



Grade 9

Assessment Highlights  
English Language Arts

---

Alberta Provincial Achievement Testing  
2017–2018

This document contains assessment highlights from the 2018 Grade 9 English Language Arts Provincial Achievement Test.

Assessment highlights provide information about the overall test, the test blueprints, and student performance on the 2018 Grade 9 English Language Arts Provincial Achievement Test. Also provided is commentary on student performance at the acceptable standard and the standard of excellence on selected items from the 2018 Provincial Achievement Test. This information is intended for teachers and is best used in conjunction with the multi-year and detailed school reports that are available to schools. **Assessment highlights reports** for all Provincial Achievement Test subjects and grades are **posted on the Alberta Education website every year** in the fall.

**Every second year, a complete test** for all Provincial Achievement Test subjects and grades (except grades 6 and 9 Français/French Language Arts and Grade 9 Knowledge and Employability courses) is posted on the Alberta Education website. A test blueprint and an answer key that includes the difficulty, reporting category, and item description for each test item are included. These materials, along with the program of studies and subject bulletin, provide information that can be used to inform instructional practice.

For further information, contact Harvey Stables, Senior Manager, Grade 9 Humanities, at [Harvey.Stables@gov.ab.ca](mailto:Harvey.Stables@gov.ab.ca); Kelly Thomas, Examiner, Grade 9 Humanities, at [Kelly.Thomas@gov.ab.ca](mailto:Kelly.Thomas@gov.ab.ca); or Nicole Lamarre, Director, Student Learning Assessments and Provincial Achievement Testing, at [Nicole.Lamarre@gov.ab.ca](mailto:Nicole.Lamarre@gov.ab.ca) at the Provincial Assessment Sector; or call 780-427-0010. To call toll-free from outside Edmonton, dial 310-0000.

The Alberta Education Internet address is [education.alberta.ca](http://education.alberta.ca).

This document was written primarily for:

Students	
Teachers	✓ of Grade 9 English Language Arts
Administrators	✓
Parents	
General Audience	
Others	

Copyright 2018, the Crown in Right of Alberta, as represented by the Minister of Education, Alberta Education, Provincial Assessment Sector, 44 Capital Boulevard, 10044 108 Street NW, Edmonton, Alberta T5J 5E6, and its licensors. All rights reserved.

**Special permission** is granted to **Alberta educators only** to reproduce, for educational purposes and on a non-profit basis, parts of this document that do **not** contain excerpted material.

Excerpted material in this document **shall not** be reproduced without the written permission of the original publisher (see credits, where applicable).

# Contents

The 2018 Grade 9 English Language Arts Provincial Achievement Test.....	1
<i>Part A: Writing</i> —2018 Test Blueprint .....	2
<i>Part A: Writing</i> —2018 Student Achievement.....	3
<i>Part A: Writing</i> —Commentary on 2018 Student Achievement .....	4
<i>Part B: Reading</i> —2018 Test Blueprint and Student Achievement .....	13
<i>Part B: Reading</i> —Commentary on 2018 Student Achievement .....	14
Provincial Achievement Test Program Support Documents.....	18



# The 2018 Grade 9 English Language Arts Provincial Achievement Test

This report provides teachers, school administrators, and the public with an overview of the performance of all students who wrote the 2018 Grade 9 English Language Arts Provincial Achievement Test. It complements the detailed school and jurisdiction reports.

## How Many Students Wrote the Test?

A total of 41 631 students wrote both parts of the 2018 Grade 9 English Language Arts Provincial Achievement Test.

## What Was the Test Like?

The 2018 Grade 9 English Language Arts Provincial Achievement Test had two parts that were weighted equally.

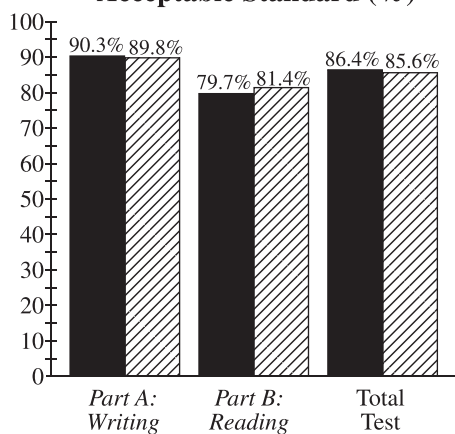
*Part A: Writing* consisted of a Narrative/Essay Writing Assignment (worth 35 marks) and a Functional Writing Assignment (worth 20 marks) for a total of 55 marks. The Narrative/Essay Writing Assignment provided students with a topic and some graphic and textual prompts to which they were to respond in the format of either a narrative or an essay. The Functional Writing Assignment required students to respond to a specific situation by addressing an envelope and writing a business letter to a specific audience.

*Part B: Reading* consisted of 55 multiple-choice questions based on ten reading selections that were either informational or narrative/poetic in nature.

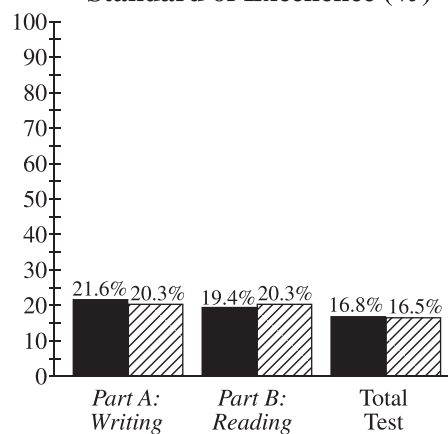
## How Well Did Students Do?

The percentages of students meeting the acceptable standard and the standard of excellence in 2018 are consistent with 2017, as shown in the graphs below. Out of a total possible score of 110 (parts A and B), the provincial average on the test was 73.6 (66.9%). The results presented in this report are based on scores achieved by all students who wrote the test, including those in French-immersion and Francophone programs. Detailed provincial assessment results are contained in school and jurisdiction reports.

**Percentage of Students Meeting the Acceptable Standard (%)**



**Percentage of Students Meeting the Standard of Excellence (%)**



 2017 Achievement Standards: The percentage of students in the province who met the acceptable standard and the standard of excellence on the 2017 Grade 9 English Language Arts Provincial Achievement Test (based on those who wrote)

 2018 Achievement Standards: The percentage of students in the province who met the acceptable standard and the standard of excellence on the 2018 Grade 9 English Language Arts Provincial Achievement Test (based on those who wrote)

## Part A: Writing—2018 Test Blueprint

The blueprint for *Part A: Writing* identifies the scoring/reporting categories by which student writing is assessed and by which 2018 summary data are reported to schools and school authorities. It also provides a description of the writing assignments and the achievement standards on the Grade 9 English Language Arts Provincial Achievement Test.

Writing Assignment and Scoring / Reporting Category	Description of Writing Assignment	Achievement Standards
<b>Assignment I—Narrative/Essay Writing</b>	The Narrative/ Essay Writing Assignment requires students to respond to a prompt that consists of a topic, as well as a collection of materials that students may use if they wish. These materials include graphics, quotes, and short literary excerpts. Students may use ideas from previous experience and/or reading. Students are to respond by writing either a narrative or an essay.	Student achievement in each scoring/ reporting category is described according to the following achievement descriptors:  Excellent  Proficient  Satisfactory  Limited  Poor  Insufficient
<b>Content*</b> (2.1, 2.2, 2.4, 3.1, 3.3, 4.1, 4.3)** (selecting ideas and details to achieve a purpose) Students respond to a given topic by writing either a narrative or an essay. Students establish their purpose, select ideas and supporting details to achieve their purpose, and communicate in a manner appropriate to their audience.		
<b>Organization*</b> (3.1, 3.3, 4.1, 4.3)** (organizing ideas and details into a coherent whole) Students organize their ideas to produce a unified and coherent narrative or essay that links events, details, sentences, and paragraphs, and that supports their purpose.		
<b>Sentence Structure</b> (4.1, 4.2)** (structuring sentences effectively) Students control sentence structure and use a variety of sentence types, sentence beginnings, and sentence lengths to enhance communication.		
<b>Vocabulary</b> (4.1, 4.2)** (selecting and using words and expressions correctly and effectively) Students choose specific words and expressions that are appropriate for their audience and effective in establishing a voice/tone that will help to achieve their purpose.		
<b>Conventions</b> (4.2)** (using the conventions of written language correctly and effectively) Students use conventions accurately and effectively to communicate.		
<b>Assignment II—Functional Writing</b>	The Functional Writing Assignment requires students to write to a specified audience in the context of a business letter. They are also required to address a blank envelope correctly.	
<b>Content*</b> (2.1, 2.2, 2.4, 3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 4.1, 4.3)** (thought and detail) Students develop, organize, and evaluate ideas for a specified purpose and audience.		
<b>Content Management*</b> (4.1, 4.2)** (using the conventions of written language correctly and effectively) Students communicate accurately and effectively by selecting words and phrases appropriate to their purpose. Students demonstrate control of sentence structure, usage, mechanics, and format.		

\* These scoring categories are weighted to be worth twice as much as the other categories.

\*\*Numbers in parentheses refer to outcomes in the Program of Studies for Grade 9 English Language Arts to which the reporting categories are cross-referenced.

## Part A: Writing—2018 Student Achievement

In 2018, 89.8% of all students who wrote the Grade 9 English Language Arts Provincial Achievement Test achieved the acceptable standard on *Part A: Writing*, and 20.3% of all students who wrote achieved the standard of excellence.

### Student Achievement by Assignment and Reporting Category

The chart below illustrates the percentage of students achieving writing standards for each writing assignment and reporting category.

		Narrative/Essay Writing Assignment					Functional Writing Assignment	
		Reporting Category					Reporting Category	
		Content	Organization	Sentence Structure	Vocabulary	Conventions	Content	Content Management
Writing Standard	Score*	% of Students	% of Students	% of Students	% of Students	% of Students	% of Students	% of Students
Excellent	5.0	4.7%	4.2%	5.3%	5.7%	5.1%	3.5%	5.8%
	4.5	7.4%	7.1%	7.8%	7.6%	7.8%	5.8%	8.3%
Proficient	4.0	20.7%	19.5%	21.5%	21.6%	21.4%	17.3%	21.5%
Satisfactory	3.5	18.0%	18.7%	17.9%	18.5%	17.2%	15.5%	15.8%
	3.0	32.7%	33.7%	32.3%	38.0%	28.4%	32.1%	27.0%
	2.5	8.5%	8.5%	8.3%	5.5%	9.8%	11.4%	9.1%
Limited	2.0	5.9%	6.4%	5.3%	2.4%	8.3%	10.9%	9.2%
	1.5	1.1%	0.9%	0.8%	0.3%	1.2%	1.8%	1.5%
Poor	1.0	0.7%	0.6%	0.5%	0.2%	0.6%	1.2%	1.0%
Insufficient / No Response	0	0.3%	0.3%	0.3%	0.3%	0.3%	0.6%	0.6%

\*Scores of 4.5, 3.5, 2.5, and 1.5 occur only when local marks and central marks are averaged. In 2018, 33 128 (79.6% of the total of 41 631) papers were marked locally, and these scores were submitted to Alberta Education. Papers with discrepant scores were given a third reading. The third-reading rescore rate was 6.7%.

# Part A: Writing—Commentary on 2018 Student Achievement

During the 2018 scoring session, 188 teachers from throughout the province scored 41 631 student test booklets. Teachers who marked the tests were generally pleased with the quality of most papers. Students who wrote *Part A: Writing* of the 2018 Grade 9 English Language Arts Provincial Achievement Test achieved an average of 36.8 out of a total raw score of 55 (66.9%). The provincial average on the Narrative / Essay Writing Assignment was 23.6 out of 35 (67.4%), and the provincial average on the Functional Writing Assignment was 13.0 out of 20 (65.0%).

Throughout the 2018 marking session, every effort was made to reward student strengths where evident rather than to critique what was missing or speculate on what a student should have added or included. When marking student responses, markers were encouraged to conscientiously return to the “**Focus**” section of the scoring categories to consider the extent to which each student had demonstrated competence in the criteria listed. There were several scoring descriptors in each scoring category to be assessed in order to arrive at judgments regarding the qualities of a response. Markers were encouraged to review—at the start of each marking day—each assignment and the prompt materials provided in the test booklet with the expectation that many students’ ideas regarding the assignments were informed by details within the prompts. Occasionally, markers needed to re-read a response to appreciate what a student had attempted and, in fact, accomplished. All markers acknowledged that student responses were first drafts.

## Narrative / Essay Writing Assignment—Observations from Standards Confirmation and Central Marking 2018: General Impressions

In the **Narrative / Essay Writing Assignment**, students were required to “Write either a narrative or an essay about **the importance of seeking adventure in life.**” This assignment was accessible for students at all levels of achievement. The **literary prompts**—which included quotations from T. S. Eliot and Ralph Waldo Emerson as well as excerpts from “Story of Nisus and Scylla,” *Jane Eyre*, and *The Graveyard Book*—provided many students with a variety of ideas to explore. In both narrative and essay responses, students often discussed the value of seeking adventure in providing opportunities for learning—about one’s environment, abilities, interests, or state of mind. In some responses, students examined character traits that were either requisite to going on an adventure or resultant from an experience undergone. In other responses, students reflected on the risks involved in undertaking an adventure, and examined how the beneficial impact of an experience warrants the risk-taking required. The **visual prompts**—which included two individuals talking to one another about going on a camping trip, three individuals at a climbing wall, a person speaking with a group of individuals about coming to Canada, a student telling a teacher about a planned trip to Africa, and two individuals holding musical instruments talking about performing—also offered students a variety of ideas to explore. In both narrative and essay responses, many students presented commentaries on how adventures may entail physical challenges, while others examined the emotional struggles that may be encountered when a person is confronted by challenging circumstances. Other students spoke of the need to leave the comfort of the familiar in order to extend personal boundaries through a new undertaking, broaden one’s knowledge by travelling to other parts of the world, and acquire skill in performing increasingly difficult tasks. Still others discussed the benefits of seeking adventure in providing individuals with confidence, wisdom, and self-awareness. In most responses, students were successful in presenting their ideas regarding the impact of seeking adventure on people’s lives.

As in other years, some students chose to support their ideas with a discussion of the impact of seeking adventure on the lives of professional athletes (such as Muhammad Ali, Michael Jordan, Michael Phelps, Wayne Gretzky, Connor McDavid, and Sidney Crosby) and popular celebrities (such as Ice Cube, Eminem, Prince, Selena Gomez, and Justin Timberlake). Others spoke of the efforts made by notable individuals—such as Malala Yousafzai, Barack Obama, Bill Gates, Steve Jobs, Terry Fox, Neil



Armstrong, Helen Keller, Rosa Parks, Martin Luther King, Jr., Nelson Mandela, and Mother Teresa—to embrace adventure in pursuit of personal goals that indelibly impact others. Other students have cited examples from literary works (including *The Golden Compass*, *The Wild Children*, *Touching Spirit Bear*, *The Giver*, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, *Ender’s Game*, *The Princess Bride*, *The Hunger Games*, *Twelfth Night*, and *Romeo and Juliet*) and commented on the experiences undergone by characters seeking or undertaking adventure in their lives

### **Narrative / Essay Writing Assignment—Observations from Standards Confirmation and Central Marking 2018: Qualities of Student Writing That Met the Acceptable Standard**

In both narrative and essay responses that received a score of “**Satisfactory**” in “**Content**,” many students approached the topic by presenting ideas regarding how all people encounter adventures in their daily lives and examined the consequences for individuals who accept or decline opportunities to seek adventure. Most students acknowledged that seeking adventure requires facing fears, taking risks, and overcoming obstacles. Some students argued that seeking adventure—something that everyone is capable of doing—is necessary for skill development, personal growth, and a meaningful life. Others reflected on the regret and lost opportunities that may result from being reluctant to seek adventure when afforded a chance. A number of students illustrated how seeking adventure entails interactions with others that enhance social skills and build interpersonal relationships, whereas others commented on circumstances in which a person must venture alone. Still other students examined the need to accept failure and learn from mistakes in order to enhance a person’s prospects of success when seeking adventure.

The following excerpts illustrate some of the ideas presented by students whose responses were awarded “**Satisfactory**” scores:

- “Seeking adventure in life is important for growth of a person. By being bold and taking more risks you can achieve more. It can shape you into a more developed person and help you get ready for the future. [...] Desiring more adventure can make you feel more alive, grow your knowledge, and help you live your life to it’s fullest.”
- “If you saw Tom Williams sitting in his dingy little office you would know he is anything but adventurous. Tom works in a cramped office in a skyscraper in New York as a accountant. Every day it was a chore to get up and go to work. [...] One day Tom knew he could not do his routine forever and that he would have to change. He hoped he could turn his life around.”
- “Do you ever wonder what life would be like without trying new things? It would be pretty boring. Life is about doing what you want to do in life and not letting anyone stop you. [...] Adventuring is a very important aspect to life, if you want to try something new then you should try it. Live your life how you want to live it.”
- “You don’t know what you’re capable of til you try new things. [...] By seeking adventure, you will learn how to do some things you have never done before, you can show other people what you are able to do, and you can discover the kind of person you are.”
- “I guilted my friend Robert into coming on a camping trip to Jasper. We have been freinds for as long as I can remember and he isn’t much of an outdoors man. [...] Robert couldn’t set up a tent to save his life so I led him through the steps. [...] The next time we set up camp Robert was the first one to get his tent set up. He smiled the widest smile I have ever seen.”

In narrative and essay responses scored “**Satisfactory**” in “**Content**,” as illustrated in these excerpts, the exploration of the topic was clear and/or logical and the student’s purpose was evident. Relevant and/or generic details were provided to support appropriate and/or predictable ideas, and the writing was straightforward and/or generalized and occasionally appealed to the reader’s interest. The “**Organization**” of such responses was characterized by a functional introduction that established a focus that was generally sustained, events and/or details that were developed in a discernible order, transitions that mechanically connected events and/or details within and/or between sentences and/or paragraphs, and a mechanical and/or moralistic closure that was related to the focus. Student responses scored “**Satisfactory**” in “**Sentence Structure**,” “**Vocabulary**,” and “**Conventions**” were characterized by generally controlled and sometimes effective and/or varied sentence structure, general words and

expressions that were generally used appropriately, a discernible voice or tone, generally correct use of conventions, and errors that occasionally reduced clarity and/or sometimes interrupted the flow of the response.

### **Narrative / Essay Writing Assignment—Observations from Standards Confirmation and Central Marking 2018: Qualities of Student Writing That Met the Standard of Excellence**

In both narrative and essay responses that received scores of “**Proficient**” or “**Excellent**” in “**Content**,” students often commented on the state of mind of individuals who seek adventure, recognizing that inherent in undertaking an adventure is a willingness to face uncertainty regarding the outcome of one’s actions. Many students spoke of how individuals may actively seek adventure and of how individuals may find themselves beset by adventures that are not of their choosing. Some students argued that the ability to seek adventure is an innately and uniquely human trait that distinguishes the individuality of each person. Other students reflected on the lasting impact of a decision to seek adventure in determining the course of an individual’s life. Still other students drew analogies related to how seeking adventure adds spice to life, fosters growth, provides a sense of direction, or strengthens one’s defenses against adversity.

Examples from student responses that received scores of “**Proficient**” or “**Excellent**” are contained in the following excerpts:

- “Why do we cling steadfastly to our daily routine? We fear change and unpredictability to the point that stepping out of our routines seems unfathomable. Unfortunately this security provided by the familiar prevents us realizing our true potential. [...] Summoning the courage to step into the unfamiliar will require persistence and determination in order to achieve success. Though hard earned, the rewards reaped will include not only newfound talents but also stronger relationships with others and better insight into one’s own personality.”
- “Becky was surrounded by chaos. Classmates hummed around her typing aggressively on their keyboards, annoyingly bickering and bragging about their high school course selections. Her mind whirled erratically with the uncertainty of the unknown future. [...] Awash with excitement, Becky strode confidently up the concrete steps of Bailey High School. She inhaled the crisp autumn air to ease her anxiety and began the journey that would determine the rest of her life. ‘One step at a time,’ she reminded herself, ‘And I’ll find my way.’”
- “Life without *risk*, without *adrenaline*, without *adventure*, is like living in a cardboard box. Securely contained within the habitual walls of this armor, a person feels safe and undisturbed. However, this sanctuary will become a prison which, over time, will become increasingly difficult to escape. [...] Breaking free of the constraints of fear and insecurity, though difficult if not impossible at times, is necessary for a person to confront the uncertainty that is daily life. After all, would living in a cardboard box really be *living*?”
- “Dread settled into Sarah’s stomach. Viola? She couldn’t play Viola – Viola was the lead! Her shallow breathing waned. Although the drama room was air conditioned, her cheeks flushed and she started to perspire. [...] When Sarah stepped into the unsympathetic glare of the stage lights, she uttered an inaudible whisper. For an eternity, time stood still. She stood motionless, eyes fixated on the tattered rags that were her clothes. Sarah thought of the shipwreck that had separated Viola from her twin brother Sebastian, who was feared dead, and then – inexplicably – the words ‘What country, friends, is this?’ could be heard throughout the auditorium.”
- “Adventure. It is a genre of movies and books. It has formed the basis of great epics such as Homer’s *Odyssey* and Melville’s *Moby Dick*. Timeless fairy tales such as *Little Red Riding Hood* and *Peter Pan* contain annals of the great rewards achieved despite the perils encountered. However, how is this possible when our society favours those who conform to the norm? [...] I hope to believe some day that I have lived my life adventurously, but I struggle to deviate from the planned course of my day to day existence.”

In responses receiving scores of “**Proficient**” or “**Excellent**” in “**Content**,” as seen in these excerpts, students explored the topic in an adept and/or plausible or insightful and/or imaginative manner. The student’s purpose was intentional or deliberate. Ideas presented were thoughtful and/or sound or perceptive and/or carefully chosen. Supporting details were specific and/or apt or precise and/or original.

The writing was considered and/or elaborated or confident and/or creative and drew or held the reader's interest. In "**Organization**," "**Proficient**" or "**Excellent**" student work contained a purposeful or engaging introduction that clearly or skillfully established a focus that was capably or consistently sustained. Events and/or details were developed coherently in a sensible or judicious order. Transitions clearly or fluently connected events and/or details within and/or between sentences and/or paragraphs. An appropriate or effective closure was related to the focus. Student responses scored "**Proficient**" or "**Excellent**" in "**Sentence Structure**," "**Vocabulary**," and "**Conventions**" demonstrated consistently controlled and usually or consistently effective and varied sentence structure. Specific or precise words and expressions were used accurately or deliberately. The voice or tone created by the student was distinct or convincing. Minor convention errors rarely, seldom, or in no way reduced clarity or interrupted the flow of the response.

### **Narrative / Essay Writing Assignment—Observations from Standards Confirmation and Central Marking 2018: Qualities of Student Writing That Did Not Meet the Acceptable Standard**

In both narrative and essay responses scored "**Poor**" or "**Limited**" in "**Content**," students typically struggled to convey their thoughts clearly and completely. In some responses, students presented naive illustrations of how seeking adventure allows individuals to have fun, do what they choose, or be happy. In some responses, students quoted randomly from the prompts provided without elaborating on them or connecting them to ideas presented. In other responses, students depicted scenarios in which little context was provided regarding a character's personality, circumstances, or behaviour in the synopsis of events in the adventure presented. In such responses, students presented largely unsupported generalizations or randomly recounted elements of experiences that were weakly connected to the importance of seeking adventure in life.

The following excerpts were taken from student responses that received "**Poor**" or "**Limited**" scores:

- "If you wanna do nothing and do the same thing over again like getting a crappy job or just staying home all day and play games or watch t.v. all day than you do that if you wanna or you could go on a adventure. [...] If you don't like you're adventure then go find a nother."
- "John need to see everything before he died so he tried to do everything he could like jumping out of a airplane and climbeing a mountain. [...] That's when he said I'm glad I got it done he said. Now I can die."
- "Kevin gets to go fishing but first he has to eat something. There are no fish today till thay finaly get some usualy only small fish but some times bigger fish then thay come back and see how big thay are then eat them. Thay get prizes for the person with the biggest fish."
- "Don went on a bike ride he did what ever he wanted too and saw everthing and had the best life ever. [...] But one day he did not believe in him self and got hert, he was scard to go out side and he had lost his adventure."
- "It's so importent to go on an adventure because if you don't go on an adventure you won't have adventure in your life. [...] Let's say if you never went on an adventure ever you probably never had any good times, if you had went on an adventure you probably had good times."

In student responses scored "**Poor**" or "**Limited**" in "**Content**," such as those from which these excerpts were taken, the exploration of the topic was tenuous and/or simplistic or minimal and/or tangential, the purpose was vague or insubstantial, and the ideas presented were superficial and/or ambiguous or overgeneralized and/or underdeveloped. Supporting details were imprecise and/or abbreviated or irrelevant and/or scant, and the writing was unsubstantiated and/or incomplete or confusing and/or lacking in validity with little appeal to the reader's interest. In "**Organization**," the introduction lacked purpose and/or was not functional or obscure and/or ineffective and any focus established provided little or no direction and was not sustained or undeveloped. The development of events and/or details was not clearly discernible or haphazard and/or incoherent. Transitions were lacking and/or indiscriminately used or absent and/or inappropriately used within and/or between sentences and/or paragraphs. Closure was abrupt, contrived, and/or unrelated to the focus or ineffectual and/or missing. "**Sentence Structure**," "**Vocabulary**," and "**Conventions**" in responses receiving scores of "**Poor**" or "**Limited**" typically demonstrated a lack of control and little or no variety in sentence structure or sentence beginnings.

Imprecise or ineffective words and expressions were used inexactly or inaccurately. The voice or tone created by the student was not clearly established, indistinct, not evident, or indiscreet. Errors in conventions weakened or impaired communication, blurred or severely reduced clarity, and interrupted or impeded the flow of the response.

As in other years, the connection between the assignment and the ideas contained in some student responses was difficult to determine. Markers were to consult with group leaders when drawing conclusions about whether or not a response sufficiently addressed the task presented in the assignment. Most often, there was evidence that the student had implicitly addressed the topic and/or prompts, and the response was assessed accordingly. If, however, extensive examination of a student's work by both a marker and a group leader led to the conclusion that the response was "**Insufficient**," then the floor supervisors in consultation with the examination manager made a final judgment.

### **Functional Writing Assignment—Observations from Standards Confirmation and Central Marking 2018: General Impressions**

In the **Functional Writing Assignment**, nearly all students were able to connect the context provided in the "**Situation**" to their own experiences. From the viewpoint of "Sam Park" ("a Grade 9 student" and "member of the Outdoor Classroom Planning Committee" who is "very grateful to the volunteers who are giving their time for construction" and wishes to "show [...] appreciation"), the majority of students successfully presented ideas regarding "a plan to provide a breakfast for the volunteers on the first morning of construction" and "asking local businesses for donations of money, food, or supplies for the proposed breakfast." Many students recognized that "The supermarket nearest to the school is Martin Family Foods" and acknowledged that "The owner, Mr. Ken Martin, has made donations to support school functions in the past" when making a request for "a donation for the breakfast" and providing "reasons for supporting this event to celebrate the creation of the outdoor classroom."

Most students directly referenced information provided in the "**Situation**" regarding how "Crocus Plains School in the town of Franklin, Alberta, is celebrating the school's 25th anniversary this year," how "To mark this event, the school community is coming together to create an exciting new outdoor classroom on the school grounds," and how "The outdoor classroom will feature spaces for gardening and gathering as well as art displays." Other students additionally identified that "The costs are being funded by the school's Outdoor Classroom Planning Committee, which applied for grants and fundraised for two years to pay for the project," that "The first phase of construction will begin in the first weekend in June," and that "Approximately 25 people, including parents, teachers, and community members, have signed up to do this work." When assessing student responses, markers recognized that, although many students adhered closely to the information provided in the test booklet, doing so was acceptable given the manner in which the assignment was framed primarily within outcomes specified in **General Outcome 3: Managing Ideas and Information**. The extent to which these guidelines were analyzed and particularized to achieve the student's purpose in the "**Assignment**"—to "Write a business letter to Mr. Ken Martin, owner of Martin Family Foods," to "**request a donation for the breakfast provided by the Outdoor Classroom Planning Committee**" and to "Provide enough information to convince Mr. Martin of the benefits of supporting this event"—distinguished the quality of student responses.

Most students appropriately appealed to Mr. Martin to make a donation of money, food, or other supplies for the breakfast to be held for volunteer workers who will begin to construct an outdoor classroom. Some students commented on the importance of showing appreciation for the volunteers and the value of recognizing their selflessness and generosity. Other students highlighted the merits of the outdoor classroom in enhancing student learning, while others commented on celebrating the fundamental role played by the school in the community for 25 years. In other responses, students elaborated on the commitment of members of the Outdoor Classroom Planning Committee and the efforts they have made to fulfill the committee's goal. In addition, some students suggested that, in return for supporting the event, Martin Family Foods could benefit from heightened publicity and increased sales of goods.

As in other years, markers were to acknowledge that there was no prescribed length for responses to the Functional Writing Assignment. While some students concisely fulfilled the requirements of the task, others elaborated more fully on ideas that they presented. Such brevity or embellishment was neither



beneficial nor detrimental in and of itself, and markers were to take into account the overall effectiveness of each response when assessing its quality. With regard to envelope and letter format, recommendations were provided in the guidelines of Canada Post. Other formats/styles were to be considered equally acceptable and markers were to assess the extent to which a student had been consistent in applying a chosen format to both the envelope and letter rather than “deduct marks” for deviations from the Canada Post guidelines. There were a number of student responses in which there were varying amounts of white space between the heading, inside address, and salutation in the letter and some students single-spaced the body of the letter while others used double-spacing. These issues specifically were not to be viewed as detrimental to the quality of student work and were not to be penalized in the assessment of “**Content Management**.”

### **Functional Writing Assignment—Observations from Standards Confirmation and Central Marking 2018: Qualities of Student Writing That Met the Acceptable Standard**

Students whose responses received a score of “**Satisfactory**” in “**Content**” typically recognized the importance of expressing gratitude for the willingness of the volunteers to put in the time and effort to build the outdoor classroom and acknowledged that hosting a breakfast as an event to kick off construction would build relationships as well as foster goodwill. Most students understood the need to appeal to Mr. Martin, who had previously supported school functions, to request a donation of some of the foods that could be served, as well as money for expenses or supplies such as plastic cutlery and paper plates. Many students highlighted aspects of the planned features of the outdoor classroom, including spaces for groups to gather, garden plots, and displays of student artwork, as well as the interest of students in having access to a new learning environment. Some students elaborated on the duration of the school’s existence and its importance to the community at large. Still others added personal reflections on positive experiences undergone while attending Crocus Plains School and the impact of the school in lives of students.

Qualities of student writing awarded “**Satisfactory**” scores are evident in the following excerpts from student responses:

- “I am a grade nine student at Crocus Plains School, I am also on the school’s Outdoor Classroom Planning Committee. I have decided to contact you to request a donation for a breakfast that the Committee has planned. [...] We believe this breakfast is a hopeful way of starting construction on our outdoor classroom which in turn would benefit the learning of our students.”
- “We have gained enough funds to start construction of the new classroom, but the construction will be handled by many volunteers. Due to these volunteers and their hard work to make this all possible we wanted to give back to them by having a breakfast for them.”
- “Our outdoor classroom is to display art, places for gardening and even for groups to gather. This would mean a stronger sense of community in our school and give us a place for students to unwind and relax. [...] In cooperation with our outstanding teachers on the committee we would like to prepare a breakfast on the first day of construction.”
- “In return for the food you provide we will announce your company as a sponsor of the outdoor classroom and put your businesses name on the plaqu with the other sponsors of the classroom. [...] You will get the name of your store to more people and increase your overall sales.”
- “We are grateful for the support that you have given to us in the past. Your donation again would mean a lot to us and to the volunteers. [...] Thank you for taking the time to read this letter. I hope you will consider this proposal we would greatly appreciate if you could help.”

In responses scored “**Satisfactory**” in “**Content**,” as illustrated in these excerpts, students presented appropriate ideas and adequately developed the topic. Relevant information was presented and supported by enough detail to fulfill the purpose of the assignment. A tone appropriate for the addressee was generally maintained. In responses scored “**Satisfactory**” in “**Content Management**,” words and expressions used were generally accurate and occasionally effective. The writing demonstrated basic control of correct sentence structure, usage, and mechanics and contained errors that may have occasionally impeded meaning. The envelope and letter contained occasional format errors and/or omissions.

## Functional Writing Assignment—Observations from Standards Confirmation and Central Marking 2018: Qualities of Student Writing That Met the Standard of Excellence

In responses awarded scores of “**Proficient**” or “**Excellent**” in “**Content**,” students often broadened the discussion of the merits of creating an outdoor classroom to the wider social and economic implications for the residents of the surrounding community of strengthening the programs offered by the local school. In other responses, students ruminated on the commitment of members of the Outdoor Classroom Planning Committee in devoting a significant amount of their time and effort to such a worthwhile project, and praised the kindness, self-sacrifice, and wisdom of those who have volunteered their support. Some students commented on the diverse learning needs of students and of the significance of an alternative or supplement to conventional classroom learning in promoting the success of all students. Other students effectively contended that Mr. Martin would enjoy reciprocal benefits from making a donation, such as appreciation of his generosity and civic-mindedness, promotion of the goods at his store, and financial prosperity resulting from growth in sales. Still other students reasoned that the symbolic token of appreciation offered by the breakfast would add motivation to the work of the volunteers and forge a bond shared by all participants.

The excerpts below were taken from student responses that received “**Proficient**” or “**Excellent**” scores:

- “As a student from Crocus Plains School and a member of the school’s Outdoor Classroom Planning Committee, I am writing to inform you of the celebratory breakfast to be held at the commencement of construction of an outdoor classroom. [...] It is extremely important, in this technological world of which we are a part, that students be exposed to hands-on learning about the environment that surrounds them. [...] We are very appreciative of the volunteers because, without them, the realization of our years of planning would not be possible.”
- “Excitement has flourished about the proposed outdoor classroom, as it will offer an abundance of new learning options. It will allow students to pursue studies beyond the confines of a stark classroom. [...] I encourage you to play a role in the creation of this innovative learning environment by providing a donation of food or other supplies for the appreciation breakfast to be held in honour of the volunteers who are to begin construction during the first week of June.”
- “The Outdoor Classroom Planning Committee has been applying for grants and has held fundraisers for the past two years in anticipation of the creation of this outdoor classroom. Alongside recognition of Crocus Plains School’s 25th anniversary, the prospect of making this planned classroom a reality is indeed worthy of celebration. [...] Your contribution will provide both personal and financial benefits. You will be comforted knowing you have supported a worthwhile cause and promotion of your business could encourage greater patronage of your store.”
- “Working together can attract more people to your business, as people will be more inclined to purchase goods at Martin Family Foods if they know of your active participation in community events through your support of school functions such as the breakfast. [...] On a broader scale, your donation also contributes to the provision of learning opportunities for students once the outdoor classroom is built. Your contribution will have a positive impact on the lives of the students of Crocus Plains School for years to come.”
- “This event is an occasion that we have been anticipating for two years, and it would mean so much to us if you would be able to contribute to making a breakfast possible in recognition of the time and effort to be spent by the volunteers who will be building the outdoor classroom. [...] We are grateful for the support we have received in the past from community-minded people like yourself. Your generosity will have a lasting effect on the lives of students of Crocus Plains School.”

Student responses scored “**Proficient**” or “**Excellent**” in “**Content**,” such as those from which these excerpts were taken, were characterized by ideas that were thoughtful or perceptive, and development of the topic was generally effective or clear and effective. Significant or pertinent information was presented, and this information was substantiated or enhanced by specific or precise details that fulfilled the purpose of the assignment. A tone appropriate for the addressee was clearly or skillfully maintained. In responses scored “**Proficient**” or “**Excellent**” in “**Content Management**,” words and expressions used were usually or consistently accurate and effective. The writing demonstrated either competent and generally consistent

control or confident and consistent control of correct sentence structure, usage, and mechanics. Any errors present rarely or in no way impeded meaning. The envelope and letter contained few, if any, format errors or omissions.

### **Functional Writing Assignment—Observations from Standards Confirmation and Central Marking 2018: Qualities of Student Writing That Did Not Meet the Acceptable Standard**

Students whose responses demonstrated qualities characteristic of “**Poor**” or “**Limited**” scores in “**Content**” sometimes relied on verbatim reiteration of information presented in the assignment with little of their own thinking or development. Other students misconstrued the role of the writer of the letter to be that of the principal of Crocus Plains School asking for parental support for the construction of an outdoor classroom or that of a parent of a student wishing to become involved in the building of an outdoor classroom. In other responses, students misrepresented information when contending that the building of the outdoor classroom has been completed, that the breakfast was intended to be provided for students of the school or members of the community, or that the outdoor classroom would not be built if the volunteers were not provided with breakfast. In some instances, students mistakenly argued against the need to build an outdoor classroom or inappropriately contended that such a classroom would lack supervision and promote student misbehaviour. In some instances, students used an inappropriately inflammatory tone in a misguided effort to persuade Mr. Martin to fulfill the request for a donation.

Ideas such as these are shown in the following excerpts from student responses that received “**Poor**” or “**Limited**” scores:

- “The classroom is been built wether I like it or not next week so I need to find some way to feed the workers. [...] I’m writing to you cause I’ve run out of options.”
- “We have a bunch of people coming to make our school better and we want to make our school better. So that’s why I’ve called you. [...] If you don’t donate we wont be able to have the class room that we want.”
- “As the principle of Crocus Plaines School I’m responsible for making sure that students learn what their suppose to learn. A outdoor classroom can make sure of this. [...] I promise I will buy my stuff at your store for the next 10 years if you help me out this time.”
- “We were wandering if you would like to donate food to our school so that we would be able to make brakefast for our residents and children at the school. [...] This would give you tons of benefits. You will be helping us to learn since it’s more easier to learn if I have a full stumuck.”
- “We would love it if you could be there ready to work on the first week of june to help out with the makeing of the out door class room. [...] I would like to here back from you in two weeks tops.”

In student responses scored “**Poor**” or “**Limited**” in “**Content**,” such as those from which these excerpts were taken, ideas were superficial, flawed, and/or merely a repetition of the situation presented in the assignment or overgeneralized, misconstrued, and/or a verbatim reiteration of the situation presented in the assignment. Development of the topic was inadequate or ineffective. Information presented was imprecise, undiscerning, and/or simply a restatement of the prompt provided or irrelevant, missing, and/or essentially copied from the prompt provided. Supporting details were insignificant and/or lacking or obscure and/or absent, and the purpose of the assignment was only partially fulfilled or not fulfilled. A tone appropriate for the addressee was either evident but inconsistently maintained or little awareness of a tone appropriate for the addressee was evident. In responses scored “**Poor**” or “**Limited**” in “**Content Management**,” words and expressions used were vague, inexact, and/or frequently taken from the prompt or inaccurate, misused, and/or essentially quoted from the prompt. The writing demonstrated either limited evidence or a lack of evidence of control of correct sentence structure, usage, and mechanics. Errors that were present may have frequently or severely impeded meaning. The envelope and letter contained frequent or numerous and glaring format errors and/or omissions.

As in other years, the connection between the assignment and the ideas contained in some student responses was difficult to determine. Markers were to consult with group leaders when drawing conclusions about whether or not a response sufficiently addressed the task presented in the assignment. Most often, there was evidence that the student had implicitly addressed the topic and/or prompts, and the response was assessed accordingly. If, however, extensive examination of a student’s work by both

a marker and a group leader led to the conclusion that the response was “**Insufficient**,” then the floor supervisors in consultation with the examination manager made a final judgment.

Overall, student responses to both the Narrative / Essay Writing Assignment and the Functional Writing Assignment in *Part A: Writing* of the 2018 Grade 9 English Language Arts Provincial Achievement Test were strong. The vast majority of students (89.8%) achieved the acceptable standard, while 20.3% of all students achieved the standard of excellence. Of all students who wrote the *Part A: Writing* test, only 10.2% did not achieve the acceptable standard.



## Part B: Reading—2018 Test Blueprint and Student Achievement

In 2018, 81.4% of all students who wrote the Grade 9 English Language Arts Provincial Achievement Test achieved the acceptable standard on *Part B: Reading*, and 20.3% of all students who wrote achieved the standard of excellence. On *Part B: Reading* of the 2018 Grade 9 English Language Arts Provincial Achievement Test, students achieved an average score of 36.7 out of a total possible score of 55 (66.7%).

The blueprint below shows the reporting categories and language functions by which 2018 summary data are reported to schools and school authorities, and it shows the provincial average of student achievement by both raw score and percentage.

Reporting Category	Language Function		Provincial Student Achievement (Average Raw Score and Percentage)
	Informational	Narrative / Poetic	
<b>Identifying and Interpreting Ideas and Details</b> (2.1, 2.2, 2.3)* Students construct meaning by interpreting ideas and details pertaining to setting/atmosphere/context, character/narrator/speaker (actions, motives, values), conflict, and events.			<b>11.4/17</b> <b>(67.1%)</b>
<b>Interpreting Text Organization</b> (2.2, 2.3)* Students identify and analyze literary genres. Students identify and analyze the text creator's choice of form, tone, point of view, organizational structure, style, diction, rhetorical techniques (e.g., repetition, parallelism), text features (e.g., alliteration, onomatopoeia, imagery, dialogue, flashback, foreshadowing, suspense), and conventions.			<b>7.0/11</b> <b>(63.6%)</b>
<b>Associating Meaning</b> (2.1, 2.2, 2.3)* Students use contextual clues to determine the denotative and connotative meaning of words, phrases, and figurative language (e.g., simile, metaphor, hyperbole, personification, irony, symbolism).			<b>7.4/11</b> <b>(67.3%)</b>
<b>Synthesizing Ideas</b> (2.2)* Students draw conclusions and make generalizations by integrating information in order to identify the tone, purpose, theme, main idea, or mood of a passage.			<b>10.9/16</b> <b>(68.1%)</b>
<b>Provincial Student Achievement</b> <b>(Average Raw Score and Percentage)</b>	<b>14.5/22</b> <b>(65.9%)</b>	<b>22.2/33</b> <b>(67.3%)</b>	<b>Part B: Reading</b> <b>Total Test</b> <b>Raw Score = 55</b>

\*Numbers in parentheses refer to outcomes in the Program of Studies for Grade 9 English Language Arts to which the reporting categories are cross-referenced.

## Part B: Reading—Commentary on 2018 Student Achievement

The following is a discussion of student achievement on *Part B: Reading* of the 2018 Grade 9 English Language Arts Provincial Achievement Test. Sample questions from the test are provided to highlight the achievement of students who met the acceptable standard, students who met the standard of excellence, and students who did not meet the acceptable standard. For each question, the keyed answer is marked with an asterisk.

In the blueprinting category of **Identifying and Interpreting Ideas and Details**, students were expected to construct meaning by interpreting ideas and details pertaining to setting/atmosphere/context, character/narrator/speaker (actions, motives, values), conflict, and events in ten reading selections. In the three informational texts—an excerpt from a magazine article, a magazine article, and an excerpt from a memoir—students who achieved the acceptable standard were able to recognize interrelationships among ideas and details, identify key elements of information presented, and acknowledge the impact of personal experience on an individual’s life. Students who achieved the standard of excellence additionally illustrated strengths in making inferences regarding the significance of personal reflections on experiences described and in discriminating among details in order to determine those most relevant to an idea under discussion. Students who did not meet the acceptable standard were generally able to identify explicit ideas and details in informational texts, but many encountered difficulty with questions that required recognition of connections among ideas presented or identifying the central focus of details presented. The seven narrative/poetic texts—including two poems, two cartoons, excerpts from two novels, and an excerpt from a short story—enabled many students who met the acceptable standard to demonstrate their ability to determine the motivation underlying a character’s actions, recognize how characters interact with others, and identify what details suggest about an individual’s character. In addition, students who achieved the standard of excellence were capable of acknowledging the complexities of interpersonal relationships among characters and appreciating the indelible impact of pivotal events on characters’ lives. Those students who did not meet the acceptable standard, while generally able to recognize causality between directly related events, sometimes struggled with questions involving interpretation of the implicit meaning of ideas pertaining to interactions among characters. The following question illustrates some of these differences in student achievement on the 2018 Grade 9 English Language Arts Provincial Achievement Test.

In question 49, students were required to identify what details in specified lines of an excerpt from a short story reveal about one character’s judgment of another character’s actions (SO 2.2).

49. Details in lines 17 to 23 **most clearly** suggest that Mrs. Rider believes Leo
- A. had sought out the boys’ assistance
  - B. had provoked the boys in some way
  - \*C. was a willing participant in the boys’ activities
  - D. was a member of the gang to which the boys belonged

Of all students who wrote the test, 52.1% chose the correct answer (option C). These students were able to determine how Mrs. Rider—who “hated to have children playing in her front yard,” walked “stiffly down the front path, leaning on her cane,” “stopped and pointed the cane at Leo,” and accused him of “Letting those hoodlums run all over this yard”—thought that Leo had willingly taken part in the boys’ activities. Of those students who did not select the keyed response, 8.8% chose option A. This alternative presents the idea that Mrs. Rider assumes that Leo had been seeking assistance, but this idea is based on an inference that is not supported by details in the text. Option B was chosen by 32.3% of all students, a choice that presents the idea that Mrs. Rider believes that Leo had antagonized the boys, but there is no evidence in the text of any provocation. Option D, which was chosen by 6.7% of all students, presents the idea that Mrs. Rider possesses knowledge of the existence of a gang of which Leo is a member, but this idea is not supported by details in the text. Of those students who achieved the acceptable standard, 52.5%

selected the correct answer. A total of 71.0% of those students who achieved the standard of excellence chose the correct answer. Of those students who did not meet the acceptable standard on the *Part B: Reading* test, 28.7% chose the correct answer.

In the section of the 2018 Grade 9 English Language Arts Provincial Achievement Test blueprinted for curricular content pertaining to **Interpreting Text Organization**, students who achieved the acceptable standard were able to identify textual features that included the use of punctuation, onomatopoeia, and subheadings to enhance meaning by writers of informational texts. Students who achieved the standard of excellence were, in addition, able to analyze how the presentation of a writer's ideas is enhanced through rhetorical choices that include the use of comparison and contrast as well as sentence fragments and repetition. Students who did not meet the acceptable standard demonstrated weaknesses in identifying how the organizational choices employed by the writers of informational texts provide a structure for the development of ideas. In narrative/poetic texts, students who achieved the acceptable standard could typically identify the effects achieved by writers through the use of imagery to enhance the presentation of ideas. Students achieving the standard of excellence could additionally detect elements central to the conflict faced by characters as well as subtleties of tone in interactions among characters. Many students who did not achieve the acceptable standard encountered difficulty with questions that tasked students with recognizing the impact of the writer's sequencing of events on the development of the central conflict in narrative/poetic texts. Some of these differences in student achievement on the 2018 Grade 9 English Language Arts Provincial Achievement Test are demonstrated in the following question.

Question 48 required that students determine from context the tone of a question posed by a character in a specified line of an excerpt from a short story (SO 2.3).

**48.** Context suggests that the tone of Mrs. Rider's question in line 7 is **best** described as

- \*A. skeptical
- B. anxious
- C. abrupt
- D. rude

The correct answer (option **A**) was selected by 76.8% of all students who wrote the test. These students could determine—from how Mrs. Rider regarded Leo “with a frown,” “paused,” and asked if he remembered “what happened last year” and how Leo “blushed and scratched the back of his knee with his foot” as he recalled when he “had agreed to rake for Mrs. Rider” and “Bulldog Nelson, Tony Rosa, and two other older boys had come along”—that Mrs. Rider is skeptical of Leo's offer. Option **B** (which was selected by 8.6% of all students) suggests that anxiety is evident in Mrs. Rider's tone, option **C** (which was selected by 7.5% of all students) suggests that the tone of Mrs. Rider's question is abrupt, and option **D** (which was selected by 6.9% of all students) suggests that Mrs. Rider is being rude when asking her question, but context reveals that each of these alternatives does not address Mrs. Rider's lack of confidence in Leo. Many of those students who achieved the acceptable standard chose the correct answer, with 79.7% selecting the keyed response. Most of those students who met the standard of excellence (95.6%) chose the correct answer, whereas 41.1% of those students who did not meet the acceptable standard chose the correct answer.

With regard to questions blueprinted in the **Associating Meaning** category, students who achieved the acceptable standard were able to identify the denotative meanings of words and phrases and could recognize the use of figures of speech—such as simile, metaphor, and irony—in informational texts. Students who achieved the standard of excellence were additionally able to appreciate how connotations of words and phrases reinforce meaning and how metaphorical comparisons enrich the reader's understanding of the similarities between familiar and unfamiliar experiences. Students who did not achieve the acceptable standard typically struggled with distinguishing the meaning of specific words and phrases presented and showed a limited understanding of figurative language in informational texts. Students who achieved the acceptable standard could generally recognize the use of metaphor, hyperbole, and personification in straightforward narrative/poetic texts. Students who achieved the standard of

excellence demonstrated additional strengths in abstracting from figures of speech a deeper understanding of ideas presented by writers of narrative/poetic texts. Students who did not achieve the acceptable standard were often challenged by questions that required the use of contextual clues to determine the meaning of words and phrases and sometimes encountered difficulty identifying figurative comparisons in narrative/poetic texts. Such differences in student achievement on the 2018 Grade 9 English Language Arts Provincial Achievement Test are shown in the following question.

Question 50 required that students identify the quotation that most clearly defines a word used in a specified line of an excerpt from a short story (SO 2.1).

- 50.** The word “scrutinized” (line 6) is **most clearly** defined in which of the following quotations?
- A.** “She hated to have children playing in her front yard” (line 18)
  - B.** “She stopped and pointed the cane at Leo” (line 21)
  - \*C.** “Mrs. Rider peered at him closely once more” (line 31)
  - D.** “Then she smiled, and her stern expression thawed” (lines 31–32)

Of all students who wrote the test, 42.3% were able to choose the keyed response (option **C**) by recognizing that when Mrs. Rider “scrutinized Leo with a frown,” the word *scrutinized* is defined by how she had “peered at him closely.” Each of the incorrect alternatives—option **A** (selected by 25.4% of all students) which references how Mrs. Rider “hated to have children playing in her front yard,” option **B** (selected by 25.5% of all students) which references how Mrs. Rider “stopped and pointed her cane at Leo,” and option **D** (selected by 6.7% of all students) which references how Mrs. Rider “smiled, and her stern expression thawed”—present characterizations of Mrs. Rider, but none of these alternatives provides a definition of the word *scrutinized*. A total of 40.7% of students who achieved the acceptable standard answered this question correctly. Of those students who achieved the standard of excellence, 66.3% chose the correct answer. Of those students who did not meet the acceptable standard, 22.3% selected the keyed response.

In the blueprinting category of **Synthesizing Ideas**, students achieving the acceptable standard were typically able to identify main ideas in informational texts and determine the central focus of a writer’s reflections on personal experiences. Students who achieved the standard of excellence were additionally capable of synthesizing ideas in informational texts in order to formulate conclusions pertaining to the basis for a writer’s inclusion of particular content and perceive the overarching ideas of information presented. Many of those students who did not achieve the acceptable standard were able to identify explicit facts presented but frequently found it difficult to answer questions that required synthesis of ideas to arrive at a generalization encapsulating the content of information presented or extrapolation from a writer’s reflections on the significance of specific events. In narrative/poetic texts, students who achieved the acceptable standard generally demonstrated the ability to recognize differing viewpoints among characters and determine central themes from events portrayed. Students achieving the standard of excellence could additionally evaluate the effectiveness of characters’ choices through the writer’s omniscience in exploring their actions and appreciate the main purpose underlying the writer’s presentation of events in narrative/poetic texts. Those students who did not meet the acceptable standard often struggled with questions that required formulating conclusions regarding the intended impact on readers of events depicted and were often challenged by questions regarding the resolution of conflict through the events documented in narrative/poetic texts. The following question illustrates some of these differences in student achievement on the 2018 Grade 9 English Language Arts Provincial Achievement Test.

In question 51, students needed to draw a conclusion regarding what events in an excerpt from a short story illustrate about the motivation underlying a character’s actions (SO 2.2).

51. Events in this excerpt illustrate that Leo is **mainly** motivated by a desire to

- A. earn the respect of others
- \*B. achieve a personal goal
- C. gain independence
- D. be kind to others

The correct answer (option **B**) was selected by 61.1% of all students who wrote the test. These students were able to synthesize events in this excerpt regarding how Leo had gone “without collecting any pay” on a previous occasion in order to conclude that Leo is motivated by his desire to use his earnings along with “this week’s allowance” to achieve his personal goal of having enough money “to buy that chameleon on Saturday.” Option **A** (selected by 23.8% of all students) suggests that Leo is striving to “earn the respect of others,” but his efforts to gain the trust of Mrs. Rider are secondary to his focus on buying a chameleon. Option **C** (selected by 7.1% of all students) suggests that Leo is striving to “gain independence,” but there is no evidence of a desire to be independent beyond his wish to purchase a chameleon. Option **D** (selected by 7.8% of all students) suggests that Leo is seeking to “be kind to others,” but this represents a misinterpretation of the motivation underlying his overtures toward Mrs. Rider. Of those students achieving the acceptable standard, 61.1% chose the correct answer. A total of 91.4% of students who achieved the standard of excellence chose the correct answer. Of those students who did not meet the acceptable standard, 26.1% answered this question correctly.

Overall, student achievement on *Part B: Reading* of the 2018 Grade 9 English Language Arts Provincial Achievement Test was strong. Most students (81.4%) were able to achieve the acceptable standard on the *Part B: Reading* test, and 20.3% of all students achieved the standard of excellence. Of all students who wrote the *Part B: Reading* test, 18.6% did not achieve the acceptable standard.



# Provincial Achievement Test Program Support Documents

The Alberta Education website contains several documents that provide valuable information about various aspects of the Provincial Achievement Test program. To access these documents, go to the [Alberta Education website](#). Click on one of the specific links to access the following documents.

## **Provincial Achievement Testing Program *General Information Bulletin***

The [General Information Bulletin](#) is a compilation of several documents produced by Alberta Education and is intended to provide superintendents, principals, and teachers with easy access to information about all aspects of the Provincial Achievement Test program. Sections in the bulletin contain information pertaining to schedules and significant dates; security and test rules; test administration directives, guidelines, and procedures; calculator and computer policies; test accommodations; test marking and results; field testing; resources and web documents; forms and samples; and Provincial Assessment Sector contacts.

## **Subject Bulletins**

At the beginning of each school year, subject bulletins are posted on the Alberta Education website for all Provincial Achievement Test subjects for grades 6 and 9. Each bulletin provides descriptions of assessment standards, test design and blueprinting, and scoring guides (where applicable) as well as suggestions for preparing students to write the tests and information about how teachers can participate in test development activities.

## **Examples of the Standards for Students' Writing**

For Provincial Achievement Tests in grades 6 and 9 English Language Arts and Français/French Language Arts, writing samples are designed for teachers and students to enhance students' writing and to assess this writing relative to the standards inherent in the scoring guides. The exemplars documents contain sample responses with scoring rationales that relate student work to the scoring categories and scoring criteria.

## **Previous Provincial Achievement Tests and Answer Keys**

All January Provincial Achievement Tests (parts A and B) for Grade 9 semestered students are secured and must be returned to Alberta Education. All May/June Provincial Achievement Tests are secured except Part A of grades 6 and 9 English Language Arts and Français/French Language Arts. Unused or extra copies of only these Part A tests may be kept at the school after administration. Teachers may also use the released items and/or tests that are posted on the Alberta Education website.

## **Parent Guides**

Each school year, versions of the [Alberta Provincial Achievement Testing Parent Guide](#) for grades 6 and 9 are posted on the Alberta Education website. Each guide answers frequently asked questions about the Provincial Achievement Test program and provides descriptions of and sample questions for each Provincial Achievement Test subject.

## **Involvement of Teachers**

Teachers of grades 6 and 9 are encouraged to take part in activities related to the Provincial Achievement Test program. These activities include item development, test validation, field testing, and marking. In addition, arrangements can be made through the Alberta Regional Professional Development Consortia for teacher in-service workshops on topics such as interpreting Provincial Achievement Test results to improve student learning.