

**Q & A for the Secondary V ELA Exam
May 2022 and April 2023**

1. Question: Do you have access to the short story while you are writing the response to a literary text, or do you rely solely on the notes you made?

Answer: You have the booklet with the literary text with you the whole time while you are working on the response on Day 1 of the exam. You can make notes on the short story or text and highlight things that you want to include in your response.

However, once you have finished writing the response on day 1, you will not get the story or response back.

2. Question: Approximately how many paragraphs should the Written Production have?

Answer: Remember that this written production is intended to be an opinion piece, feature, or analysis article. It is not a standard 5-paragraph essay.

Usually, I recommend between 6 to 10 smaller paragraphs. In an article like this, one sentence can actually be a paragraph. Start with the lead/lede paragraph, which is a few sentences that outlines what you are writing about.

If you want it to include an impact sentence in the middle of your article and it stands alone that could be considered a paragraph.

I always recommend writing an opinion article, because I personally think it's easier to write because you are allowed to give your opinion. You can write your thoughts, as opposed to writing a feature which is much more formal in tone.

You always have to keep your audience in mind. You are writing for a magazine for teens. You want to keep your audience's attention. Long paragraphs never grab and keep an audience's attention like smaller impact paragraphs.

3. How can students prepare for this exam at home?

Answer: Review the rubrics. The rubrics are not just evaluation tools. They can be used by students as a reference, as a way to check: What have I done? What do I need to do to improve?

For **Competency 2, Reading**, you can go through the rubric and ask yourself: Have I only hinted at codes and conventions or have I evaluated and critiqued the impact of codes and conventions? Don't just list them! Have I included and explained my meaningful personal reaction to the text?

Something else to do to prepare is to review literary terms like foreshadowing, simile, metaphor, symbolism, characterization. I often tell my students, **when in doubt, go with characterization.**

In your response, take time to explore the main character(s)' development, how the character starts off and ends up in the story.

For **Competency 3, Written Production**, definitely go through the rubrics for this part of the exam too.

Remind yourself of the codes and conventions of an article. For example: You will want to start with a lead of 2 – 3 sentences. You need to establish your stance like you're trying to talk to somebody and get your point across on paper if you are writing an opinion piece or commentary. If you're doing a feature or analysis article, you've got to be more formal and you cannot use "I" statements.

There's a bit of a persuasive aspect to writing this kind of article and you have to support your stance. **Your lead should match your conclusion.**

To practice writing with a clear stance (or position on the topic/theme) and voice, reading blog posts might be helpful. Choose blogs in which the author strongly expresses an opinion so that you can see what techniques they use. **There's no right or wrong in terms of your opinion** in the written production; it's all in how you express your theme, how you back it up the references that you make.

4. Question: What are some helpful tips while I am writing the exam?

Answer: Write your way to meaning. If you are stuck, try writing out what you got out of the story, perhaps starting with characterization and as you write, often the meaning comes out.

Bring a **dictionary**. A dictionary can help with more than understanding the words in the story. Maybe you forget what a simile is or what foreshadowing means but you know that you should probably comment on some literary terms. Look them up in the dictionary to refresh your memory so you are not stuck there!

Bring a **highlighter!** While you are reading, highlight passages, quotations that you may want to come back to when you are writing. These passages will help to include textual references in your work.

Don't stop thinking about the written production part of the exam when you go home after Day 2. After reading the texts, discussing, and organizing your ideas, think about what you want to write and expand on your ideas before writing the next day. Think about other ways that you can drive home the theme of your article.

Keep in mind that **the cover of the React magazine provides the topic/theme** for your article.

Remember to keep the audience for your article in mind.

5. Question: Are students evaluated on the discussion parts of the exam?

Answer: While students are not evaluated on the discussion portions of this exam, the discussion counts. It counts because it helps students find meaning together. Once you get the big idea or the meaning or the theme, once you get it, it is easier to write. There is value in the discussion because if you're lost, there are other people who will have ideas that maybe you didn't think about. You can share your ideas and others may add to or question your ideas which will improve them.

So while the discussions are not formally evaluated, there's definitely value in them.