



**State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR®)
Performance Level Descriptors
English II**

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 persuasive essays that maintain a convincing position and sustain focus with a skillful organizing structure, compelling evidence and support, purposeful and precise word choice, and an understanding and control of rhetorical techniques that enhance effectiveness
- Choose sentences that are purposeful and well controlled
- Evaluate how the author's use of syntax, diction, and sensory language creates voice, tone, and meaning
- Make discerning 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 persuasive essays that contain a clear position, use a logical organizing structure, sufficiently develop relevant reasons and evidence, create an appropriate tone through clear and specific word choice, 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 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 syntax, diction, and sensory 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 analyzing the controlling idea or argument, determining the author's purpose, identifying organizational patterns, and distinguishing between a summary and a critique of the text
- Identify the implicit connections and thematic links between texts representing similar or different genres
- Make logical inferences about literary and informational texts, supporting those inferences with accurate, relevant textual evidence

STAAR English II—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 persuasive task and minimally developed, with a partial command of conventions
- Demonstrate a minimal control of sentence structure
- Demonstrate basic skills in revision and editing
- Determine the denotative meaning of words using context, structural analyses, and reference materials
- Demonstrate a basic understanding of literary and informational texts and identify universal themes and controlling ideas
- Make plausible inferences about literary and informational texts

* The rigor of the writing task increases from English I to English II in that the prompt is more demanding in English II, 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. Persuasive writing, which is assessed on STAAR for the first time, also increases the rigor of English II writing. The persuasive task requires students to take a position on a specific issue and to develop an argument that not only supports this position but also convinces the reader of its merit. In addition, the text complexity of the reading selections increases from English I to English II. 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.