

Session 2: Exam Overview & Part 1

(approximately one hour)

A. Overview of Exam (5 min.)

As I'm sure your teacher has told you, the NYS Common Core ELA Regents exam has three sections. Let's break down what you can expect.

Section I, **Reading Comprehension**, is designed to test how well you understand what you read. You 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.

The goal of Section II, **Argument**, is to see how well you are able to defend a claim using specific evidence from texts that you've read. You will be given a topic question and four relevant passages.

The final section of the exam, Section 3, is the **Text-Analysis Response** portion. You will be provided with a passage, which may be fiction or nonfiction, and asked to write two to three paragraphs breaking down how the author uses a specific technique to develop the central idea of the text.

These three sections are **not** weighted evenly, and you should **not** spend an equal amount of time on each. The majority of points (85%) are earned in the first two sections of the exam. Does this mean you should blow off Part 3? Of course not, but it does mean that you should budget more time to the more valuable Part 1 & Part 2.

| 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 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 |

B. Tips for confronting unfamiliar vocab (10 min.)

Chances are, you're going to run into at least a few vocabulary words on the ELA Regents that you're not familiar with. Don't panic! There are a lot of different strategies you can use to help figure out the meaning of these unfamiliar words.

Watch this helpful [video](#) for some tips!

C. Part 1 Strategy (40 min.)

Important Reminders for Part 1

- You should budget approximately an hour for answering this section when taking the Regents Exam.
- Don't leave any questions blank! You don't lose any points for wrong answers, so it's always worth putting your best guess down.
- There is not any connection in the topics of the three passages.

Usually, you will have only a handful of questions about the poetry selection, so if poetry is a genre that intimidates you, don't stress!

Part 1 Suggested Procedure

1. Annotate the questions.
 - a. Underline the line, stanza, or paragraph number specified in each question.
 - b. Circle any key words or phrases.
2. Annotate the text.
 - a. Draw a box around the sections referred to by each question.

- b. Next to each box, note the question number and write any key words you circled.
 - c. Circle any words defined in the footnotes; write a short definition in the margins.
 3. Skim through the text, including the introductory blurb.
 4. Answer the questions
 - a. Read through the text, stopping as you reach each boxed-in section and referring back to the question.
 - b. Eliminate at least two of the four options.
 - c. Choose the remaining option you think *best* answers the question.
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Let's take a look at some actual exams. You have an annotated copy of the January 2019 version as an example, and a blank copy of June 2018 to fill out yourself.

1. Annotate the Questions

What is the first thing you should do when you open your test booklet to Reading Comprehension Passage A? You might think that you should start by reading the passage. After all, it's the first thing you see.

Nope! It might seem counter-intuitive, but most teachers would agree that the best strategy is to flip immediately to the first *batch* of questions (i.e. those dealing with Passage A). Using the January 2019 exam as a model, let's take a look at the first question.

1. The figurative language in lines 1 and 2 creates a sense of
 - (1) discomfort
 - (2) fearfulness
 - (3) curiosity
 - (4) tranquility

You'll notice that the question refers to a specific location in the text, "lines 1 and 2". In fact, nearly every multiple choice will give you a similar *roadmap*. Don't ignore this – it tells you *exactly* where to find the answer! **Underline any line, paragraph, or stanza* numbers referred to in the question.**

*Remember, a stanza is like a *paragraph* of poetry

On the June 2018 Part 1, go ahead and underline this information in the Passage A questions now. Refer to the January 2019 example if needed.

You will also want to circle any *key words* you see in the question. What does the question seem to focus on? In the first question from January 2019, the words “figurative language” should leap out to you.

On the June 2018 Part 1, circle any key words you see in the Passage A questions.

2. Annotate the Text

Now, look back to the text. Using your underlined *roadmaps*, draw a box around the location of each answer. In the right margin, identify which question refers to this section, and using your circled key words to help, jot a few words down to give a sense of what the question is looking for.

On the June 2018 Part 1, box and annotate the location of each answer in Passage A.

Several words in the passage will be defined in the footnote glossary (that’s the collection of definitions at the bottom of the page). Locate and circle each of these words. Draw a line to the margin and write down a few words to remind yourself what the word means as you’re reading the text. The left margin is preferable, since your previous annotations are to the right, but use whatever area makes the most sense given the location of the word.

On the June 2018 Part 1, circle and define each word from the footnote glossary.

3. Skim Through the Text

Now, finally, take a few minutes to read through the text, including the introduction if there is one. Don’t spend a ton of time on this reading; skim if you have to. You’ll be looking at the text in more detail momentarily.

On the June 2018 Part 1, spend three to five minutes skimming through the text.

4. Answer the Questions

Once you finish your quick read-through, re-read the first question and go back to the area you boxed in. As you consider these lines, try to eliminate at least two of the multiple-choice options. Look for answers that don’t seem to match the *vibe* of the boxed lines or that appear to be unconnected to what’s going on in that section of the text. If you eliminate two incorrect answers, that means you have at least a 50-50 chance of picking the correct answer!

Once you cross out two answers that seem incorrect to you, choose the remaining option that you think **best** answers the question.

On the June 2018 Part 1, eliminate two options from the first question. Then, choose the remaining option that you think best answers the question. Repeat with the remaining Passage A questions.

Once you complete the Passage A questions, continue on to Passage B & C, making sure you're repeating these same procedures.

D. Select Part 2 topic for next session (5 min.)

During the next two sessions, we'll be taking a look at Part 2 of the exam, where you'll be asked to write an argumentative essay defending your position on a topic. This topic will **always** be a question beginning with "Should...?", so your answer or **position** will always contain the words "should" or "should not".

Next time, you'll be practicing strategies for outlining this type of argumentative essay. While you won't get a choice of topic on the actual exam, for our practice session you can pick any of the previous topics that sound interesting to you! Take a look at the list of topics below, and circle the one you'd like to focus on.

Past Exams' Part 2 Topics

- 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?*