

English I Item Writing

Item writing for English/language arts, and all subjects covered in the North Carolina Testing Program, is guided by a rigorous set of policies and procedures. North Carolina teachers are invited to participate at all steps in the item writing process beginning with initial creation of items and continuing on to revision and final editing of item content. As a North Carolina item writer, teachers are provided with item writer training that involves issues in testing and measurement, sensitivity, and universal design. The following information is a useful tool for teachers planning to participate in item writing. In addition, it provides insight to teachers in the classroom regarding the types of literary selection items on the English I end-of-course tests.

NOTE: Please remember the following item types are presented as examples only and do not represent the full scope of items on the English I end-of-course tests.

Items addressing the meaning of the overall passage

Tips:

- These items should be coded to specific communication environment of selection OR to 5.01; read carefully and use your best professional judgment.
- Theme is a more complex concept and should be stated as a phrase or a sentence.
- When possible ask about theme first, then main idea or purpose, if appropriate.

Examples:

- Which best states the theme of this selection? What is the theme of this selection? (usually 5.01)
- What is the main purpose of this selection? (usually within environment of selection)
- What is the main idea of this selection? (usually within environment of selection)
- Which of the following best expresses the writer's overall opinion of ___? (usually within environment of selection)

Items addressing use of “context clues to discern meaning” (objective 6.01)

Tips:

- Select words that proficient 9th graders would not be expected to know.
- Select words that are meaningful within the selection, if possible.

Examples:

- In paragraph 6, what does *erudition* mean?
- Based on the context of paragraphs 1 and 2, what does *veracity* mean?

Items addressing an analysis of the relationship of a part of the work to the whole work, addressing “the impact of different stylistic and literary devices on the work” (objective 4.02)

Tips:

- These items should address the importance/impact to the whole work. “What is the effect of the girl’s yellow dress on Joe’s first impression of her?” does not appear to address the

whole work, whereas “The author’s use of color throughout the work emphasizes which of the following ideas?” appears more reflective of the work as a whole.

- These items can be written for selections from any of the environments.

Examples:

- The author uses words such as *whizzed*, *flew*, and *sparked* to emphasize which of the following? (choices all reflect impact on whole work)
- The author’s tone produces which of the following overall effects?
- What is the purpose of opening the article with an anecdote about ____?
- For what purpose does the author include details such as _____?
- How does _____ provide an effective ending to the selection?
- What is the effect of the use of analogies throughout the selection?
- What does the poet suggest by using the title ____?

Items addressing effect of discrete literary element within context of text (objective 5.01)

Tips:

- These items should not address work as a whole.
- These items can be written for selections from any of the environments.

Examples:

- The author uses words such as *whizzed*, *flew*, and *sparked* to emphasize which of the following? (choices all reflect discrete aspect of work)
- In paragraph 3, which words best describe Joe’s tone?
- Which is the best statement of the theme of the selection? What is the theme of the selection?
- What can a reader infer about _____’s feeling about _____?
- What characteristic is highlighted by _____?
- What makes _____ an effective simile?
- What does _____ symbolize?
- Why is / what makes _____ ironic?
- The author explains that he creates meaning in his stories through which of the following?
- The author’s description of the cat as “small,” “slight,” “powerful,” and “fierce” suggests which of the following about its personality?
- What effect is achieved through the use of words such as *downy* and *hush*?

Items addressing aspects of understanding the text that are relevant to the communication environment – “identifying and analyzing elements of *expressive / informational/ argumentative/ critical / literary* environment found in text in light of purpose, audience, and context.”

Tips:

- These items are selection specific. In other words, these expressive items should only be written to texts categorized as expressive; informational for informational texts, etc. These guidelines are important for test specifications although distinctions may not seem as clear-cut in classroom use of texts.
- Expressive selection - (objective 1.03)

“Expressive communication involves exploring and sharing personal experiences and insights. The writer/speaker of expressive text addresses the reader/listener as a confidante, a friendly, though not necessarily personally known, audience who is interested in how thoughtful people respond to life. As authors, students write, speak and use media for expressive purposes; as readers and listeners, they learn to appreciate the experiences of others. Expressive communication is the focus of English I. Expressive communication can include personal responses, anecdotes, memoirs, autobiographies, diaries, friendly letters, and monologues.”
(NC ELA SCS, p.84)

- How does the author emphasize the significance of the _____ incident?
- How does the author create a vivid impression of the setting?
- What details are used to create a sense of setting?
- How does the author create a sense of the narrator’s voice?
- Which words does the author use to emphasize his attitude toward _____?
- Which conflict is most closely related to the theme of the selection?
- Which quotation best suggests the author’s fondness for his childhood?
- Based on the tone of the selection, which of the following best describes the author’s attitude toward _____?

- Informational selection - (objective 2.01)

“Informational (explanatory) communication involves giving information to explain realities or ideas, to teach people who want to know what the writer or speaker knows. The writer/speaker of informational text should be knowledgeable and should communicate so that the audience may gain the knowledge as well as circumstances required. Informational texts often depend on the traditional prompts of who, what, when, where, and how, and can include definitions, instructions, histories, directions, business letters, reports, and research.”
(NC ELA SCS, p.84)

- If the author were to include a graphic to help clarify the information in the article, which of the following information would be the best addition?
- What does the author accomplish by including the paragraph on _____?
- Which information best supports the main point of this selection?
- Which statement best reveals the author’s attitude toward his topic?
- In paragraph 20, what is the effect of including the description of _____?
- What additional instructions could be included to help the reader _____?
- What does the author show by including information about _____?

- Argumentative selection - (objective 3.04)

“Argumentative communication involves defining issues and proposing reasonable resolutions. The writer/speaker is an advocate who discerns the grounds of an issue and convincingly supports a claim to resolve it. The reader/listener is considered to be a skeptic who may become another advocate as a result of the communication. Argumentative texts include advertisements, debates, letters of complaint, editorials, sermons, speeches, letters to the editor, and the senior project.” (NC ELA SCS, p.84)

- How does the author develop support for his position?

- What additional information could the author have included to support his ideas?
 - Which of the following is an example of the author’s bias?
 - What does the author accomplish by including the paragraph on ____?
- Critical selection - (objective 4.03)

“Critical communication involves interpreting, proposing, evaluating, and judging. The critic approaches the reader/listener as an independent consumer who is interested in thinking more keenly about the subject. The critic may establish and apply criteria and may offer new ways of discerning how the subject is meaningful. Critical texts include media or book reviews and essays that provide critical analysis of literature, media, ideas, people, or language.” (NC ELA SCS, p.84-85)

 - Which of the following is an example of the author’s bias?
 - What does the writer appear to dislike most about the film?
 - Why is the writer critical of Jones’ poetry?
 - What does the writer appear to appreciate most about _____?
 - According to the reviewer, what best explains why _____ is classified as a _____?
- Literary selection – (objective 5.03)

“The study of literature, which includes print and non-print texts, is extremely important in the English Language Arts curriculum. Students should develop a deep appreciation for literature, understand its personal, cultural, and historical significance, and learn how to understand and analyze its meaning and relevance....Literary study in high school focuses on building understanding as the students progress through the courses. English I provides a foundation for literary analysis. Students develop an understanding of literary concepts, elements, genres, and terms as a foundation for further study of world, American, and British literature.” (NC ELA SCS, p. 85-86)

 - Through which of the following does the author reveal her point of view?
 - What is the most important conflict in _____?
 - Which best describes her relationship with her mother?
 - How does the repetition of _____ impact the theme of the selection?
 - Which of the following best describes similarity in themes between the two selections?
 - Which of the following best describes the tone of the selection?
 - What effect does the author achieve with the imagery in lines 5-8?
 - The use of parallel verbs in lines 28-30 emphasizes which of the following?
 - What does the poet suggest by using the title _____?