

Assessment **Guide** for **Educators**

Reasoning Through Language Arts (RLA)

June 2016



Table of Contents

Note on the March 2016 Edition.....3

Chapter 1: Assessment Targets

Assessment Targets for Reasoning Through Language Arts (RLA)4

Content of the GED® RLA Test.....4

Reading Comprehension on the GED® RLA Test.....5

Writing on the GED® Test - RLA9

Language Conventions and Usage on the GED® RLA Test11

Chapter 2: Item Types & Layouts

Item Types in Reasoning Through Language Arts13

 Multiple choice (MC) 14

 Drag-and-drop items 14

 Drop-down 14

 Extended response (ER) 14

Item Layouts in Reasoning Through Language Arts16

 Multiple Choice Item and a Passage. 16

 Drag-and-drop Item 17

 Drop-down Item. 18

 Passage and Response Box. 19

Chapter 3: Extended Response

Extended Response Scoring Rubrics20

 Holistic Scoring vs. Analytic Scoring. 21

Passage Requirements and Exemplars25

Chapter 4: Performance Level Descriptors

Performance Level Descriptors36

 RLA - Below Passing Level 37

 RLA - GED® Pass / High School Equivalency Level 40

 RLA - GED® College Ready Level. 44

 RLA - GED® College Ready + Credit Level. 46

Appendix A

The GED® Test - RLA: A Content Comparison Between 2002 and the Current Test.....48

Appendix B

Reasoning Through Language Arts Reporting Categories54

Appendix C

RLA Extended Response (ER) Rubric Breakdown.....57

Appendix D

Glossary of Key Terms for the RLA Test.....61

Note on the March 2016 Edition

GED Testing Service has published the March 2016 Edition of the Assessment Guide for Educators to include the following:

1. Updated performance level information to reflect the new performance levels: Below Passing, Pass/High School Equivalency, GED® College Ready, and GED® College Ready + Credit
2. Updated information on the Social Studies test to reflect the elimination of the Social Studies Extended Response question
3. Streamlining and simplification of the guide, based on adult educator feedback, to make the guide more user-friendly and to eliminate redundancies

Assessment Targets

Assessment Targets for Reasoning Through Language Arts (RLA)

The GED® test has three main purposes—to provide candidates with

1. A path to a high school credential
2. Evidence of their readiness to enter workforce training programs or postsecondary education
3. Information about their strengths and weaknesses in key academic areas

The philosophy underlying the GED® test is that there is a core of academic skills and content knowledge that must be acquired in order for an adult to be prepared to enter a job, a training program, or an entry-level, credit-bearing postsecondary course. This core of knowledge and skills is reflected in the career- and college-readiness standards now adopted in some form by the majority of states.

Content of the GED® RLA Test

The GED® RLA test focuses on three essential skills:

- Close reading
- Clear writing
- Editing and understanding the use of standard written English in context

Because the strongest predictor of career and college readiness is the ability to read and comprehend complex texts, especially

nonfiction, the RLA test includes texts from both academic and workplace contexts. The texts' ideas, syntax, and style reflect a range of complexity levels. The writing tasks, or extended response (ER) items, require test-takers to analyze given source texts and use evidence drawn from the texts to support their answers.

The following specifications guide the GED® RLA test:

1. Seventy-five percent of the texts in the exam are informational texts (including nonfiction drawn from science and social studies as well as a range of texts from workplace contexts); 25 percent are literary texts
2. The texts included in the test cover a range of text complexity, including texts at the career-and college-readiness level
3. Texts emphasize vocabulary that has multiple meanings dependent on subject area or context, rather than focusing on discipline-specific terms
4. U.S. founding documents and “the Great American Conversation” that followed are required texts for study and assessment
5. The length of the texts included in the reading comprehension component of the test varies between 400 and 900 words
6. The items are written to a Depth of Knowledge cognitive complexity level 1, 2, or 3

“The Great American Conversation” refers to texts like the founding documents (e.g. The Bill of Rights) or other sources, including more contemporary ones, that reflect important ideas about American citizenship and modern liberties.

Reading Comprehension on the GED® RLA Test

The reading comprehension component of the GED® RLA test measures two overarching reading standards that reflect current research about career-and-college-readiness skills:

- Determine the details of what is explicitly stated and make logical inferences or valid claims based on textual evidence
- Read and respond to questions from a range of texts that are from the upper levels of complexity, including texts at the career- and college-ready level

Each target and indicator in the RLA assessment targets correspond to one or more Anchor Standards from the Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts. For example, R.2 refers to Reading Anchor Standard 2. Similarly, W and L refer to Writing Anchor Standards and Language Anchor Standards, respectively.

Assessment targets

The assessment targets for all four content areas provide a complete description of the skills and knowledge that are measured on the GED® test. Evidence strongly indicates that proficiency with the core skills identified in the assessment targets is predictive of success in a wide range of career and college pathways.

Passage selection and test question development for the reading comprehension component of the GED® RLA test reflect these two high-level standards. The texts span a range of complexity, including texts at the career- and college-readiness level.

The targets and indicators in the following tables are derived from nationally recognized career- and college-readiness curricular standards.

Reading Assessment Targets ¹	Range of Depth of Knowledge (DOK) Levels ²
Common Core Connection: R.29	
Determine central ideas or themes of texts and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas.	
R.2.1 Comprehend explicit details and main ideas in text.	1-2
R.2.2 Summarize details and ideas in text.	2
R.2.3 Make sentence level inferences about details that support main ideas.	2-3
R.2.4 Infer implied main ideas in paragraphs or whole texts.	2-3
R.2.5 Determine which detail(s) support(s) a main idea.	1-3
R.2.6 Identify a theme, or identify which element(s) in a text support a theme.	1-3
R.2.7 Make evidence based generalizations or hypotheses based on details in text, including clarifications, extensions, or applications of main ideas to new situations.	2-3
R.2.8 Draw conclusions or make generalizations that require synthesis of multiple main ideas in text.	2-3
Common Core Connection: R.3	
Analyze how individuals, events, and ideas develop and interact over the course of a text.	
R.3.1 Order sequences of events in texts.	1-2
R.3.2 Make inferences about plot/sequence of events, characters/people, settings, or ideas in texts.	2
R.3.3 Analyze relationships within texts, including how events are important in relation to plot or conflict; how people, ideas, or events are connected, developed, or distinguished; how events contribute to theme or relate to key ideas; or how a setting or context shapes structure and meaning.	2-3
R.3.4 Infer relationships between ideas in a text (e.g., an implicit cause and effect, parallel, or contrasting relationship).	2-3
R.3.5 Analyze the roles that details play in complex literary or informational texts.	2-3

Reading Assessment Targets ¹	Range of Depth of Knowledge (DOK) Levels ²
Common Core Connection: R.4.2; L4.2	
Interpret words and phrases that appear frequently in texts from a wide variety of disciplines, including determining connotative and figurative meanings from context and analyzing how specific word choices shape meaning or tone.	
R.4.1/L.4.1 Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including determining connotative and figurative meanings from context.	1-3
R.4.2/L.4.2 Analyze how meaning or tone is affected when one word is replaced with another.	2
R.4.3/L.4.3 Analyze the impact of specific words, phrases, or figurative language in text, with a focus on an author’s intent to convey information or construct an argument.	2-3
Common Core Connection: R.59	
Analyze the structure of texts, including how specific sentences or paragraphs relate to each other and the whole.	
R.5.1 Analyze how a particular sentence, paragraph, chapter, or section fits into the overall structure of a text and contributes to the development of the ideas.	2-3
R.5.2 Analyze the structural relationship between adjacent sections of text (e.g., how one paragraph develops or refines a key concept or how one idea is distinguished from another).	2-3
R.5.3 Analyze transitional language or signal words (words that indicate structural relationships, such as consequently, nevertheless, otherwise) and determine how they refine meaning, emphasize certain ideas, or reinforce an author’s purpose.	2
R.5.4 Analyze how the structure of a paragraph, section, or passage shapes meaning, emphasizes key ideas, or supports an author’s purpose.	2-3
Common Core Connection: R.6	
Determine an author’s purpose or point of view in a text and explain how it is conveyed and shapes the content and style of a text.	
R.6.1 Determine an author’s point of view or purpose of a text.	1-2
R.6.2 Analyze how the author distinguishes his or her position from that of others or how an author acknowledges and responds to conflicting evidence or viewpoints.	2-3
R.6.3 Infer an author’s implicit as well as explicit purposes based on details in text.	2
R.6.4 Analyze how an author uses rhetorical techniques to advance his or her point of view or achieve a specific purpose (e.g., analogies, enumerations, repetition and parallelism, juxtaposition of opposites, qualifying statements).	2-3
Common Core Connection: R.8	
Delineate and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text, including the validity of the reasoning as well as the relevance and sufficiency of the evidence.	
R.8.1 Delineate the specific steps of an argument the author puts forward, including how the argument’s claims build on one another.	2-3
R.8.2 Identify specific pieces of evidence an author uses in support of claims or conclusions.	1-3
R.8.3 Evaluate the relevance and sufficiency of evidence offered in support of a claim.	2-3
R.8.4 Distinguish claims that are supported by reasons and evidence from claims that are not.	2-3
R.8.5 Assess whether the reasoning is valid; identify fallacious reasoning in an argument and evaluate its impact.	2-3
R.8.6 Identify an underlying premise or assumption in an argument and evaluate the logical support and evidence provided.	2-3

Reading Assessment Targets ¹	Range of Depth of Knowledge (DOK) Levels ²
Common Core Connection: R.7 & R.909	
Analyze how two or more texts address similar themes or topics	
R.9.1/R. 7.1 Draw specific comparisons between two texts that address similar themes or topics or between information presented in different formats (e.g., between information presented in text and information or data summarized in a table or timeline).	2-3
R.9.2 Compare two passages in similar or closely related genre that share ideas or themes, focusing on similarities and/or differences in perspective, tone, style, structure, purpose, or overall impact.	2-3
R.9.3 Compare two argumentative passages on the same topic that present opposing claims (either main or supporting claims) and analyze how each text emphasizes different evidence or advances a different interpretation of facts.	2-3
R.7.2 Analyze how data or quantitative and/or visual information extends, clarifies, or contradicts information in text, or determine how data supports an author’s argument.	2-3
R.7.3 Compare two passages that present related ideas or themes in different genre or formats (e.g., a feature article and an online FAQ or fact sheet) in order to evaluate differences in scope, purpose, emphasis, intended audience, or overall impact when comparing.	2-3
R.7.4 Compare two passages that present related ideas or themes in different genre or formats in order to synthesize details, draw conclusions, or apply information to new situations.	2-3

1 See the [Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts and Literacy at www.corestandards.org](http://www.corestandards.org) for more information on the reference codes listed at the beginning of each Reading Assessment Target.

2 The Depth of Knowledge (DOK) levels correspond with Norman Webb’s (University of Wisconsin) Depth of Knowledge model of cognitive complexity.

Writing on the GED® Test - RLA

The writing component of the GED® RLA test integrates reading and writing in tasks that require candidates to support their written analysis with evidence drawn from given source texts. Given the growing demand and use of technology in all levels of postsecondary education and careers, the GED® test is administered by computer. As a result, the following two high-level standards, which correspond with national career- and college-readiness standards, broadly govern the writing tasks.

1. Draw relevant and sufficient evidence from a literary or informational text to support analysis and reflection
2. Use technology to produce writing, demonstrating sufficient command of keyboarding skills

Candidate responses will be scored by a multi-dimensional rubric that focuses on three core elements (“traits”):

- **Trait 1:** Creation of Arguments and Use of Evidence
- **Trait 2:** Development of Ideas and Organizational Structure
- **Trait 3:** Clarity and Command of Standard English Conventions

More information about the rubrics can be found in Chapter 3.

About the assessment

Content specifications govern the proportions of content that appear on the test forms and ensure item distribution across the assessment targets.

Writing Assessment Targets ³	Range of Depth of Knowledge (DOK) Levels ⁴
Common Core Connections: R.112	
W.1 Determine the details of what is explicitly stated and make logical inferences or valid claim that square with textual evidence.	1-3
Common Core Connection: W.1, W.2 and W.4	
W.2 Produce an extended analytic response in which the writer introduces the idea(s) or claim(s) clearly; creates an organization that logically sequences information; develops the idea(s) or claim(s) thoroughly with well-chosen examples, facts, or details from the text; and maintains a coherent focus.	2-3
Common Core Connection: W.5 and L.1, L.2. and L.3	
W.3 Write clearly and demonstrate sufficient command of standard English conventions. ⁵	1-2

³ See the Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts and Literacy at www.corestandards.org for more information on the reference codes listed at the beginning of each Writing Assessment Target.

⁴ The Depth of Knowledge (DOK) levels correspond with Norman Webb’s (University of Wisconsin) Depth of Knowledge model of cognitive complexity.

⁵ “Sufficient command of standard English conventions” is meant to signal that the assessment would seek “mostly correct use” by students, not “total correctness.” See RLA Extended Response Scoring Rubric, Trait 3 (page 3.10) for more information.

In the career- and college-readiness standards, writing skills are deeply integrated with reading skills. Therefore, extended response items on the RLA test require test-takers to apply skills described in Reading Anchor Standards 1 and 10 (see GED® RLA Assessment Targets) as they analyze source texts in their own writing.

Language Conventions and Usage on the GED® RLA Test

The language component of the GED® RLA test measures a candidate's ability to demonstrate command of a foundational set of conventions of standard English that have been identified as most important for career and college readiness by higher education instructors of post-secondary entry-level, credit-bearing composition courses. This core set of skills includes essential components of grammar, usage, capitalization, and punctuation.

The GED® RLA test assesses these skills in an authentic context. Test-takers are asked to edit phrases or sentences to demonstrate their knowledge of this core set of skills. In these "editing" items, highlighted words or phrases appear in dropdown menus offering alternatives, which will include a clear best choice alongside common errors or misconceptions.

Language Assessment Targets ⁶	Range of Depth of Knowledge (DOK) Levels ⁷
Common Core Connection: L.1	
Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking.	
L.1.1 Edit to correct errors involving frequently confused words and homonyms, including contractions (passed, past; two, too, to; there, their, they're; knew, new; it's its).	1-2
L.1.2 Edit to correct errors in straightforward subject-verb agreement.	1-2
L.1.3 Edit to correct errors in pronoun usage, including pronoun-antecedent agreement, unclear pronoun references, and pronoun case.	1-2
L.1.4 Edit to eliminate non-standard or informal usage (e.g., correctly use try to win the game instead of try and win the game).	1-2
L.1.5 Edit to eliminate dangling or misplaced modifiers or illogical word order (e.g., correctly use to meet almost all requirements instead of to almost meet all requirements.)	1-2
L.1.6 Edit to ensure parallelism and proper subordination and coordination.	1-2
L.1.7 Edit to correct errors in subject-verb or pronoun antecedent agreement in more complicated situations (e.g., with compound subjects, interceding phrases, or collective nouns).	1-2
L.1.8 Edit to eliminate wordiness or awkward sentence construction.	1-2
L.1.9 Edit to ensure effective use of transitional words, conjunctive adverbs, and other words and phrases that support logic and clarity.	1-2
Common Core Connection: L.2	
Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English capitalization and punctuation when writing.	1-2
L.2.1 Edit to ensure correct use of capitalization (e.g., proper nouns, titles, and beginnings of sentences).	1-2
L.2.2 Edit to eliminate run-on sentences, fused sentences, or sentence fragments.	1-2
L.2.3 Edit to ensure correct use of apostrophes with possessive nouns.	1-2
L.2.4 Edit to ensure correct use of punctuation (e.g., commas in a series or in appositives and other non-essential elements, end marks, and appropriate punctuation for clause separation).	1-2

6 See the Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts and Literacy at www.corestandards.org for more information on the reference codes listed at the beginning of each Language Assessment Target.

7 The Depth of Knowledge (DOK) levels correspond with Norman Webb's (University of Wisconsin) Depth of Knowledge model of cognitive complexity

Item Types & Layouts

Item Types in Reasoning Through Language Arts

The GED® test uses a variety of item types, made possible through computer-based testing. The computer-based testing platform offers the opportunity to use interactive item types that are not possible on a pencil-and-paper test. The item types are listed below.

The GED® RLA test is composed of several passage sets. Each passage set includes texts ranging from 400-900 words and six to eight associated test questions (See Chapter Three: Passage Requirements and Exemplars for more detailed information on RLA passages). All items on the GED® RLA test are based on a source text or multiple source texts. There are no stand-alone items on the RLA test.

The RLA test includes:

- Multiple choice items
- Drag-and-drop items (Technology-enhanced)
- Drop-down items embedded in passages (Technology-enhanced)
- One 45-minute extended response item

These items assess the full depth and breadth of skills outlined in the GED® RLA Assessment Targets. Test-takers can apply different cognitive strategies with the wide variety of item types, demonstrating proficiency with the RLA content. This allows GED Testing Service to assess the targeted content at a number of Depth of Knowledge (DOK) levels.

Technology-Enhanced Items

In technology-enhanced (TE) items, test-takers interact with the content in an authentic way. Test-takers may be asked to select blocks of text, select multiple answers from a list, drag an answer to a location, or manipulate symbols or other graphics.

Multiple choice (MC)

Multiple choice (MC) items consist of a question accompanied by several possible answer choices. This item type is used to assess every indicator listed in the GED® RLA Assessment Targets. Multiple choice items are a reliable method for measuring skills and knowledge at a range of cognitive levels in a standardized manner. MC items on the GED® test have four answer options and all MC items are associated with a reading (stimulus) passage.

Drag-and-drop items

Drag-and-drop items require test-takers to move small images, words, or short phrases to designated drop targets on a computer screen. They are often used to assess a test-taker's ability to classify or sequence information. For example, a drag-and-drop task might require test-takers to order events in a passage on the basis of chronology or of cause and effect. They may also provide opportunities for test-takers to analyze an author's arguments by classifying the evidence provided as sufficient or insufficient. These items may use a variety of different graphic representations, including Venn diagrams, timelines, and other organizers.

Drop-down

Drop-down items are items with multiple response options embedded directly within a text. On the RLA test, this item type is used primarily to assess the language skills, such as conventions of Edited American English, standard usage, and punctuation, outlined in the GED® RLA Assessment Targets. These items are designed to mimic the editing process as authentically as possible. Variations of a target phrase will appear as options in drop-down menus within the text. Once the test-taker selects an option, the answer will show on the screen as part of the text.

Extended response (ER)

Extended response (ER) items on the RLA test are 45-minute tasks that require test-takers to analyze two source texts in order to produce a writing sample. The source texts do not exceed 650 words total. The ER prompts are designed to elicit analytical writing that uses evidence from the source texts. These ERs are scored on three traits as outlined in the Extended Response Multi-dimensional Scoring Rubric (found in Chapter Three).

The three traits on the rubric pertain to how well test-takers:

1. analyze arguments and gather evidence found in source texts to support their positions
2. develop and organize their writing
3. demonstrate fluency with conventions of Edited American English

Each of these three traits are scored on a 0-1-2 scale. For more information on how the ERs are scored, see the Chapter Four: Extended Response Scoring Rubrics.

Item Layouts in Reasoning Through Language Arts

Item layouts are shown to highlight the structure of each item type described in the previous section. The content in the item layouts shown in this guide is not representative of the GED® test and is merely included to show test item functionality rather than content.

Multiple Choice Item and a Passage

This layout allows test-takers to see the text and item simultaneously.

Social Studies - Candidate Name Question 1 of 10

Answer Explanation Flag for Review

page 1 page 2 page 3

The chart below describes the four methods used to amend the U.S. Constitution.

	Step 1	Step 2
1.	A two-thirds vote in both houses of the U.S. Congress	Ratified by three-fourths of the state legislatures
2.	A two-thirds vote in both houses of the U.S. Congress	Ratified by ratification conventions in three-fourths of the states
3.	A national constitutional convention called by two-thirds of the state legislatures	Ratified by three-fourths of the state legislatures
4.	A national constitutional convention called by two-thirds of the state legislatures	Ratified by ratification conventions in three-fourths of the states

Which statement correctly describes an important way that the process of amending the U.S. Constitution is different from the process of creating federal laws?

- A. Only one government branch is involved in the amendment process.
- B. Only one legislative body can conclude the amendment process.
- C. Only state legislatures are involved in the amendment process.
- D. Only state governments can start the amendment process.

Previous Next

Drag-and-drop Item

This example using math content shows six elements of an equation (boxed numbers and boxed letter x), three of which would be selected and dragged to one of the drop targets in the equation boxes next to “y =.” In items that use this layout, the appearance and number of the drag tokens and the drop targets may vary, but all drag-and-drop items allow test-takers to interact with the material as they move objects around on the screen.

Mathematical Reasoning - Candidate Name
Question 6 of 10

Answer Explanation Calculator
Flag for Review

A scientist is studying red maple tree growth in a state park. She measured the trunk diameters of a sample of trees in the same month every other year. The tables show the data for two of the trees.

Tree 1		Tree 2	
Year	Trunk Diameter (inches)	Year	Trunk Diameter (inches)
1	18.6	1	11.4
3	19.2	3	12.0
5	19.8	5	12.6
7	20.4	7	13.2
9	21.0	9	13.8
11	21.6	11	14.4
13	22.2	13	15.0

This is the final year in which she will collect data. When her data collection is complete, she will predict future red maple tree growth.

Formula Sheet
Calculator Reference

The scientist creates an equation that models her data for each tree so that she can predict the diameter in the future. Complete a linear equation that fits the data for tree 1, where x is the year and y is the trunk diameter, in inches.

Click on the variables and numbers you want to select and drag them into the boxes.

Equation for Tree 1

$$y = \boxed{0.3} \boxed{} + \boxed{0.6}$$

-0.6

-0.3

18.0

18.3

18.6

x

← Previous
Next →

Drop-down Item

In this item type, showing example content from science, test-takers will select their answers from a drop-down menu that appears embedded within the text. This item layout is used in editing items on the RLA test.

Mathematical Reasoning - Candidate Name Question 8 of 10

Answer Explanation Calculator Flag for Review

Formula Sheet Calculator Reference

The graph shows the level of ibuprofen, y units, in a patient's bloodstream x hours after the ibuprofen was taken.

Time Since Ibuprofen Was Taken (hours)	Ibuprofen Level (units)
0	0
1	6
2	4
3	3
4	2
5	1
8	0

The level of ibuprofen in the patient's bloodstream increased from hours to hours.

Select...

0

2/3

2 1/2

5

8

Passage and Response Box

This item layout is used to display extended response (ER) items. Pages in passages will be tabbed so that test-takers can easily navigate through longer texts. Also, the question or prompt and instructions are visible to test-takers as they read the passage.

The screenshot displays a digital assessment interface. At the top, it shows 'RLA - Candidate Name' on the left and 'Question 10 of 10' on the right. Below this, there are tabs for 'Answer' and 'Explanation', with 'Answer' selected. A 'Flag for Review' button is also visible. The main content area is divided into two columns. The left column contains a passage titled 'An Analysis of Daylight Saving Time' with three numbered paragraphs. The right column contains instructions for the response box, including a prompt to analyze both positions and a note that the response should be typed in the box below. At the bottom of the interface, there are 'Previous' and 'Next' navigation buttons.

RLA - Candidate Name Question 10 of 10

Answer Explanation

page 1 | page 2 | page 3 | page 4

An Analysis of Daylight Saving Time

- Twice a year, most Americans adjust their clocks before bedtime to prepare for Daylight Saving Time (DST). Every spring, clocks are moved ahead one hour. In the fall, they are moved back one hour, and all to maximize the benefits of the sun. DST was first implemented in the United States in 1918 to conserve resources for the war effort, though proponents encouraged its adoption long before then. Benjamin Franklin, for example, touted the idea of DST to citizens of France way back in 1784!

DST in America

- For years following DST's U.S. debut, cities could choose if and when they wanted to participate. However, by the 1960s, the open choice resulted in various cities throughout the United States using different times. These varying times created confusion, particularly for entertainment and transportation schedules. Imagine traveling across several states, each adhering to its own little time zone!
- In order to remedy the confusing situation, Congress established a start and stop date for DST when it passed the Uniform Time Act of 1966. Although this act helped clarify when DST went into effect around the country, cities were not required to use DST. To this day, parts of Arizona and all of Hawaii, for example, do not use DST.

The article presents arguments from both supporters and critics of Daylight Saving Time who disagree about the practice's impact on energy consumption and safety.

In your response, analyze both positions presented in the article to determine which one is best supported. Use relevant and specific evidence from the article to support your response.

Type your response in the box below. You should expect to spend up to 45 minutes in planning, drafting, and editing your response.

Extended Response

Extended Response Scoring Rubrics

The Reasoning Through Language Arts (RLA) test includes one extended response (ER) item that requires test-takers to analyze source texts and use evidence to support their arguments. The ER is scored through reference to a three-trait, multi-dimensional rubric that identifies the qualities of a test-taker's writing that will be evaluated. For example, the development of an organizational structure is an important quality of writing that is included in Trait 2 (see below).

In the RLA rubric, these three traits are adapted from career- and college-readiness standards in English Language Arts. The rubric focuses on three key elements of writing:

- Trait 1: Creation of Arguments and Use of Evidence
- Trait 2: Development of Ideas and Organizational Structure
- Trait 3: Clarity and Command of Standard English Conventions

On the RLA test, test-takers are given 45 minutes in a separately-timed section to read two source texts, compose a response, and review and edit what they have written. These responses are scored on a 6-point scale with each trait being worth up to two points. The final raw score on the ER item is then double-weighted so that it represents up to 12 raw score points on the overall RLA test.

For each ER item, committees of subject matter experts have reviewed a selection of test-taker responses taken from field testing. These experts have determined the range of responses that represent each score point in the ER scoring rubric. Representative

responses from the rangefinding pool comprise sets of exemplars that were used to train scorers.

Holistic Scoring vs. Analytic Scoring

Holistic scoring is a method through which scorers evaluate a test-taker's writing as a whole, based on the overall impression that the writing leaves on the reader, considering a number of criteria (e.g., how well the test-taker develops ideas, how well he or she maintains focus on a main idea throughout the writing sample, etc.).

Analytic scoring, on the other hand, is a method through which test-taker responses are evaluated on several dimensions separately. In analytic scoring, points are usually added for each dimension present or subtracted for each dimension missing. This is unlike holistic scoring, in which points are awarded at the end of an evaluation for the response's overall impression on the reader.

The GED® test extended response (ER) items are scored using a hybrid approach. As mentioned, the RLA ER multi-dimensional rubric breaks down the evaluation criteria into three overall categories, each category encompassing several dimensions:

- Trait 1: Creation of Arguments and Use of Evidence
- Trait 2: Development of Ideas and Organizational Structure
- Trait 3: Clarity and Command of Standard English Conventions

Each of the dimensions are weighted equally when readers are assigning scores to individual responses. Each of the three traits have multiple aspects or "dimensions" that are described in the rubric as bullets underneath each trait. Each bullet in each trait of the rubric represents a distinct **dimension or quality of writing**. Each score point describes the same dimensions, but at varying levels of mastery. For instance, in Trait 1 of the RLA rubric, there are three main qualities that involve the creation of arguments and use of evidence in test-takers' writing samples reflecting how well the test-taker:

1. establishes an argument and uses information from given source texts to support a stance
2. analyzes the issue and/or the validity of argument presented in the source texts

3. integrates evidence from the source text with his or her own ideas about the topic

Each of these three dimensions are taken together to determine a score for Trait 1 on a 0 to 2 scale.

It is important to note that no two responses are the same. Some responses may be stronger in one dimension, while others have strengths in another. However, the dimensions can compensate for each other to some degree such that, on balance, responses that demonstrate similar levels of overall proficiency will be given similar scores.

Similarly, Traits 2 and 3 have multiple dimensions that readers must weigh together in order to determine scores on those traits. In other words, each trait constitutes a holistic rubric in itself. However, because we have divided scores into three traits, and scores from all three traits are added together to determine an individual test-taker's score on the ER, the multi-trait rubric can also be considered partially analytic.

Test-takers can earn up to 2 points on each trait, or up to 6 points overall, though the final score is then double-weighted to represent the importance of writing skills in the test-taker's overall score on the RLA test. This scoring model, which brings together the added precision of analytic scoring with the compensatory, balanced approach of holistic scoring, allows for scores that most accurately reflect test-takers' abilities to write arguments.

Breaking down the ER Scoring Rubric

See Appendix C for a detailed discussion about the dimensions in each of the three traits.

Score	Description
Trait 1: Creation of Arguments and Use of Evidence	
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • generates text-based argument(s) and establishes a purpose that is connected to the prompt • cites relevant and specific evidence from source text(s) to support argument (may include few irrelevant pieces of evidence or unsupported claims) • analyzes the issue and/or evaluates the validity of the argumentation within the source texts (e.g., distinguishes between supported and unsupported claims, makes reasonable inferences about underlying premises or assumptions, identifies fallacious reasoning, evaluates the credibility of sources, etc.)
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • generates an argument and demonstrates some connection to the prompt • cites some evidence from source text(s) to support argument (may include a mix of relevant and irrelevant citations or a mix of textual and non-textual references) • partially analyzes the issue and/or evaluates the validity of the argumentation within the source texts; may be simplistic, limited, or inaccurate
0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • may attempt to create an argument OR lacks purpose or connection to the prompt OR does neither • cites minimal or no evidence from source text(s) (sections of text may be copied from source) • minimally analyzes the issue and/or evaluates the validity of the argumentation within the source texts; may completely lack analysis or demonstrate minimal or no understanding of the given argument(s)
Trait 2: Development of Ideas and Organizational Structure	
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • contains ideas that are well developed and generally logical; most ideas are elaborated upon • contains a sensible progression of ideas with clear connections between details and main points • establishes an organizational structure that conveys the message and purpose of the response; applies transitional devices appropriately • establishes and maintains a formal style and appropriate tone that demonstrate awareness of the audience and purpose of the task • chooses specific words to express ideas clearly
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • contains ideas that are inconsistently developed and/or may reflect simplistic or vague reasoning; some ideas are elaborated upon • demonstrates some evidence of a progression of ideas, but details may be disjointed or lacking connection to main ideas • establishes an organization structure that may inconsistently group ideas or is partially effective at conveying the message of the task; uses transitional devices inconsistently • may inconsistently maintain a formal style and appropriate tone to demonstrate an awareness of the audience and purpose of the task • may occasionally misuse words and/or choose words that express ideas in vague terms
0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • contains ideas that are insufficiently or illogically developed, with minimal or no elaboration on main ideas • contains an unclear or no progression of ideas; details may be absent or irrelevant to the main ideas • establishes an ineffective or no discernable organizational structure; does not apply transitional devices, or does so inappropriately • uses an informal style and/or inappropriate tone that demonstrates limited or no awareness of audience and purpose • may frequently misuse words, overuse slang or express ideas in a vague or repetitious manner

Score	Description
Trait 3: Clarity and Command of Standard English Conventions	
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • demonstrates largely correct sentence structure and a general fluency that enhances clarity with specific regard to the following skills: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) varied sentence structure within a paragraph or paragraphs 2) correct subordination, coordination and parallelism 3) avoidance of wordiness and awkward sentence structures 4) usage of transitional words, conjunctive adverbs and other words that support logic and clarity 5) avoidance of run-on sentences, fused sentences, or sentence fragments • demonstrates competent application of conventions with specific regard to the following skills: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) frequently confused words and homonyms, including contractions 2) subject-verb agreement 3) pronoun usage, including pronoun antecedent agreement, unclear pronoun references, and pronoun case 4) placement of modifiers and correct word order 5) capitalization (e.g., proper nouns, titles, and beginnings of sentences) 6) use of apostrophes with possessive nouns 7) use of punctuation (e.g., commas in a series or in appositives and other non-essential elements, end marks, and appropriate punctuation for clause separation) • may contain some errors in mechanics and conventions, but they do not interfere with comprehension; overall, standard usage is at a level appropriate for on-demand draft writing.
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • demonstrates inconsistent sentence structure; may contain some repetitive, choppy, rambling, or awkward sentences that may detract from clarity; demonstrates inconsistent control over skills 1-5 as listed in the first bullet under Trait 3, Score Point 2 above • demonstrates inconsistent control of basic conventions with specific regard to skills 1-7 as listed in the second bullet under Trait 3, Score Point 2 above • may contain frequent errors in mechanics and conventions that occasionally interfere with comprehension; standard usage is at a minimally acceptable level of appropriateness for on demand draft writing.
0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • demonstrates consistently flawed sentence structure such that meaning may be obscured; demonstrates minimal control over skills 1-5 as listed in the first bullet under Trait 3, Score Point 2 above • demonstrates minimal control of basic conventions with specific regard to skills 1-7 as listed in the second bullet under Trait 3, Score Point 2 above • contains severe and frequent errors in mechanics and conventions that interfere with comprehension; overall, standard usage is at an unacceptable level for on-demand draft writing. <p>OR</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • response is insufficient to demonstrate level of mastery over conventions and usage

Non-scorable Responses (Score of 0/Condition Codes)

- Response exclusively contains text copied from source text(s) or prompt Response shows no evidence that test-taker has read the prompt or is off-topic Response is incomprehensible
- Response is not in English
- Response has not been attempted (blank)

Passage Requirements and Exemplars

Passages selected for inclusion on the GED® RLA test reflect a number of guidelines with regard to both length and content.

- Stimulus passages for reading comprehension items range from 400 to 900 words in length
- Drop-down item editing passages range from 350 to 450 words
- Extended response passages range from 550 to 650 words

Literary Passages (25% of RLA Stimulus Passages):

These passages feature the conventions of good storytelling, such as characterization, thematic elements, and plot lines. Literary elements (metaphor, imagery, etc.) and rich use of language are also helpful, though the test questions themselves focus minimally on these elements.

Excerpts exhibit some sense of “completeness,” even if they are not composed of a discrete text with a beginning, middle, and end. The entire pool of fiction passages contains a variety of texts in order to provide natural opportunities to assess test-taker understanding of the full range of RLA Assessment Targets.

Informational Passages (75% of RLA Stimulus Passages):

These passages are selected to be of high interest for a wide range of GED® test-takers. They contain a variety of topics focused around three main categories: science, social studies, and workplace documents. Informational passages reflect real-world situations and experiences. Categories of informational texts are listed below.

- **Informational science**

Passages in this category focus on a broad interpretation of two main themes:

1. Human health and living systems (e.g. nutrition, genetics, etc.)
2. Energy and related systems (e.g. conservation, modes of energy production, photosynthesis, etc.)

Some passages are more academic in approach, while others are directed toward a more general audience, but all science passages are intended to be interesting and engaging. Useful diagrams or graphics may occasionally

accompany these passages in order to provide an opportunity for creative items and increased reader interest.

- **Informational social studies**

Passages in this category are excerpts or articles pertaining to the theme of “the Great American Conversation.” They may include excerpts from documents such as the Bill of Rights and the preamble to the U.S. Constitution (excluding the Declaration of Independence and the U.S. Constitution, as the reading levels of those documents exceed the high school-level target of the GED® test) They may also draw from any number of public speeches, U.S. Supreme Court decisions, and other writings that express important concepts about American civics. For instance, a letter from folk icon Woody Guthrie to a librarian at the National Archives about maintaining an archive of folk music lyrics and recordings is an example of an ideal passage. A letter from Teddy Roosevelt on the importance of preserving public land as national space would also be part of “the Great American Conversation.” These documents could consist of correspondence, articles, speeches, journal entries, or other important primary or secondary documents relating to American civics.

- **Informational workplace**

Passages in this category may include workplace letters, resume cover letters, letters to customer service departments, memos, flyers for company-sponsored events, explanations of initiatives, procedural documents, descriptions of activities, or changes in policies. They also include community-related documents like public postings or letters to the editor.

Again, these documents reflect real-world situations and are intended to be engaging to a broad range of readers.

Passages used for “editing” item sets

The subject matter for these passages is drawn primarily from workplace and community documents, like the informational workplace passages described above. They are similar to the types of texts that test-takers might encounter or produce in their daily

lives. They are written clearly and simply, but they also provide variety in sentence structure and grammatical constructions so that the range of elements of conventions defined in the Language Conventions and Usage targets can be measured. These passages do not exceed 450 words.

Source texts for extended response prompts:

These passages may be drawn from the same categories as the informational passages: social studies, science, and workplace. Passages feature paired texts, where each text focuses on different aspects of a particular issue. These texts include empirical support that is paraphrased from authentic sources. The source texts for ER prompts do not exceed 650 words.

The prompts associated with these passages require test-takers to analyze arguments found within the source texts and use evidence directly from the texts themselves to support their responses. The GED® RLA test extended response (ER) prompts are written with the intent to elicit responses that draw from the skills specified in the extended response scoring rubric.

Passage Text Complexity

Passages on the GED® test also have a varying range of complexity levels. The reading level range is similar to the range of those encountered in typical high school-level courses in English language arts, science, and social studies.

The following series of excerpts are from Common Core State Standards Appendix B. They are similar to the types of texts that appear on the GED® RLA Test and are provided for illustrative purposes only.

Passage Exemplars

Churchill, Winston. "Blood, Toil, Tears and Sweat: Address to Parliament on May 13th, 1940." Lend Me Your Ears: Great Speeches in History, 3rd Edition. Edited by William Safire. New York: W. W. Norton, 2004. (1940)

From "Winston Churchill Braces Britons to Their Task"

I say to the House as I said to ministers who have joined this government, I have nothing to offer but blood, toil, tears, and sweat. We have before us an ordeal of the most grievous kind. We have before us many, many months of struggle and suffering.

You ask, what is our policy? I say it is to wage war by land, sea, and air. War with all our might and with all the strength God has given us, and to wage war against a monstrous tyranny never surpassed in the dark and lamentable catalogue of human crime. That is our policy.

You ask, what is our aim? I can answer in one word. It is victory. Victory at all costs - Victory in spite of all terrors - Victory, however long and hard the road may be, for without victory there is no survival.

I take up my task in buoyancy and hope. I feel sure that our cause will not be suffered to fail among men. I feel entitled at this juncture, at this time, to claim the aid of all and to say, "Come then, let us go forward together with our united strength."

United States. Preamble and First Amendment to the United States Constitution. (1787, 1791)

Preamble

We, the People of the United States, in Order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defence, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution of the United States of America.

Amendment I

Congress shall make no law respecting the establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.

Petroski, Henry. "The Evolution of the Grocery Bag." American**Scholar 72.4 (Autumn 2003). (2003)**

That much-reviled bottleneck known as the American supermarket checkout lane would be an even greater exercise in frustration were it not for several technological advances. The Universal Product Code and the decoding laser scanner, introduced in 1974, tally a shopper's groceries far more quickly and accurately than the old method of inputting each purchase manually into a cash register. But beeping a large order past the scanner would have led only to a faster pileup of cans and boxes down the line, where the bagger works, had it not been for the introduction, more than a century earlier, of an even greater technological masterpiece: the square-bottomed paper bag.

The geometry of paper bags continues to hold a magical appeal for those of us who are fascinated by how ordinary things are designed and made. Originally, grocery bags were created on demand by storekeepers, who cut, folded, and pasted sheets of paper, making versatile containers into which purchases could be loaded for carrying home. The first paper bags manufactured commercially are said to have been made in Bristol, England, in the 1840s. In 1852, a "Machine for Making Bags of Paper" was patented in America by Francis Wolle, of Bethlehem, Pennsylvania. According to Wolle's own description of the machine's operation, "pieces of paper of suitable length are given out from a roll of the required width, cut off from the roll and otherwise suitably cut to the required shape, folded, their edges pasted and lapped, and formed into complete and

perfect bags.” The “perfect bags” produced at the rate of eighteen hundred per hour by Wolle’s machine were, of course, not perfect, nor was his machine. The history of design has yet to see the development of a perfect object, though it has seen many satisfactory ones and many substantially improved ones. The concept of comparative improvement is embedded in the paradigm for invention, the better mousetrap. No one is ever likely to lay claim to a “best” mousetrap, for that would preclude the inventor himself from coming up with a still better mousetrap without suffering the embarrassment of having previously declared the search complete. As with the mousetrap, so with the bag.

“Space Probe.” *Astronomy & Space: From the Big Bang to the Big Crunch*. Edited by Phillis Engelbert. Farmington Hills, Mich.: Gale Cengage Learning, 2009. (2009)

A space probe is an unpiloted spacecraft that leaves Earth’s orbit to explore the Moon, planets, asteroids, comets, or other objects in outer space as directed by onboard computers and/or instructions send from Earth. The purpose of such missions is to make scientific observations, such as taking pictures, measuring atmospheric conditions, and collecting soil samples, and to bring or report the data back to Earth.

Numerous space probes have been launched since the former Soviet Union first fired Luna 1 toward the Moon in 1959. Probes have now visited each of the eight planets in the solar system.

In fact, two probes—Voyager 1 and Voyager 2—are approaching the edge of the solar system, for their eventual trip into the interstellar medium. By January 2008 Voyager 1 was about 9.4 billion miles (15.2 billion kilometers) from the Sun and in May 2008 it entered the heliosheath (the boundary where the solar wind is thought to end), which is the area that roughly divides the solar system from interstellar space. Voyager 2 is not quite as far as its sister probe. Voyager 1 is expected

to be the first human space probe to leave the solar system. Both Voyager probes are still transmitting signals back to Earth. They are expected to help gather further information as to the true boundary of the solar system.

The earliest probes traveled to the closest extraterrestrial target, the Moon. The former Soviet Union launched a series of Luna probes that provided humans with first pictures of the far side of the Moon. In 1966, Luna 9 made the first successful landing on the Moon and sent back television footage from the Moon's surface.

The National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) initially made several unsuccessful attempts to send a probe to the Moon. Not until 1964 did a Ranger probe reach its mark and send back thousands of pictures. Then, a few months after Luna 9, NASA landed Surveyor on the Moon.

In the meantime, NASA was moving ahead with the first series of planetary probes, called Mariner. Mariner 2 first reached the planet Venus in 1962. Later Mariner spacecrafts flew by Mars in 1964 and 1969, providing detailed images of that planet. In 1971, Mariner 9 became the first spacecraft to orbit Mars. During its year in orbit, Mariner 9's two television cameras transmitted footage of an intense Martian dust storm, as well as images of 90 percent of the planet's surface and the two Martian natural satellites (moons).

Encounters were also made with Mars in 1976 by the U.S. probes Viking 1 and Viking 2. Each Viking spacecraft consisted of both an orbiter and a lander. Viking 1 made the first successful soft landing on Mars on July 20, 1976. Soon after, Viking 2 landed on the opposite side of the planet. The Viking orbiters made reports on the Martian weather and photographed almost the entire surface of the planet.

Henry, O. "The Gift of the Magi." *The Best Short Stories of O. Henry*. New York: Modern Library, 1994. (1906)

White fingers and nimble tore at the string and paper. And then an ecstatic scream of joy; and then, alas! a quick feminine change to hysterical tears and wails, necessitating the immediate employment of all the comforting powers of the lord of the flat.

For there lay The Combs—the set of combs, side and back, that Della had worshipped long in a Broadway window. Beautiful combs, pure tortoise shell, with jewelled rims—just the shade to wear in the beautiful vanished hair. They were expensive combs, she knew, and her heart had simply craved and yearned over them without the least hope of possession. And now, they were hers, but the tresses that should have adorned the coveted adornments were gone.

But she hugged them to her bosom, and at length she was able to look up with dim eyes and a smile and say: "My hair grows so fast, Jim!"

And then Della leaped up like a little singed cat and cried, "Oh, oh!"

Jim had not yet seen his beautiful present. She held it out to him eagerly upon her open palm. The dull precious metal seemed to flash with a reflection of her bright and ardent spirit.

"Isn't it a dandy, Jim? I hunted all over town to find it. You'll have to look at the time a hundred times a day now. Give me your watch. I want to see how it looks on it."

Instead of obeying, Jim tumbled down on the couch and put his hands under the back of his head and smiled.

"Dell," said he, "let's put our Christmas presents away and keep 'em a while. They're too nice to use just at present. I sold the watch to get the money to buy your combs. And now suppose you put the chops on."

The magi, as you know, were wise men—wonderfully wise men—who brought gifts to the Babe in the manger. They invented the art of giving Christmas presents.

Being wise, their gifts were no doubt wise ones, possibly bearing the privilege of exchange in case of duplication. And here I have lamely related to you the uneventful chronicle of two foolish children in a flat who most unwisely sacrificed for each other the greatest treasures of their house. But in a last word to the wise of these days let it be said that of all who give gifts these two were the wisest. Of all who give and receive gifts, such as they are wisest. Everywhere they are wisest. They are the magi.

Twain, Mark. *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*. New York: Modern Library, 2001. (1876)

From Chapter 2: “The Glorious Whitewasher”

But Tom’s energy did not last. He began to think of the fun he had planned for this day, and his sorrows multiplied. Soon the free boys would come tripping along on all sorts of delicious expeditions, and they would make a world of fun of him for having to work—the very thought of it burnt him like fire. He got out his worldly wealth and examined it—bits of toys, marbles, and trash; enough to buy an exchange of WORK, maybe, but not half enough to buy so much as half an hour of pure freedom. So he returned his straitened means to his pocket, and gave up the idea of trying to buy the boys. At this dark and hopeless moment an inspiration burst upon him! Nothing less than a great, magnificent inspiration.

He took up his brush and went tranquilly to work. Ben Rogers hove in sight presently—the very boy, of all boys, whose ridicule he had been dreading. Ben’s gait was the hop-skip-and-jump—proof enough that his heart was light and his anticipations high. He was eating an apple, and giving a long, melodious whoop, at intervals, followed by a deeptoned ding-dong-dong, ding-dong-dong, for he was personating a steamboat. As he drew near, he slackened speed, took the middle of the street, leaned far over to starboard and rounded to ponderously and with laborious pomp and circumstance—for he was personating the Big Missouri, and considered himself to

be drawing nine feet of water. He was boat and captain and engine-bells combined, so he had to imagine himself standing on his own hurricane-deck giving the orders and executing them:

"Stop her, sir! Ting-a-ling-ling!" The headway ran almost out, and he drew up slowly toward the sidewalk.

"Ship up to back! Ting-a-ling-ling!" His arms straightened and stiffened down his sides.

"Set her back on the stabboard! Ting-a-ling-ling! Chow! ch- chow-wow! Chow!" His right hand, meantime, describing stately circles—for it was representing a forty-foot wheel.

"Let her go back on the labboard! Ting-a-lingling! Chow-ch- chow-chow!" The left hand began to describe circles.

"Stop the stabboard! Ting-a-ling-ling! Stop the labboard! Come ahead on the stabboard! Stop her! Let your outside turn over slow! Ting-a-ling-ling! Chow-ow-ow! Get out that head-line! LIVELY now! Come—out with your spring-line— what're you about there! Take a turn round that stump with the bight of it! Stand by that stage, now—let her go! Done with the engines, sir! Ting-a-ling-ling! SH'T! S'H'T! SH'T!" (trying the gauge-cocks)."

Tom went on whitewashing—paid no attention to the steamboat. Ben stared a moment and then said: "Hi-YI! YOU'RE up a stump, ain't you!"

No answer. Tom surveyed his last touch with the eye of an artist, then he gave his brush another gentle sweep and surveyed the result, as before. Ben ranged up alongside of him. Tom's mouth watered for the apple, but he stuck to his work. Ben said:

"Hello, old chap, you got to work, hey?" Tom wheeled suddenly and said:

"Why, it's you, Ben! I warn't noticing."

"Say—I'm going in a-swimming, I am. Don't you wish you could? But of course you'd druther WORK—wouldn't you? Course you would!"

Tom contemplated the boy a bit, and said: "What do you call work?"

"Why, ain't THAT work?"

Tom resumed his whitewashing, and answered carelessly: "Well, maybe it is, and maybe it ain't. All I know, is, it suits Tom Sawyer."

"Oh come, now, you don't mean to let on that you LIKE it?" The brush continued to move.

"Like it? Well, I don't see why I oughtn't to like it. Does a boy get a chance to whitewash a fence every day?"

That put the thing in a new light. Ben stopped nibbling his apple. Tom swept his brush daintily back and forth—stepped back to note the effect—added a touch here and there—criticised the effect again—Ben watching every move and getting more and more interested, more and more absorbed. Presently he said:

"Say, Tom, let ME whitewash a little."

Tom considered, was about to consent; but he altered his mind:

"No—no—I reckon it wouldn't hardly do, Ben. You see, Aunt Polly's awful particular about this fence—right here on the street, you know—but if it was the back fence I wouldn't mind and SHE wouldn't. Yes, she's awful particular about this fence; it's got to be done very careful; I reckon there ain't one boy in a thousand, maybe two thousand, that can do it the way it's got to be done."

"No—is that so? Oh come, now—lemme just try. Only just a little—I'd let YOU, if you was me, Tom."

Performance Level Descriptors

Performance Level Descriptors

Performance Level Descriptors explain the skills a test-taker generally demonstrates in order to score into one of four performance levels on the GED® test and the skills they need to develop to advance their score.

In the RLA content area, the performance levels are driven by the level of complexity of the texts about which test-takers must answer questions. That is, test-takers are asked to perform similar skills with texts that vary from simple to complex. Therefore, each level description contains references to example texts that are typical of what test-takers can comprehend and analyze at each level. In addition, the performance levels represent a progression of skills, from most basic to most sophisticated, with each performance level building on the skills developed at the lower levels.

The three performance levels for the GED® RLA test are Performance Level 1 - Below Passing, Performance Level 2 - Pass/High School Equivalency, Performance Level 3 - GED® College Ready, and Performance Level 4 - GED® College Ready + Credit.

RLA - Below Passing Level

Test-takers who score at this level are typically able to comprehend and analyze simple passages similar to those found in L.M. Montgomery's *Anne of Green Gables*, Joy Hakim's *A History of US*, and Colin A. Ronan's "Telescopes," and generally demonstrate **limited but developing** proficiency with the following skills:

- **Analyzing and Creating Text Features and Technique**
 - Make inferences about plot/sequence of events, characters/people, settings, or ideas in texts at a limited and/or inconsistent level
 - Analyze relationships within texts, including how events are important in relation to plot or conflict; how people, ideas, or events are connected, developed, or distinguished; how events contribute to theme or relate to key ideas; or how a setting or context shapes structure and meaning, at a limited and/or inconsistent level
 - Analyze the roles that details play in texts at a limited and/or inconsistent level
 - Analyze how meaning or tone is affected when one word is replaced with another at a limited and/or inconsistent level
 - Analyze the structural relationship between adjacent sections of text at a limited and/or inconsistent level
 - Analyze transitional language and determine how it functions in a text at a limited and/or inconsistent level
- **Using Evidence to Understand, Analyze, and Create Arguments**
 - Comprehend explicit details and main ideas in a text at a limited and/or inconsistent level
 - Summarize details and ideas in a text at a limited and/or inconsistent level
 - Make sentence-level inferences about details that support main ideas at a limited and/or inconsistent level
 - Determine which details support a main idea at a limited and/or inconsistent level

- Identify a theme, or identify which element(s) in a text support a theme at a limited and/or inconsistent level
- **Applying Knowledge of English Language Conventions and Usage**
 - Edit to correct errors involving frequently confused words at a limited and/or inconsistent level
 - Edit to correct errors in straightforward subject-verb agreement at a limited and/or inconsistent level
 - Edit to eliminate run-on sentences, fused sentences, or sentence fragments at a limited and/or inconsistent level
 - Edit to ensure correct use of punctuation at a limited and/or inconsistent level

In order to progress to the **Pass/High School Equivalency** level, test-takers need to:

1. **strengthen** the skills listed in the **Below Passing** level and apply them to texts at a **more challenging** level of complexity, such as Sandra Cisneros' "Eleven," John Steinbeck's *Travels With Charley: In Search of America*, and Donald Mackay's *The Building of Manhattan*, with a particular focus on improving the following skills:
 - Make inferences about plot/sequence of events, characters/people, settings, or ideas in texts
 - Analyze the roles that details play in complex literary or informational texts
 - Analyze the structural relationship between adjacent sections of text
 - Comprehend explicit details and main ideas in a text
 - Determine which details support a main idea
 - Edit to ensure correct use of punctuation

and

2. **develop** the following additional skills:
 - Order sequences of events in texts
 - Determine the meaning of words or phrases as they are used in a text, including determining connotative and figurative meanings from context
 - Analyze the impact of specific words, phrases, or figurative language in text, with a focus on an author's intent to convey information or construct an argument
 - Analyze how a particular sentence, paragraph, chapter, or section fits into the overall structure of a text and contributes to the development of ideas
 - Determine an author's point of view or purpose of a text
 - Infer an author's implicit as well as explicit purposes based on details in a text
 - Analyze how an author uses rhetorical techniques to advance his or her point of view or achieve a specific purpose
 - Infer implied main ideas in paragraphs and whole texts
 - Draw conclusions or make generalizations that require synthesis of multiple main ideas in text
 - Edit to eliminate dangling or misplaced modifiers or illogical word order
 - Edit to correct errors in subject-verb or pronoun-antecedent agreement in more complicated situations
 - Edit to ensure effective use of transitional words, conjunctive adverbs, and other words and phrases that support logic and clarity
 - Edit to ensure correct use of capitalization

RLA - GED® Pass / High School Equivalency Level

Test-takers who score at this level are typically able to demonstrate **satisfactory proficiency** with the skills identified in the Below Passing level as well as to comprehend and analyze challenging passages similar to Sandra Cisneros' "Eleven," John Steinbeck's *Travels With Charley: In Search of America*, and Donald Mackay's *The Building of Manhattan*. Test-takers who score in this performance level are typically able to demonstrate the following skills:

- **Analyzing and Creating Text Features and Technique**
 - Order sequences of events in texts at a satisfactory level
 - Make inferences about plot/sequence of events, characters/people, settings, or ideas in texts at a satisfactory level
 - Analyze relationships within texts, including how events are important in relation to plot or conflict; how people, ideas, or events are connected, developed, or distinguished; how events contribute to theme or relate to key idea; or how a setting or context shapes structure and meaning
 - Analyze the roles that details play in complex literary or informational texts at a satisfactory level
 - Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including determining connotative and figurative meanings from context
 - Analyze how meaning or tone is affected when one word is replaced with another, at a satisfactory level
 - Analyze the impact of specific words, phrases, or figurative language in text, with a focus on an author's intent to convey information or construct an argument
 - Analyze how a particular sentence, paragraph, chapter, or section fits into the overall structure of a text and contributes to the development of ideas
 - Analyze the structural relationship between adjacent sections of text at a satisfactory level
 - Analyze transitional language or signal words and determine how they refine meaning, emphasize certain

- ideas, or reinforce an author's purpose, at a satisfactory level
- Analyze how the structure of a paragraph, section, or passage shapes meaning, emphasizes key ideas, or supports an author's purpose
- Determine an author's point of view or purpose in texts, at a satisfactory level
- Infer an author's implicit as well as explicit purposes based on details in a text, at a satisfactory level
- Analyze how an author uses rhetorical techniques to advance his or her point of view or achieve a specific purpose
- **Using Evidence to Understand, Analyze, and Create Arguments**
 - Comprehend explicit details and main ideas in a text at a satisfactory level
 - Summarize details and ideas in text at a satisfactory level
 - Make sentence-level inferences about details that support main ideas at a satisfactory level
 - Infer implied main ideas in paragraphs and whole texts at a satisfactory level
 - Determine which details support a main idea at a satisfactory level
 - Identify a theme, or identify which element(s) in a text support a theme at a satisfactory level
 - Make evidence-based generalizations or hypotheses based on details in text, including clarifications, extensions, or applications of main ideas to new situations, at a satisfactory level
 - Draw conclusions or make generalizations that require synthesis of multiple main ideas at a satisfactory level
 - Identify specific pieces of evidence an author uses in support of claims or conclusions at a satisfactory level
 - Evaluate the relevance and sufficiency of evidence offered in support of a claim at a satisfactory level

- **Applying Knowledge of English Language Conventions and Usage**
 - Edit to correct errors involving frequently confused words at a satisfactory level
 - Edit to correct errors in pronoun usage at a satisfactory level
 - Edit to eliminate dangling or misplaced modifiers or illogical word order at a satisfactory level
 - Edit to correct errors in subject-verb or pronoun-antecedent agreement in more complicated situations at a satisfactory level
 - Edit to eliminate wordiness or awkward sentence construction at a satisfactory level
 - Edit to ensure effective use of transitional words, conjunctive adverbs, and other words and phrases that support logic and clarity, at a satisfactory level
 - Edit to ensure correct use of capitalization at a satisfactory level
 - Edit to eliminate run-on sentences, fused sentences, or sentence fragments at a satisfactory level
 - Edit to ensure correct use of apostrophes with possessive nouns at a satisfactory level
 - Edit to ensure correct use of punctuation at a satisfactory level

In order to progress to the **GED® College Ready** level, test-takers need to:

1. continue to **strengthen** the skills listed in the Below Passing and Pass/High School Equivalency levels and apply them to **complex** texts, such as Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, Martin Luther King Jr.'s "Letter from Birmingham Jail," and Euclid's *Elements*, with a particular focus on improving the following skills:
 - Infer relationships between ideas in a text
 - Analyze how the structure of a paragraph, section, or passage shapes meaning, emphasizes key ideas, or supports an author's purpose
 - Identify specific pieces of evidence an author uses in support of claims or conclusions
 - Evaluate the relevance and sufficiency of evidence offered in support of a claim
 - Edit to eliminate wordiness or awkward sentence construction

and

2. **develop** the following additional skills:
 - Analyze how an author distinguishes his or her position or responds to conflicting viewpoints
 - Compare two passages that present related ideas or themes in different genres or formats in order to evaluate differences in scope, purpose, emphasis, intended audience, or overall impact
 - Delineate the specific steps of an argument the author puts forward, including how the argument's claims build on one another
 - Distinguish claims that are supported by reasons and evidence from claims that are not
 - Assess whether the reasoning is valid; identify fallacious reasoning in an argument and evaluate its impact
 - Identify an underlying premise or assumption in an argument and evaluate the logical support and evidence provided
 - Edit to eliminate non-standard or informal usage
 - Edit to ensure parallelism and proper subordination and coordination

RLA - GED® College Ready Level

Test-takers who score at this performance level are typically able to analyze complex passages similar to Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, Martin Luther King Jr.'s "Letter from Birmingham Jail," and Euclid's *Elements*, as well as demonstrating strong abilities in the skills identified in the Pass/High School Equivalency level, including the following:

- **Analyzing and Creating Text Features and Technique**
 - Analyze the impact of specific words, phrases, or figurative language in texts, with a focus on an author's intent to convey information or construct an argument, at a strong level
 - Analyze how the structure of a paragraph, section, or passage shapes meaning, emphasizes key ideas, or supports an author's purpose, at a strong level
 - Determine an author's point of view or purpose in texts, at a strong level
 - Analyze how the author distinguishes his or her position from that of others or how an author acknowledges and responds to conflicting evidence or viewpoints, at a strong level
 - Draw specific comparisons between two texts that address similar themes or topics or between information presented in different formats, at a strong level
- **Using Evidence to Understand, Analyze, and Create Arguments**
 - Make evidence-based generalizations or hypotheses based on details in text, including clarifications, extensions, or applications of main ideas to new situations, at a strong level
 - Delineate the specific steps of an argument the author puts forward, including how the argument's claims build on one another, at a strong level
 - Compare two passages that present related ideas or themes in different genres or formats in order to evaluate differences in scope, purpose, emphasis, intended audience, or overall impact, at a strong level

- Identify specific pieces of evidence an author uses in support of claims or conclusions, at a strong level
- Evaluate the relevance and sufficiency of evidence offered in support of a claim, at a strong level
- Distinguish claims that are supported by reasons and evidence from claims that are not, at a strong level
- Assess whether reasoning is valid; identify fallacious reasoning in an argument and evaluate its impact, at a strong level
- Identify an underlying premise or assumption in an argument and evaluate the support, at a strong level
- **Applying Knowledge of English Language Conventions and Usage**
 - Edit to eliminate non-standard or informal usage, at a strong level
 - Edit to ensure parallelism and proper subordination and coordination, at a strong level
 - Edit to eliminate wordiness or awkward sentence construction, at a strong level
 - Edit to ensure correct use of apostrophes with possessive nouns, at a strong level

In order to progress to the **GED® College Ready + Credit** Level, test-takers need to:

1. **continue to develop** the skills listed in the previous performance levels and apply them to even more complex texts, such as Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye*, Thomas Jefferson's *The Declaration of Independence*, and Malcolm Gladwell's *The Tipping Point: How Little Things Can Make a Big Difference*, with a particular focus on strengthening the following skills:
 - Infer relationships between ideas in a text (e.g., an implicit cause and effect, parallel, or contrasting relationship)
 - Analyze how data or quantitative and/or visual information extends, clarifies, or contradicts information in text, or determine how data supports an author's argument
 - Compare two argumentative passages on the same topic that present opposing claims (either main or supporting claims) and analyze how each text emphasizes different evidence or advances a different interpretation of facts

RLA - GED® College Ready + Credit Level

Test-takers who score at this level are typically able to comprehend and analyze complex passages similar to that of Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye*, Thomas Jefferson's *The Declaration of Independence*, and Malcolm Gladwell's *The Tipping Point: How Little Things Can Make a Big Difference* and generally demonstrate outstanding proficiency with the skills identified in the previous performance levels, including the following:

- **Analyzing and Creating Text Features and Technique**
 - Infer relationships between ideas in a text (e.g., an implicit cause and effect, parallel, or contrasting relationship) at an outstanding level
 - Infer an author's implicit as well as explicit purposes based on details in text at an outstanding level
 - Draw specific comparisons between two texts that address similar themes or topics or between information presented in different formats at an outstanding level
 - Compare two passages in similar or closely related genres that share ideas or themes, focusing on similarities and/or differences in perspective, tone, style, structure, purpose, or impact at an outstanding level
- **Using Evidence to Understand, Analyze, and Create Arguments**
 - Infer implied main ideas in paragraphs or whole texts at an outstanding level
 - Analyze how data or quantitative and/or visual information extends, clarifies, or contradicts information in text, or determine how data supports an author's argument, at an outstanding level
 - Identify an underlying premise or assumption in an argument and evaluate the logical support and evidence provided, at an outstanding level
 - Compare two argumentative passages on the same topic that present opposing claims (either main or supporting claims) and analyze how each text emphasizes different evidence or advances a different interpretation of facts, at an outstanding level

- **Applying Knowledge of English Language Conventions and Usage**
 - Edit to correct errors in subject-verb or pronoun antecedent agreement in more complicated situations (e.g., with compound subjects, interceding phrases, or collective nouns) at an outstanding level
 - Edit to eliminate wordiness or awkward sentence construction at an outstanding level

Appendix

The GED® Test - RLA: A Content Comparison Between 2002 and the Current Test

Appendix A gives a breakdown of the similarities between the 2002 Series GED® Test and the current GED® test as well as a summary of the changes. Each content area's section contains a table showing the content specifications that are comparable across both tests, followed by a "What's different?" section that identifies specific innovations or improvements that we implemented in the Current test's content.

Reasoning Through Language Arts (RLA) – Reading: Similarities between the 2002 Test and Current Test.

Note: *Codes in the Current test column refer to the current GED® test Targets and Indicators as outlined in Chapter 1. The codes may not appear in numerical order, as the goal of the table below is to show areas of correspondence between the 2002 content and the current test content.*

RLA – Reading: Content Specifications	
2002	Current test
• Restate or paraphrase information.	R.2.1 Comprehend explicit details and main ideas in a text.
• Summarize main ideas.	R.2.2 Summarize details and ideas in text.
• Explain the primary implications of the text.	R.2.4 Infer implied main ideas in paragraphs or whole texts.
• Transfer concepts and principles from reading to a new context.	R.2.7 Make evidence-based generalizations or hypotheses based on details in text, including clarifications, extensions, or applications of main ideas to new situations.
• Draw conclusions and understand consequences.	R.2.8 Draw conclusions or make generalizations that require synthesis of multiple main ideas in text.
• Make inferences and recognize unstated assumptions	R.2.3 Make sentence-level inferences about details that support main ideas.
• Identify elements of style and structure and interpret the organizational structure or pattern in a text.	R.5.4 Analyze how the structure of a paragraph, section, or passage shapes meaning, emphasizes key ideas, or supports an author's purpose.
• Identify tone, word usage, characterization, use of detail and example, and figurative language.	R.4.3/L.4.3 Analyze the impact of specific words, phrases, or figurative language in text, with a focus on an author's intent to convey information or construct an argument. R.3.1 Make inferences about plot/sequence of events, characters/people, settings, or ideas in texts.
• Identify cause and effect relationships.	R.3.4 Infer relationships between ideas in a text (e.g. an implicit cause and effect, parallel, or contrasting relationship).
• Distinguish conclusions from supporting statements.	R.2.5 Determine which detail(s) supports a main idea.
• Interpret tone, point of view, style or purpose of a work.	R.6.1 Determine an author's point of view or purpose of a text.
• Make connections among parts of a text and integrate information from outside a passage with elements within the passage.	[Not assessed on 2014 test. Refer to R.5, R.7, and R.9 on the following page for how the 2014 test assesses related content]

What’s different on the RLA test in the Reading content domain?

In addition to continuing to measure test-takers’ knowledge and abilities with regard to key comprehension skills, the Reasoning Through Language Arts test will be assessing a selection of reasoning skills that allow them to evaluate complex argumentative text and analyze information. While these skills infuse all of the RLA Reading targets and indicators, they are described in some detail in the following Reading Targets and their corresponding Indicators, which represent an expansion upon the skills measured on the 2002 Series GED® Test.

- R.3 Analyze how individuals, events, and ideas develop and interact over the course of a text
- R.5 Analyze the structure of texts, including how specific sentences or paragraphs relate to each other and the whole

- R.6 Determine an author’s purpose or point of view in a text and explain how it is conveyed and shapes the content and style of a text
- R.8 Delineate and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text, including the validity of the reasoning as well as the relevance and sufficiency of the evidence
- R.7 and R.9 Analyze how two or more texts address similar themes or topics

For more information on each of the Reading Targets, see the Reasoning Through Language Arts Assessment Targets in Chapter 1.

RLA – Language: Similarities between the 2002 test and Current Test

Note: Codes in the current column refer to the GED® Assessment Targets and Indicators as outlined Chapter 1. The codes may not appear in numerical order, as the goal of the table below is to show areas of correspondence between the 2002 content and the Current Test content.

RLA – Language: Content Specifications	
2002	Current test
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create effective text divisions (within or among paragraphs). • Combine paragraphs to form a more effective document. • Form new paragraphs within multi-paragraph documents. • Create topic sentences. 	L.1.9 Edit to ensure effective use of transitional words, conjunctive adverbs, and other words and phrases that support logic and clarity. <i>[Note: Paragraph development and organizational skills are measured through Trait 2 of the Extended Response Scoring Rubric and will not appear in editing tasks on the 2014 RLA test.]</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Edit to eliminate sentence fragments, run-on sentences, and comma splices. 	L.2.2 Edit to eliminate run-on sentences, fused sentences, or sentence fragments.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Edit to eliminate improper coordination and subordination, modification, and parallelism. 	L.1.5 Edit to eliminate dangling or misplaced modifiers or illogical word order (e.g., correctly use to meet almost all requirements instead of to almost meet all requirements). L.1.6 Edit to ensure parallelism and proper subordination and coordination.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Edit to eliminate subject-verb agreement (including agreement in number, interrupting phrases, and inverted structure). 	L.1.2 Edit to correct errors in straightforward subject-verb agreement. L.1.7 Edit to correct errors in subject-verb or pronoun antecedent agreement in more complicated situations (e.g., with compound subjects, interceding phrases, or collective nouns).

RLA – Language: Content Specifications	
2002	Current test
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Edit to eliminate verb tense errors (including sequence of tenses, word clues to tense in sentences, word clues to tense in paragraphs, and verb form). 	L.1.2 Edit to correct errors in straightforward subject-verb agreement. L.1.7 Edit to correct errors in subject-verb or pronoun antecedent agreement in more complicated situations (e.g., with compound subjects, interceding phrases, or collective nouns).
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Edit to eliminate pronoun reference errors (including incorrect relative pronouns, pronoun shift, vague or ambiguous references, and agreement with antecedents). 	<i>[Note: This skill is assessed on the 2014 test via Extended Response Scoring Rubric Trait 3 only.]</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Edit to eliminate pronoun reference errors (including incorrect relative pronouns, pronoun shift, vague or ambiguous references, and agreement with antecedents). 	L.1.3 Edit to correct errors in pronoun usage, including pronoun-antecedent agreement, unclear pronoun references, and pronoun case. L.1.7 Edit to correct errors in subject-verb or pronoun antecedent agreement in more complicated situations (e.g., with compound subjects, interceding phrases, or collective nouns).
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Edit to eliminate errors in capitalization (including proper names and adjectives, titles, and months/ seasons). 	L.2.1 Edit to ensure correct use of capitalization (e.g., proper nouns, titles, and beginnings of sentences).
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Edit to eliminate errors in punctuation (including commas in a series, commas between independent clauses joined by a conjunction, introductory elements, appositives, and the overuse of commas). 	L.2.4 Edit to ensure correct use of punctuation (e.g., commas in a series or in appositives and other non-essential elements, end marks, and appropriate punctuation for clause separation).
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Edit to eliminate errors in spelling (restricted to errors related to possessives, contractions, and homophones). 	L.1.1 Edit to correct errors involving frequently confused words and homonyms, including contractions (passed, past; two, too, to; there, their, they're; knew, new; it's its). L.2.3 Edit to ensure correct use of apostrophes with possessive nouns.
<i>[Not assessed on the 2002 Series test.]</i>	L.1.4 Edit to eliminate non-standard or informal usage (e.g., correctly use try to win the game instead of try and win the game)

What’s different on the RLA test in the Language content domain?

While virtually all of the language conventions and usage skills that are measured on the 2002 Series Writing Test will continue to be measured in the RLA editing tasks, one of the biggest innovations that appear in this content area is in how these tasks are presented. On the 2002 Series, editing items appear in multiple-choice format in which sentences or phrases that contain errors are excerpted from a passage. On the RLA test, however, test-takers will find passages with embedded drop-down menus within them. These drop-down style items simulate real-life editing tasks because, once the test-taker has chosen the appropriate phrase selection from the menu, the phrase selection appears right in the passage so that the test-taker can see the selection in the context of the sentence and overall passage.

For more information on each of the Language Targets, see Reasoning Through Language Arts Assessment Targets in Chapter 1.

RLA – Extended Response (Essay): Similarities between the 2002 test and Current Test

Trait 2 of the Extended Response (ER) Scoring Rubric has extensive overlap with the 2002 Series Holistic Scoring Rubric.

Dimensions of the 2002 Essay Rubric	Dimensions of the RLA ER Trait 2 Rubric
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presents a clearly focused main idea that addresses the prompt. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contains ideas that are thoroughly and logically developed, with full elaboration of main ideas
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establishes a clear and logical organization. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establishes an effective organizational structure that is well-suited to the message and purpose of the response as a whole; applies transitional devices strategically and effectively
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Achieves coherent development with specific and relevant details and examples. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contains purposeful, logical progression of ideas with details closely tied to their main points
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consistently controls sentence structure and the conventions of EAE. 	<p><i>[Note: This 2002 content is measured on Trait 3 of the Extended Response Scoring Rubric.]</i></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exhibits varied and precise word choice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chooses words purposefully and carefully to express ideas with clarity and logic; consistently and strategically applies advanced vocabulary.
<p><i>[Note: The Current test column lists a new dimension that was not assessed on the 2002 Series test.]</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategically applies awareness of audience and purpose of the task to enhance meaning throughout the response.

What’s different about the RLA test extended response (essay)?

The extended response (ER) task is designed to present a real-world opportunity for test-takers to demonstrate their ability to develop an argument and support their ideas with text-based evidence. Unlike the 2002 Series Essay prompts, which were presented outside of any context and which posed somewhat abstract questions to test-takers, the ERs provide a brief pair of engaging passages describing opposing perspectives on a similar topic. Test-takers must read these passages and evaluate which position is better supported. As noted in the table above, the Trait 2 Rubric also adds an assessment of the test-takers awareness of both the audience and the purpose of the writing task.

In addition to the stylistic and organizational skills that are outlined in Trait 2 of the Scoring Rubric, test-takers’ responses to the ER tasks will be evaluated on how well they use two other important sets of skills.

1. Creating Arguments and Using Evidence (Trait 1)
2. Clarity and Command of Standard English Conventions (Trait 3)

Trait 1 is designed to help scorers focus on not just the presentation of the test-takers' ideas, but also the content of what they say in their essays. In particular, we are interested in how well test-takers can develop an argument in which they use evidence directly from the passages they are given in order to support their assertions.

Trait 3, on the other hand, which was incorporated into the 2002 Series Holistic rubric, specifically delineates a clear and limited number of key conventions and usage skills (outlined in the Language specifications above). The reason for separating these skills into a distinct trait on this rubric is that it is essential for test-takers to demonstrate their command of these skills in writing of their own, in addition to being able to apply them to the writing of another, as the editing tasks described above require.

For more information about Traits 1, 2, and 3, see the RLA Extended Response Scoring Rubric in Chapter 3.

Appendix

B

Reasoning Through Language Arts Reporting Categories

The following table illustrates which Reasoning Through Language Arts (RLA) indicators support each reporting category.

Reporting Category 1- Analyzing and creating text features and technique		35%
R.3.1	Order sequences of events in texts	
R.3.2	Make inferences about plot/sequence of events, characters/people, settings, or ideas in texts	
R.3.3	Analyze relationships within texts, including how events are important in relation to plot or conflict; how people, ideas, or events are connected, developed, or distinguished; how events contribute to theme or relate to key ideas; or how a setting or context shapes structure and meaning	
R.3.4	Infer relationships between ideas in a text (e.g. an implicit cause and effect, parallel, or contrasting relationship)	
R.3.5	Analyze the roles that details play in complex literary or informational texts	
R.6.1	Determine an author’s point of view or purpose of a text	
R.6.2	Analyze how the author distinguishes his or her position from that of others or how an author acknowledges and responds to conflicting evidence or viewpoints	
R.6.3	Infer an author’s implicit as well as explicit purposes based on details in text	
R.6.4	Analyze how an author uses rhetorical techniques to advance his or her point of view or achieve a specific purpose (e.g., analogies, enumerations, repetition and parallelism, juxtaposition of opposites, qualifying statements)	
R.4.1 / L.4.1	Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including determining connotative and figurative meanings from context	
R.4.2 / L.4.2	Analyze how meaning or tone is affected when one word is replaced with another.	
R.4.3 / L.4.3	Analyze the impact of specific words, phrases, or figurative language in text, with a focus on an author’s intent to convey information or construct an argument	
R.5.1	Analyze how a particular sentence, paragraph, chapter, or section fits into the overall structure of a text and contributes to the development of the ideas.	
R.5.2	Analyze the structural relationship between adjacent sections of text (e.g., how one paragraph develops or refines a key concept or how one idea is distinguished from another).	

Reporting Category 1- Analyzing and creating text features and technique		35%
R.5.3	Analyze transitional language or signal words (words that indicate structural relationships, such as consequently, nevertheless, otherwise) and determine how they refine meaning, emphasize certain ideas, or reinforce an author's purpose	
R.5.4	Analyze how the structure of a paragraph, section, or passage shapes meaning, emphasizes key ideas, or supports an author's purpose	
R.9.1 / 7.1	Draw specific comparisons between two texts that address similar themes or topics or between information presented in different formats (e.g., between information presented in text and information or data summarized in a table or timeline)	
R.7.3	Compare two documents that present related ideas or themes in different genre or formats (e.g., a feature article and an online FAQ or fact sheet) in order to evaluate differences in scope, purpose, emphasis, intended audience, or overall impact when comparing.	
R.9.2	Compare two passages in similar or closely related genre that share ideas or themes, focusing on similarities and/or differences in perspective, tone, style, structure, purpose, or overall impact	
W.2	Produce an extended analytic response in which the writer introduces the idea(s) or claim(s) clearly; creates an organization that logically sequences information; develops the idea(s) or claim(s) thoroughly with well-chosen examples, facts, or details from the text; and maintains a coherent focus.	

Reporting Category 2- Using evidence to understand, analyze and create arguments		45%
R.2.1	Comprehend explicit details and main ideas in text	
R.2.2	Summarize details and ideas in text	
R.2.3	Make sentence level inferences about details that support main ideas	
R.2.4	Infer implied main ideas in paragraphs or whole texts	
R.2.5	Determine which detail(s) support(s) a main idea	
R.2.6	Identify a theme, or identify which element(s) in a text support a theme	
R.2.7	Make evidence based generalizations or hypotheses based on details in text, including clarifications, extensions, or applications of main ideas to new situations	
R.2.8	Draw conclusions or make generalizations that require synthesis of multiple main ideas in text	
R.8.1	Delineate the specific steps of an argument the author puts forward, including how the argument's claims build on one another.	
R.8.2	Identify specific pieces of evidence an author uses in support of claims or conclusions	
R.8.3	Evaluate the relevance and sufficiency of evidence offered in support of a claim	
R.8.4	Distinguish claims that are supported by reasons and evidence from claims that are not	
R.8.5	Assess whether the reasoning is valid; identify fallacious reasoning in an argument and evaluate its impact	
R.8.6	Identify an underlying premise or assumption in an argument and evaluate the logical support and evidence provided	
R.9.3	Compare two argumentative passages on the same topic that present opposing claims (either main or supporting claims) and analyze how each text emphasizes different evidence or advances a different interpretations of facts	
R.7.2	Analyze how data or quantitative and/or visual information extends, clarifies, or contradicts information in text, or determine how data supports an author's argument	
R.7.4	Compare two passages that present related ideas or themes in different genre or formats in order to synthesize details, draw conclusions, or apply information to new situations	
W.1	Determine the details of what is explicitly stated and make logical inferences or valid claim that square with textual evidence.	

Reporting Category 3- Applying knowledge of English language conventions and usage		20%
W.3	Write clearly and demonstrate sufficient command of standard English conventions	
L.1.1	Edit to correct errors involving frequently confused words and homonyms, including contractions (passed, past; two, too, to; there, their, they're; knew, new; it's its)	
L.1.2	Edit to correct errors in straightforward subject-verb agreement	
L.1.3	Edit to correct errors in pronoun usage, including pronoun antecedent agreement, unclear pronoun references, and pronoun case	
L.1.4	Edit to eliminate non-standard or informal usage (e.g., correctly use try to win the game instead of try and win the game)	
L.1.5	Edit to eliminate dangling or misplaced modifiers or illogical word order (e.g., correctly use to meet almost all requirements instead of to almost meet all requirements)	
L.1.6	Edit to ensure parallelism and proper subordination and coordination	
L.1.7	Edit to correct errors in subject-verb or pronoun antecedent agreement in more complicated situations (e.g., with compound subjects, interceding phrases, or collective nouns)	
L.1.8	Edit to eliminate wordiness or awkward sentence construction	
L.1.9	Edit to ensure effective use of transitional words, conjunctive adverbs, and other words and phrases that support logic and clarity	
L.2.1	Edit to ensure correct use of capitalization (e.g., proper nouns, titles, and beginnings of sentences)	
L.2.2	Edit to eliminate run-on sentences, fused sentences, or sentence fragments	
L.2.3	Edit to ensure correct use of apostrophes with possessive nouns	
L.2.4	Edit to ensure correct use of punctuation (e.g., commas in a series or in appositives and other non-essential elements, end marks, and appropriate punctuation for clause separation)	



Appendix

RLA Extended Response (ER) Rubric Breakdown

The tables below provide more information about how a test-taker can receive full credit for each trait. The dimensions for a score point of two, which are represented by each bullet point in the rubric, are included in the tables for each trait.

Trait 1: Creation of Arguments and Use of Evidence

For Trait 1, responses are scored according to the criteria outlined in all three bullets. When a response shows mixed evidence of proficiency levels, it will receive a score that reflects a balanced consideration of each quality, with no one dimension weighted more than the others. For instance, a response may contain a logical text-based argument and sufficient support (a 2-point response), but the integration of claims might be simplistic (a 0-point response).

Breakdown of Trait 1 Dimensions for Score Point 2

Dimension or Quality of Writing	Explanation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> generates text-based argument(s) and establishes a purpose that is connected to the prompt 	<p>The first dimension relates to making claims or assertions. At higher score points, arguments will be focused on close reading and analysis of the source texts. As responses ascend the scale in this dimension, they will become more focused on making arguments.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> cites relevant and specific evidence from source text(s) to support argument (may include few irrelevant pieces of evidence or unsupported claims) 	<p>The second dimension focuses test-takers abilities to use information from the source texts to support their claims or assertions. As responses ascend the scale in this dimension, they will use evidence that is progressively more tied to the text. Responses that establish criteria for the evaluation of the source texts and then apply these criteria to specific text-based evidence are most likely to score highest in this dimension. At lower score points, the test-taker may rely more heavily on evidence drawn from personal experience with the topic rather than from text-based evidence.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> analyzes the issue and/or evaluates the validity of the argumentation within the source texts (e.g., distinguishes between supported and unsupported claims, makes reasonable inferences about underlying premises or assumptions, identifies fallacious) 	<p>The third dimension focuses on a test-taker's ability to critically evaluate the rhetorical strategies and argumentation demonstrated by the authors of the source texts. Test-takers who focus more specifically on the task outlined in the prompt, will be more likely to score highly on this dimension. More specifically, responses that establish criteria for the evaluation of the source texts and then apply these criteria to specific text-based evidence are most likely to score highest in this dimension. Responses that rely heavily on the test-taker's own opinion are indicative of lower score points.</p>

Trait 2: Development of Ideas and Organizational Structure

The five bullets, or dimensions, in Trait 2 must be considered together to determine the score of any individual response. No one dimension is weighted more than any other. Each score point describes the same dimensions, but at varying levels of mastery.

Breakdown of Trait 2 Dimensions for Score Point 2	
Dimension or Quality of Writing	Explanation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> contains ideas that are well developed and generally logical; most ideas are elaborated upon 	<p>The first dimension relates to the depth and breadth of explanation exhibited in the response. While support for ideas should come from the source texts (like in Trait 1) fully developed ideas are often extended with additional evidence that builds upon central assertions. High-scoring responses will tend to contain multiple ideas that are fully elaborated upon and help articulate a central thesis. Responses that develop ideas insufficiently, unevenly, or illogically fall into the lower score ranges with regard to this dimension.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> contains a sensible progression of ideas with clear connections between details and main points 	<p>The second dimension focuses on how effectively the response builds from one idea to the next as well as the degree in which details and central ideas are linked. High-scoring responses will maintain coherence and a sense of progression that help convey the writer's central thesis. Responses at lower score points demonstrate an increasingly disjointed or unclear progression of ideas. Details are increasingly unrelated to central ideas, or even absent.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> establishes an organizational structure that conveys the message and purpose of the response; applies transitional devices appropriately 	<p>The third dimension relates to how well the response is organized. Though using paragraphs may lend structure to many responses, it is possible for a well-organized, logical, non-paragraphed response to receive a high score. However, responses that contain circular, list-like, or scattered organizational structure, as well as those that do not fully integrate effective transitions between ideas, are often indicative of lower score points.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> establishes and maintains a formal style and appropriate tone that demonstrate awareness of the audience and purpose of the task 	<p>The fourth dimension is associated with how well the response demonstrates an understanding of audience and purpose. Responses that score highly in this dimension will establish and maintain a formal style and objective tone while attending to the norms and conventions of argumentative writing. Responses at lower score points may contain informal tone and/or the perspective may be inappropriate for the audience.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> chooses specific words to express ideas clearly 	<p>The fifth dimension focuses on word choice. Effective word choice does not necessarily suggest that test-takers must employ a great deal of advanced vocabulary. Advanced vocabulary used correctly is often associated with a higher score on Trait 2, but responses that reflect precision in word choice are just as likely to score well in this dimension. At lower score points, imprecise, vague and/or misused words are more prevalent.</p>

Trait 3: Clarity and Command of Standard English Conventions

As in the previous two traits, each of the three dimensions of Trait 3 must be weighed together to determine the score. Each score point describes the same dimensions, but at varying levels of mastery.

Breakdown of Trait 3 Dimensions for Score Point 2	
Dimension or Quality of Writing	Explanation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • demonstrates largely correct sentence structure and a general fluency that enhances clarity with specific regard to the following skills: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) varied sentence structure within a paragraph or paragraphs 2) correct subordination, coordination, and parallelism 3) avoidance of wordiness and awkward sentence structures 4) usage of transitional words, conjunctive adverbs and other words that support logic and clarity 5) avoidance of run-on sentences, fused sentences, or sentence fragments 	<p>This dimension relates to sentence structure and variety. Scoring will focus only on these skills essential to the development of sentence structure. High-scoring responses mix simple and compound sentences and purposefully incorporate a variety of clauses to enhance overall fluidity. Repetitive, choppy, rambling, and/or awkward sentence constructions are indicative of responses at the lower score points.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • demonstrates competent application of conventions with specific regard to the following skills: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) frequently confused words and homonyms, including contractions 2) subject-verb agreement 3) pronoun usage, including pronoun-antecedent agreement, unclear pronoun references, and pronoun case 4) placement of modifiers and correct word order 5) capitalization (e.g., proper nouns, titles, and beginnings of sentences) 6) use of apostrophes with possessive nouns 7) use of punctuation (e.g., commas in a series or in appositives and other non-essential elements, end marks, and appropriate punctuation for clause separation) 	<p>The second dimension focuses on how well the response maintains specific conventions of standard English. Responses will be scored on the basis of a test-taker’s demonstrated mastery over the particular language skills listed in this dimension. Though there are many other conventions that come into play in a test-taker’s writing, these essential skills are the ones on which they will be scored. Further, the longer the response, the greater tolerance for errors. For example, 10 errors in a 10-line response will likely receive a lower score than a response that contains 20 errors but is 60 lines long.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • may contain some errors in mechanics and conventions, but they do not interfere with comprehension; overall, standard usage is at a level appropriate for on-demand draft writing. 	<p>The third dimension pertains to overall fluency with conventions and mechanics. In order to receive a score higher than 1, test-takers must sustain their writing long enough to demonstrate their level of proficiency with all the skills listed in the two previous dimensions. Then, writing samples are evaluated for level of grammatical and syntactical fluency appropriate for on-demand, draft writing.</p>

Appendix

D

Glossary of Key Terms for the RLA Test

Analysis/analyze (do not substitute *infer, summarize*): to examine critically in order to determine meaning and to understand the essential elements of [a text or other stimulus]

Application/apply (do not substitute *interpret, infer, summarize, conclude, calculate, solve, predict*): to use or employ an already established skill or piece of information in a new situation

Argument (do not substitute *claim, stance, argumentation*): a process or line of reasoning. For our purposes, arguments can be made either persuasively (i.e., to convince an audience of something) or rhetorically (i.e., to lay out a logical progression of ideas in support of a central stance)

Argumentation (do not substitute *argument, claim, stance, point of view*): the presentation of a line (or lines) of reasoning (i.e., the way in which something is argued, not the line of reasoning itself)

Assumption (do not substitute *premise, conclusion*): something taken for granted; a supposition

Author (do not substitute *narrator, speaker*): the person who wrote a text or other document

Author's credibility (do not substitute *author's point of view, meaning, bias, propaganda*): the degree to which an author can be believed or trusted

Author's point of view (do not substitute *author's purpose, meaning, author's credibility*): the author's attitude or outlook with which information, events, etc. are presented

Author's purpose/intent (do not substitute *meaning, summary, author's point of view, perspective*): the reason an author composes a text or other document (e.g., to convince an audience to use reusable bags rather than paper, to explain Lincoln's stance on abolition of slavery)

Bias (do not substitute *propaganda, author's credibility*): a particular tendency (of an author or a group), especially ones that prevents unprejudiced consideration

Character (not to be interchanged with *people, figure*): a person represented in a story or other literary work (for our purposes, characters are often fictional)

Claim (not to be interchanged with *stance, argument author's purpose, author's point of view, hypothesis, position, perspective*): an assertion of something as fact

Conclusion/conclude (not to be interchanged with *generalization, hypothesis, inference, application, summarize, predict*): a statement that follows logically from another or others in an argument (note: arguments may be text-based, mathematical, scientific, etc.)

Connotative meaning (not to be interchanged with *literal (denotative) meaning, figurative meaning, symbolic meaning*): an association or idea suggested by a word; implicated meaning

Create (not to be interchanged with *apply, analyze, synthesize*): to originate or invent (e.g., an original line of reasoning)

Data (not to be interchanged with *information*): individual facts, statistics or pieces of information (can be qualitative or quantitative). See **information** for disambiguation.

Detail (not to be interchanged with *idea*): a small part than can be considered individually

Evaluate: (not to be interchanged with *interpret, infer, summarize, analyze*): to make a judgment about the significance, worth, validity or quality of something.

Evidence (not to be interchanged with *detail, reasoning*): that which tends to prove or disprove something; grounds for belief

Expression: setting forth in words; syntax, intonation, etc.

Figurative meaning/language (not to be interchanged with *connotative meaning*): that which involves figures of speech and/or is not meant literally (e.g., that which is described through metaphor)

Finding (not to be interchanged with *conclusion*, *evidence*, *assumption*): that which is discovered through research or study (See **conclusion** for disambiguation— these concepts are closely related)

Format (not to be interchanged with *genre*): general appearance, style, arrangement (e.g., of a text)

Generalization (not to be interchanged with *summary*, *conclusion*, *hypothesis*): a principle, theory or idea that can be applied in many instances

Genre (not to be interchanged with *format*): a class or category, usually used to describe literary or artistic work (e.g., fiction, poetry, etc.)

Historical context: events, figures, ideas prevalent in the popular or political discourse at the time at which something (e.g., a document) was originated

Hypothesis (not to be interchanged with *generalization*, *conclusion*, *claim*, *stance*, *position*, *assumption*, *inference*): a proposition or set of propositions set forth as an explanation for a group of facts or phenomena; conjecture that is a guide for investigation

Idea (not to be interchanged with *theme*, *detail*): any conception resulting from mental understanding, awareness or activity

Inference/infer (not to be interchanged with *interpret*, *summarize*, *analyze*, *hypothesize*): to conclude by reasoning from evidence that which is *not* explicitly stated

Information (not to be interchanged with *data*): knowledge gained through experience or study. More abstract and general than “data.”

Interpret (not to be interchanged with *infer*, *summarize*, *analyze*): to provide the meaning of, or explain, that which is explicitly stated or displayed graphically or symbolically

Justify (not to be interchanged with *support*): to show a claim or statement to be writing, especially using evidence

Literal meaning (not to be interchanged with *inference, interpretation, generalization*): meaning that is in exact accordance with the most explicit, primary meaning of a word or text

Main idea (not to be interchanged with *theme, summary, topic, idea*): the most important central thought in a paragraph or longer informational text

Meaning (not to be interchanged with *tone, voice*): what is or is intended to be expressed

Narrator (not to be interchanged with *author, speaker*): a person who tells a story or gives an account of something (often a fictional character (i.e., the person telling the story in a memoir is typically referred to as “author” rather than “narrator”))

Plot (not to be interchanged with *sequence of events*): a storyline in a literary or dramatic work

Premise (not to be interchanged with *conclusion, assumption, hypothesis*): a basis, stated or assumed, on which reasoning proceeds

Prediction (not to be interchanged with *conclusion, assumption, reasoning, premise, hypothesis*): A statement of something in advance of occurrence, especially on a reasoned or evidentiary basis

Primary source: an original document describing events or ideas of which the author has personal knowledge or experience

Propaganda (not to be interchanged with *bias*): systematic, purposefully persuasive messages that attempt to influence the emotions, attitudes, opinions, and actions of an audience

Reasoning (not to be interchanged with *evidence, meaning, conclusion*): the process of forming conclusions, judgments or inferences from evidence

Rhetorical technique (not to be interchanged with *author’s purpose, figurative language, literary device*): any device an author may use to to evoke particular tone or feeling or to provide a frame that may help an audience think about a topic (e.g., appeal to reason); an element of style (i.e., literary devices are a type of rhetorical technique, but not all rhetorical techniques are literary devices)

Secondary source: a document that relates, discusses and comments upon a primary source

Sequence of events (not to be interchanged with *plot, structure*): the order in which events (often historical) occur. Most often conveyed chronologically, but may also be conveyed procedurally, non-literally, etc. Typically, we use “sequence of events” to describe historical events and we use “plot” to describe the events that occur in fictional works.

Speaker (not to be interchanged with *author, narrator*): a person who speaks (used specifically to describe one who delivers a speech or the voice expressed in a poem. Should *not* be used to describe a narrator in a work of fiction or an author in a work of non-fiction.)

Stance (not to be interchanged with *claim, argument, argumentation*): the position on which an author bases an argument (e.g., pro or con)

Structure (not to be interchanged with *sequence of events*): the relationships among and/or organization of component parts of a text or other medium (e.g., Q&A or cause-effect)

Summarize (not to be interchanged with *interpret, analyze*): a brief account that gives the main points of something

Support (not to be interchanged with *justify*): to establish by providing appropriate facts and evidence (either quantitative or textual).

Synthesis/synthesize (not to be interchanged with *apply, summarize, analyze*): to combine elements or ideas from multiple materials into a unified, if complex, whole

Text Structure: how the information in a written text is organized, including sequential order, chronological order, cause an effect, problem and solution, compare and contrast, and description

Theme (not to be interchanged with *idea, topic, main idea, summary*): the unifying, dominant idea in a *literary* text

Theory (not to be interchanged with *scientific presentation, scientific model*): A set of principles that explain or predict phenomena

Tone (not to be interchanged with *meaning, voice*): the author's attitude toward the subject and/or audience (e.g., informal, playful, serious, condescending, etc.)

Topic (not to be interchanged with *idea, theme, main idea, summary*): the subject of a discussion or work (typically more concrete than a theme (e.g., sedimentary rocks (topic) vs. rebirth (theme))) in an *informational* text

Transitional Language/signal words: words or phrases that are used to connect ideas, show a relationship, make comparisons or contrasts, add information, present a sequence, show a cause and effect, or provide an example

Voice (not to be interchanged with *meaning, tone*): a combination of an author's syntax, diction, style and perspective that is unique to that particular author