

ELA 7-12 TExES Online Preparation Session

General Description

As a prerequisite for graduation, students pursuing a B.A. in English with secondary certification are required to satisfactorily complete the online Blackboard English Language Arts 7-12 TExES prep session in their next to the last semester, or their last semester at Angelo State University.

All questions and communication about the online prep session are to be directed to Dr. Julie Gates, the Coordinator of the Secondary English Certification Program: Julie.Gates@angelo.edu.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the ELA 7-12 online prep session?

It is a self-paced, online prep session made up of reading materials, resources, quizzes, practice tests, and writing prompts designed to prepare majors pursuing a B.A. English with secondary certification for the state licensure certification exam (TExES) once they graduate.

Is the prep session required?

Yes. Satisfactory completion of the prep session is a requirement for graduation.

When should I complete the online prep session?

In your next to last semester or the semester you student teach because the prep session draws on the body of knowledge you have accumulated throughout your degree program.

Who do I contact to get signed up for the prep session?

Dr. Julie Gates @ Julie.Gates@angelo.edu

I understand some parts of the prep session are password protected. How do I get the passwords?

Contact Dr. Julie Gates

What happens after I complete a writing prompt?

A faculty member with a PhD in literature will read and evaluate the essay. If the essay earns less than a 3 (out of a 4 point scale), you will be asked to schedule a meeting with the faculty member who evaluated your essay so they can go over the essay with you and give you advice about improving your score. After that, contact Dr. Gates to get the password for the next writing prompt so you can complete the next one.

What do I have to score on different parts of the prep session to pass the prep session?

80 on quizzes

75 on practice tests
A 3 on a writing prompt

How times can I attempt quizzes, tests, and writing prompts?

Quizzes: unlimited tries

Tests: once

Each writing prompt: once

*Most students need to complete 2 or 3 writing prompts to achieve the proficiency of a 3.

Will you give me some information about the actual state test?

The state test is 5 hours long and consists of 80 objective questions and 1 writing prompt. You can move back and forth between the questions and the writing prompt. You should allow yourself at least an hour and a half to complete the written portion. There are usually 4 dates a year when you can attempt the test, and the test is administered on a computer at a testing site. You'll receive your results in about a month. Generally speaking, you have to make the equivalent of a C on both parts of the test to pass.

How do I get eligibility to register for the 7-12 ELA TExES?

You must first successfully complete the online 7-12 ELA TExES prep course. Then Dr. Gates informs Christine Pruitt in the College of Education that you are prepared and eligible to register for the exam. You then need to contact Ms. Pruitt: Christine.Pruitt@angelo.edu; 325-486-6601; 287 Carr Education Fine Arts Building

What assistance does the prep course offer me?

The review document typically includes tips for writing a literary analysis, such as the following:

Tips for Writing a Literary Analysis

Along with learning some basic facts about literary terms and devices, skills for structuring and organizing an essay, and tips for explicating literature, these simple test-taking tools will be useful as you write your analysis. As you prepare for your exam, keep the following tips in mind.

Manage your time.

-  You have two hours to complete the writing portion of the exam. This is plenty of time if you have prepared in advance. Don't panic!
-  Don't spend time worrying or daydreaming. Focus your energy on writing your analysis.

Read the prompt carefully.

- ✚ Carefully read the prompt. *Then* read the poem/excerpt. As you read the excerpt, underline portions of the text that you may be able to use/quote in your essay.
- ✚ Stay focused on the question the prompt is asking you. Make sure you are identifying those elements/devices/techniques and corresponding concepts (usually thematic issues) asked for in the prompt. (Refer to the *Sample Prompts* tab to get an idea of what the prompt will look like.)
- ✚ If you feel like you've run out of ideas to write about, read back through the prompt to see if any new ideas jump out at you.

Choose your quotations carefully.

- ✚ Quote **brief** excerpts from the text (frequently) to support your explication/interpretation. Do not, however, expect your essay to hang together by a long series of loosely connected quoted passages.
- ✚ Proceed with your analysis/use of quotes in the same order these quoted portions appear in the text. In other words, analyze the poem from beginning to end.
- ✚ Remember that a quote cannot explain itself. Furthermore, restating what the text says without explanation does not prove anything. If you get stuck with a quote that looks like it has potential, go back to the prompt and figure out **HOW** this quote demonstrates the phenomenon mentioned in the test question (eg: this symbol is used to demonstrate the speaker's love for human characteristics because it shows...)

Don't summarize.

- ✚ Your analysis should not be a summary, a paraphrasing, or an appreciation of the literary text. It should analyze, pick apart, dissect – just as you have seen your literature professors do time and again.
- ✚ Avoid the tendency to generalize – make sure you have fully explained your assertion about a passage or element from the text.

In your essay...

- ✚ Explain and show **HOW** the speaker/author uses X to accomplish Y. In other words, show how the use of a literary device (such as imagery, symbolism, etc.) works to establish the theme (isolation, coming of age, etc.)
- ✚ Do not attempt to provide a definition of a literary element or device. Instead, show **HOW** the element or device works in the text.

- ✚ Each paragraph needs to have a clear focus supported by what you show and prove in the sentences in the paragraph. (See the *Writing Basics* handout for more information.)

Don't expect the reader to do all the work!

- ✚ Make sure that you are providing adequate detail to explain your meaning to the reader/grader.

Do not assume your reader knows what you mean. These readers will not read between the lines to draw conclusions about implied assertions. Your assertions must be made explicit by your use of thorough following through with the position(s) you make in your paper.

What does a typical quiz in prep session look like?

The following shows the format for a typical competency quiz.

Domain 1, Competency Quiz

1. You assign an activity during which students will rewrite a passage of Shakespeare's *Hamlet* in their own language (could include modern day slang, jargon; Texan sayings; elements of native language--Spanish, for instance). Domain I, competency_____

- a. competency 1
- b. competency 2
- c. competency 3
- d. none of the above

2. You hand your students a list of words that have multiple meanings and ask them to brainstorm as many meanings as they can come up with that are included in each word.

Domain I, competency_____

- a. competency 1
- b. competency 2
- c. competency 3
- d. none of the above

3. You assign a culminating activity that involves writing and performing a play (a modern day version of *Romeo and Juliet*). Domain, competency_____

- a. competency 1
- b. competency 2
- c. competency 3
- d. none of the above

4. You work in collaboration with the art teacher and the history teacher to design a unit called, "Renaissance Teens." Domain I, competency_____

- a. competency 1
- b. competency 2
- c. competency 3

d. none of the above

5. You purposely pair up weaker writers with stronger writers during writing workshop. Additionally, you provide minilessons that help struggling writers identify patterns of error in their writing AND minilessons designed to challenge your stronger writers to experiment with sentence structure and manipulation of language in their writing. Domain I, competency_____

- a. competency 1
- b. competency 2
- c. competency 3
- d. none of the above

6. As a teacher you are aware of regional and cultural influences that contribute to changes in the English language. Domain I, competency_____

- a. competency 1
- b. competency 2
- c. competency 3
- d. none of the above

7. As a teacher you know and teach grammar and usage in the context of written discourse. Domain I, competency_____

- a. competency 1
- b. competency 2
- c. competency 3
- d. none of the above

8. You understand that the ELA curriculum for 8-12 is a continuum of language arts skills and expectations. Domain I, competency_____

- a. competency 1
- b. competency 2
- c. competency 3
- d. none of the above

9. You understand the impact of first and second language acquisition on language learners in the English classroom. Domain I, competency_____

- a. competency 1
- b. competency 2
- c. competency 3
- d. none of the above

10. You understand that the language arts--reading, writing, speaking, listening+complex thinking--are inextricably integrated in the English classroom. Domain I, competency_____

- a. competency 1

- b. competency 2
- c. competency 3
- d. none of the above

What does a typical writing prompt in the prep session look like?

The following is a sample TExES Practice Writing Prompt.

The two passages below address similar topics. They convey themes that are related, either through their similarities or differences. In an essay to be read by an educator in the field of English, write an analysis of the two selections shown below. Support your analysis with textual evidence.

Your analysis should:

- * identify and discuss themes that connect the two passages; and
- * explain how the authors use literary elements and/or literary devices in each excerpt to develop and support these themes.

WAR IS KIND by Stephen Crane

Do not weep, maiden, for war is kind.
Because your lover threw wild hands toward the sky
And the affrighted steed ran on alone,
Do not weep.
War is kind.

*Hoarse, booming drums of the regiment,
Little souls who thirst for fight,
These men were born to drill and die.
The unexplained glory flies above them,
Great is the battle-god, great, and his kingdom --
A field where a thousand corpses lie.*

Do not weep, babe, for war is kind.
Because your father tumbled in the yellow trenches,
Raged at his breast, gulped and died,
Do not weep.
War is kind.

*Swift blazing flag of the regiment,
Eagle with crest of red and gold,*

*These men were born to drill and die.
Point for them the virtue of slaughter,
Make plain to them the excellence of killing
And a field where a thousand corpses lie.*

Mother whose heart hung humble as a button
On the bright splendid shroud of your son,
Do not weep.
War is kind.

Dulce Et Decorum Est by Wilfred Owen

Bent double, like old beggars under sacks,
Knock-kneed, coughing like hags, we cursed through sludge,
Till on the haunting flares we turned our backs
And towards our distant rest began to trudge.
Men marched asleep. Many had lost their boots
But limped on, blood-shod. All went lame; all blind;
Drunk with fatigue; deaf even to the hoots
Of disappointed shells that dropped behind.

GAS! Gas! Quick, boys!-- An ecstasy of fumbling,
Fitting the clumsy helmets just in time;
But someone still was yelling out and stumbling
And floundering like a man in fire or lime.--
Dim, through the misty panes and thick green light
As under a green sea, I saw him drowning.

In all my dreams, before my helpless sight,
He plunges at me, guttering, choking, drowning.

If in some smothering dreams you too could pace
Behind the wagon that we flung him in,
And watch the white eyes writhing in his face,
His hanging face, like a devil's sick of sin;
If you could hear, at every jolt, the blood
Come gargling from the froth-corrupted lungs,
Obscene as cancer, bitter as the cud
Of vile, incurable sores on innocent tongues,--
My friend, you would not tell with such high zest
To children ardent for some desperate glory,
The old Lie: Dulce et decorum est
Pro patria mori.**

**"Sweet and fitting it is. To die for one's country."

What does a "passing" essay look like?

Undoubtedly, the common thread throughout all mankind is the presence of one unavoidable villain—fear. He stalks us in our darkest hours and makes children of us in the moments we must stand tall; he can be a real parasite. However, at times man finds the courage, the deep inner-strength, that he needs to strike down fear and push forward to make a change in the world and embrace the new and unknown. This idea of pushing past the boundaries of fear to discover great and unknown things is the subject of both "The Seafarer" and "Ulysses"—two poems that reject the ordinary and welcome the unknown, whether in body or soul.

The poem "The Seafarer" suggests what the fear to venture forth, into the unknown and dangerous, looks and feels like in our lives and, in the process, leaves no man unscathed. States the narrator, "But there isn't a man on earth so proud,/ So born to greatness, so bold with his youth,/ Grown so brave, or so graced by God,/ That he feels no fear as the sails unfurl." These opening lines draw us in and stir our souls by identifying a dreaded characteristic we all share—our unavoidable tendency toward fear. No man can escape it, not even the strongest and most cunning. This declaration might seem to offer a hopeless and despairing outlook on the way we are to live—suggesting that such an obstacle is unavoidable. If no man is to escape it, then are we to become a slave to it? If this is so, then we are certain to be doomed to the existence he further describes where "longing wraps itself around him." Here, the beautiful things in life act as a caution, rather than a call. The expansion of life and beauty only work to remind the observer that they do not have the courage to seek further beauty; they are trapped in their own comfortable world with their fears to keep them company. The antithesis that the beauty and inspiration that man encounters actually causes him immense pain—because it reminds him of the fact that he hasn't the strength to climb higher mountains or travel "a quickening tide"—here becomes painfully aware to us. The narrator's anaphora, "No harps ring in his heart, no rewards,/No passion for women, no worldly pleasures," further build the sense of despair in the reader that fair can make souls dull and lifeless. The repeating of such negative suggestions—"no. . . no. . .no. . ."—lead us to believe that we truly are stuck in the hopeless states that fear leaves us in; there is no hope and no recovery. With every passing "no" we become more discouraged and aware of the effect that this plague has upon our lives, and the source becomes even more evident and accusing. With a final, and most tragic, cry for understanding, the narrator use careful and effective diction to express the true isolation that this curse creates. We are confronted with a heart-sickening question: "Who could understand/,In ignorant ease, what others suffer/As the paths of exile stretch endlessly on?" It is an uncomfortable subject for the reader—the fact that every man is alone and no person can understand his unique pain. His use of words like, "ignorant ease" and "exile" and "endlessly," create a true sense of hopelessness in the reader. We become painfully aware of the desperation and isolation that fear has imposed upon us. If these words are fact, then we are faced with the dilemma that there is no person that can heal us of the pain caused by fear. If every fear is different for every man, then we are truly in this alone. Further, if our fears render our pain remediless by any person, then aren't others' fears remediless by us?

The poem "Ulysses" presents a different sort of fear, the fear of death and limited time,

and uses it as inspiration to call for the banding together for a remedy to the life not lived. The narrator of this poem is aware of the obstacles that fear creates, stating that “death closes all; but something ere the end,/Some work of noble note, may yet be done.” He senses that there is a sad fear that haunts man, the fear and imminence of death, but he does not embrace or resign to it like the narrator of “The Seafarer.” There is a sense of hope and an air of determination in his speech. He has resolved to find some sort of answer to fear that haunts all men, some way of alleviating the tragedy of death. The mere rhythm of the poem suggests that there is hope. Written in iambic pentameter, the sing-song rhythm of the poem lifts the reader’s spirits and inspired the reader to believe that “some work of noble note, may yet be done.” There is also a sense of tradition that is evoked, whether consciously or not, when reading a poem of iambic pentameter. It is an old form that evokes memories of Shakespeare and has been making poetry accessible for centuries. This easily read and traditional form strengthens his suggestion that the search and call to conquer fear is an ancient yearning present in all people—great and small—now and then. This time old dilemma is further expressed through the narrator’s historical allusion to “the great Achilles,” a powerful warrior whom, through the struggle to live a life not manipulated by fear, the narrator feels he shares a connection with. The speaker hopes to be great as well and intends to accomplish this through the way he intends to live his life. It is the fear that haunts him, and every other man, that has inspired him. This poem presents, just as “The Seafarer” did, anaphora to build emotion; in this case it is inspiration. The narrator expresses the desire “to strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield.” It is a call to action and a personal goal. He feels confident in his ability to rise above and use fear as a fuel for his purpose in life. In this simply put statement, the narrator expresses his entire mantra for life and desire for his soul.

The idea that fear does not have to hold us back is a common idea in these two poems, though it is manifested in two very different ways. “The Seafarer” feels trapped, and we feel trapped with him; however, we are given a means of escape. Though the narrator does not seem to be capable of mustering to physically venture beyond his comfort zone, a new method of exploration has been discovered—exploration of the mind. He states that his “heart wanders away,/ [His] soul roams with the sea, the whales’/Home, wandering to the widest corners/Of the world, returning ravenous with desire.” Such diction indicates the passion that the speaker feels when he is this world, and it build excitement in the reader to join in the adventure. There is an escape in his worlds, one that the reader—who has surely encountered the same fears—is likely to appreciate and embrace. While fear can prevent a person from taking a much desired worldly risk, there is no need to fear adventures of the mind. The narrator is happy in this pretend adventure and needn’t be hurt or spoiled by the things he fears. His adventures are always as he hopes them to be and he remains unharmed, able to reject the ordinary and take a risk in his own way. The speaker of “Ulysses” presents a quite different outlook. He wishes to take real action and make the most of life, even it means his demise. Declaring to his peers that “’tis not too late to seek a newer world” and wishing “to sail beyond the sunset, and the baths/Of all the western stars, until [he] die[s],” he makes an oath to himself to search for the unknown and live a life that has meaning and does not succumb to fear. He will not just be doing this in spirit, as “The Seafarer” does, but in body. He dedicates his whole being to it, disregarding the threat of death or injury.

The venturing of the mind and body, as prompted by fear, is a powerful thing even now.

“The Seafarer” and “Ulysses” are but reminders of the passion and fulfillment we can receive when we channel and conquer our fears. It cannot be expected and is not possible to abolish fear, but rather we must find a way to work through our weaknesses and boundaries. The passion that the narrators have for their adventures outside fear should serve as an inspiration to all. Do not despair and do dwell. There is a calling to do something great and engage in life-changing adventure in everyone. How will you embrace yours?

May I see an example of a test question that might appear on one of the objective practice tests?

Question: A high school English teacher wants to help students understand and appreciate the role of dialogue in fiction. Which of the activities described below would best use interactions among the language arts to address this goal?

- A. Students listen to an audiotape of professional actors reading aloud dialogue from short stories and then discuss the dialogues in small groups.
 - B. Students read a short story and write an essay about the author's use of dialogue.
 - C. Pairs of students read a story, compose a dialogue for two of the characters, and then read the dialogue aloud and discuss it with the class.
 - D. Pairs of students dramatize scenes from several different short stories by reading aloud dialogues from the stories for class.
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