



pennsylvania
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

The Pennsylvania System of School Assessment

English Language Arts Item and Scoring Sampler



2023–2024
Grade 5

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INTRODUCTION

General Introduction

The Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) provides districts and schools with tools to assist in delivering focused instructional programs aligned with the Pennsylvania Core Standards (PCS). These tools include Academic Standards, Assessment Anchors and Eligible Content (AAEC) documents, assessment handbooks, and content-based item and scoring samplers. This Item and Scoring Sampler is a useful tool for Pennsylvania educators in preparing local instructional programs by providing samples of released test items, of test item types, and scored student responses. The item sampler is not designed to be used as a pretest, a curriculum, or any other benchmark for operational testing.

This Item and Scoring Sampler is available in Braille format. For more information regarding Braille, call (717) 901-2238.

Pennsylvania Core Standards (PCS)

This sampler contains examples of test questions designed to assess the Pennsylvania Assessment Anchors and Eligible Content aligned to the PCS. The Mathematics, Reading, and Writing PSSA transitioned to PCS-based operational Mathematics and English Language Arts assessments starting with the spring 2015 PSSA administration.

The PCS-aligned Assessment Anchors and Eligible Content documents are posted on this portal:

- www.education.pa.gov [Hover over “Data and Reporting,” select “Assessment and Accountability,” and select “PSSA-PA System of School Assessment.” Then select “Assessment Anchors/Eligible Content” on the right side of the screen.]

What Is Included

This sampler contains stimulus reading passages with test questions, Conventions of Standard English questions, and a text-dependent analysis (TDA) prompt that have been written to align to the Assessment Anchors, which are based on the PCS. The sample test questions model the types of items that may appear on an operational PSSA. Each sample test question has been through a rigorous review process to ensure alignment with the Assessment Anchors prior to being piloted in an embedded field test within a PSSA assessment and then used operationally on a PSSA assessment. Answer keys, scoring guidelines, and any related stimulus material are also included. Additionally, sample student responses are provided with each open-ended item to demonstrate the range of responses that students provided in response to these items.

Purpose and Uses

The items in this sampler may be used¹ as examples for creating assessment items at the classroom level. Classroom teachers may find it beneficial to have students respond to the text-dependent analysis prompt question in this sampler. Educators may then use the sampler as a guide to score the responses either independently or together with colleagues within a school or district.

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Item Format and Scoring Guidelines

The 2023 PCS-based PSSA has multiple types of test questions. For grade 5, the types of test questions are multiple-choice (MC) questions, evidence-based selected-response (EBSR) questions, and text-dependent analysis (TDA) prompts.

Multiple Choice: Each of this type of test question has four answer choices. Some MC test questions are based on a stimulus reading passage, while Conventions of Standard English MC test questions are independent of a passage. Each correct response to an MC test question is worth one point.

Evidence-Based Selected-Response: Each two-part EBSR question is designed to elicit an evidence-based response from a student who has read either a literature or an informational text passage. In Part One, which is similar to an MC question, the student analyzes a passage and chooses the best answer from four answer choices. In Part Two, the student utilizes evidence from the passage to select one or more answers based on the response to Part One. Part Two is different from an MC question in that there may be more than four answer options and more than one correct answer. Each EBSR test question is worth either two or three points, and students can receive points for providing a correct response to Part One or for providing one or more correct responses in Part Two.

Text-Dependent Analysis Prompt: The TDA prompt is a text-dependent analysis prompt based on a passage or passage set that each student has read during the test event. There are three response pages in the paper-and-pencil format and up to 5,000 characters in the online format. Both literature and informational text passages are addressed through this item type. Students use explicit and implicit evidence to make inferences leading to a conclusion or generalization in response to the task stated in the prompt. Students construct a well-written analytical essay to communicate inferences and connections to the evidence using grade-appropriate writing skills. The TDA response is scored using a holistic scoring guideline on a 1–4-point scale.

Non-score Considerations: For TDA items, responses can be designated as non-scorable (NS). While every effort is made to score each student response, a response may receive an NS designation if it falls into one of five categories:

Blank – Blank, entirely erased, entirely crossed out, or consists entirely of whitespace

Refusal – Refusal to respond to the task

Non-scorable – In a language other than English, incoherent, illegible, insufficient, unrelated to the passage, or consisting solely or almost solely of text copied from the passage

Off Topic – Makes no reference to the item or passage but is not an intentional refusal

Copied – Consists of text copied from the item and/or test directions

Testing Time and Mode of Testing Delivery for the PCS-Based PSSA

The PSSA is delivered in a traditional paper-and-pencil format as well as in an online format. The estimated time to respond to a test question is the same for both methods of test delivery. The following table shows the estimated response time for each item type.

English Language Arts Item Type	MC	EBSR	TDA
Estimated Response Time (minutes)	1.5	3 to 5	45

During an official test administration, students are given as much additional time as is necessary to complete the test questions.

English Language Arts Grade 5

This English Language Arts Sampler is composed of 2 passages, 6 passage-based MC questions, 1 EBSR question, 1 TDA prompt, and 3 Conventions of Standard English MC questions.

There are 2 passages in this booklet. The first passage is followed by 6 passage-based MC questions and 1 EBSR question. The second passage is followed by 1 TDA prompt. This booklet also contains 3 Conventions of Standard English MC questions.

Each question is accompanied by a table that contains the Assessment Anchor and Eligible Content coding, answer key(s), depth of knowledge, and testing data. Each question is followed by a brief analysis or rationale. The TDA prompt is displayed with the item-specific scoring guideline and examples of student responses with scores and annotations at each scoring level.

The PCS-based PSSA may be administered in paper-and-pencil format or online. As a result, this sampler includes samples of TDA prompt responses in both formats. A sample online response is noted by the symbol .

Item and Scoring Sampler Format

This sampler includes the test directions and scoring guidelines that appeared in previous PSSA English Language Arts assessments. Each MC item is followed by a table that includes the item alignment, the answer key, the depth of knowledge (DOK) level, the percentage² of students who chose each answer option, and a brief answer-option analysis or rationale. The EBSR item is followed by a table that includes the item alignment, the answer key to Part One of the item, the answer key to Part Two of the item, the DOK level, the mean student score, and a brief answer-option analysis for each part of the item. The TDA prompt is followed by a table that includes the item alignment, the DOK level, and the mean student score. Additionally, the *Text-Dependent Analysis Scoring Guideline* is combined with sample student responses representing two examples of each score point to form a practical item-specific scoring guideline. The student responses in this item and scoring sampler are actual student responses; however, the handwriting has been changed to protect the students’ identities and to make the item and scoring sampler accessible to as many people as possible.

Example Multiple-Choice Item Information Table

Item Information	
Alignment	Assigned AAEC
Answer Key	Correct Answer
Depth of Knowledge	Assigned DOK
p-value A	Percentage of students who selected option A
p-value B	Percentage of students who selected option B
p-value C	Percentage of students who selected option C
p-value D	Percentage of students who selected option D
Option Annotations	Brief answer-option analysis or rationale

Example Evidence-Based Selected-Response Item Information Table

Item Information	
Alignment	Assigned AAEC
Answer Key: Part One	Correct Answer
Answer Key: Part Two	Correct Answer
Depth of Knowledge	Assigned DOK
Mean Score	Average Score
Option Annotations	Brief answer-option analysis or rationale

Example Text-Dependent Analysis Prompt Information Table

Alignment	Assigned AAEC	Depth of Knowledge	Assigned DOK	Mean Score	Average Score
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² All p-value percentages listed in the item information tables have been rounded.

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ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS TEST DIRECTIONS FOR READING PASSAGES AND QUESTIONS**Directions:**

On the following pages are the Reading passages and questions.

Directions for Multiple-Choice Questions:

Some questions will ask you to select an answer from among four choices.

For the multiple-choice questions:

- First, read the passage carefully.
- Read each question and choose the best answer.
- Only one of the answers provided is correct.
- You may look back at the passage to help you answer the question.
- Record your choice in the answer booklet.

Directions for Evidence-Based Selected-Response Questions:

Some questions will have two parts and will ask you to select one or more answers in each part.

For the evidence-based selected-response questions:

- Read Part One of the question and choose the best answer.
- You may look back at the passage to help you answer Part One of the question.
- Record your answer to Part One in the answer booklet.
- Only one of the answers provided in Part One is correct.
- Then, read Part Two of the question and choose the evidence to support your answer in Part One. If Part Two tells you to select two answers, be sure to select two answers.
- You may look back at the passage to help you answer Part Two of the question.
- Record your answer or answers to Part Two in the answer booklet.

Directions for Text-Dependent Analysis (TDA) Prompts:

The English Language Arts TDA prompt will ask you to analyze the passage and use evidence from the passage to write an essay.

For the TDA Essay:

- Be sure to read the passage and the TDA prompt carefully.
- Review the Writer’s Checklist to help you plan and organize your response.
- You may look back at the passage to help you write your essay.
- Write your essay in the appropriate space in the answer booklet. If you use scratch paper to write a rough-draft essay, be sure to transfer your final essay to the answer booklet.
- Be sure to check that your essay contains evidence from the passage to support your response.
- Be sure to check your essay for errors in capitalization, spelling, sentence formation, punctuation, and word choice.

PASSAGE 1*

Read the following passage about young inventors. Then answer questions 1–7 in your answer booklet.

Stellar-Tasting Space Food

by Stephanie Warren

What space food do astronauts like best? The answer might surprise you. “Our most popular product by far is our freeze-dried shrimp cocktail,” says food scientist Vickie Kloeris, who has spent the past 26 years developing and testing all of the food that NASA astronauts eat in space, as well as creating packaging.

Dehydrated shrimp may not sound very appetizing, but Kloeris explains that it’s not the seafood the astronauts love—it’s the sauce. The shrimp comes with a packet of freeze-dried cocktail sauce that has spicy horseradish in it. “That gives it a kick,” she says.

Astronauts like the sauce’s strong flavor because of a strange side effect of living in space: Something about floating in a microgravity environment weakens a person’s sense of taste.

Now, thanks to a team of high-school students from the North Carolina School of Science and Mathematics, tasteless space food could be a thing of the past. The students created edible, dissolvable sheets—which they named Stellar Strips—that deliver a punch of flavor to the tongue.

Stellar Strips made it to the finals of the Conrad Foundation’s Spirit of Innovation Challenge, a competition in which students develop products to solve global and local problems. The team hopes its invention will go all the way to space someday.

Taste in Space

Scientists don’t yet fully understand why astronauts lose some of their sense of taste in space, but they have some theories.

Here on Earth, gravity pulls fluids throughout the body. In the microgravity of space, these fluids collect in the head and the astronauts get all stuffed up.

“It’s just like when you have a cold and can’t smell the food because you’re congested,” says Kloeris. Smell is an important part of taste; if you can’t smell food, you can’t taste it very well either.

Over time, astronauts’ bodies adapt, but the astronauts still say they can’t taste their food as well as they can on Earth. So scientists suspect more is going on.

“Space travel might also interfere with food aromas themselves,” says Kloeris. For one thing, astronauts don’t eat off plates—the food would float away. Instead, they eat out of packages. The packages keep the food from escaping but probably hold in its aromas as well. And even if the aromas do get out of the package, in microgravity they don’t float up toward the nose as they do on Earth. They might go down or sideways instead.

To boost their food’s flavor, astronauts ask for their spacecraft to be stocked with spicy toppings. “We have flown so many different kinds of hot sauce that I can’t even count them!” says Kloeris.

Problem Solvers

The students who developed Stellar Strips didn't start out trying to boost the flavor of foods in space. "We actually started off with wanting to solve the problem of bone atrophy," says 18-year-old Jin Yoon, one of the team's members.

Astronauts don't have the normal force of gravity pressing on their bones. They also don't need the full strength of their bones to stand and walk in microgravity. These factors cause their bones to weaken.

So the students set out to make a calcium supplement that was easy to consume in space so astronauts' bones would stay stronger. "One day we thought of Listerine breath strips," says Yoon. The breath-freshening strips dissolve on the tongue, releasing a powerful mint flavor. The team realized they might be able to create a similar product to boost flavor in foods. "We thought maybe we could solve the problem of taste in space," says Yoon.

Taste Test

The team had identified a problem and had an idea of how to solve it. But the students still had to create a strip that would deliver a lot of flavor and dissolve on the tongue—but not too quickly, or the flavor wouldn't last through a whole meal.

First, the team tried sandwiching flavor between two Listerine strips. "It was way too minty!" says Yoon. But the team didn't give up. The students researched edible materials and experimented to see what could be made into flavored strips.

Finally, they found one that worked: Vietnamese spring-roll wrappers. Spring-roll wrappers are made out of rice flour and come in extremely thin sheets.

First the team soaked the wrappers in water to soften them. Then they dripped liquid flavoring onto the wrappers. Once the wrappers dried, it was time to test them. "It didn't dissolve too quickly, [and] you could taste the flavor," says Yoon. Eureka!

A Stellar Idea

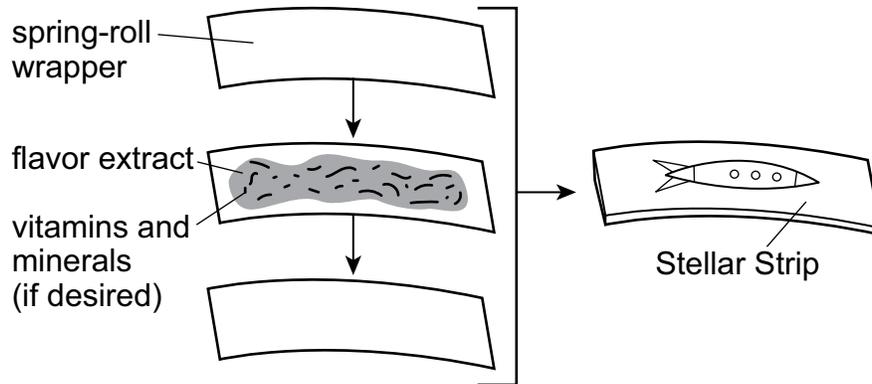
The team made a sour-lemon-flavored strip to present to the judges at the Spirit of Innovation Challenge. In the future, they want to create Stellar Strips in various flavors, such as sweet, spicy, and barbecue. Their hope is to refine their product so they can sell it to NASA. "It's a very interesting concept that has potential," says Kloeris.

One advantage of Stellar Strips is that they're lightweight. According to Kloeris, it costs about \$10,000 to send each pound of food into space, so she's always trying to make foods and their packages as light as possible. A six-pound pack of Stellar Strips would give astronauts enough flavor choices to last three meals a day for about 15 years!

Stellar Strips may be useful here on Earth too. Like astronauts, people going through chemotherapy for cancer or taking certain types of medicines experience a decreased sensation of taste. "Stellar Strips could make their lives a little happier," says Yoon.

When the team first started the project, they didn't think they would really create something that could potentially be used by astronauts. "After all," says Yoon, "this is a problem that the world's smartest people are working on. But that's no reason to be intimidated by a project," he says. "Just go for it!"

How Stellar Strips Work



Stellar Strips are made from three layers of thin spring-roll wrappers, which are layered like tiny sandwiches: two plain sheets surround one that's doused in tasty liquids. Different fillings can yield different flavors, like sweet, spicy, and barbecue. Vitamins could even be added.

** The passage "Stellar-Tasting Space Food" and items one through seven also appear on the 2022 PSSA ELA Grade 5 Item Sampler.*

Multiple-Choice Questions

1. Based on the suffix “-ion,” the word “competition” means
 - A. one who competes.
 - B. the act of competing.
 - C. the ability to compete.
 - D. the result of competing.

2. Read the sentences from the passage.

“The shrimp comes with a packet of freeze-dried cocktail sauce that has spicy horseradish in it. ‘That gives it a kick,’ she says.”

Which idea does the phrase “gives it a kick” suggest?

- A. a sudden chill
- B. a burst of energy
- C. a strong scent
- D. a boost of flavor

- 3.** How are the experiments the students completed related to each other?
- A. They led to the creation of a material that solves a problem.
 - B. They helped reduce the cost of shipping food to space.
 - C. They helped produce a medicine that improves health.
 - D. They led to a product that will make them money.

4. Which section of the passage has information that is **most** connected to the diagram at the end of the passage?
- A. “Taste in Space”
 - B. “Problem Solvers”
 - C. “Taste Test”
 - D. “A Stellar Idea”

5. How does the diagram of Stellar Strips contribute to the reader's understanding of the passage?
- A. It confirms that Stellar Strips are available in many flavors.
 - B. It shows what is used to create the layers of Stellar Strips.
 - C. It illustrates how Stellar Strips are similar to other types of space food.
 - D. It describes the research completed to determine the benefits of Stellar Strips.

6. Which evidence from the passage **best** supports the generalization that Stellar Strips may have benefits on Earth?
- A. “ ‘It’s just like when you have a cold and can’t smell the food because you’re congested,’ says Kloeris.”
 - B. “One advantage of Stellar Strips is that they’re lightweight.”
 - C. “Like astronauts, people going through chemotherapy for cancer or taking certain types of medicines experience a decreased sensation of taste.”
 - D. “ ‘After all,’ says Yoon, ‘this is a problem that the world’s smartest people are working on.’ ”

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Evidence-Based Selected-Response Question

7. This question has two parts. Answer Part One and then answer Part Two.

Part One

Which statement **best** expresses main ideas of the passage?

- A. A team of high-school students invented Stellar Strips, and they hope their product will come in many different flavors in the future.
- B. A group of students wants to develop products that solve global problems, so they are entering contests in hopes of getting approval to expand their ideas.
- C. Microgravity in space has caused the bones of astronauts to become weakened, so scientists are researching ways to improve the strength of astronauts.
- D. Astronauts' sense of taste decreases in space, and the inventors of Stellar Strips hope to solve this problem with their product.

Part Two

Which evidence from the passage **best** supports the answer in Part One? Choose **one** answer.

- A. "Now, thanks to a team of high-school students from the North Carolina School of Science and Mathematics, tasteless space food could be a thing of the past."
- B. "Smell is an important part of taste; if you can't smell food, you can't taste it very well either."
- C. "Astronauts don't have the normal force of gravity pressing on their bones."
- D. "The team made a sour-lemon-flavored strip to present to the judges at the Spirit of Innovation Challenge."

PASSAGE 2

Read the following passage about a young person who learns to understand her name. Then answer question 8 in your answer booklet.

The Noblest of the Lilies

by JoLynne Ricker Whalen

C.J. Malone stood on the pitcher's mound, her hands tightly squeezing the baseball. She brushed back her braids and stared intently at the batter.

"Hey Frankie! Let's see if you can handle my fastball!" C.J. said as she put on her glove.

She started her windup and released the ball as hard as she could. Frankie dropped to the ground as the ball whizzed past him. He watched the ball hurdle the fence and land with a crash in Mr. Kelly's backyard.

"Uh-oh," groaned C.J. She quickly ran to the fence and scanned the back of the house. She breathed a sigh of relief when she saw that none of the windows were broken. But then her eyes moved to the planters filled with colorful flowers that sat on the patio. There she saw the missing ball resting in a pile of broken, rose-colored glass.

At the same moment, Mr. Kelly appeared at the back door. "I thought I heard something break," he said, adjusting his wire-rimmed glasses. He saw the broken glass and murmured, "Irene's vase," as he picked up the shattered pieces.

"I—I'm sorry," C.J. stuttered, bowing her head. "It was an accident. I was aiming for that boy over there," she said and pointed to the ball field.

Mr. Kelly looked to the ball field. It was vacant. Frankie had run away.

"I can buy you another one," C.J. offered. "I get an allowance."

"I'm afraid that's impossible," said Mr. Kelly. "My late wife, Irene, made this vase for me years ago. It can never be replaced." Mr. Kelly wiped a tear from his eye as he walked toward the door and into the house.

As C.J. lay in bed that night, she couldn't forget the hurt look on Mr. Kelly's face. The vase had been very special to him, and C.J.'s carelessness had hurt him deeply.

C.J. walked to the window and looked down upon the moonlit gazebo in Mr. Kelly's yard. It was adorned with flowers of all colors, and their sweet scent embraced the gentle breeze. Somehow, her fastball didn't seem so important now.

The sound of chirping birds awakened C.J. the following morning. She looked out the window and spotted their nest in an oak tree. Then she noticed Mr. Kelly working in his garden. She dressed quickly and hurried outside.

Frankie saw her and shouted, "Hey C.J.! Wanna play catch?"

“Maybe later,” she answered. Her mind was set on something different. As difficult as it may be, she knew she had to make things right.

C.J. passed under an arched trellis that was covered with fragrant miniature roses. Their scarlet blooms and glossy foliage enhanced what appeared to be a gateway to paradise.

“Hi, Mr. Kelly,” said C.J. hesitantly.

Her voice startled him. He turned around, and his expression softened as he recognized C.J.

“Good morning,” he said gently. “You haven’t lost another ball, have you?”

“No,” answered C.J. “I was hoping that I could help you. You know, to make up for the broken vase.”

“That’s not necessary,” Mr. Kelly said. “Accidents happen, and your apology was sufficient.”

“But if I could help you, it would make me feel better,” insisted C.J. She knelt down beside him and pulled a small weed from the flower bed.

“Why do you like flowers so much?” she asked.

“I love their beauty, but I also find them interesting,” said Mr. Kelly. He showed C.J. a delicate white cluster.

“This is called lily of the valley,” explained Mr. Kelly.

“The flowers look like little bells,” C.J. said and sniffed the sweet blooms. “Mmm, they smell good.”

“Many stories, names, and beliefs come from flowers,” said Mr. Kelly. “Did you know that every state in the United States has a flower to represent it? Even your birth month has its own special flower.”

“I was born in September,” said C.J. “What is my flower?”

“I’ll show you,” said Mr. Kelly. He led C.J. down the brick pathway to the gazebo. Its rooftop and sides were interlaced with vines and blue blooms.

“This is the morning glory,” began Mr. Kelly, “the flower for September.”

“It’s kind of pretty,” said C.J. She stroked the morning glory with her fingers and then took a deep sniff. She giggled as the thin petals clung to her nose. “Who would guess that C.J. Malone would have something in common with a flower?” she said, chuckling.

“May I ask what C.J. stands for?” asked Mr. Kelly.

“I try to keep it a secret,” C.J. said reluctantly. “I don’t like my real name.”

“I was never fond of my name either,” said Mr. Kelly. “Then I discovered something magical about it.”

“What was it?” C.J. asked.

“My name is Gareth,” explained Mr. Kelly. “I wanted to have a common name like Charles or James until I learned how my name was special. I learned that Gareth means ‘garden.’ ”

C.J. gasped in amazement. Now she understood why Mr. Kelly had changed his mind about his name.

“My real name is Calla Jo,” she began. “I’ve never liked it. It’s so different from other names. I don’t understand why my parents gave me that name.”

“I think I may know,” said Mr. Kelly. He motioned for C.J. to follow him. They walked down a brick path to a small garden beyond the gazebo. Nestled there were dozens of pink, yellow, and white flowers.

“These are called callas,” said Mr. Kelly heartily. “Aren’t they lovely? They have so much character and beauty that the calla is known as the noblest of the lilies. I think that they are the perfect match for you.”

C.J. knelt down. She touched the delicate pastel blooms and emerald leaves.

“It was very honest and thoughtful of you to tell me about the vase,” said Mr. Kelly. “You should be very proud of yourself.”

He clipped a small bouquet of callas and gave them to C.J.

“I’m glad that you found your own special magic,” said Mr. Kelly.

“They’re beautiful, Mr. Kelly. Thank you,” C.J. said. She gave Mr. Kelly a quick hug and hurried home to put the flowers in water.

“Hey, C.J.! Are you ready to play ball now?” shouted Frankie when he saw her rushing to her house.

“I can’t. I have to take these flowers home,” C.J. explained, tightly hugging the bouquet. “Oh, and Frankie . . . please call me Calla.”

Text-Dependent Analysis Prompt

8. In the passage, C.J. Malone has two interactions with Mr. Kelly. Write an essay analyzing how C.J.'s interactions with Mr. Kelly affect her. Use evidence from the passage to support your response.

Writer's Checklist for the Text-Dependent Analysis Prompt

PLAN before you write

- Make sure you read the prompt carefully.
- Make sure you have read the entire passage carefully.
- Think about how the prompt relates to the passage.
- Organize your ideas on scratch paper. Use a thought map, outline, or other graphic organizer to plan your essay.

FOCUS while you write

- Analyze the information from the passage as you write your essay.
- Make sure you use evidence from the passage to support your response.
- Use precise language, a variety of sentence types, and transitions in your essay.
- Organize your paper with an introduction, body, and conclusion.

PROOFREAD after you write

- I wrote my final essay in the answer booklet.
- I stayed focused on responding to the prompt.
- I used evidence from the passage to support my response.
- I corrected errors in capitalization, spelling, sentence formation, punctuation, and word choice.

