Performance Level Descriptors

When writing essays in response to progressively demanding writing tasks and reading texts of increasing complexity,* students achieving Level III: Advanced Academic Performance can

- Write skillfully crafted expository essays with sustained focus, a logical organizing structure, and development that lends substance to the essay
- Choose sentences that are purposeful and well controlled
- Evaluate how the author's use of diction and figurative language creates meaning
- Make subtle inferences about literary and informational texts, supporting those inferences with specific and well-chosen textual evidence

When writing essays in response to progressively demanding writing tasks and reading texts of increasing complexity,* students achieving Level II: Satisfactory Academic Performance can

- Write expository essays that contain a clear thesis statement, use an appropriate organizing structure, sufficiently develop ideas with specific details and examples, choose words that reflect an understanding of the explanatory purpose, and demonstrate an adequate command of written conventions
- Use a variety of sentence structures
- Revise drafts to strengthen the introductory and concluding paragraphs, add information that enhances the supporting details, strengthen transitions within and between paragraphs, improve the effectiveness of sentences, and recognize appropriate style and word choice
- Edit drafts to correct errors in grammar, sentence structure, capitalization, punctuation, and spelling
- Distinguish between the denotative and connotative meanings of words using context, structural analyses, and reference materials
- Analyze how the author's use of diction and figurative language supports meaning
- Analyze literary texts by recognizing universal themes and the ways in which literary devices contribute to the development of linear and non-linear plots and complex, believable characters
- Demonstrate an understanding of informational texts by recognizing the controlling idea or argument, identifying the author's purpose, and summarizing the text by determining which ideas are most important
- Recognize the logical connections and thematic links between texts representing similar or different genres
- Make reasonable inferences about literary and informational texts, supporting those inferences with accurate, relevant textual evidence

STAAR English I—Continued

Performance Level Descriptors
When writing essays in response to progressively demanding writing tasks and reading texts of increasing complexity,* students achieving Level I: Unsatisfactory Academic Performance can • Write basic or limited essays that are only marginally suited to the expository task and minimally developed, with a partial command of conventions • Demonstrate a minimal control of sentence structures • Demonstrate basic skills in revision and editing • Determine the denotative meaning of words using context and reference materials • Demonstrate a basic understanding of literary and informational texts and recognize a summary • Make plausible inferences about literary and informational texts

*The rigor of the expository writing task increases from grade 7 to English I in that the prompt is more demanding in English I, specifically with regard to the cognitive complexity of the stimulus (the synopsis or quotation students use in developing the essay) and the sophistication of the topic. In addition, the text complexity of the reading selections increases from grade 8 to English I. Texts can become increasingly complex for a variety of reasons: (1) vocabulary/use of language may be more varied and challenging because it is nonliteral/figurative, abstract, or academic/technical; (2) sentence structures may be more varied, dense, and sophisticated; (3) the author's use of literary elements/devices, rhetorical strategies, organizational patterns, and text features may be more nuanced or sophisticated; (4) the topic/content may be less familiar or more cognitively demanding; and (5) relationships among ideas may be less explicit and require more interpretation, reasoning, and inferential thinking to understand the subtlety, nuances, and depth of ideas.