

# English Language, Literature, and Composition: Content Knowledge (0041)

<i>Test at a Glance</i>			
Test Name	English Language, Literature, and Composition: Content Knowledge		
Test Code	0041		
Time	2 hours		
Number of Questions	120		
Format	Multiple-choice questions		
	Content Categories	Approximate Number of Questions	Approximate Percentage of Examination
	I. Reading and Understanding Text	66	55%
	II. Language and Linguistics	18	15%
	III. Composition and Rhetoric	36	30%

## About This Test

The English Language, Literature, and Composition: Content Knowledge test is designed to assess whether an examinee has the broad base of knowledge and competencies necessary to be licensed as a beginning teacher of English in a secondary school. The 120 multiple-choice questions are based on the material typically covered in a bachelor's degree program in English and English education.

The test covers literature and reading, the English language, and composition and rhetoric.

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## Topics Covered

Representative descriptions of topics covered in each category are provided below.

### I. Reading and Understanding Text

- Paraphrasing, comparing, and interpreting (literally and inferentially) various types of texts, including fiction, poetry, essays, and other nonfiction
- Identifying and interpreting figurative language and other literary elements, e.g., metaphor, simile, voice, point of view, tone, style, setting, diction, mood, allusions, irony, clichés, analogy, hyperbole, personification, alliteration, and foreshadowing
- Identifying patterns, structures, and characteristics of literary forms and genres, e.g., elements of fiction and features of different poetic and prose forms and understanding how these patterns, structures, and characteristics may influence the meaning and effect of a work
- Identifying major works and authors of American, British, and World literature from various cultures, genres, and periods, including literature for young adults
- Situating and interpreting texts within their historical and cultural contexts
- Recognizing and identifying various instructional approaches to and elements of teaching reading and textual interpretation, e.g., cueing

systems, activating prior knowledge, constructing meaning through context, and metacognitive strategies

### II. Language and Linguistics

- Understanding the principles of language acquisition and development, including social, cultural, and historical influences and the role and nature of dialects
- Understanding elements of the history and development of the English language and American English, including linguistic change, etymology, and processes of word formation
- Understanding and applying the elements of traditional grammar, e.g., syntax, sentence types, sentence structure, parts of speech, modifiers, sentence combining, phrases and clauses, capitalization, and punctuation
- Understanding the elements of semantics, including ambiguity, euphemism, doublespeak, connotation, and jargon and how these elements affect meaning

### III. Composition and Rhetoric

- Understanding and applying elements of teaching writing, including
  1. Individual and collaborative approaches to teaching writing, e.g., stages of the writing process (prewriting, drafting, revising, editing, publishing, evaluating) and how those stages work recursively

2. Tools and response strategies for assessing student writing, e.g., peer review, portfolios, holistic scoring, scoring rubrics, self-assessment, and conferencing
  3. Common research and documentation techniques, e.g., gathering and evaluating data, using electronic and print media, and MLA and APA citations
- Understanding and evaluating rhetorical features in writing, including
    1. Purposes for writing and speaking and the role of the audience within varying contexts
    2. Organization in a piece of writing and the creation and preservation of coherence
    3. Strategies for the organization, development, and presentation of print, electronic, and visual media
    4. Discourse aims, e.g., creative, expository, persuasive
    5. Methods of argument and types of appeals, e.g., argumentative strategies, analogy, extended metaphor, allusion
    6. Style, tone, voice, and point of view as part of rhetorical strategy
    7. Recognition of bias, distinguishing between fact and opinion, and identifying stereotypes, inferences, and assumptions

## Sample Test Questions

The sample questions that follow illustrate the kinds of questions in the test. They are not, however, representative of the entire scope of the test in either content or difficulty. Answers with explanations follow the questions.

**Directions:** Each of the questions or statements below is followed by four suggested answers or completions. Select the one that is best in each case.

Questions 1–2 are based on the following poem.

When I was a child I knew red miners  
dressed raggedly and wearing carbide lamps.  
I saw them come down red hills to their camps  
dyed with red dust from old Ishkooda mines.

- (5) Night after night I met them on the roads,  
or on the streets in town I caught their glance;  
the swing of dinner buckets in their hands,  
and grumbling undermining all their words.

I also lived in low cotton country  
(10) where moonlight hovered over ripe haystacks,  
or stumps of trees, and coppers' rotting shacks,  
with famine, terror, flood, and plague near by,  
where sentiment and hatred still held sway  
and only bitter land was washed away.

— Margaret Walker

From *This is My Century: New and Collected Poems*, by Margaret Walker Alexander.  
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1. In the octave, the poet recalls
- (A) the discontent of the miners
  - (B) the happiness of the miners
  - (C) the efficiency and competence of the miners
  - (D) a conversation between a child and miners
2. The last three lines suggest that “cotton country” (line 9) is a place where
- (A) only the land washes away; the hatred, terror, flood, and plague remain
  - (B) all the bitter aspects of life such as hatred, terror, flood, and plague were washed away with the land
  - (C) all the troubles and discontentment such as hatred, terror, flood, and plague are gone once the land is washed away
  - (D) in a land where there are many problems, it will require a flood to rid society of the evils of famine, terror, and plague
3. Grammar may be taught in two main ways—by experience with discourse that entails the varieties of word forms and sentence construction, or by analyzing dummy sentences and diagramming parts. Plentiful discursive experience is what really teaches grammar, for it exercises judgment and provides language intake, whereas formal grammar study has been proved irrelevant. Politics more than pedagogy retards the changing of the curriculum to fit this truth.
- The author of the passage above argues that
- (A) using language in a wide variety of situations improves grammar
  - (B) good judgment can be improved by studying the rules of formal grammar
  - (C) analyzing and diagramming provide exercise in logical thinking
  - (D) formal study of grammar improves writing ability

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4. The book announced an insane world of dehumanization through terror in which the individual was systematically obliterated by an all-powerful elite. Its key phrases—Big Brother, doublethink, Newspeak, the Ministry of Peace (devoted to war), the Ministry of Truth (devoted to lies), the Ministry of Love (devoted to torture)—burned their way at once into the modern consciousness.

The passage above discusses

- (A) E.M. Forster's *A Passage to India*
- (B) Thomas Pynchon's *V.*
- (C) George Orwell's *1984*
- (D) Flannery O'Connor's *The Violent Bear It Away*

Questions 5–6 refer to the following passages.

- (A) If the rude throng pour with furious pace,  
And hap to break thee from a friend's embrace,  
Stop short; nor struggle through the crowd  
in vain,  
But watch with careful eye the passing train.
- (B) There lived a wife at Usher's Well,  
And a wealthy wife was she;  
She had three stout and stalwart sons,  
And sent them o'er the sea.
- (C) She thanked men,—good! but thanked  
Somehow— I know not how—as if she  
ranked  
My gift of a nine-hundred-years-old name  
With anybody's gift. Who'd stoop to blame  
This sort of trifling?
- (D) Upon the maple leaves  
The dew shines red,  
But on the lotus blossom  
It has the pale transparence of tears.

5. Which is an example of the ballad stanza?
6. Which is from a dramatic monologue?

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7. bawl . . . ball

mettle . . . metal

nun . . . none

The pairs above are examples of

- (A) antonyms
  - (B) synonyms
  - (C) homophones
  - (D) colloquialisms
8. Which of the following is the best description of traditional phonics instruction?
- (A) Students study lists of high-frequency words in order to increase reading speed and comprehension.
  - (B) Students are taught individual letter sounds first, followed by letter combination sounds and the rules of putting these combinations together to make words.
  - (C) Students are immersed in written language and encouraged to decode entire words using context clues.
  - (D) Students analyze patterns of organization and syntax as a way of learning to recognize common structures.

Questions 9–11 refer to the following sentences.

- I. Americans who do not speak French are at a disadvantage in Paris.
  - II. Americans, who do not speak French, are at a disadvantage in Paris.
9. Which of the following describes the meaning of sentence I ?
- (A) All Americans are at a disadvantage in Paris.
  - (B) Only those Americans who do not speak French are at a disadvantage in Paris.
  - (C) Some French-speaking Americans are at a disadvantage in Paris.
  - (D) Only French-speaking Americans are at a disadvantage in Paris.
10. Which of the following describes the meaning of sentence II ?
- (A) All Americans are at a disadvantage in Paris.
  - (B) Only those Americans who do not speak French are at a disadvantage in Paris.
  - (C) Some French-speaking Americans are at a disadvantage in Paris.
  - (D) Only French-speaking Americans are at a disadvantage in Paris.
11. The sentences can best serve as illustrations of which of the following?
- (A) The semantics of punctuation
  - (B) The differences between transformational and structural grammar
  - (C) The differences between value judgments and reports
  - (D) The importance of word order in determining meaning in English

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12. In a holistic evaluation of student essays, evaluations are made on the basis of the
- (A) number and variety of errors made by each student
  - (B) average sentence length and the complexity demonstrated in each essay
  - (C) ability of each student to communicate in a variety of discourse modes
  - (D) overall quality of each student's essay in relation to the topic
13. Which of the following best describes the organization of paragraph I ?
- (A) Chronological order
  - (B) Spatial order
  - (C) Cause and effect
  - (D) Order of importance
14. Which of the following best describes the organization of paragraph II ?
- (A) Chronological order
  - (B) Spatial order
  - (C) Cause and effect
  - (D) Order of importance

Questions 13–15 refer to the following paragraphs.

- I. On a dark, secluded street stood three abandoned houses. The first had broken shutters and shattered windows. Next to it stood a dilapidated structure badly in need of paint. Adjacent, amid debris, stood a shack with graffiti scrawled across the door.
- II. Weeks before they decided on their destination, the seniors had already begun a massive fundraising project to help finance their class trip. When they were offered the choice between Rome and London, an overwhelming majority chose Rome. Then preparations began in earnest. In the months that followed, the students' enthusiasm escalated until the day the plane finally took off, carrying them toward an experience they would remember forever.
- III. Selecting a new car requires each buyer to weigh a number of factors. First to be considered is the car's appearance. Next, and even more critical, are the car's performance and safety ratings. Most significant to any prospective buyer, however, is the car's price.
15. Which of the following best describes the organization of paragraph III ?
- (A) Chronological order
  - (B) Spatial order
  - (C) Cause and effect
  - (D) Order of importance

### Answers

1. The correct answer is A. In Margaret Walker's poem, the octave recalls the poet's awareness of the discontent of the miners; she caught the "grumbling undermining all their words."

2. The correct answer is A. This is no sentimental picture of a rural idyll. The poet knows that life is hard for those who must wrest a living from the earth. Miners and farmers share this bitter truth and learn to live with it. They live in a world where "famine . . . and plague" are ever near.

3. Choice A is the best expression of the author's argument. The author maintains that "plentiful discursive experience" is the most effective teacher of grammar. In this context, "discursive" experience means experience with discourse—that is, speech or texts that communicate ideas for some purpose and not merely as an exercise. The author argues that students learn the rules of grammar as part of the process of learning to understand the meaning of diverse texts.

4. The correct answer is C. The passage describes the themes and key phrases of Orwell's *1984*.

5. The correct answer is B. The ballad stanza is a quatrain of alternating tetrameter and trimeter lines rhyming abcb.

6. The correct answer is C. The lines are from Browning's dramatic monologue "My Last Duchess." One distinguishing characteristic of such a poem is that it consists of the words of a single character who reveals in his speech his own nature as well as the dramatic situation. Here, the Duke is displeased by his wife's failure to value his "gift of a nine-hundred-years-old name." He reads her graciousness in accepting gifts from others as a devaluing of his gift.

7. The correct answer is C. The words in each pair sound alike despite their differences in spelling and meaning. They are homophones.

8. The correct answer is B, which is a typical definition of traditional phonics instruction. Choice C is a very general description of whole-language instruction, and A and D represent potential strategies for increasing reading comprehension.

9. Choice B is the best answer. Because the adjective clause "who do not speak French" is not set off by commas in sentence I, it is restrictive and therefore essential to the meaning of the sentence. In this case, the subject of the sentence—"Americans who do not speak French"—would be simply "Americans" if the adjective clause were deleted. Since "Americans who do not speak French" is clearly a subset of all Americans, choice A cannot be correct. The statement includes nothing to support choice C and contradicts choice D.

10. Choice A is the best answer. In sentence II, the adjective clause "who do not speak French" is set off by commas, and it is therefore nonrestrictive. Grammatically, it provides additional information about the subject, "Americans," but its omission would not essentially change the meaning of the sentence. The sentence makes the statement that, as a total group, Americans do not speak French and are at a disadvantage in Paris, untrue though that statement may be. Choices B, C, and D either state or imply that some Americans speak French; therefore, these statements cannot be correct.

11. The sentences illustrate how drastically meaning can be changed by the presence or absence of commas. In this case, the meaning of the sentences changes dramatically depending on whether the adjective clauses are nonrestrictive (not essential to the meaning of the sentence) or restrictive (essential to the meaning of the sentence). Since these semantic differences are indicated by commas, the correct choice is A.

12. The correct answer is D. Holistic evaluation is based on the premise that the overall impact of an essay depends on the integration of different elements of writing, such as organization, development, sentence structure, word choice, and mechanics. Holistic evaluators assign a single score to a student essay based on the total effect to which these elements contribute. Holistic evaluation does not rely on a count of errors, as described by choice A, nor does it focus exclusively on one or two specific writing skills, as do the methods of evaluation suggested by choices B and C.

13. Choice B is the best answer. Paragraph I describes three houses standing in a row and relates them to one another according to where in that row each is situated. The words "next to" and "adjacent" are typical of the kinds of words used in descriptions of spatial relationships.

14. Choice A is the best answer. Paragraph II describes a series of events that take place over the course of several months. Words and phrases such as "Weeks before," "When," "Then," and "In the months that followed" relate events sequentially.

15. Choice D is the best answer. The organization of paragraph III reflects an order of increasing importance. The features of the car are arranged from the one that should least affect the prospective buyer's decision (appearance) to the one that should most influence the buyer's decision (price). Words such as "more" and "Most" help establish the comparative importance of each feature.