
GENERAL COMMENTS

Grade 12 English Language Arts (May 2018)

Student Performance—Observations

The following observations are based on local marking results and on comments made by markers during the sample marking session. These comments refer to common errors made by students at the provincial level and are not specific to school jurisdictions.

Information regarding how to interpret the provincial test and assessment results is provided in the document *Interpreting and Using Results from Provincial Tests and Assessments* available at www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/assess/support/results/index.html.

Various factors impact changes in performance over time: classroom-based, school-based, and home-based contexts, and changes to demographics. In addition, Grade 12 provincial tests may vary slightly in overall difficulty although every effort is made to minimize variation throughout the test development and pilot testing processes.

When considering performance relative to specific areas of course content, the level of difficulty of the content and its representation on the provincial test vary over time according to the type of test questions and learning outcomes addressed. Information regarding learning outcomes is provided in the document *Senior 4 English Language Arts: Manitoba Curriculum Framework of Outcomes and Senior 4 Standards* (2000).

Responding to Text (provincial mean: 64%)

Teacher feedback indicates that some teachers have concerns about the quantity of reading on Day 1 of the test. Students could be instructed to read the question before reading the texts so that they read with purpose. On Day 1, students choose between two of the longest texts—one that is pragmatic (e.g., a magazine article) and one that is aesthetic (e.g., a short story)—to form the basis of a response. Giving students choice allows them to select a text based on prior knowledge and personal preference. For questions such as this on the provincial test, students could be encouraged to read just the first few paragraphs of each text and then make their choice. Some students had difficulty with the poetry question. Most students can identify a technique and an idea or an impression, however, they often have difficulty articulating how one influences the other. Students could review key terms (such as metaphor, diction, tone, etc.), be exposed to more poetry, and receive instruction on *how* language is used as a tool to create an effect.

Writing Task (provincial mean: 69.8%)

Teacher feedback indicates that some students experience difficulty managing their time for the writing task (three hours). The writing task mirrors process writing as practiced and experienced in and outside of the classroom. Students could be reminded that thinking and planning for the writing task may continue between administration sessions (outside of the classroom), allowing students more time for writing and revising during the scheduled administration time.

Process Booklet (provincial mean: 58.4%)

Teacher feedback indicates that students had difficulty with the Connecting Ideas question. Students are expected to make text-to-text connections to strengthen ideas. It is important for them to explain how the text enhances their ideas rather than providing just summaries or descriptors of the text. Teachers also mentioned difficulty with the Reflecting question. Students could be encouraged to think about the choices they make when they are writing and practice metacognition. Students also had difficulty explaining how their chosen writing variables work together. Writing variables should be introduced gradually throughout the Senior Years curriculum. Activities that interchange the variables for different results might give students a better understanding of how they might work together. For example, students could discuss how changing the audience or context might change the purpose or the form.

Marking Accuracy and Consistency

Information regarding how to interpret the marking accuracy and consistency reports is provided in the document *Interpreting and Using Results from Provincial Tests and Assessments* available at www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/assess/support/results/index.html.

These reports compare the local marking results to the results from the departmental re-marking of sample test booklets. Provincially, local marking resulted in test scores on average 6.6% higher than departmental marking. Test score agreement was within 6 percentage points for 47% of test booklets. 53% of booklets received a score of more than 6 percentage points higher than departmental marking.

Survey Results

Teachers who supervised the Grade 12 English Language Arts Standards Test in May 2018 were invited to provide comments regarding the test and its administration. A total of 269 teachers responded to the survey. A summary of their comments is provided below. After adjusting for non-responses:

- 90% agreed that the test was congruent with the emphasis of the Grade 12 English Language Arts curriculum.
- 94% agreed that “Activating Your Thoughts Through Group Discussion” before reading is congruent with classroom practice.
- 96% agreed that distributing the *Responding to Text* booklet before reading helps students focus on the readings.
- 94% agreed that directing students to preview the writing task during group discussion ensures students focus earlier in the process.
- 96% agreed that students are given choices on selecting writing variables in regular classroom work.
- 82% agreed that the test provides students with a fair opportunity to demonstrate their proficiencies in English Language Arts.
- 64% agreed that removing the writing variable ‘context’ from the writing variables question was helpful for students in their writing task. Of the 36 teachers who chose to comment on this change, 29 of them suggested that context be reintroduced.
- For the different marking models: 20% used classroom-based, 31% used school-based, 40% (a majority) used a centralized marking model, and 8% did not respond.