



NEW YORK STATE MIGRANT EDUCATION PROGRAM

TITLE: ELA Regents Prep in Four Sessions

DESCRIPTION: These materials are intended to help you prepare a student to take the NYS Common Core English Language Arts Regents Exam. This Facilitator Guide has specific information and answers to support the Educator who is using the Regents Prep that is compacted into four sessions.

FOUR SESSIONS: The organization of this version is based on the assumption that you have four approximately one-hour sessions to work with the student. What I have chosen to prioritize in these four sessions may not align perfectly with the individual needs of the student you are working with; if this is the case, I encourage you to adapt the activities and materials to your situation. I also encourage you to substitute any developmentally appropriate texts that you think will capture your students' interest.

TWELVE LESSONS: A more in-depth twelve-lesson version is available, with its own Educator Guide for each lesson. The extended lessons allows the student more time to practice the skills they need to excel.

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REGENTS PREP SERIES: The NYS-MEP continues to build a series of Regents Prep materials, available in the Resource Library on the www.nysmigrant.org website.

FACILITATOR GUIDE

GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT THE ELA REGENTS EXAM

The exam itself has three sections, which are **not** weighted evenly. The majority of points (85%) are earned in the first two sections of the exam.

Part 1, **Reading Comprehension**, is designed to test how well students understand what they read. Students will be asked to read three unconnected passages and answer a total of twenty-four multiple-choice questions about them. One passage will be prose fiction*, one will be

poetry, and the third will be nonfiction prose. Usually, about 40% of the questions deal with the first and the final passage, with only 20% asking about the poem.

*One exam had a selection from a memoir (i.e. nonfiction) for the first passage, but this has not been repeated.

Part 2, **Argument**, asks students to write an essay defending a claim. Students must use specific evidence from at least three of the four texts provided. They will be given a topic question and four relevant passages. The complete list of past Part II topic questions has been compiled and included in these materials.

The final section of the exam, Part 3, is the **Text-Analysis Response** portion. Students will be provided with a passage, which may be fiction or nonfiction, and asked to write two to three paragraphs analyzing how the author uses a specific technique to develop the central idea of the text. The genre of the passage has varied over the years since the current test was introduced in 2014. Originally, nonfiction was most common, with one speech and several memoir/diary selections. Since 2017, however, fiction has held sway, with the passage most frequently being taken from a short story or novel.

SECTION	Part 1: Reading Comprehension	Part 2: Argument	Part 3: Text Analysis
SUGGESTED TIME	60 min.	90 min.	30 min.
TEXTS TO READ	3 texts; ~2,600 words total; literary text, poem, and informational text	4 texts; ~2,600 words total; 4 informational texts	1 text; ~1,000 words; either a literature text or an informational text
TASK	Respond to 24 multiple-choice questions.	Write a source-based argument using the texts as their sources. Students must specifically cite at least three of the texts.	Write a 2-3 paragraph expository essay identifying the text’s central idea and explaining the author’s use of one writing strategy in developing this central idea.
Raw vs Weighted Pts	24 24	6 24	4 8

SESSION 1: LITERARY ELEMENTS & TECHNIQUES

(approx. one hour)

Getting Started

- You need:
 - Session 1 Student Handout
- Support for English Learners (See “*Summary of Supplies and Resources*”):
 - NYSED Guides of Literary Terms & Devices for Language Arts [in language(s) appropriate for your students]

The goal of this session is to reinforce students’ understanding of the literary terms that will be most vital to their success on the exam. This topic is tackled first, before much time is devoted to the specifics of the exam, because it is foundational knowledge for the test as a whole, especially Part I & Part III. The concepts I have chosen to focus on are those that I have deemed most essential. I encourage you, however, to differentiate this session based on the needs of the students you are working with. If you believe they have a good grasp on the terms below, feel free to spend the time reviewing higher level concepts. For example, if their understanding of the general concept of *figurative language* appears sound, you could spend the time reviewing some of the various types of figurative language, such as *metaphor*, *simile*, *personification*, *hyperbole*, *irony*, etc. I encourage you to explore the resources at literaryterms.net if you want clarification on the meaning of any of these terms.

A. Figurative Language vs. Literal Language (approx. 10 min)

A large number of the terms and concepts that figure prominently in discussions of texts fall under the umbrella of *figurative language*. Students have likely studied various forms of figurative language, such as *metaphor* and *simile*. More important than distinguishing between the various categories, however, is a firm grasp of the basic difference between figurative and literal meanings.

The literal meaning of something is its surface meaning, what the dictionary definitions (denotation) of the words communicate. Figurative language is when a speaker or writer intends to communicate something beyond this literal meaning. **Emphasize that your students use and understand figurative language every day.** Every language on Earth employs this technique. As you go through the following examples, you may have to adjust the instruction based on the native language of your students, as well as their background knowledge. If your students are not familiar with any examples you are able to produce, solicit suggestions from them: what are common *figures of speech* in their language?

1. Discuss the *Family Circle* comic with your students. Do they get the joke? Ask them to explain it to you. They may or may not be familiar with the idiom “It’s raining cats and dogs.” Regardless, the meaning should not be difficult to explain.
2. As you go through the chart in **Exercise 1a**, talk about the difference between the literal and figurative meanings in the two given examples (a metaphorical idiom and hyperbole, respectively).
3. Work with your students to fill in the empty boxes on the chart with examples of figurative language. Do your best to include a variety of types, so that students can develop as global as possible an understanding of the concept. Use your judgement as to whether you think it would be helpful to discuss what distinguishes the different subcategories: this might be valuable for some students, but it may also be overwhelming for students who are struggling. I have included below some examples of metaphors, similes, personification & hyperbole. Feel free to use different examples, including ones generated by students.

Exercise 1.a Suggested Examples

Phrase	Literal Meaning	Figurative Meaning
“Life is a highway.” (metaphor)	Life is a paved roadway designed for automobiles.	Life is similar to a journey on a road.
“Life is like a box of chocolates; you never know what you’re gonna get.” (simile)	Life is a container full of candy.	Life is similar to a box of chocolates because, in the same way that you don’t know the filling of a chocolate, you don’t know what your choices and circumstances will lead to in life.
“The sea was angry that day, my friends.” (personification)	The large body of saltwater was emotionally upset for some reason.	The ocean was rough and choppy.
“It took me a million years to do that homework last night!” (hyperbole)	I worked on the homework assignment for 1,000,000 years.	It took a pretty long time to do the homework.

B. Symbolism (*approx. 10 min*)

Symbolism is when something is used to represent something else; frequently, a concrete, tangible object stands in for an abstract idea. Authors can always use symbolism in original and unique ways, but cultures tend to have commonly agreed upon symbols that are recognizable in a variety of contexts. Once again, be sure to be conscious of your students' background knowledge, especially as it relates to their native language and culture. I have done my best to pick symbols that I believe to be widely understood, but your students may not recognize them. Adjust accordingly.

Discuss the image of the arrow-pierced heart. Ask your students what the picture shows. Talk with them about the distinction between what it *literally* shows (symbolism is a form of figurative language) versus what it represents. Why does our culture use the rather gruesome image of a vital organ pierced by a medieval weapon to represent romantic attachment? Discuss the reasons that might exist behind this symbolism. Then, in **Exercise 1.b**, work with your students to unpack the meaning behind the other provided examples of symbols.

Exercise 1.b Answers

Figure 1 → the crowned woman holding a torch is a symbol for liberty

Figure 2 → Uncle Sam is a symbol for the United States of America

C. Imagery (*approx. 10 min*)

Imagery is, on its face, a relatively straightforward concept, and it is a valuable term to know for the exam because nearly every piece of descriptive writing contains multiple examples. Precisely because it is so omnipresent, however, it may take some work to help students recognize examples of it “in the wild”.

Have students list the five senses, writing them down on a blank piece of paper. When they read the passage in **Exercise 1.c**, they can write each example next to the sense it appeals to. There should be one example for each sense. The passage may have some words or concepts that students are unfamiliar with; it's important that they not let this derail them, since identifying the imagery is still possible even if they're not familiar with the Empire State Building or if they don't know what “emanating” means. They **will** encounter unfamiliar words and references on the exam, and it is important for them to learn not to be intimidated by that.

Exercise 1.c Answers

Looking out over the city from the top of the Empire State Building, Jen saw the glittering sunlight reflecting off the windows of skyscrapers, the tiny, darting cars and pedestrians, and the deep blue of the harbor as a backdrop to it all. SIGHT

She thought she could almost smell the salt from the ocean, though that might be the popcorn held by the small child next to her. SMELL

The wind whistled in her ears, and she could hear the distant honking of car horns emanating from the midtown traffic jams. HEARING

The frigid wind stung her cheeks as she gripped the cold, smooth metal of the soda can in her hand. TOUCH

Raising the can to take a sip, she savored the sweet citrus flavor of the beverage. TASTE

D. Characterization (*approx. 10 min*)

Characterization is another seemingly simple technique that is extremely useful for students to understand. When analyzing the meaning of any piece of fiction, characterization is one of the most versatile and useful tools a student can employ. Anything the reader is told about a character or their actions is characterization. There is a distinction made between *indirect* and *direct characterization*; it is not vital for the exam that students are able to distinguish between the two, but it might be helpful to discuss the difference so that students are more likely to recognize all the examples in a passage.

For **Exercise 1.d**, students should hopefully be able to identify that the central idea or message of the story is something along the lines of **“Don’t brag about your lightning pace, for slow and steady wins the race.”** Once they identify this, ask them to rephrase it. You should talk about how, in a fable, the central idea is usually directly stated, and that the texts on the exam are unlikely to be so forthright. If you are working with a higher-level student, selecting a text with a less explicitly spelled-out message may be more worthwhile.

E. Central Idea (*approx. 10 min*)

In Part 3, students will need to use a term like those reviewed above to unpack how an author develops the central idea of their writing. Central Idea is the language commonly used to describe both the theme of a piece of fiction and the main idea of nonfiction. Its

meaning is, mercifully, relatively self-explanatory compared to *theme*, but students still need to practice in order to both (a.) identify the central idea and (b.) analyze how the author conveys that idea. Students tend to underestimate their ability to do this, especially the first part. The example texts provided are meant to be approachable and familiar. If you think your students would benefit from alternative texts, feel free to seek them out. Nearly any short story would work for the first example, and any set of lyrics for the second.

In **Exercise 1.e**, students are asked to unpack the meaning of a song excerpt. Depending on the students' gender, musical tastes, and cultural backgrounds, alternative selections might be preferable. If you use the provided Taylor Swift song, the student should identify a central idea somewhat similar to the one identified below; remember, however, that there is usually more than one way to frame a central idea.

Example Central Idea: The memories shared by the narrator and her boyfriend are just as meaningful a representation of their relationship as having a song would be.

Students should be able to support their interpretation of the song's central idea using terms such as those reviewed above. For example, the boyfriend's description of "our song" is an example of figurative language, since he is not actually talking about a song. Additionally, Swift uses imagery (*a slamming screen door* and *tapping on your window*). She uses symbolism, when she talks about her boyfriend having one hand *on my heart*; rather than a mere description of anatomy, the author clearly means to represent the narrator and her boyfriend's romantic attachment. Nearly anything we learn about the narrator and her boyfriend constitutes characterization. Work with your students to talk about as many of these examples as you can, and discuss how these techniques help communicate Swift's central idea.

SESSION 2: EXAM OVERVIEW & STRATEGIES FOR PART 1 (READING COMPREHENSION)

(approx. one hour)

Getting Started:

- You Need
 1. Session 2 Student Handout
 2. Annotated January 2019 exam (Activity C-Reference)
 - plan to use again during Session 3
 3. Blank June 2018 (Activity C-Students Practice)
 4. June 2018 Part 1 Answer Key

- Optional
 - YouTube link about unfamiliar vocabulary (Activity B)
https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=5&v=0auqQ82551Y

In addition to some basic overview of the exam structure, the second session focuses on some concrete strategies that can help students succeed on Part 1, the Reading Comprehension section. If time is available for more than four sessions, scaffolding these skills with more approachable texts may be desirable, but for students who will be tackling a state assessment in the near future, the more exposure they have to Regents-level texts, the less intimidated they will hopefully be by what they are confronted with on the exam. It is important for students to understand that even if they are presented with a passage that they find unfamiliar and challenging, there are skills and procedures they can use to increase the likelihood of doing well on the multiple-choice questions.

I encourage you to communicate with students' ELA instructors to see if they have taught similar or alternative strategies for the multiple-choice section. If they have, you may want to alter the session to better align with their particular approach, though it is likely that they will make similar recommendations.

A. Overview of exam (*approx. 5 min*)

Discuss with students the various parts of the exam. They have presumably gone over the structure in their ELA classes, but it may require reinforcement. As much as possible, emphasize the many predictable elements of the exam. While the specific selected texts may be unknown, there are many things that stay the same from exam to exam, and students may feel less intimidated and more in control if they know what to expect. For instance, Part 1 will reliably contain pieces of prose fiction, poetry, and nonfiction. Refer to the chart at the beginning of this Facilitator Guide for a complete description of each portion of the exam.

B. Tips for Confronting Unfamiliar Vocabulary (*approx. 10 min*)

Have students watch the provided YouTube video (runtime = 8:43) that goes over strategies students can use when they come across unfamiliar words in texts. Briefly discuss the video afterwards to gauge their understanding. In the extended sessions, more time will be devoted to these strategies.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=5&v=0auqQ82551Y

C. Part 1 Strategy (*approx. 40 min*)

1. Go over the general reminders for Part 1. Make sure students understand each of them via discussion.
2. Provide each student with a blank copy of the Part I from the June 2018 exam.
3. Guide students through each step of the recommended procedure, using my provided January 2019 exam as an example. Make sure that students do not skip any steps. Even if the system seems tedious, it encourages students to approach the questions and texts in a systematic way that boosts their chances of selecting the correct answer.
4. It is likely that students will not have time to complete all three passages, since they only have about 45 minutes, and they will be reading instructions & looking at examples during the process. On the exam itself, however, they should only spend about an hour on Part 1, so hopefully they are able to put a substantial dent in the three texts during your session.

D. Select Part 2 Topic for Next Session (*approx. 5 min*)

The next session will focus on Part 2. While students will have no control over the topic provided to them on the actual exam, you can hopefully engage their interest to some extent by allowing them to choose the topic they are most intrigued by on the list compiled from past exams. Give students some time to read through the options and make a selection. Then, in between sessions, you can print a copy of the Part 2 containing their chosen topic.

SESSION 3: STRATEGIES FOR PART 2 (ARGUMENT)

(*approx. one hour*)

Getting Started

- You need:
 1. Session 3 Student Handout
 2. Annotated January 2019 exam (Reference)
 3. Blank exam corresponding to the topics students selected at the end of Session 2 (Student Practice)
 - June 2018: *Is graffiti vandalism?*
 - August 2017: *Should self-driving cars replace human drivers?*
 - January 2016: *Should food be genetically modified?*

- June 2015: *Should college athletes be paid?*
 - January 2015: *Should extinct species be brought back into existence?*
4. Evidence T-Chart Example (Activity B)
 5. Blank paper for students to make own T-Chart (Activity B)

As with Session 2, I have chosen to use texts and topics from past Regents exams for students to practice with. With a more leisurely preparation schedule, it might be preferable to scaffold with shorter, more approachable, and higher interest texts, but in the context of an eleventh-hour preparation, students will hopefully benefit from being exposed to texts similar to what they will see on the exam. As with the strategies covered in the previous session, the intention is to equip students with a reliable and flexible toolset that will allow them to confront texts that may challenge their reading abilities and background knowledge.

A. Overview of Part 2 & Important Reminders (5 min)

Review the task and reminders for this section of the exam. Review the rubric with students, emphasizing how many of the points are based on their inclusion of all required components, such as specific evidence from at least three of the four texts.

B. Part 2 Reading Strategies (30 min)

Using my annotations on the January 2019 exam, have students work their way through the four texts on their chosen exam. Have them draw and fill in the T chart, which is designed to help them select and organize quotes to use as evidence in their writing.

C. Introduction of an Argumentative Essay (25 min)

The time remaining is not sufficient for students to outline and write an entire essay; however, if a student can successfully construct an introduction articulating a strong claim and identifying the textual support that will bolster that claim, they have the roadmap for their essay.

Additionally, students are often intimidated by the blank page and have trouble getting started on their response. Working on the craft of the introduction can help them get momentum started when it comes time to tackle the Part 2 essay.

Remember that this section of the exam is scored largely based on whether it contains all requisite elements. You can refer to the provided rubric, where you will see, for instance, the importance of having at least three pieces of evidence from three different texts. Students will often fail to include enough evidence, or they may include three pieces but not draw from three separate sources. This automatically lowers their score on the section.

SESSION 4: STRATEGIES FOR PART 3 (TEXT ANALYSIS RESPONSE)

(approx. one hour)

Getting Started

- You need:
 - Session 4 Student Handout
- Support for English Learners (See “*Summary of Supplies and Resources*”):
 - NYSED Guides of Literary Terms & Devices for Language Arts [in language(s) appropriate for your students]

For the final session, which deals with Part 3 of the exam, I have diverged from my approach in the previous two sessions. With the first two sections of the exam, I prioritized the use of actual passages from past exams, with the rationale that students should become accustomed to employing their strategies despite being confronted with challenging and unfamiliar texts. Both sections, in my opinion, lend themselves a bit more to formula and procedure compared to the final section. While there are undeniably strategies and templates that can be enormously helpful for Part 3, I think that when dealing with a limited timeline, it is perhaps more beneficial to help students become more confident in their ability to understand a text’s central idea and articulate how **specific literary techniques** are used to convey this idea.

With this in mind, I have selected a relatively approachable short story with, hopefully, a not-too-obscure central idea. Feel free to substitute an alternative passage. Work with students as they try to articulate the central idea of the piece and identify specific examples of literary techniques. Help them make the connection between these techniques and how the author tells us what the central idea is.

SUMMARY OF SUPPLIES AND RESOURCES

Session 1

1. Session 1 Student Handout
2. Support for ENL Students: *NYSED Guides of Literary Terms & Devices for Language Arts*: Found by scrolling to the bottom of the Bilingual Glossaries, this Guide provides a definition and example for each term, in a bilingual format, with the terms in English and the target Language. Currently available in 22 languages, including Arabic, Haitian, Karen, Nepali, Somali, and Spanish.
<https://steinhardt.nyu.edu/metrocenter/resources/glossaries>

Session 2

1. Session 2 Student Handout

2. Annotated January 2019 exam (Activity C – Reference)
3. Blank June 2018 Part 1 (Activity C – Students Practice)
4. June 2018 Part 1 Answer Key
5. YouTube link about unfamiliar vocabulary (Activity B)
https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=5&v=0augQ82551Y

Session 3

1. Session 3 Student Handout
2. Annotated January 2019 exam (Reference)
3. Blank exam corresponding to the topics students selected at the end of Session 2 (Student Practice)
 - June 2018: *Is graffiti vandalism?*
 - August 2017: *Should self-driving cars replace human drivers?*
 - January 2016: *Should food be genetically modified?*
 - June 2015: *Should college athletes be paid?*
 - January 2015: *Should extinct species be brought back into existence?*
4. Evidence T-Chart Example (Activity B)
5. Blank paper for students to make own T-Chart (Activity B)

Session 4

1. Session 4 Student Handout
2. Support for ENL students: NYSED Guides of Literary Terms & Devices for Language Arts (in language(s) appropriate for your students (from Session 1)).

ADDITIONAL WEBSITE RESOURCES

Past Regents Exams nysedregents.org/hsela

learningwithmslee (home page)

youtube.com/channel/UCEQxrd3QSF3TLXFblxqTGFg

A series of videos dealing with each section of the ELA Regents & offering a number of helpful tips & strategies for success. The upload section scrolls left and right. Look for the sideways arrow to see more.

The videos are mostly in English, but each has useful visuals. One video, “ELA CC Regents – Part 2 Directions Explanation,” has a Spanish interpretation in addition to the English.

Literary Elements & Devices literarydevices.net

You can search for any literary term you might run across, to find a definition and description about using it. It can be difficult to work around the multiple advertisements on the website.