

TEXAS ASSESSMENT OF KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS (TAKS)

BLUEPRINT FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS

GRADE 10 AND GRADE 11 EXIT LEVEL

	Grade 10	Grade 11 Exit Level
Selections—one “triplet” (literary + expository + visual representation)	Approximately 3000-3500 words total	Approximately 3000-3500 words total
Objective 1 (reading—basic understanding)	8 multiple-choice items	8 multiple-choice items
Objective 2 (reading—literary elements and techniques)	8 multiple-choice items 1 short answer item*	8 multiple-choice items 1 short answer item*
Objective 3 (reading—analysis and critical evaluation)	12 multiple-choice items 2 short answer items*	12 multiple-choice items 2 short answer items*
Objective 4 (composition)	1 writing prompt	1 writing prompt
Objective 5 (composition)		
Objective 6 (revising and editing in the context of two peer-editing selections)	20 multiple-choice items (10 items per selection)	20 multiple-choice items (10 items per selection)
Total number of items	48 multiple-choice items 3 short answer items 1 writing prompt	48 multiple-choice items 3 short answer items 1 writing prompt

*Short answer items require students to respond briefly and accurately. Their responses must include a reasonable analysis or interpretation of the text supported by specific evidence from the text itself. One short answer item will assess the literary selection (Objective 2), one will assess the expository selection (Objective 3), and one will bridge the two selections (Objective 3). Two of the three short answer items are from Objective 3 because the “crossover” item deals with both selections and always requires students to analyze or evaluate some aspect of both texts; analysis and evaluation both fall under Objective 3.

Curriculum Rationale

The English Language Arts assessments at Grades 10 and 11 are integrated reading and writing tests. Although these assessments are the same length, they differ in the complexity of the reading selections and the revising and editing passages. In addition, the eleventh grade items require a higher level of performance from students than the tenth grade items. In reading, for example, critical analysis items require exit level students to demonstrate a deeper understanding of the texts.

Objectives 1, 2, and 3: Reading

Both Objective 2 and Objective 3 cover TEKS that address higher-order thinking skills; these objectives together are weighted more heavily than Objective 1 (basic understanding) because the TEKS designated for assessment at Grades 10 and 11 support this emphasis. While it is still important to ensure that students have the skills necessary to understand a text's literal meaning, by Grades 10 and 11 students are expected to utilize their skills in critical thinking. These critical thinking skills require students to connect what they have read to what they already know, to make predictions, and to develop reasonable interpretations based on the text. Furthermore, students at Grades 10 and 11 are expected to demonstrate an understanding of literary elements and techniques appropriate to their grade levels: for example, connecting literature to historical contexts and current events and comparing and contrasting varying aspects of texts, such as themes, conflicts, and allusions.

There are fewer multiple-choice questions on the reading portion of the Grades 10 and 11 ELA tests than on the Grade 9 reading test because the ELA tests are integrated reading and writing tests. Tenth and eleventh grade students must be able to complete both the reading and writing sections in a single testing period.

Objectives 4 and 5: Written Composition

Objectives 4 and 5 are assessed through a composition written in response to a specific topic. Students should be able to produce an effective piece of writing that is focused and coherent, organized, well developed, original and authentic, and well written (assessed through the student's ability to apply the conventions of standard written English). This portion of the writing assessment will likely require a significant amount of time to complete, since students are encouraged to utilize the writing process (prewriting, drafting, revising, and editing) in producing a composition that represents their best work. Expectations for eleventh grade writers with regard to organization, focus and coherence, development of ideas, voice, and conventions of standard English (spelling, capitalization, punctuation, grammar, usage, and sentence structure) will be higher than those for tenth writers.

Objective 6: Revising and Editing Multiple Choice

Objective 6 encompasses the most important skills students need to revise and edit effectively. These skills include adding, deleting, or rearranging sentences to improve organization and development; adding transition words or phrases to strengthen progression; recognizing correct and effective sentences; correcting grammar, usage, spelling, capitalization, and punctuation errors; and replacing vague or informal words or phrases with more specific or appropriate language. The level of proficiency of eleventh grade students with regard to these skills is expected to be higher than that of tenth grade students.

The number of multiple-choice items (10 per passage) allows for appropriate spacing of items within each passage. Two passages and 20 items allow for a broad coverage of the knowledge and skills that comprise Objective 6. In addition, given the length of the ELA test overall, the number of passages and items in this section of the test is appropriate.