



Contents at left – click to preview chapters.

If contents are not visible use your toolbar above and click on the indicated button (to open table of contents):



STANDARDS BASED MCAS

10th Grade ELA

- Test and Retest Preparation.
- Review materials organized by curriculum standard.
- Instruction, not fill in the blanks.
- Basic skills practice.
- Internet resources aligned to curriculum standards.



TM

An MCAS Mentor Production

Copyright 2000, all rights reserved. This online document is encrypted to prevent printing.



Next Page - use page number arrows below to navigate.

A Few Words About the Writing Prompt

The following items represent the Writing Prompts from the last four 10th Grade MCAS English Language Arts Exams. You will notice that in each case, they are asking you to write about a reading selection in your personal repertoire. One of your assignments in this course is to make sure you are thoroughly familiar with at least one piece of literature. Your teacher may take you to the Library Media Center to select a book, or review a book you have read in class. Read each of the Prompts below to see if you could have responded using your selection. This is a good indication that you have chosen a good piece. Know this piece of literature inside and out. It will be a life-saver on the exam.

2001: A frequent theme in literature is the conflict between the individual and society. From a work of literature you have read in or out of school, select a character who struggles with society. In a well-developed composition, identify the character and explain why this character's conflict with society is important.

2000: Often in works of literature, there are characters – other than the main character – whose presence in the work is essential. From a work of literature you have read in or out of school, select a character, other than the main character, who plays a key role. In a well-developed composition, identify the character and explain why this character is important.

1999: In literature, as in life, things are not always as they appear to be. Identify a work of literature that you have read in or out of class in which this is true. Select one event, scene, or episode from this work of literature and explain in an essay what the situation appears to be and what the situation really is.

In 1998, students were asked to read a selection from a short literary work then respond to the following prompt:

In many literary works, the opening paragraphs provide clues for what is yet to come. Read the above paragraph (use the piece of literature you have selected) for such clues. Based on these clues, write an essay that explains what comes next in this story. In developing your essay, you might want to consider the purpose of the first sentence, imagery, word choice, point of view, mood, setting, and characters.

On the next few pages you will learn the difference between different kinds of essays and compositions. You will see how students have responded to prompts in the past, and you will learn about scoring rubrics, and the criteria used by scorers to grade responses. We also provide a bibliography of books you might select as candidates for thorough reading.

These are good choices for your “thoroughly read” list. From “Outstanding Books for the College Bound” list from the American Library Association.

<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Agee, James. “A Death in the Family” 2. Allison, Dorothy. “Bastard Out of Carolina” 3. Alvarez, Julia. “In the Time of the Butterflies” 4. Anaya, Rudolfo. “Bless Me, Ultima” 5. Atwood, Margaret. “The Handmaid’s Tale” 6. Butler, Octavia. “Parable of the Sower” 7. Card, Orson Scott. “Ender’s Game” 8. Chopin, Kate. “The Awakening” 9. Dostoyevsky, Fyodor. “Crime and Punishment” 10. Ellison, Ralph. “Invisible Man” 11. Emecheta, Buchi. “Bride Price” 12. Faulkner, William. “The Bear” 13. Frazier, Charles. “Cold Mountain” 14. Gaines, Ernest. “A Lesson Before Dying” 15. Gardner, John. “Grendel” 16. Gibbons, Kaye. “Ellen Foster” 17. Heller, Joseph. “Catch-22” 18. Hemingway, Ernest. “Farewell to Arms” 19. Hesse, Hermann. “Siddhartha” 20. Huxley, Aldous. “Brave New World” 21. Keneally, Thomas. “Schindler’s List” 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 22. King, Laurie R. “The Beekeeper’s Apprentice, or, on the Segregation of the Queen” 23. Kosinski, Jerzy. “Painted Bird” 24. Lee, Harper. “To Kill a Mockingbird” 25. LeGuin, Ursula. “The Left Hand of Darkness” 26. McCullers, Carson. “The Member of the Wedding.” 27. McKinley, Robin. “Beauty” 28. Malamud, Bernard. “The Fixer” 29. Markandaya, Kamala. “Nectar in a Sieve” 30. Mason, Bobbi Ann. “In Country” 31. Mori, Kyoko. “Shizuko’s Daughter” 32. Morrison, Toni. “Beloved” 33. O’Brien, Tim. “The Things They Carried A Work of Fiction” 34. O’Connor, Flannery. “Everything That Rises Must Converge.” 35. Potok, Chaim. “The Chosen” 36. Power, Susan. “The Grass Dancer” 37. Shaara, Michael. “ Killer Angels” 38. Steinbeck, John. “The Grapes of Wrath” 39. Uchida, Yoshiko. “Picture Bride” 40. Watson, Larry. “Montana” 41. Wright, Richard. “Native Son” 42. Yolen, Jane. “Briar Rose”
---	--

Now, before you say “Oh Yeah, I read ‘To Kill A Mockingbird’ and I can use that”, you need to go back to the Writing Prompts we presented on the previous pages to see if you can thoroughly respond intelligently based on what you remember of the story. To be absolutely secure in your ability to respond to the Prompt, make sure there are two books in your repertoire.

Preface to MCAS English Language Arts: Your Assignments

To make this course useful as you prepare for the MCAS English Arts Exams in the 10th Grade, we will strive to teach you what the standards say. The Commonwealth of Massachusetts has set tough academic standards for graduation. Standards are good things. They are guidelines and directions so you know what is expected of you.

Your assignment for completion of this course will be to create an MCAS English Language Arts Exam. You will place yourself in the shoes of the teachers and administrators at the Department of Education who created the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System. Your task will be to learn the standards inside and out and establish criteria for excellence on your class created exam. We will provide guidance along the way, but it's up to you to create an instrument that you believe might be the next MCAS Exam.

Every MCAS English Language Arts Exam measures your knowledge in four key areas, composition writing skills, language (spoken language and language structure), literature, and media. There are seven separate strands in the composition standard, six in the language standard and twelve strands in the literature standard. There are two strands in the media standard. We outline these categories for you on the next page.

English Language Arts Standards

LANGUAGE STRAND

- Standard 1: Discussion
Students will use agreed-upon rules for informal and formal discussions in small and large groups.
- Standard 2: Questioning, Listening, and Contributing
Students will pose questions, listen to the ideas of others, and contribute their own information or ideas in group discussions and interviews in order to acquire new knowledge.
- Standard 3: Oral Presentation
Students will make oral presentations that demonstrate appropriate consideration of audience, purpose, and information to be conveyed.
- Standard 4: Vocabulary and Concept Development
Students will understand and acquire new vocabulary, and use it correctly in reading and writing.
- Standard 5: Structure and Origins of Modern English
Students will describe and analyze the structure of modern English and how its vocabulary has developed and been influenced by other languages.
- Standard 6: Formal and Informal English
Students will describe, analyze, and use appropriately formal and informal English.

READING AND LITERATURE STRANDS

- Standard 7: Beginning Reading
Students will understand the nature of written English, and the relationship of letters and spelling patterns to the sounds of speech.
- Standard 8: Understanding a Text
Students will identify the basic facts and main ideas in a text and use them as the basis for interpretation.
- Standard 9: Making Connections
Students will deepen their understanding of a literary or non-literary work by relating it to its context or historical background.
- Standard 10: Genre
Students will identify, analyze, and apply knowledge of the characteristics of different genres.
- Standard 11: Theme
Students will identify, analyze, and apply knowledge of theme in literature and provide evidence from the text to support their understanding.
- Standard 12: Fiction
Students will identify, analyze, and apply knowledge of the structure and elements of fiction and provide evidence from the text to support their understanding.
- Standard 13: Nonfiction
Students will identify, analyze, and apply knowledge of the structure, elements, and meaning of nonfiction or informational materials and provide evidence from the text to support their understanding.

- Standard 14: Poetry
Students will identify, analyze, and apply knowledge of the theme, structure, and elements of poetry and produce evidence from the text to support their understanding.
- Standard 15: Figurative Language
Students will identify and analyze how an author appeals to the senses, creates imagery, suggests mood, and sets tone.
- Standard 16: Myth, Traditional Narrative, and Classical Literature
Students will identify, analyze, and apply knowledge of the structure, elements, and themes of myths and traditional narratives and provide evidence from the text to support their understanding.
- Standard 17: Dramatic Literature
Students will identify, analyze, and apply knowledge of the structure, elements, and themes of drama and provide evidence from the text to support their understanding.
- Standard 18: Dramatic Reading and Performance
Students will plan and present dramatic readings, recitations, and performances that demonstrate appropriate consideration of audience and purpose.

COMPOSITION STRAND

- Standard 19: Writing
Students will write with a clear focus, coherent organization, and sufficient detail.
- Standard 20: Consideration of Audience and Purpose:
Students will write for different audiences and purposes.
- Standard 21: Revising
Students will demonstrate improvement in organization, content, paragraph development, level of detail, style, tone, and word choice (diction) in their compositions after revising them.
- Standard 22: Standard English Usage
Students will use knowledge of Standard English conventions in their writing, revising, and editing.
- Standard 23: Organizing Ideas in Writing
Students will organize ideas in writing in a way that makes sense for their purpose.
- Standard 24: Locating and Using Information for Inquiry
Students will gather information from a variety of sources, analyze and evaluate the quality of the information they obtain, and use it to answer their own questions.
- Standard 25: Evaluating Writing and Presentations
Students will develop and use appropriate rhetorical, logical, and stylistic criteria for assessing final versions of their compositions or research projects before presenting them to varied audiences.

MEDIA STRANDS

➤ Standard 26: Analysis of Media

Students will identify, analyze, and apply knowledge of the conventions, elements, and techniques of film, radio, video, television, multimedia productions, the Internet, and emerging technologies, and provide evidence from the works to support their understanding.

➤ Standard 27: Media Production

Students will design and create coherent media productions (audio, video, television, multimedia, Internet, and emerging technologies) with a clear controlling idea, adequate detail, and appropriate consideration of audience, purpose, and medium.

Composition Scoring Rubrics

A rubric is a chart or a way to apply a scoring checklist to the compositions and written work you provide for the Writing Prompt part of the MCAS Test. At the beginning of the 10th Grade MCAS Test, they provide you with a Writing Prompt that is intended to evoke a high quality composition response from you.

In the Spring of 2000, this was the Writing Prompt:

Often in works of literature, there are characters - other than the main characters - whose presence in the work is essential. From a work of literature you have read in or out of school, select a character, other than the main character, who plays a key role. In a well-developed composition, identify the character and explain why this character was important.

The Compositions are scored by Massachusetts teachers. They are trained to look at your papers using the Scoring Guide we include in this book. A simplified look at the rubrics or checklists they use in two key areas, Topic Development and Standard English Conventions, will help explain how your written work is graded.

The first area of concern for the scorers is Topic Development. How well did you develop your topic. Here is the rubric they use. After this rubric we will show compositions written by students who earned 6, 3 and then one point for this composition. Discuss the differences in the compositions. How could you make the three or one point answers better? Use the Scoring Guide, the Rubric and the writing self evaluation tool we provide after page 29 to help you decide.

Scoring Guide for Topic/Idea Development

Score	Description
6 Points	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rich topic/idea development • Careful and/or subtle organization • Effective/rich use of language
5 Points	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Full topic/idea development • Logical organization • Strong details • Appropriate use of language
4 Points	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Moderate topic/idea development and organization • Adequate, relevant details • Some variety in language
3 Points	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rudimentary topic/idea development • Basic supporting details • Simplistic language
2 Points	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited or weak topic/idea development, organization, and/or details • Limited awareness of audience and/or task
1 Point	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited topic/idea development, organization, and/or details • Little or no awareness of audience and/or task
Blank	No response.

Group Work

Your teacher will divide the class into four groups for study. Within your group you will be working on several projects.

Project Number One:

Your main project is to develop the MCAS Exam for the year 2002. You are the test creators; you are the teachers. As you work in your group to develop the exam, you will be referring to the standards often. You might want to bookmark the preceding pages that contain descriptions of the standards.

1. You will create a Writing Prompt. We suggest you skip ahead in the book now to Standard 16, Myth (**page 98**). In this standard you will be working in your groups to read about myths in many cultures. This would be an excellent standard to use for your Writing Prompt. Also, if you skip ahead, you will be able to start planning for the assignment in that standard.
2. You will create Multiple Choice questions. Many of the Multiple Choice questions on the MCAS exam are questions about readings they provide on the test. In the 2000 Exam there were a total of 41 Multiple Choice questions on the standards. As you develop your questions, go back to the standards to make sure all the standards are represented in your questions. You can see old MCAS Tests on the Department of Education web site here:

<http://www.doe.mass.edu/mcas/testitems.html>

Your teacher may provide copies of previous tests for you to look at.

3. To find readings for your test you can visit Project Gutenberg on the Internet:

<http://www.gutenberg.net/>

Here you will find full text copies of literature that has passed into the public domain. This means that the author or holder of the copyright has been dead for over fifty years, and the copyright has expired. The materials can then be copied and used for study.

You might try typing the words "Short Story" into the search engine. Short stories or brief excerpts from longer works make excellent reading assignments for consideration on your exam.

4. The first language standards are about oral language. These standards are not tested on the MCAS but your assignment for Standard 16 on myth may contain an oral presentation. It's important for you to be able to speak clearly and with logical thought development. This helps your writing too. You will learn in this course about oral skills by reviewing Robert's Rules of Order and debate concepts.
5. The last two standards are about media and the use of electronic resources. You might also reinforce your knowledge in these standards by preparing your Myth presentation using electronic tools like Microsoft Powerpoint™ presentation software.

A good website to learn about oral presentation skills and the use of media to get your point across can be found here:

<http://www.microsoft.com/education/tutorial/classroom/ppt97/overview.asp>

or go here to learn the way teachers prepare:

<http://www.datasync.com/~teachers/powerpoint.html>

Project Number Two

Within your groups you will be reading a summarized version of a play by William Shakespeare. The summaries were written by Edith Nesbit. You can find all of her summaries in a short book called "Beautiful Stories from Shakespeare" here:

<http://promo.net/cgi-promo/pg/cat.cgi?&label=ID&ftpsite=ftp://ibiblio.org/pub/docs/books/gutenberg/&alpha=1500>

Ms. Nesbit was a writer of stories who eventually achieved literary notoriety when she wrote for young people. In these summaries, she captures the story without losing the flavor of the story. The story remains intact but the vocabulary and language are easier for young people to understand today.

We have included one of her summaries at the end of this book. For your assignment in Project Two, you are to go to Project Gutenberg or the site listed above and choose one of the summaries in the "Beautiful Stories from Shakespeare" volume. In your groups, you are to read your summary, create your own Writing Prompt question about the summary, and construct your composition to answer your question. This is not as difficult as it sounds. You will use the self-evaluation rubric for writing that we include after page 18. This will help you become a critic of your own writing.

Project Three

Your third project is found in Standard Sixteen on myth, traditional narrative and classical literature. You will be choosing myths from different cultures. Your assignment will be to compare the myths, citing their similarities and differences. Your project for this assignment will be a presentation. This gives you exercise in Standards one through three on oral language and also practice in Standards 17 and 18 on Dramatic Literature if you choose to present in a play. If you choose to present using electronic tools, you will be getting exercise in the media standards.

We are introducing you to the major assignments for this course now so you can plan ahead.

English Language Arts

A message to students, teachers and parents about the English Language Arts Standards: Introduction to the Standards

The English Language Arts Tests implemented by the MCAS (Massachusetts Comprehensive Testing System) have been developed over a long period of time. One of the most difficult hurdles our school districts face is the increasing number of foreign languages to which we teach. Some districts teach to as many as 23 languages. This book is a course in basics, the skills students must master to pass the tests.

There are three traditional strands. Literature, Language and Composition strands have standards to which teachers have taught for decades. There is a fourth strand now, Media, which is relatively new. This strand revolves around electronic resources. It includes an expectation that students are well versed in using their school and public libraries. Students should be able to use technology as a learning tool.

Students, take these books home to read with your parents; many studies have shown that one of the most reliable predictors of a child's success in school is the amount of reading a parent does with them at home. Parents, a great gift is to take your child to the library often, spend some time there. Children's librarians are a great resource for finding the best reading materials. Get to know the librarian in your child's school. The school Library Media Specialist is qualified as a teacher as well as qualified in library science and technology. The school librarian is often the technology expert in a school and can provide individual help to you in all strands. There are wonderful Internet resources for students in this set of standards as well. A favorite is the Gutenberg Project at <http://www.gutenberg.net/>. Full text versions of the classics and other books in the public domain can be found here. The American Library Association page is a good resource for book recommendations. Their page can be found at: <http://www.ala.org/>

The first six standards in the English Language Arts Curriculum Frameworks relate to oral language. They are not directly tested on the MCAS tests.

Reading and Literature Standard Nine

Making Connections: Students will deepen their understanding of a literary or non-literary work by relating it to its context or historical background

On the Spring 2000 MCAS Test there were four questions on this standard. This represents 10% of the total number of multiple choice questions. As you read the excerpts of stories provided on the MCAS, pay attention to the facts in the stories that make a difference to their overall meaning.

One excerpt on this exam was from "The Perfect Storm" by Sebastian Junger. There were two questions from Standard 9 that related to this story. The questions follow:

According to this excerpt, when does the federal government get involved with a potential natural emergency?

- A. At the first forecast of a storm
- B. After local communities exhaust their resources
- C. When state agencies cannot cope with the emergency
- D. Only after the situation is declared a disaster

What factor prevented this storm from causing even more damage?

- A. seawalls
- B. lower tides
- C. sand dunes
- D. mild winds

There is no secret to finding the answers to these questions about facts. The only way to do it is to methodically go back to the excerpt and scan the text until the fact appears. Even if you think you know the answer, don't rush through these questions. 10% is a big portion of the multiple choice part of the exam. If you take your time here, it could mean the difference between passing and failing.

For the first question, in paragraph three there is the following sentence: "If local communities don't have the resources to cope, state agencies step in; if state agencies can't handle it, the federal government gets called in." From this sentence, what is the correct answer to the first question? C

For the second question, we tried an experiment. We asked four separate teachers to answer this question. We timed them as they read the question, then went back to the selection and tried to find the answer. The average amount of time the teachers spent reading through the selection a second (or even third) time was nine minutes. This is a long time to spend on one question, but every point counts.

The answer was found in paragraph seven where the following sentence appears: "Had the storm occurred a week earlier, during the highest tides of the month, water levels would be a foot and a half higher."

From this sentence, we can deduce that the answer was "B", lower tides.

Take the time to go back to the readings to make sure the facts you think are true are really true. Don't always leap to a conclusion without re-reading the selection. You will always have time on the MCAS. You are given ample time to go back and read selections to make sure your answers are correct.

A technique used by good students when they read for information is to take notes while they read. You can do this during the test if it is a method that helps. You might create a list of facts that come up in a story or article.

Here's a little guide for taking notes:

Taking notes causes you to become physically involved in the learning process. We all learn in different ways. You may remember things you hear better than when you see it in print. When you take notes on what you are reading, the act of recreating the information with your hand may help you

to remember it. Make drawings if it helps you see the information more clearly.

Use abbreviations when you take notes during class. If your teacher is speaking quickly, you can create your own abbreviations so you don't miss the basic facts.

While you are reading the selections on the tests, circle facts you think might be important. Have a pencil handy while you read.

You are creating MCAS Test questions on this standard. Find a reading from Project Gutenberg as an example from which you can develop some multiple choice questions.

Your overnight assignment for this standard is to find a newspaper article that interests you. You are to make a list of complete sentences that outline the basic facts in the story. What are the questions a newspaper reporter tries to answer for his readers? Do your listed facts answer those questions?