

# Lesson 5: Exam Overview & Part 1 Practice

*(approximately one hour)*

## A. Overview of Exam (5 min.)

**Educator Note:** 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. This overview emphasizes 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 a piece each of prose fiction, poetry, and nonfiction. Refer to the chart at the beginning of the facilitator guide for a complete description of each portion of the exam.

The NYS Common Core ELA Regents exam has three sections. Let’s break down what you can expect.

**Part 1, 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 **Part 2, 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 is **Part 3, Text-Analysis Response**. This will have a passage, which may be fiction or nonfiction. You will be asked to write two to three paragraphs that break down how the author uses a specific writing technique to develop the central idea of the text.

These three sections are **not** weighted evenly, so 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
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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 <b>multiple-choice</b> <b>questions.</b>	Write a <b>source-based</b> <b>argument</b> using the texts as their sources. Students <b>must</b> specifically cite at least three of the texts.	Write a <b>2-3 paragraph</b> <b>expository essay</b> identifying the text’s central and explaining the author’s use of one writing strategy in developing this central idea.
RAW VS WEIGHTED POINTS	24   24	6   24	4   8

## B. Part 1 Strategy (40 min.)

### Important Reminders for Part 1

**Educator Note:** Make sure students understand each of them via discussion.

- You should budget approximately an hour for this section.
- 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

**Educator Note:** Guide students through each step of the recommended procedure. The provided January 2019 exam is already annotated as an example.

Some teachers/districts have their own recommended process for marking, annotating multiple-choice questions and text. Use that when possible. Otherwise, you can use this system.

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.

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.

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 2019 to fill out yourself.

### 1. Annotate the Questions

#### Looking at the January 2019 example

**Educator Note:** January 2019 ELA Regents Exam is the Annotated copy, that is pre-marked to model strategies the students can use to mark and highlight their own reading passages and 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 look at the first question.

1. The figurative language in lines 1 and 2 creates a sense of
  - a. discomfort
  - b. fearfulness
  - c. curiosity
  - d. 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

### **Practice using June 2019, Part 1**

Find the first batch of questions for Passage A. Go ahead and underline any line, paragraph or stanza numbers.

You will also want to circle any key words you see in the question. What does the question seem to focus on?

(Refer to how the January 2019 example is marked, if needed.)

## **2. Annotate the Text**

### **Practice using June 2019 Part 1**

***Box and annotate the location of each answer in Passage A.***

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.

***Circle and define each word from the footnote glossary.***

Some words are defined in the footnote glossary. The footnote glossary is the collection of definitions at the bottom of the page. These are definitions to help you understand the reading passage. 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.

**3. Skim Through the Text**

Now, finally, take three to five minutes to skim through the text for Passage A. Include the introduction, if there is one. Don't spend a ton of time on this reading. You'll be looking at the text in more detail shortly.

**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 for #1. 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 ideas 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!

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

***In short***, 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.**

**Educator Note:** Students will want to know how they did. The answer key is provided with the rest of the handouts. Decide ahead of time how you want to manage the answer key. For example, you may decide to review the correct answers at the end of each passage.

**Once you complete the Passage A questions, continue on to Passage B if there is time.**

**Educator Note:** This lesson is designed to take students through Passage A slowly. They will not have time to complete all three passages, in one session, so plan to save Passage C to review the process during Lesson 6.

***Remember to collect students' responses to June 2019, Part 1.*** Students can use their work on Passages A and B to remember the steps, and then apply to Passage C.

During the actual exam, students should plan to spend about an hour on Part 1.

**For additional practice,** you can download the past ELA Regents Exams from the NYSED website at <https://www.nysedregents.org/hsela/>

If the reading level is too difficult for students, you can utilize articles and multiple-choice questions from the newsela website practice answering annotating. <https://newsela.com/>