

Q & A from the Elementary 6 ELA Exam Sessions

- May 2022 & April 2023 -

1. Must students work in small groups during the exam?

Yes. This is a design element of the exam. After the initiation task, and a first reading of the illustrated text, students will discuss their ideas in teams.

2. Can two students write together?

No. Students must work on their writing independently.

3. Where can we find examples of well-written responses to literature?

You will need to communicate with your school/school board contact for this specific information.

4. If there is a word in big bold letters, what would a student say about that?

The student could comment on the fact that this word was put in bold and that they noticed that. And why was that important? Why do they think the author chose to put that word in bold? What is the author trying to do with that? Are they trying to emphasize a feeling? Are they trying to get the attention?

5. What is “voice”? How do you let your voice show through when writing a reader response or a narrative - what does that mean?

If you're writing a narrative, it's using language appropriate to the characters. So that the characters sound the way they should. For example, a little kid would not speak the same way as a grown-up and not perceive things the same way as an adult would. The character would not comment or describe things the same way as a grown-up so being aware that character's voice should match who the character is. When you're writing your response, picking up on voice in a text is how characters talk, how they react. Is it appropriate for the student who is picturing that character?

6. For response, should you analyse the writing style of the author, as compared to other authors you've read (ex: humorous, fantastical, good or poor vocabulary? Or should you analyse the style of the story (dramatic, suspenseful, adventure, poetic, dreamy, etc.)?

Both. You can write a paragraph about each of those things. The idea is to make as many connections as possible and to think critically about as many aspects of the story as you can.

7. Do you absolutely have to indent paragraphs, and leave margins when writing? If you don't, will you lose marks?

Well, there are different styles of paragraphing. For example, I teach my students to skip

lines and then skip 2 lines between paragraphs rather than indenting. What's important is that their ideas are not randomly written on the page. The style isn't as important as being able to take ideas and group them together where they belong.

8. What is the minimum number of connections?

I wouldn't say there's a minimum, I would say, go nuts, go for the max. Keep writing and make as many connections as you can. You will have the opportunity to make notes and use your highlighter, your pencil, and you can write on the storybook and write in the student booklet. Students have a chance to talk to other students and then after the discussion they'll be able to write down the ideas that were shared and what they liked, or didn't like, and what they could use. I would keep writing until they say, stop, and just try to get as much in there as you can.

9. If you just write an outline in points or a few lines for the story, will you lose marks for not writing a draft and must the draft be noticeably different from the final story?

You don't lose marks for not writing a draft. The evaluator should see some evidence of a plan and that you thought about it before you started writing. But whether that looks like a timeline or some bullet points, or a storyboard, or a plot map... that's up to the student. When we talk about revision, it means, if you notice something in your plan that didn't make sense, you actually fixed it before you wrote it down. The plan is supposed to be flexible, so that if something doesn't work the student can change it.

10. How long of a response for grade 6?

For the response, I would say a bare minimum of about 3 paragraphs. Students will need to make connections with the text, connections between their own life, their own personality, and the experiences of the characters, connections between other media that they've read before, other books that they've read before, as well as connections that they can make between either a different type of medium like a movie, or a real-world type connection like something that's actually going on in the world. Usually, three paragraphs are sufficient but it's fine if they make more connections. Although, there is actually no minimum number of words or maximum number of words, for grade 6 students, a page to 2 pages, 3 paragraphs to 5 paragraphs is about what they're expecting.

11. How long for the narrative piece?

When we're writing a narrative we're expecting a clear beginning, middle, and end. We're expecting a plot that has rising action. You will start with your initial event that starts off the story. The rising action leads to some kind of climax, some kind of "Oh, my gosh!" moment that changes everything, and then some kind of falling action that ties up all the loose ends and resolves all of the conflicts that were in the story. Even if that's a personal narrative we're still looking for that kind of progression through the story, so for grade 6, I would say a page and a half, up to 4 pages. It really depends

on how well the students can map out their thinking beforehand and how organized they are in planning their story with their planning tool and applying it to their writing.

12. Will participation in the small group discussion contribute to the student's mark?

In this exam we're not evaluating their *Talk to Learn Competency*, but where possible, I highly recommend that students participate as much as possible. The more you talk, and the more you discuss your ideas, the more likely you'll have more ideas, and your ideas will solidify in your own mind. So, if students are given the opportunity to talk with other children, they should take that opportunity and take advantage of the fact that they can share their ideas and get new ideas from someone else.

13. Would the 3 paragraphs include an intro and conclusion?

So, in your first paragraph, the student should start talking about connections to the text, right away. At the end, if there's still time, and they want to have a paragraph of their opinion of the story, that's all right. The main goal of a response is the connections that you can make.

14. Do you have examples of the type of question that the students will see for their narrative piece? Are they given topics to write about?

The students will receive some kind of text which is a book that's been printed specifically for the exam. They will have initiation type tasks that are going to be based on the theme of the exam. Those tasks could be watching the video, looking at photos, looking at drawings, listening to recordings. All of those texts are meant to get the students thinking about the theme of the exam. They will be provided with various media to inspire them in their narrative writing but that doesn't mean that they have to write about whatever the inspiration media are, if they have something else completely different, that's okay, too. But they will have things to inspire them, and to help them come up with ideas.

15. When do we typically find out the dates of the exam? Some school boards tell sooner than others, but what is the latest we will find out?

Exam dates will be provided by your school/school board. Please note that the date range has been provided by the [Ministère de l'Éducation](#).

16. Are there good examples of responses my child could read so he could get an idea of what is expected? (beyond the video you provided)

No, but there are rubrics included in the presentation and associated docs for Grade 6 ELA on the LEARN site: learnquebec.ca/examprep

17. What are the materials allowed?

Please see the Grade 6 ELA student checklist on the LEARN site:
learnquebec.ca/examprep

18. How long is the English exam?

There are three parts to this exam of varying lengths. That information is on the LEARN site and in the associated documents: learnquebec.ca/examprep

19. For kids with IEPs that are using computers to write the response or narrative, how does that work with notes, rough draft vs final draft? Will somebody in the exam room guide them with that?

You will need to communicate with your school/school board contact for this specific information.

20. How could students be practicing at home for the exam?

What students could be doing now to get ready is journal writing, which is really important. Having your child watch their favourite TV show and then, write about it in response style, not just telling what happened in the show, but what it made them think about or how they can relate to it. If they've ever encountered those experiences or those situations in other books or TV shows that they've seen before. I'm not saying that they should be writing 3 paragraphs every time but even if they're just talking about it, paying attention to connections, it's more than just consuming the show, more than just watching. When it comes to writing narratives, reading books and picture books is an excellent way to talk about how a narrative works: a beginning, a middle, and an end of a story, a plot, how the characters change, etc. When you are reading picture books, you can use them as a model to make your own short story. That's a great way to practice when you're not in a classroom with other kids. Use picture books as mentor texts. More great tips to help you prepare are included in the exam prep. video. Please take the time to work through it.

21. So is the narrative a response to a question/theme or are they making up a fictional story?

A narrative is a story. It could be a fictional story, but it could be a personal narrative. It could be something that happened to a person, to the child, and they could embellish on it, or it could be completely and totally made up.

22. But for the narrative, does it have to be based on a topic, or can they make a whole story up?

Ideally, it should be based on the topic, but the important part is that it is a piece of narrative writing.

23. Are there good examples of responses somewhere that my child could read so he could get an idea of what is expected, beyond the video you've provided?

We have provided all of the authorized materials and examples on the LEARN site (learnquebec.ca/examprep). The teacher who prepared the video highlights the kinds of responses that a child could and should include in a response, as well as examples.

24. Where is the rubric available?

The rubric, with explanation, can be found in the video. It is also available in the associated documents below the video, under the heading Elementary 6 English Language Arts, here: learnquebec.ca/examprep. Looking at the level 5 criteria for evaluating the response, we are really looking at how well the students examine the ideas that are in the text: the author's message being given, the choices the author is making in the text, if the students are able to make these perceptive inferences (reading between the lines), and what's going on in the story, and connecting that to something that they've experienced or they've read about or another character has experienced. They must justify their ideas and make deliberate connections.

25. What is the passing grade?

60%

26. Is their draft their final copy? Is there a need for a final copy?

Students are no longer given the time to do a final copy of either written portion of the exam (response or narrative) which makes the planning that much more essential. They should spend the first half hour, maybe even 45 min. working on a plan for their story. That could be a timeline of events or a plot mountain that shows their initiation, rising action, climax, falling action and resolution. Or maybe they decide to do storyboarding or other forms of graphic organizers to plan out their story. It's the plan that kind of serves as the rough draft. Then, when they're actually writing the story, they need to take their time and revise it as they're going because they won't get a chance to do a second good copy.

27. Do we have extra time if needed?

Extra time identified in IEPs will be respected. Students must plan their time carefully to finish writing their text in the designated space within the allotted time.

28. Do you recommend the child writes in cursive?

No, unless that's what the child always writes in. Use the format that you are used to! I do not recommend that students suddenly decide that they are going to make this pretty and right in cursive, because sometimes they make spelling errors, just in the formation of the words. Don't suddenly start to practice cursive in an exam :)

29. For questions about the ELA program, not directly related to the exam, such as:

How do structures and features enhance the reader's understanding of the text? What does the "Author's craft" mean exactly? What is the purpose of writing reading responses?

We invite you to learn more here:

http://www.education.gouv.qc.ca/fileadmin/site_web/documents/education/jeunes/pfeq/PFEQ_english-language-arts-primaire_EN.pdf