

Georgia High School Graduation Tests



Test Content Descriptions Georgia Performance Standards Version

English Language Arts

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Program Purpose

The Georgia High School Graduation Tests (GHSGT) measure whether Georgia high school students have mastered essential concepts and skills from the state-adopted curriculum deemed necessary to earn a diploma. Students earning a regular Georgia diploma must pass all four parts of the GHSGT and the Georgia High School Writing Assessment in addition to meeting other local and state graduation requirements.

The Georgia State Board of Education, in July 2004, approved the Georgia Performance Standards (GPS) in English Language Arts for use in all Georgia public schools. Committees of English language arts educators from throughout Georgia met in October and November of 2004 to identify (1) GPS standards, concepts, and skills essential for students to master in order to earn a diploma and (2) QCC standards being assessed on the GHSGT that aligned with (matched) the GPS that were identified as essential. The result of these meetings was a dually aligned (QCC and GPS) test blueprint for a transitional ELA GHSGT to be administered in 2006 and 2007. The dually aligned test ensured that students had the opportunity to learn as the GPS was being implemented. The committees also made recommendations about how the content and skills should be assessed. The GHSGT Content Descriptions for English Language Arts GPS/QCC version are the outcome of their discussions.

Instruction in the new language arts performance standards began in the fall of the 2005 – 2006 school year. In 2006 and 2007, the English Language Arts GHSGT reflected the transition to the GPS from the former curriculum, the Quality Core Curriculum (QCC). First-time 11th grade test takers took a transitional form of the English Language Arts GHSGT that aligned to standards and content found in both the GPS and the QCC. The transitional tests assessed only the standards and the content that students had an opportunity to learn whether they received instruction in the GPS or the QCC. Beginning in spring 2008, after the GPS ELA curriculum has been in use for three years, first-time 11th grade test takers will take an English Language Arts GHSGT based solely on the GPS.

In 2008 and beyond, when the ELA GHSGT aligns solely to the GPS, several differences will be noted.

- 1. Only GPS standards and elements identified in 2004 as essential for mastery to earn a diploma will be used to develop questions and tests.**
- 2. Additional GPS standards will NOT be added to the test at this time due to opportunity to learn issues.**
- 3. Georgia Performance Standards will be assessed at the depth of knowledge (DOK) intended in the GPS not the more limited depth of knowledge of the QCC standards.**
- 4. Cognitively rich items, not necessarily more difficult items, reflecting the range of cognitive demand of the elements of the GPS will replace lower level items such as recall and recognition.**
- 5. New cut (passing) scores will be set for the spring 2008 test.**
- 6. A new score scale will be established.**
- 7. New reports will be provided to students, parents, schools, and school systems.**

GHSGT Content Descriptions

The Content Descriptions acquaint Georgia educators, students, parents, and others with the content assessed on the GHSGT. They provide an overview of the three content domains and list the associated skills and concepts that students should understand and be able to apply. They also provide the GPS standards under which the information assessed within each domain is taught. The Content Descriptions included in this document are identical to those in the GPS/QCC version since that document was based on the GPS standards. Only QCC standards have been eliminated.

Georgia English Language Arts (ELA) teachers selected the standards included in the high school graduation test based on whether the content is essential for all graduates to demonstrate mastery prior to graduation. Georgia teachers also grouped the standards according to similar content themes, creating these three content domains for ELA.

- **Reading Comprehension**

It is important that students understand the meaning of what they read. Assessment in this domain focuses on student understanding of the meaning and the main ideas of fiction, nonfiction, and poetry. Students demonstrate comprehension by identifying main ideas as well as the evidence found in the language and elements of a text that support meaning. Students also identify, analyze, and apply knowledge of the characteristics of a variety of texts as they relate to meaning. Students recognize how authors use literary elements including language and style, character development, point of view, irony, sound, form, and structure to convey meaning.

- **Literary Analysis**

It is important that students be able to analyze what they read. Assessment in this domain focuses on analyzing how authors use language for particular purposes in fiction, nonfiction, and poetry. Students interpret text by identifying and analyzing techniques used by authors to produce particular effects on their audiences.

- **Conventions and Writing**

It is important that students be able to write correctly for multiple purposes. Assessment in this domain focuses on student development of vocabulary (diction) in writing, standard usage, and use of the research and writing process. Students apply knowledge of Standard American English usage and revise writing to improve its organization or appropriateness for a specific audience. Students form clear research questions and identify appropriate methods of research.

The Content Descriptions include references to GPS standards associated with the descriptions. The GPS can be accessed at www.georgiastandards.org. Additional information about the GHSGT can be found at http://www.gadoe.org/ci_testing.aspx?PageReq=CI_TESTING_GHSGT.

English Language Arts

Domain 1: Reading Comprehension (approximately 48% of the test)

Overview of the Domain

- Students read selections from the fiction, nonfiction, and poetry genres of American Literature for meaning.
 - Students identify structure in works of these genres.
 - Students describe main ideas and themes.
 - Students identify and analyze the meaning of vocabulary in the context of text.
 - Students identify and evaluate the use of symbolism.
 - Students identify and evaluate the use of figurative language, sound, and form in works of these genres.
 - Students determine the point of view in works of fiction and nonfiction.
 - Students evaluate the development of characters in works of fiction.
 - Students identify plot in works of fiction.

Associated Concepts and Skills

Assessment of this domain focuses on the following:

- identifying, analyzing, and applying knowledge of elements and relating them to the meaning of selected passages; elements include:
 - character development
 - foreshadowing
 - irony
 - language (e.g., symbolism, imagery, figurative language)
 - point of view
 - setting and mood
- identifying, analyzing, and evaluating the use of imagery and symbolism and relating them to the meaning of the passage
- identifying, analyzing, and evaluating an author's uses of various techniques and elements of American fiction for rhetorical and aesthetic purposes
- identifying, analyzing, and evaluating the influence of traditional or classical literature on American literature
- identifying and analyzing the history of American literature's development
- identifying, analyzing, and evaluating the structures and elements of works such as:
 - diaries
 - essays
 - journals
 - speeches
- identifying, analyzing, and evaluating the logic of evidence in an author's argument
- identifying, analyzing, and evaluating the ways authors use language and style for specific purposes in nonfiction works of American literature

- identifying, analyzing, and evaluating the effects of sounds as they relate to meaning:
 - alliteration
 - assonance
 - consonance
 - end rhyme
 - internal rhyme
 - slant rhyme
- identifying, analyzing, and evaluating the effects of forms as they relate to meaning:
 - blank verse form
 - fixed ballad form
 - free verse form
 - haiku form
 - lyrical form
 - narrative poem form
 - sonnet form
- identifying, analyzing, and evaluating the effects of language as it relates to meaning:
 - allusion
 - extended metaphor
 - figurative language
 - hyperbole
 - imagery
 - irony
 - metaphor
 - paradox
 - personification
 - symbolism
 - tone

Associated GPS – American Literature

ELAALRL1 Fiction – elements a, b, d

ELAALRL1 Nonfiction – element a

ELAALRL1 Poetry – element a

English Language Arts

Domain 2: Literary Analysis (approximately 38% of the test)

Overview of the Domain

- Students analyze selections of fiction, nonfiction, and poetry in American Literature.
 - Students analyze universal themes of fiction, nonfiction, and poetry.
 - Students analyze nonfiction selections to determine the purpose and structure.
 - Students analyze the effects of the diction and imagery in fiction selections.
 - Students analyze longer selections to determine multiple themes within the text.
 - Students analyze the choices authors make in the structures and elements of nonfiction.
 - Students analyze and explain the choices made by authors in constructing arguments in nonfiction.

Associated Concepts and Skills

Assessment in this domain focuses on the following:

- identifying, analyzing, and evaluating the structures and purposes of nonfiction as they relate to meaning, including:
 - language
 - logic
 - rhetorical strategies
 - style
 - syntax
- identifying, analyzing, and evaluating fiction, nonfiction, and poetry to determine how an author's choices affect meaning, including:
 - controlling images
 - extended metaphor
 - figurative language
 - hyperbole
 - irony
 - paradox
 - tone
 - understatement
- evaluating a selection to determine how universal themes are presented:
 - in various literary periods
 - in fiction, nonfiction, or poetry
- identifying, analyzing, and evaluating multiple themes in longer selections of fiction, nonfiction, and poetry

Associated GPS – American Literature

ELAALRL1 Fiction – elements c, f

ELAALRL1 Nonfiction – elements b, c

ELAALRL1 Poetry – element b

ELAALRL2 – elements a, c, d

English Language Arts

Domain 3: Conventions and Writing (approximately 14% of the test)

Overview of the Domain

- Students revise selections of writing, analyze vocabulary, and utilize research strategies.
 - Students review selections for the correct use of language in sentence and paragraph structures.
 - Students review selections to determine the most appropriate revision for communicating clearly to the reader.
 - Students review selections to determine the most appropriate revision of a text for a particular audience.
 - Students identify and correctly use a variety of research strategies.

Associated Concepts and Skills

Assessment of this domain focuses on the following:

- demonstrating understanding of proper English usage, including:
 - idioms
 - cognates
 - formal language versus informal
 - literal meanings of words
 - figurative meanings of words
- determining the appropriate use of grammar, structure, diction, or syntax in sentences and paragraphs
- determining appropriate development of logic and coherence in a written piece
- evaluating written work for its appropriateness to specific audiences, specific purposes, or specific contexts (formal/informal)
- determining the most appropriate research strategy for:
 - developing appropriate research questions
 - accessing primary and secondary research material

Associated GPS – Ninth Grade

ELA9C1 – element a

ELA9W3 – element a

ELA9W4 – elements b, c

Associated GPS – American Literature

ELAALRL5 – element a