams began to experience the long separations from her husband, John, that would ultimately shadow and shape their marriage, letter writing became a way of life for her. Her bursting heart often found vent at her pen.

Indeed, Abigail lives in history because of the letters she wrote to her family and friends, and we are the richer for them. More than two thousand letters survive today as a written legacy to us because her husband ignored her plea to burn them. John’s reply to her was: “The Conclusion of your Letter makes my Heart throb more than a cannonade would. You bid me burn your Letters. But I must forget you first.”

In fact, recognizing the potential importance of their letters, John ultimately asked Abigail to “put them up safe and preserve them. They may exhibit to our posterity a kind of picture of the manners, opinions, and principles of these times of perplexity, danger, and distress.”

They do just that! And more. For me, personally, these past five years that I have spent reading and re-reading them have been an inspiration. They have taken me on a journey back in time and allowed me the privilege every biographer yearns for: a glimpse into the heart and mind, and even the soul, of Abigail Adams.

They were extraordinary letters that recorded an extraordinary life — one that not only gave impetus to a husband and son to become presidents of the United States but opened wide a window on a crucial period in history. Her letters allow us to witness, through her eyes, the birth of our nation, and to come to know the people who played a vital role in it.

It is Abigail’s voice in those letters that I hoped to capture for my readers. And it is those letters that became the vehicle by which I could take my readers on a journey back in time. For we cannot really know Abigail Adams unless we know what it was like to live in the eighteenth century. …

In my persistent search for what the biographer calls truth, beyond the necessary reading and hard labor that go into writing a life, I have had the joy and excitement of myriad unexpected happenings. All have left their mark on me. In the case of Abigail Adams, the more details I uncovered in my quest for her, the more I found myself becoming Abigail Adams.

I was with her in Boston on a cold, clear night in March of 1770, as she coped with two small children while the explosion that came to be known as the Boston Massacre was taking place outside her window. I felt her terror as Massachusetts was plunged into the fierce tumult of war, and every alarm sent minutemen marching past her door, hungry, thirsty, looking for a place to rest.

I listened as she taught John Quincy how to read and write, and subtly began to inculcate in him a sense of duty to his father and to his country. Years later, still concerned about her children’s education, Abigail instructed their father: “You will not teach them what to think, but how to think, and they will know how to act.”

I sat with her on lonely nights when, in the silence of the cold, dark house, using her pen as her emotional outlet, she wrote letters to her husband pouring out her fears as well as her passionate love for him.

As she vividly described the devastating situation in Massachusetts to her husband in Philadelphia, she brought the reality of war home to him. When some members of Congress continued to press for conciliation with Great Britain, Abigail’s letters echoed in John’s mind and he pressed for [gun]powder.
In her own way, Abigail Adams may have changed the course of history.

As she reached beyond the kitchen and the nursery to explore the outside world, she worried about the lack of education for women: “If we mean to have Heroes, Statesmen and Philosophers, we must have learned women,” she warned.

Reflecting on the importance of her position as a woman and on her own growing independence, she wrote the letter to John that has echoed down through the centuries, and marks, in a sense, the beginning of change in the status of women:

“In the new Code of Laws which I suppose it will be necessary for you to make, I desire you would Remember the Ladies, and be more generous and favourable to them than your ancestors. Do not put such unlimited power into the hands of the Husbands. Remember all Men would be tyrants if they could.” She recognized the possibilities as well as the limits of her position as a woman in a man’s world.

When Abigail died, her daughter-in-law Louisa, John Quincy’s wife, described her as “the guiding planet around which all revolved, performing their separate duties only by the impulse of her magnetic power.” That magnetic power still pulls me. …

— excerpted from “Abigail Adams: Witness to a Revolution”

_The Horn Book Magazine_, January/February 1996

6 After reading the passage aloud once, say:

You may take five minutes to look over the questions before I read the passage aloud the second time.

7 After the students have had five minutes to read the questions, say:

As you listen to the second reading, you may take notes or answer the questions. You will be given an opportunity to complete the questions after the second reading. Now I will read the passage aloud a second time.

8 Read both the introduction and the passage a second time.

9 After the second reading, say:

Now turn to page 4 of your test booklet, read the directions and answer the multiple-choice questions. You may look over your notes to answer the questions.
RUBRICS COMPREHENSIVE (Common Core-Aligned) ENGLISH REGENTS EXAM

Below are the Rubrics used to grade each section of the exam.

Question 26
Question 27
Question 28 – Critical Lens
Question 26
(used for 2-credit responses that refer to two texts)

Score Point 2
• presents a well-developed paragraph
• demonstrates a basic understanding of the texts
• establishes an appropriate controlling idea
• supports the controlling idea with clear and appropriate details from both texts
• uses language that is appropriate
• may exhibit errors in conventions that do not hinder comprehension

Score Point 1
• has a controlling idea
  or
• implies a controlling idea
  or
• has an unclear controlling idea
  AND
• supports the controlling idea with partial and/or overly general information from the texts
• uses language that may be imprecise or inappropriate
• exhibits errors in conventions that may hinder comprehension

Score Point 0
• is off topic, incoherent, a copy of the task/texts, or blank
• demonstrates no understanding of the task/texts
• is a personal response
Question 27

(used for 2-credit responses that refer only to one text)

Score Point 2
- presents a well-developed paragraph
- provides an appropriate explanation of the literary element or technique chosen
- supports the explanation with clear and appropriate evidence from the text
- uses language that is appropriate
- may exhibit errors in conventions that do not hinder comprehension

Score Point 1
- provides an explanation of the literary element or technique
  or
- implies an explanation of the literary element or technique
  or
- has an unclear explanation of the literary element or technique
  AND
- supports the explanation with partial and/or overly general information from the text
- uses language that may be imprecise or inappropriate
- exhibits errors in conventions that may hinder comprehension

Score Point 0
- is off topic, incoherent, a copy of the task/text, or blank
- demonstrates no understanding of the task/text
- is a personal response

Note: Since the question specifies choosing one of the authors, if the student responds using both passages, score the portion of the response that would give the student the higher score.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>QUALITY</th>
<th>Responses at this level:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Meanings: the extent to which the response exhibits sound understanding, interpretation, and analysis of the text(s)</td>
<td>- provide a thoughtful interpretation of the &quot;critical lens&quot; that clearly establishes the criteria for analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- use the criteria to make insightful analysis of the chosen texts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development: the extent to which ideas are elaborated using specific and relevant evidence from the text(s)</td>
<td>- develop ideas clearly and fully, making effective use of a wide range of relevant and specific evidence and appropriate literary elements from both texts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organization: the extent to which the response exhibits direction, shape, and coherence</td>
<td>- maintain the focus established by the critical lens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- exhibit a logical and consistent structure through skillful use of appropriate devices and transitions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language Use: the extent to which the response reveals an awareness of audience and purpose</td>
<td>- are stylistically sophisticated, using language that is precise and engaging, with a notable sense of voice and awareness of audience and purpose</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- vary structure and length of sentences to enhance meaning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conventions: the extent to which the response exhibits conventional spelling, punctuation, capitalization, grammar, and usage</td>
<td>- demonstrate control of the conventions with essentially no errors, even with sophisticated language</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- If the student addresses only one text, the response can be scored no higher than a 3.
- If the student writes only a personal response and makes no reference to the text(s), the response can be scored no higher than a 1.
- Responses totally unrelated to the topic, illegible, incoherent, or blank should be given a 0.
- A response totally copied from the text(s) with no original student writing should be scored a 0.
Appendix C

Below is a complete copy of the June 2014 Common Core English Regents examination. It has been altered only for the purpose of having it formatted and fitted to this document. Attached also are the rubrics used for grading each part of the exam.
DO NOT OPEN THIS EXAMINATION BOOKLET UNTIL THE SIGNAL IS GIVEN.

REGENTS IN ELA (Common Core)

The University of the State of New York

REGENTS HIGH SCHOOL EXAMINATION

REGENTS EXAMINATION

IN

ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS

(Common Core)

Tuesday, June 3, 2014 — 1:15 to 4:15 p.m., only

The possession or use of any communications device is strictly prohibited when taking this examination. If you have or use any communications device, no matter how briefly, your examination will be invalidated and no score will be calculated for you.

A separate answer sheet has been provided for you. Follow the instructions for completing the student information on your answer sheet. You must also fill in the heading on each page of your essay booklet that has a space for it, and write your name at the top of each sheet of scrap paper.

The examination has three parts. For Part 1, you are to read the texts and answer all 24 multiple-choice questions. For Part 2, you are to read the texts and write one source-based argument. For Part 3, you are to read the text and write a text-analysis response. The source-based argument and text-analysis response should be written in pen. Keep in mind that the language and perspectives in a text may reflect the historical and/or cultural context of the time or place in which it was written.

When you have completed the examination, you must sign the statement printed at the bottom of the front of the answer sheet, indicating that you had no unlawful knowledge of the questions or answers prior to the examination and that you have neither given nor received assistance in answering any of the questions during the examination. Your answer sheet cannot be accepted if you fail to sign this declaration.
It was upon the 4th of March, as I have good reason to remember, that I rose somewhat earlier than usual, and found that Sherlock Holmes had not yet finished his breakfast. The landlady had become so accustomed to my late habits that my place had not been laid nor my coffee prepared. With the unreasonable petulance1 of mankind I rang the bell and gave a curt intimation that I was ready. Then I picked up a magazine from the table and attempted to while away the time with it, while my companion munched silently at his toast. One of the articles had a pencil-mark at the heading, and I naturally began to run my eye through it. …

"From a drop of water," said the writer, "a logician could infer the possibility of an Atlantic or a Niagara without having seen or heard of one or the other. So all life is a great chain, the nature of which is known whenever we are shown a single link of it. Like all other arts, the Science of Deduction and Analysis is one which can only be acquired by long and patient study, nor is life long enough to allow any mortal to attain the highest possible perfection in it. Before turning to those moral and mental aspects of the matter which present the greatest difficulties, let the inquirer begin by mastering more elementary problems. Let him, on meeting a fellow-mortal, learn at a glance to distinguish the history of the man and the trade or profession to which he belongs. Puerile2 as such an exercise may seem, it sharpens the faculties of observation and teaches one where to look and what to look for. By a man's fingernails, by his coat-sleeve, by his boot, by his trouser-knees, by the calllosities of his forefinger and thumb, by his expression, by his shirt-cuffs—by each of these things a man's calling is plainly revealed. That all united should fail to enlighten the competent inquirer in any case is almost inconceivable."

"What ineffable twaddle!" I cried, slapping the magazine down on the table; "I never read such rubbish in my life.

"What is it?" asked Sherlock Holmes.

"Why, this article," I said, pointing at it with my egg-spoon as I sat down to my breakfast. "I see that you have read it, since you have marked it. I don't deny that it is smartly written. It irritates me, though. It is evidently the theory of some arm-chair lounger who evolves all these neat little paradoxes in the seclusion of his own study. It is not practical. I should like to see him clapped down in a third-class carriage on the Underground and asked to give the trades of all his fellow-travellers. I would lay a thousand to one against him."

"You would lose your money," Sherlock Holmes remarked, calmly. "As for the article, I wrote it myself."

"You?"

"Yes, I have a turn both for observation and for deduction. The theories which I have expressed there, and which appear to you to be so chimerical, are really extremely practical—so practical that I depend upon them for my bread-and-cheese."

1 petulance — a quality or state of being rude
2 puerile — childish
“And how?” I asked, involuntarily.

“Well, I have a trade of my own. I suppose I am the only one in the world. I’m a consulting detective, if you can understand what that is. Here in London we have lots of government detectives and lots of private ones. When these fellows are at fault they come to me, and I manage to put them on the right scent. They lay all the evidence before me, and I am generally able, by the help of my knowledge of the history of crime, to set them straight. There is a strong family resemblance about misdeeds, and if you have all the details of a thousand at your finger-ends, it is odd if you can’t unravel the thousand and first. Lestrade is a well-known detective. He got himself into a fog recently over a forgery case, and that was what brought him here.”

“And these other people?”

“They are mostly sent out by private inquiry agencies. They are all people who are in trouble about something, and want a little enlightening. I listen to their story, they listen to my comments, and then I pocket my fee.”

“But do you mean to say,” I said, “that without leaving your room you can unravel some knot which other men can make nothing of, although they have seen every detail for themselves?”

“Quite so. I have a kind of intuition that way. Now and again a case turns up which is a little more complex. Then I have to bustle about and see things with my own eyes. You see, I have a lot of special knowledge which I apply to the problem, and which facilitates matters wonderfully. Those rules of deduction laid down in that article which aroused your scorn are invaluable to me in practical work. Observation with me is second nature. You appeared to be surprised when I told you, on our first meeting, that you had come from Afghanistan.”

“You were told, no doubt.”

“Nothing of the sort. I knew you came from Afghanistan. From long habit the train of thought ran so swiftly through my mind that I arrived at the conclusion without being conscious of intermediate steps. There were such steps, however. The train of reasoning ran: ‘Here is a gentleman of a medical type, but with the air of a military man. Clearly an army doctor, then. He has just come from the tropics, for his face is dark, and that is not the natural tint of his skin, for his wrists are fair. He has undergone hardship and sickness, as his haggard face says clearly. His left arm has been injured. He holds it in a stiff and unnatural manner. Where in the tropics could an English army doctor have seen much hardship and got his arm wounded? Clearly in Afghanistan.’ The whole train of thought did not occupy a second. I then remarked that you came from Afghanistan, and you were astonished.” …

I was still annoyed at his bumptious style of conversation. I thought it best to change the topic.

“I wonder what that fellow is looking for?” I asked, pointing to a stalwart, plainly dressed individual who was walking slowly down the other side of the street, looking anxiously at the numbers. He had a large, blue envelope in his hand, and was evidently the bearer of a message. He had a large, blue envelope in his hand, and was evidently the bearer of a message.

“You mean the retired sergeant of marines,” said Sherlock Holmes.

“Brag and bounce!” thought I to myself. “He knows that I cannot verify his guess.”

The thought had hardly passed through my mind when the man whom we were watching caught sight of the number on our door, and ran rapidly across the roadway. We heard a loud knock, a deep voice below, and heavy steps ascending the stair.

“For Mr. Sherlock Holmes,” he said, stepping into the room and handing my friend the letter.
The phrase “with the unreasonable petulance of mankind” (line 4) emphasizes the narrator's
(1) frustration with himself for missing sleep
(2) irritation about not finding his breakfast ready
(3) concern regarding the pencil-mark on the newspaper
(4) impatience with Sherlock Holmes's silence

How do the words “logician” (line 9), “deduction” (lines 12, 36, and 59), and “analysis” (line 12) advance the author's purpose?
(1) by indicating the relationship between science and art
(2) by suggesting the reasons why private inquiry agencies seek outside help
(3) by highlighting the complexity of the crimes encountered by Sherlock Holmes
(4) by emphasizing the systematic nature of Sherlock Holmes's approach to solving crimes

What is the effect of withholding the identity of Sherlock Holmes as the author of the article (lines 9 through 34)?
(1) It creates a somber mood.
(2) It foreshadows an unwelcome turn of events.
(3) It allows the reader to learn the narrator's true feelings.
(4) It leads the reader to misunderstand who the writer is.

In this passage, the conversation between Holmes and the narrator (lines 23 through 38) serves to
(1) reinforce the narrator's appreciation for deduction
(2) establish a friendship between the narrator and Holmes
(3) reveal how Holmes makes his living
(4) expose some of Holmes's misdeeds

As used in line 37, the word “chimerical” most nearly means
(1) unfair
(2) unrealistic
(3) aggravating
(4) contradictory

Which analysis is best supported by the details in lines 43 through 55 of the text?
(1) Private detectives base their analyses on an understanding of human nature.
(2) Sherlock Holmes's association with other well-known detectives improves his crime-solving abilities.
(3) Government detectives are mostly ineffective at solving complicated crimes.
(4) Sherlock Holmes's intuition relies on his ability to detect similarities among various crimes.

Here was an opportunity of taking the conceit out of him. He little thought of this when he made that random shot. “May I ask, my lad,” I said, blandly, “what your trade may be?”
“Commissionaire, sir,” he said, gruffly. “Uniform away for repairs.”

“And you were?” I asked, with a slightly malicious glance at my companion.
“A sergeant, sir, Royal Marine Light Infantry, sir. No answer? Right, sir.”
He clicked his heels together, raised his hand in a salute, and was gone.

—A. Conan Doyle
excerpted from A Study in Scarlet, 1904
Harper & Brothers Publishers
7 Which quotation best reflects a central theme in the text?

(1) “So all life is a great chain, the nature of which is known whenever we are shown a single link of it” (lines 10 and 11)
(2) “What ineffable twaddle ... I never read such rubbish in my life” (lines 23 and 24)
(3) “They are all people who are in trouble about something, and want a little enlightening” (lines 50 and 51)
(4) “Now and again a case turns up which is a little more complex” (lines 56 and 57)

8 The narrator views the arrival of the messenger as “an opportunity of taking the conceit out of him” (line 87) because the narrator wishes to

(1) challenge Holmes's theories of deduction
(2) stress the importance of self-confidence
(3) reveal Holmes's true intentions
(4) practice his own deductive abilities

9 The author's description of the conversation between the narrator and the retired sergeant in lines 88 through 92 serves mostly to

(1) develop a character
(2) create a flashback
(3) establish a comparison
(4) resolve a conflict

10 The conversation with the retired sergeant (lines 89 through 91) leaves the narrator with a sense of

(1) astonishment
(2) confusion
(3) pleasure
(4) distrust
Give Us Our Peace

Give us a peace equal to the war
Or else our souls will be unsatisfied,
And we will wonder what we have fought for
And why the many died.

Give us a peace accepting every challenge—
The challenge of the poor, the black, of all denied,
The challenge of the vast colonial world
That long has had so little justice by its side.

Give us a peace that dares us to be wise.
Give us a peace that dares us to be strong.
Give us a peace that dares us still uphold
Throughout the peace our battle against wrong.

Give us a peace that is not cheaply used,
A peace that is no clever scheme,
A people's peace for which men can enthuse,
A peace that brings reality to our dream.

Give us a peace that will produce great schools—
As the war produced great armament,
A peace that will wipe out our slums—
As war wiped out our foes on evil bent.

Give us a peace that will enlist
A mighty army serving human kind,
Not just an army geared to kill,
But trained to help the living mind—

An army trained to shape our common good
And bring about a world of brotherhood.

—Langston Hughes
from *The Chicago Defender*, August 25, 1945
11 The prevailing tone of the poem is
(1) demanding (3) celebratory
(2) angry (4) proud

12 What is most likely not a purpose of the repetition of the phrase “Give us a peace” throughout the poem?
(1) to provide a unified structure
(2) to emphasize a central idea
(3) to solicit the people’s loyalty
(4) to introduce the poet’s requests

13 The military references throughout the poem serve to
(1) recall the heroic cause of war
(2) stress the destructive nature of war
(3) rally the people for a new form of war
(4) warn the people of an impending war

14 The poet’s purpose in the poem can best be described as
(1) a condemnation of war
(2) an appeal for justice
(3) an argument for colonial values
(4) a criticism of education
Reading Comprehension Passage C

Science is a way of thinking much more than it is a body of knowledge. Its goal is to find out how the world works, to seek what regularities there may be, to penetrate to the connections of things—from subnuclear particles, which may be the constituents of all matter, to living organisms, the human social community, and thence to the cosmos as a whole. Our intuition is by no means an infallible guide. Our perceptions may be distorted by training and prejudice or merely because of the limitations of our sense organs, which, of course, perceive directly but a small fraction of the phenomena of the world. Even so straightforward a question as whether in the absence of friction a pound of lead falls faster than a gram of fluff was answered incorrectly by Aristotle and almost everyone else before the time of Galileo. Science is based on experiment, on a willingness to challenge old dogma, on an openness to see the universe as it really is. Accordingly, science sometimes requires courage—at the very least the courage to question the conventional wisdom.

Beyond this the main trick of science is to really think of something: the shape of clouds and their occasional sharp bottom edges at the same altitude everywhere in the sky; the formation of a dewdrop on a leaf; the origin of a name or a word—Shakespeare, say, or "philanthropic"; the reason for human social customs—the incest taboo, for example; how it is that a lens in sunlight can make paper burn; how a "walking stick" got to look so much like a twig; why the Moon seems to follow us as we walk; what prevents us from digging a hole down to the center of the Earth; what the definition is of "down" on a spherical Earth; how it is possible for the body to convert yesterday's lunch into today's muscle and sinew; or how far it is up—does the universe go on forever, or if it does not, is there any meaning to the question of what lies on the other side? Some of these questions are pretty easy. Others, especially the last, are mysteries to which no one even today knows the answer. They are natural questions to ask. Every culture has posed such questions in one way or another. Almost always the proposed answers are in the nature of "Just So Stories," attempted explanations divorced from experiment, or even from careful comparative observations.

But the scientific cast of mind examines the world critically as if many alternative worlds might exist, as if other things might be here which are not. Then we are forced to ask why what we see is present and not something else. Why are the Sun and the Moon and the planets spheres? Why not pyramids, or cubes, or dodecahedra? Why not irregular, jumbly shapes? Why so symmetrical, worlds? If you spend any time spinning hypotheses, checking to see whether they make sense, whether they conform to what else we know, thinking of tests you can pose to substantiate or deflate your hypotheses, you will find yourself doing science. And as you come to practice this habit of thought more and more you will get better and better at it. To penetrate into the heart of the thing—even a little thing, a blade of grass, as Walt Whitman said—is to experience a kind of exhilaration that, it may be, only human beings of all the beings on this planet can feel. We are an intelligent species and the use of our intelligence quite properly gives us pleasure. In this respect the brain is like a muscle. When we think well, we feel good. Understanding is a kind of ecstasy. …

Let us approach a much more modest question: not whether we can know the universe or the Milky Way Galaxy or a star or a world. Can we know, ultimately and in detail, a grain of salt? Consider one microgram of table salt, a speck just barely large enough for someone with keen eyesight to make out without a microscope. In that grain of salt there are about $10^{16}$ sodium and chlorine atoms. This is a 1 followed by 16 zeros, 10 million billion atoms. If we wish to know a grain of salt, we must know at least the three-dimensional positions of each of these atoms. (In fact, there is much more to be known—for example, the nature of the forces between the atoms—but we are making only a modest calculation.) Now, is this number more or less than the number of things which the brain can know?
How much can the brain know? There are perhaps $10^{11}$ neurons in the brain, the circuit elements and switches that are responsible in their electrical and chemical activity for the functioning of our minds. A typical brain neuron has perhaps a thousand little wires, called dendrites, which connect it with its fellows. If, as seems likely, every bit of information in the brain corresponds to one of these connections, the total number of things knowable by the brain is no more than $10^{14}$, one hundred trillion. But this number is only one percent of the number of atoms in our speck of salt.

So in this sense the universe is intractable, astonishingly immune to any human attempt at full knowledge. We cannot on this level understand a grain of salt, much less the universe.

But let us look a little more deeply at our microgram of salt. Salt happens to be a crystal in which, except for defects in the structure of the crystal lattice, the position of every sodium and chlorine atom is predetermined. If we could shrink ourselves into this crystalline world, we would see rank upon rank of atoms in an ordered array, a regularly alternating structure—sodium, chlorine, sodium, chlorine specifying the sheet of atoms we are standing on and all the sheets above us and below us. An absolutely pure crystal of salt could have the position of every atom specified by something like 10 bits of information. This would not strain the information-carrying capacity of the brain.

If the universe had natural laws that governed its behavior to the same degree of regularity that determines a crystal of salt, then, of course, the universe would be knowable. Even if there were many such laws, each of considerable complexity, human beings might have the capability to understand them all. Even if such knowledge exceeded the information-carrying capacity of the brain, we might store the additional information outside our bodies—in books, for example, or in computer memories—and still, in some sense, know the universe. …

—Carl Sagan
excerpted from *Broca’s Brain*, 1979
Random House

1*intractable — stubborn

2Chlorine is a deadly poison gas employed on European battlefields in World War I. Sodium is a corrosive metal which burns upon contact with water. Together they make a placid and unpoisonous material, table salt. Why each of these substances has the properties it does is a subject called chemistry, which requires more than 10 bits of information to understand.
15. The central idea of the first paragraph focuses on the
(1) nature of scientific investigation
(2) unknowable nature of the universe
(3) growth of our understanding over time
(4) benefits of formal education

16. Which phrase from the text clarifies the meaning of “dogma” as used in line 11?
(1) “constituents of all matter” (lines 3 and 4)
(2) “infallible guide” (line 5)
(3) “phenomena of the world” (line 7)
(4) “conventional wisdom” (line 12)

17. Which statement from the text best summarizes the central idea of paragraph 2?
(1) “Its goal is to find out how the world works, to seek what regularities there may be, to penetrate to the connections of things” (lines 1 through 3)
(2) “But the scientific cast of mind examines the world critically as if many alternative worlds might exist, as if other things might be here which are not” (lines 27 and 28)
(3) “We are an intelligent species and the use of our intelligence quite properly gives us pleasure” (lines 37 and 38)
(4) “Even if there were many such laws, each of considerable complexity, human beings might have the capability to understand them all” (lines 69 and 70)

18. According to the text, the “main trick” (line 13) of science is to
(1) follow one’s intuition
(2) observe and develop questions
(3) experiment and create laws
(4) accept one’s limitations

19. The examples presented in lines 27 through 31 help the reader understand
(1) how scientific inquiry differs from ordinary questioning
(2) why multiple worlds could potentially exist
(3) how cultural stories influence scientific observation
(4) why popular explanations rarely rely on experimentation

20. Which statement best summarizes the central claim made in lines 27 through 39?
(1) Science is based on human criticism of the world.
(2) Science is based on the accuracy of human perceptions.
(3) Humans have a capacity to experience joy through their intelligence.
(4) Humans consider themselves superior to all other species on the planet.

21. The purpose of the figurative language in lines 38 and 39 is to
(1) question the function of the human brain
(2) contrast the human brain with the brains of other beings
(3) indicate the shape and composition of one’s brain
(4) illustrate the effect of using one’s brain

22. The description of salt in lines 41 through 47 emphasizes the idea of
(1) interconnectedness
(2) complexity
(3) predictability
(4) uniqueness

23. What effect is created by the use of irony in line 47 and lines 53 through 55?
(1) humor
(2) scorn
(3) doubt
(4) awe

24. With which statement would the author of this text most likely agree?
(1) Understanding the world is essential to our well being.
(2) The human brain has an unlimited capacity to store knowledge.
(3) Scientific inquiry should only focus on objective reality.
(4) Technology allows us to have complete knowledge of the universe.
Part 2

Argument

Directions: Closely read each of the four texts provided on pages 12 through 17 and write a source-based argument on the topic below. You may use the margins to take notes as you read and scrap paper to plan your response. Write your argument beginning on page 1 of your essay booklet.

Topic: Should companies be allowed to track consumers’ shopping or other preferences without their permission?

Your Task: Carefully read each of the four texts provided. Then, using evidence from at least three of the texts, write a well-developed argument regarding companies being allowed to track consumers’ shopping or other preferences without their permission. Clearly establish your claim, distinguish your claim from alternate or opposing claims, and use specific, relevant, and sufficient evidence from at least three of the texts to develop your argument. Do not simply summarize each text.

Guidelines:

Be sure to
- Establish your claim regarding companies being allowed to track consumers’ shopping or other preferences without their permission
- Distinguish your claim from alternate or opposing claims
- Use specific, relevant, and sufficient evidence from at least three of the texts to develop your argument
- Identify each source that you reference by text number and line number(s) or graphic (for example: Text 1, line 4 or Text 2, graphic)
- Organize your ideas in a cohesive and coherent manner
- Maintain a formal style of writing
- Follow the conventions of standard written English

Texts:

Text 1 – Cell Phone Carrier Marketing Techniques An Invasion of Privacy?
Text 2 – EyeSee You and the Internet of Things: Watching You While You Shop
Text 3 – Where Will Consumers Find Privacy Protection from RFIDs?: A Case for Federal Legislation
Text 4 – RFID Consumer Applications and Benefits
Text 1

Cell Phone Carrier Marketing Techniques
An Invasion of Privacy?

BOSTON (CBS) – Your cell phone may be spying on you.
Every time you download an app, search for a website, send a text, snap a QR code or drive by a store with your GPS on, you are being tracked by your cell phone company.

“They know you were playing Angry Birds. They know that you drove by Sears. They know you drove by Domino’s Pizza. They can take that and take a very unique algorithm\(^1\) that can focus on your behavior,” explained marketing expert Mark Johnson. “It’s very impactful.”

According to Johnson, your data trail is worth big money to the cell phone companies. Details about your habits, your age and gender are compiled and can be sold to third parties. The information is predominantly used as a marketing tool so advertisers can target you with products or services that you are more likely to use or want.

The idea does not sit well with smartphone user Harrine Freeman. “It does seem creepy that companies are collecting all this information about consumers,” she said. Freeman is so uneasy; she turns off her GPS when she is not using it. She also clears her browser history.

“I think it is an invasion of privacy,” she said.

All of the major cell phone carriers admit to collecting information about its customers. Some in the industry argue it benefits consumers because they get ads that are relevant to them.

Cell phone companies do notify customers about the data they collect, but critics say the notices are often hard to understand and written in fine print.

Rainey Reitman of the Electronic Frontier Foundation doesn’t like the fact that those who don’t want to be tracked have to go out of their way to get the company to stop.

“This is something that consumers are automatically opted into,” Reitman said.

To find out how your cell phone company might be monitoring you, be sure to carefully read the privacy policy.

Also, make sure you read all of the updates your carrier might send you because this tracking technology keeps changing.

—Paula Ebben


\(^1\)algorithm — process or set of rules followed in calculations
EyeSee You and the Internet of Things: Watching You While You Shop

...Even the store mannequins have gotten in on the gig. According to the Washington Post, mannequins in some high-end boutiques are now being outfitted with cameras that utilize facial recognition technology. A small camera embedded in the eye of an otherwise normal looking mannequin allows storekeepers to keep track of the age, gender and race of all their customers. This information is then used to personally tailor the shopping experience to those coming in and out of their stores. As the Washington Post report notes, "a clothier introduced a children's line after the dummy showed that kids made up more than half its mid-afternoon traffic... Another store found that a third of visitors using one of its doors after 4 p.m. were Asian, prompting it to place Chinese-speaking staff members by the entrance."

At $5,072 a pop, these EyeSee mannequins come with a steep price tag, but for storeowners who want to know more—a lot more—about their customers, they're the perfect tool, able to sit innocently at store entrances and windows, leaving shoppers oblivious to their hidden cameras. Italian mannequin maker Almax SpA, manufacturer of the EyeSee mannequins, is currently working on adding ears to the mannequins, allowing them to record people's comments in order to further tailor the shopping experience. ...

It's astounding the amount of information—from the trivial to the highly personal—about individual consumers being passed around from corporation to corporation, all in an effort to market and corral potential customers. Data mining companies collect this wealth of information and sell it to retailers who use it to gauge your interests and tailor marketing to your perceived desires.

All of the websites you visit collect some amount of information about you, whether it is your name or what other sites you have visited recently. Most of the time, we're being tracked without knowing it. For example, most websites now include Facebook and Twitter buttons so you can “like” the page you are viewing or “Tweet” about it. Whether or not you click the buttons, however, the companies can still determine which pages you've visited and file that information away for later use. ...

As the EyeSee mannequins show, you no longer even have to be in front of your computer to have your consumer data accessed, uploaded, stored and tracked. In August 2012, for example, data mining agency Redpepper began testing a service known as Facedeals in the Nashville, Tennessee area. Facial recognition cameras set at the entrances of businesses snap photos of people walking in, and if you've signed up to have a Facedeals account via your Facebook, you receive instant coupons sent to your smartphone. Similarly, a small coffee chain in San Francisco, Philz Coffee, has installed sensors at the front door of their stores in order to capture the Wi-Fi signal of any smartphone within 60 yards. Jacob Jaber, president of Philz Coffee, uses the information gleaned from these sensors to structure his stores according to the in-store behavior of customers. ...

Not even politicians are immune to the lure of data mining. In the run-up to the 2012 presidential election, the Romney and Obama campaigns followed voters across the web by installing cookies on their computers and observing the websites they visited in an attempt to gather information on their personal views. CampaignGrid, a Republican affiliated firm, and Precision Network, a Democratic affiliated firm, both worked to collect data on 150 million American Internet users, or 80% of the registered voting population. ...

—John W. Whitehead
excerpted
https://www.rutherford.org, December 17, 2012
Where Will Consumers Find Privacy Protection from RFIDs?:
A Case for Federal Legislation

What Are RFIDs? How Do RFIDs Work?

RFID [Radio Frequency Information Device] technology is an automatic identification system that identifies objects, collects data, and transmits information about the object through a "tag." A device called a reader extracts and processes the information on the tag. Experts characterize RFIDs as devices "that can be sensed at a distance by radio frequencies with few problems of obstruction or misorientation." In essence, RFIDs are wireless barcodes. However, unlike typical barcodes, which are identical for all common products, each RFID has a unique identification. Therefore, every individually tagged item has a different barcode sequence. Typical barcodes also require unobstructed paths for scanning, whereas RFIDs can be scanned through solid objects. RFIDs have communication signals that facilitate data storage on RFID tags and enable the stored information to be gathered electronically—hypothetically permitting, for example, Coca-Cola to have a database storing information about the life cycle of a Coke can. The database would contain tracking details from the moment the can is manufactured through its processing at a garbage dump—since RFID readers can be attached to garbage trucks. Between the birth and death of a customer's Coke can, the RFID tags would tell the Coca-Cola Company where and when the Coke was purchased, what credit card the Coke was purchased with, and, in turn, the identity of the purchaser. Even if the customer did not purchase the Coke with a credit card, state issued ID cards equipped with RFID technology could relay the customer's identity to RFID readers as he or she leaves the store. Coca-Cola's final product of the RFIDs' communications is a database of the life cycles of individual cans of Coke and personal information about their purchasers. With this myriad of information, Coca-Cola has the ability to individually market to each of the 1.3 billion daily Coca-Cola consumers.

How Are RFIDs Used?

RFIDs are currently used in many ways, including, "livestock management[,] 24 hour patient monitoring[,] authentication of pharmaceuticals[,] tracking consignments in a supply chain[,] remote monitoring of critical components in aircraft [, and] monitoring the safety of perishable food." Advocates of RFID technology, including retailers and manufacturers, praise the increased functionality and efficiency that will likely ensue from using RFIDs. Once all products are individually tagged, shoppers are expected to be able to purchase items without checking-out. This should be possible since RFID readers will be able to scan every item as the customer exits the store and charge an RFID credit card, thereby simultaneously increasing efficiency and possibly reducing shoplifting. Other RFID uses include easy monitoring of product recalls, tracking lobsters for conservation purposes, and purchasing products with transaction-free payment systems. Additionally, in October 2003, the Department of Defense set standards mandating suppliers to place Rfid chips in all government contracts.

---

2 Id.
3 Viviane Reding, Member of the European Commission responsible for Information Society and Media, Address at EU RFID 2006 Conference: Heading for the Future, RFID: WHY WE NEED A EUROPEAN POLICY, 1,3 (Oct. 16, 2006).
4 David Flint, Everything with Chips!, BUS. L. REV., Mar. 2006, 73, 73.
RFID tags on all packaging for the Department of Defense. Thus, RFIDs can be used to increase efficiency and safety. …

**Do Consumers Have a Right to Privacy from RFIDs under Tort Law?**

In the context of RFIDs, there are some situations where gathering information from RFID tags violates consumers’ privacy expectations. For example, a consumer does not have a reasonable expectation of privacy when carrying RFID equipped items in a transparent shopping cart. However, once the items are placed in an opaque bag, a right to privacy immediately arises. If a business or third-party gathers data about the items once the items are no longer visible to the naked eye, there is an objective invasion of privacy. Gathering information stored in the RFID tag in a winter jacket worn in public is also not an invasion of privacy, yet pulling data off undergarments is intrusive. However, since the home is always considered a private place, once an active RFID tag enters the home, any information gathered, including information from the winter jacket, immediately offends the principles of privacy. Protecting consumers from unreasonably intrusive actions of businesses requires that RFID tags become unreadable once they enter private places. However, the fundamental nature of the technology does not harmonize with this privacy goal because RFID readers do not scrutinize whether the information is considered private before it gathers data from the tag. …

With new technologies come new methods of consumer tracking and changing parameters for what may be considered highly offensive. These new methods of tracking are not considered intrusive simply because the nature of the technology requires consumer purchases to be recorded. If individuals make active decisions to use a credit card instead of cash—a voluntary act—their purchases can be tracked. Similarly, the gathering of information stored on RFID technology in consumer goods may not be deemed highly offensive depending on changing consumer expectations. …

—Serena G. Stein

excerpted and adapted

*Duke Law & Technology Review, 2007, No.3*

---


6 *Tort Law — covers civil wrongs resulting in an injury or harm constituting the basis for a claim by the injured person
RFID Consumer Applications and Benefits

...One of the first consumer applications of RFID was automated toll collection systems, which were introduced in the late 1980s and caught on in the 1990s. An active transponder is typically placed on a car’s or truck’s windshield. When the car reaches the tollbooth, a reader at the booth sends out a signal that wakes up the transponder on the windshield, which then reflects back a unique ID to the reader at the booth. The ID is associated with an account opened by the car owner, who is billed by the toll authority. Consumers spend less time fumbling for change or waiting on lines to pay their toll fee.

In the late 1990s, ExxonMobil (then just Mobil) introduced Speedpass, an RFID system that allows drivers who have opened an account to pay for gas automatically. Drivers are given a small, passive 13.56 MHz transponder in a small wand or fob that can be put on a key chain. To pay for gas, they just wave the key fob by a reader built into the gas pump. Seven million people in the United States use the system, and it has increased the number of cars each gas station can serve during rush periods. …

RFID has other consumer applications, besides being a convenient payment system. One is the recovery of lost or stolen items. A company called Snagg in Palo Alto, Calif., has created an electronic registry for musical instruments. It provides an RFID tag that can be affixed to a classic guitar or priceless violin and keeps a record of the serial number in the tag. If the instrument is recovered by the police after being lost or stolen, they can call Snagg, which can look up the rightful owner. …

Merloni Elettrodomestici, an Italian appliance maker, has created a smart washing machine. When you drop your clothes in the machine, an RFID reader in the appliance can read the tags in the clothes (if your clothes have tags) and wash the clothes based on instructions written to the tag.

Whether smart appliances with RFID readers catch on depends on how long it takes for RFID tags to become cheap enough to be put into packaging for items. It also depends on whether consumers find RFID-enabled products convenient enough to accept the potential invasion of privacy that comes with having RFID tags in products. But RFID will certainly have a positive impact on people’s lives in less direct ways.

One area of importance is product recalls. Today, companies often need to recall all tires, meat or drugs if there is a problem to ensure people’s safety. But they can never be sure they recovered all the bad goods that were released into the supply chain. With RFID, companies will be able to know exactly which items are bad and trace those through to stores. Customers that register their products could be contacted individually to ensure they know something they bought has been recalled. …

And RFID should enable consumers to get more information about the products they want to purchase, such as when the items were made, where, whether they are under warrantee and so on. When RFID tags are eventually put on the packaging of individual products, consumers will be able to read the tag with a reader embedded in a cell phone or connected to a computer and download data from a Web site. They’ll be able to learn, for example, whether the steak they are about to buy is from an animal that was raised organically in the United States. Some companies will be reluctant to share this information, but smart companies will provide it to their customers to build trust and loyalty.
RFID could also have an [sic] positive impact on our environment by greatly reducing waste. The main reason many companies want to use RFID is to better match supply and demand and to make sure that products are where they are supposed to be. If successful, there should be fewer products that are thrown away because no one wants to buy them or they pass their sell-by date (it’s estimated that 50 percent of all food harvested in the United States is never eaten).

RFID tags could also help improve our environment by identifying hazardous materials that should not be dumped in landfills. One day, robots at landfills might be equipped with RFID tags, and they might be able to quickly sort through garbage to locate batteries and other items that contain toxic materials. …

—Bob Violino
excerpted
http://www.rfidjournal.com, January 16, 2005
Part 3

Text-Analysis Response

Your Task: Closely read the text provided on pages 19 and 20 and write a well-developed, text-based response of two to three paragraphs. In your response, identify a central idea in the text and analyze how the author's use of one writing strategy (literary element or literary technique or rhetorical device) develops this central idea. Use strong and thorough evidence from the text to support your analysis. Do not simply summarize the text. You may use the margins to take notes as you read and scrap paper to plan your response. Write your response in the spaces provided on pages 7 through 9 of your essay booklet.

Guidelines:

Be sure to

- Identify a central idea in the text
- Analyze how the author's use of one writing strategy (literary element or literary technique or rhetorical device) develops this central idea. Examples include: characterization, conflict, denotation/connotation, metaphor, simile, irony, language use, point-of-view, setting, structure, symbolism, theme, tone, etc.
- Use strong and thorough evidence from the text to support your analysis
- Organize your ideas in a cohesive and coherent manner
- Maintain a formal style of writing
- Follow the conventions of standard written English
The following excerpt is from a speech delivered by suffragette Anna Howard Shaw in 1915.

...Now one of two things is true: either a Republic is a desirable form of government, or else it is not. If it is, then we should have it, if it is not then we ought not to pretend that we have it. We ought at least be true to our ideals, and the men of New York have for the first time in their lives, the rare opportunity on the second day of next November, of making the state truly a part of the Republic. It is the greatest opportunity which has ever come to the men of the state. They have never had so serious a problem to solve before; they will never have a more serious problem to solve in any future of our nation's life, and the thing that disturbs me more than anything else in connection with it is that so few people realize what a profound problem they have to solve on November 2. It is not merely a trilling matter; it is not a little thing that does not concern the state, it is the most vital problem we could have, and any man who goes to the polls on the second day of next November without thoroughly informing himself in regard to this subject is unworthy to be a citizen of this state, and unfit to cast a ballot.

If woman’s suffrage is wrong, it is a great wrong; if it is right, it is a profound and fundamental principle, and we all know, if we know what a Republic is, that it is the fundamental principle upon which a Republic must rise. Let us see where we are as a people; how we act here and what we think we are. The difficulty with the men of this country is that they are so consistent in their inconsistency that they are not aware of having been inconsistent; because their consistency has been so continuous and their inconsistency so consecutive that it has never been broken, from the beginning of our Nation's life to the present time. If we trace our history back we will find that from the very dawn of our existence as a people, men have been imbued with a spirit and a vision more lofty than they have been able to live; they have been led by visions of the sublimest truth, both in regard to religion and in regard to government that ever inspired the souls of men from the time the Puritans left the old world to come to this country, led by the Divine ideal which is the sublimest and the supremest ideal in religious freedom which men have ever known, the theory that a man has a right to worship God according to the dictates of his own conscience, without the intervention of any other man or any other group of men. And it was this theory, this vision of the right of the human soul which led men first to the shores of this country. ...

Now what is a Republic? Take your dictionary, encyclopedia lexicon or anything else you like and look up the definition and you will find that a Republic is a form of government in which the laws are enacted by representatives elected by the people. Now when did the people of New York ever elect their own representatives? Never in the world. The men of New York have, and I grant you that men are people, admirable people, as far as they go, but they only go half way. There is still another half of the people who have not elected representatives, and you never read a definition of a Republic in which half of the people elect representatives to govern the whole of the people. That is an aristocracy and that is just what we are. We have been many kinds of aristocracies. We have been a hierarchy of church members, than an oligarchy of sex....
Now I want to make this proposition, and I believe every man will accept it. Of course he will if he is intelligent. Whenever a Republic prescribes the qualifications as applying equally to all the citizens of the Republic, when the Republic says in order to vote, a citizen must be twenty-one years of age, it applies to all alike; there is no discrimination against any race or sex. When the government says that a citizen must be a native-born citizen or a naturalized citizen that applies to all; we are either born or naturalized, somehow or other we are here. Whenever the government says that a citizen, in order to vote, must be a resident of a community a certain length of time, and of the state a certain length of time and of the nation a certain length of time, that applies to all equally. There is no discrimination. We might go further and we might say that in order to vote the citizen must be able to read his ballot. We have not gone that far yet. We have been very careful of male ignorance in these United States. I was much interested, as perhaps many of you, in reading the Congressional Record this last winter over the debate over the immigration bill, and when that illiteracy clause was introduced into the immigration bill, what fear there was in the souls of men for fear we would do injustice to some of the people who might want to come to our shores, and I was much interested in the language in which the President vetoed the bill, when he declared that by inserting the clause we would keep out of our shores a large body of very excellent people. I could not help wondering then how it happens that male ignorance is so much less ignorant than female ignorance. When I hear people say that if women were permitted to vote a large body of ignorant people would vote, and therefore because an ignorant woman would vote, no intelligent women should be allowed to vote, I wonder why we have made it so easy for male ignorance and so hard for female ignorance. …

—Anna Howard Shaw
excerpted from “The Fundamental Principle of a Republic”
delivered at Ogdensburg, New York, June 21, 1915
http://www.emersonkent.com
Below are the rubrics used to grade each section of the Common Core English Regents exam.

Part Two - Writing from Sources - Argument

Part Three - Text Analysis - Exposition
# New York State Regents Examination in English Language Arts (Common Core)

## Part 2 Rubric
### Writing From Sources: Argument

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Essays at this Level:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Content and Analysis: the extent to which the essay introduces a precise and insightful claim, as directed by the task.

- **6**: Introduce a precise and insightful claim, as directed by the task.
- **5**: Demonstrate an insightful analysis of the texts, as necessary to support the claim and to distinguish the claim from alternate or opposing claims.
- **4**: Introduce a precise claim, as directed by the task.
- **3**: Demonstrate appropriate and accurate analysis of the texts, as necessary to support the claim and to distinguish the claim from alternate or opposing claims.
- **2**: Introduce a claim.
- **1**: Do not introduce a claim.

### Command of Evidence: the extent to which the essay presents evidence from the provided texts to support analysis.

- **6**: Present ideas clearly and accurately, making effective use of specific and relevant evidence.
- **5**: Demonstrate proper citation of sources to avoid plagiarism when dealing with direct quotes and paraphrased material.
- **4**: Present ideas clearly, making effective use of specific and relevant evidence.
- **3**: Demonstrate proper citation of sources to avoid plagiarism when dealing with direct quotes and paraphrased material.
- **2**: Present ideas consistently, making effective use of specific and relevant evidence.
- **1**: Do not make use of evidence from the texts.

### Coherence, Organization, and Style: the extent to which the essay logically organizes complex ideas, concepts, and information using formal style and precise language.

- **6**: Exhibit skillful organization of ideas and information to create a cohesive and coherent essay.
- **5**: Establish logical organization of ideas and information to create a cohesive and coherent essay.
- **4**: Establish logical organization of ideas and information.
- **3**: Establish but fail to maintain a formal style, using fluent and precise language and sound structure.
- **2**: Establishes a lack of a formal style, using some language that is inappropriate or imprecise.
- **1**: Exhibits minimal organization of ideas and information.

### Control of Conventions: the extent to which the essay demonstrates command of conventions in a standard English grammar, usage, capitalization, punctuation, and spelling.

- **6**: Demonstrate control of conventions with essentially no errors, even with sophisticated language.
- **5**: Demonstrate partial control, exhibiting occasional errors that do not hinder comprehension.
- **4**: Demonstrate emerging control, exhibiting occasional errors that hinder comprehension.
- **3**: Demonstrate a lack of control, exhibiting frequent errors that make comprehension difficult.
- **2**: Do not exhibit some control, exhibiting most errors.
- **1**: Demonstrate little or no control, exhibiting most errors.

- An essay that addresses fewer texts than required by the task can be scored no higher than a 3.
- An essay that is a personal response and makes little or no reference to the texts can be scored no higher than a 1.
- An essay that is totally copied from the task or texts with no original student writing must be scored a 0.
- An essay that is totally unrelated to the task, illiterate, incoherent, blank, or unrecognizable as English must be scored a 0.
### Text Analysis: Exposition

#### Criteria

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Responses at this Level:</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Content and Analysis:</strong> the extent to which the response conveys complex ideas and information clearly and accurately in order to respond to the task and support an analysis of the text</td>
<td>- introduce a well-reasoned central idea and a writing strategy that clearly establish the criteria for analysis</td>
<td>- introduce a clear central idea and a writing strategy that establish the criteria for analysis</td>
<td>- introduce a central idea and/or a writing strategy and/or</td>
<td>- introduce a confused or incomplete central idea or writing strategy and/or</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- demonstrate a thoughtful analysis of the author's use of the writing strategy to develop the central idea</td>
<td>- demonstrate an appropriate analysis of the author's use of the writing strategy to develop the central idea</td>
<td>- demonstrate a superficial analysis of the author's use of the writing strategy to develop the central idea</td>
<td>- demonstrate a minimal analysis of the author's use of the writing strategy to develop the central idea</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Command of Evidence:</strong> the extent to which the response presents evidence from the provided text to support analysis</td>
<td>- present ideas clearly and consistently, making effective use of specific and relevant evidence to support analysis</td>
<td>- present ideas sufficiently, making adequate use of relevant evidence to support analysis</td>
<td>- present ideas inconsistently, inadequately, and/or inaccurately in an attempt to support analysis, making use of some evidence that may be irrelevant</td>
<td>- present little or no evidence from the text</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Coherence, Organization, and Style:</strong> the extent to which the response logically organizes complex ideas, concepts, and information using formal style and precise language</td>
<td>- exhibit logical organization of ideas and information to create a cohesive and coherent response</td>
<td>- establish and maintain a formal style, using precise language and sound structure</td>
<td>- exhibit acceptable organization of ideas and information to create a coherent response</td>
<td>- exhibit inconsistent organization of ideas and information, failing to create a coherent response</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- establish and maintain a formal style, using precise language and sound structure</td>
<td>- establish and maintain a formal style, using appropriate language and structure</td>
<td>- lack a formal style, using language that is basic, inappropriate, or imprecise</td>
<td>- use language that is predominantly incoherent, inappropriate, or copied directly from the text or task</td>
<td>- are minimal, making assessment unreliable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Control of Conventions:</strong> the extent to which the response demonstrates command of conventions of standard English grammar, usage, capitalization, punctuation, and spelling</td>
<td>- demonstrate control of the conventions with infrequent errors</td>
<td>- demonstrate partial control of conventions with occasional errors that do not hinder comprehension</td>
<td>- demonstrate emerging control of conventions with some errors that hinder comprehension</td>
<td>- demonstrate a lack of control of conventions with frequent errors that make comprehension difficult</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- are minimal, making assessment unreliable</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- A response that is a personal response and makes little or no reference to the task or text can be scored no higher than a 1.
- A response that is totally copied from the text with no original writing must be given a 0.
- A response that is totally unrelated to the task, illegible, incoherent, blank, or unrecognizable as English must be scored as a 0.


