THREE ENGLISH 11 ESSAY ASSIGNMENTS FOR PARCC PREP

THIS SCHEDULE COVERS WRITING ASSIGNMENTS FOR THE NEXT THREE WEEKS: The PARCC practice test you received in email Tuesday, February 10th, requires you to write three essays. IT IS SET UP JUST LIKE THE REAL EXAM, WHICH WILL OCCUR OVER THREE DAYS IN MARCH (March 11, 12, and 13). The 90-minute writing TASK is on day one and it will probably be the simulated research essay described below. The narrative and literary essays will probably be on days two and three and the writing time will be about 50 minutes for each task. We teachers are learning more about this process each day.

For the grade book, we will write the three PARCC-style essays over the next three weeks. The value will be 100 points per essay. We will also practice using PARCC tools online as PEARSON refines the practice tests. I see improvements every day, but I have also seen the practice site crash every day. Not good!

The Essay Due Dates below are based on a tentative schedule because PARCC is making changes everyday and teachers are doing the best we can to get you ready for the exam. Stay FLEXIBLE and we will try to do the same.

NOTE: Although you are doing these essay tasks on your computers like normal writing assignments, you will have to use a variety of unfamiliar tools for the same tasks when the real exam occurs. Rest assured, each week, we will get online and play with the PARCC tools for these specific reading and writing assignments so that nothing will surprise you March 11. We will probably do this as bell-ringers so we can give you as much time to write in class as possible. Meanwhile, check the essay due dates, task descriptions, and explanations below for more information.

STEPS FOR SUCCESS ON EACH ESSAY ASSIGNMENT: Regardless which essay you write first, you should do the following steps BEFORE writing:

• **Step One**: Check the PARCC rubric for the assignment. It is attached to the same email as this Assignment Schedule.

• **Step Two**: Read the passages and the multiple-choice questions that pertain to the specific writing prompt. PARCC claims the questions are designed to guide your writing tasks.

• **Step Three**: Read the writing prompt for each essay and make certain you understand what the prompt is really asking. You will have a vocabulary handout to refresh your memory, but you should already know terms like rhetoric, synthesis, argument, evidence, literary analysis, narrative, character traits, setting elements, events or conflicts, sources, and research simulation. If not, let’s review these terms and make certain you are comfortable with what the prompts are asking you to do.

• **Step Four**: for the literary and research essays, plan your thesis statement and the order of your arguments or ideas before you start writing.

• **Step Five**: Put your thesis and preview of key ideas into your introductory paragraph.

• **Remember**: the real exam essays are timed. You have about 50-minutes or so to write each essay (roughly one class period) and you will have no help from a teacher or other students. That is why we are going to spend three weeks getting you up to speed on PARCC-style exams. We have already practiced PARCC-style Multiple Choice questions, but you need to understand how critical they are to writing an effective response to the essay prompts.

Multiple-Choice Questions: All three essays are based on close-reading of passages in the practice test that require readers to make inferences for Part A responses, and then identify evidence for Part B answers to multiple-choice questions. Most of you have already seen these questions on the computer version of this test if your computer worked during the practice sessions. We have since learned that answering Part B questions first, helps you answer the Part A questions correctly.
ESSAY SCORING:
Each week you will have two kinds of assessment: formative and summative. For formative assessment you will receive 10-points in the grade book for just showing me your essay ideas roughed out on a PAGES document. Your summative assessment will be 100-points for each essay based on a conversion of the PARCC-rubrics.

- **Formative Assessment**: you will show me the essay you are writing. We will have a short, informal discussion of your ideas and your approach to the assignment. I will give you advice and turn you loose to finish the assignment as needed.

- **Summative Assessment**: you will turn in the finished essay for holistic grading against the rubric. The rubric is 11 points. Essays scoring 10-11 are advanced; essays scoring 8-9 are proficient; essays scoring 6-7 are nearing proficiency; essays scoring 5 or lower are developing writers. Converting the rubric to a 100-point scale looks like this:

  **Conversion of PARCC Rubric:**
  - 11 = 98-100 points
  - 10 = 90-98 points
  - 9 = 80-89 points
  - 8 = 70-79 points
  - 7 = 60-69 points
  - 6 = 50-59 points
  - 5 = 40-49 points

**Revisions for higher scores**: If you score 75-points on the finished draft of each essay, that will be pretty good. But you can do better. You will have one chance to revise graded essays for higher points as long as you submit all the work on time for formative and summative assessments. The due dates below will give you far more time to think and write each of the three essays than you will have on the actual exam, but our purpose is to get you thinking about how to handle each task during crunch time. If this works as planned, you will get quick feedback on what you are doing well and what you need to improve.

**DUE DATES ESSAY ONE:**
- Formative assessment Tuesday, February 17th
- Summative assessment Wednesday, February 18th.

**DUE DATES ESSAY TWO:**
- Formative assessment Friday, February 20th
- Summative assessment Monday, February 23rd

**DUE DATES ESSAY THREE:**
- Formative assessment on Wednesday, February 25th
- Summative assessment Thursday, February 26th

**DUE DATES FOR REVISIONS:**
- Wednesday, March 4.
**Essay Prompts:** As noted earlier, you may respond to the prompts in any order you wish, so long as you show me your progress on one essay each formative assessment day for the next three weeks. For this assignment schedule, essays will be discussed in the order they appear on the practice test.

- The first essay prompt is the **literary essay** (question 6 on the practice test).
- The second essay prompt is the **research simulation essay** (question 16 on the practice test).
- The third essay prompt is the **narrative essay** (question 22 on the test).

Pictures of all three prompts are shown below. Beneath each picture is an explanation of how to write the essay so you have a chance to do well on the assignments and the exam.

**THE LITERARY ESSAY (QUESTION 6 ON PARCC PRACTICE)**

6. Now that you have read and answered questions about the passages from *Quicksand* and *The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man*, write an essay in which you identify a theme that is similar in both passages and analyze how each author uses the characters, events, and settings in the passages to develop the theme.

**Explanation of the Prompt:** The literary essay prompt is asking you to identify the common theme of both stories. You must make a claim -- an argument -- that the common theme is what your say it is. To prove this claim, you must explain how the theme is revealed in each story by (1) characters, (2) events, and (3) settings. To use examples from each story, and explain why the examples are relevant, you will need three body paragraphs. This prompt is set up for a five-paragraph essay just like a prompt on an AP exam. You will need an introduction, three body paragraphs, and a conclusion.

- **Introduction:** You should identify the common theme for the two stories in your introductory paragraph. This will be your thesis – the claim you are going to prove in your essay. Your proof will be evidence from the two stories. Remember, the theme is the writer's opinion on the main idea in the story. You should also preview the three types of proofs you will discuss in the body paragraphs: (1) the development of the characters in each story, (2) the events in each story, and (3) the setting in each story. You should then transition to the first of three body paragraphs to prove you have correctly identified the common theme.

- **Body Paragraph One:** You should explain how characters in each story reveal the theme. Use specific details from the stories. Your commentary should explain why the evidence is proof of your claim in the introduction. Transition to BP two to continue building your case to support your thesis.

- **Body Paragraph Two:** You should explain how events in each story reveal the theme. Again, use specific details for evidence. You case is almost complete. Transition to BP Three.

- **Body Paragraph Three:** You should explain how the settings of each story reveal the theme. Use specific details so there is no question about what the writers intended with their descriptions of the settings. You are now ready to wrap it up with your concluding paragraph.

- **Conclusion:** You remind the reader why you believe the development of characters, the sequence of events, and the settings in these two stories support your claim that the common theme in these stories is what you said it was in your introduction. You have now written an essay that will pass PARCC, EoC, SBA, or any college class you will ever take.

**Advice for timed essays:** During the actual exam, you will have about 50 minutes to write this kind of essay. For this prompt, you need to figure out the differences in author strategies quickly and then immediately choose the right evidence for each body paragraph. The literary essay on the real exam will be similar but may require different comparisons or contrasts between two stories. On the actual exam, you will be able to highlight the stories using the pdf highlighter tool in PARCC. You will also be able to use the note-taking tool to remind yourself what is important.
**Annotate for Success:** I have been told you will not have much time for a pre-write, so annotation (notes about what you have highlighted while reading) will help you categorize and organize your evidence for the essay. Use your annotation notes to write your claim and your preview of key arguments into the introduction paragraph immediately. Then use evidence from the stories to prove your key ideas in each of the body paragraphs. Make certain your commentary explains why the evidence is relevant to your thesis. If you have time on the actual exam, the conclusion will be icing on the cake. For this class assignment, your conclusion is required.

**THE SIMULATED RESEARCH ESSAY (QUESTION 16 ON PARCC PRACTICE)**

You have studied three sources involving the establishment of American independence from Great Britain. The sources are:

- Declaration of Independence, signed on July 4, 1776
- A passage from Patrick Henry’s March 23, 1776, speech to the Second Virginia Convention
- The transcript of the video “From Subjects to Citizens”

An important idea presented in the sources involves the colonists’ notions of the purpose of government. Write an essay in which you explore the perspectives offered in the source documents regarding government’s purpose and its relationship to the people it governs. Use evidence from all three source documents to support your ideas.

**Explanation of the Prompt:** Again, you are writing an argument essay. You will be *synthesizing* three sources to prove your claim that Americans were justified in their fight for independence from Great Britain. Again, this prompt is set up for a five-paragraph essay.

- **The introduction** has your claim and a preview of key ideas you will develop from the source documents.
- **The three body paragraphs** develop the evidence from each of the three sources.
- **The conclusion** reminds the reader why these ideas not only inspired a revolution, but also spawned a nation that has become a beacon of freedom for the world.

**Advice for Writing Argument Essays Using Documents:** Use quotes from each of the sources. Make certain you identify the documents immediately after the quote in parentheses. Then you must explain why the quote supports your claim – you thesis. *In this case,* you must use quotes to prove that the colonists were justified in their fight for independence from Great Britain. For example, in the Declaration of Independence, Jefferson literally said God created men equal, therefore free to make their own choices about everything in life including their form of government. Patrick Henry used his speech to convince indecisive convention delegates that it was time to walk the talk because fellow colonists were already fighting the British in Boston. Peace was no longer an option. The British King fully intended to “enslave” the colonists, which is exactly what Jefferson said more eloquently in the Declaration of Independence. Ironically, transforming people who have been subservient to a king, into citizens who make decisions for themselves as voters in a democratic republic, is not something natural. Very few people in world history had ever experienced this kind of freedom in any form of government. This nation was an anomaly.
Explanation of the prompt: This is the most unusual writing assignment on the PARCC exam. It might be easier for an imaginative child to answer this question than for a jaded teenager who no longer has a “playful” nature. Nevertheless, this task does demand a serious effort for success. It requires the reflective nature of a mature adult. You must assume the persona of a young man who is older now. This man was obviously an up-and-coming bureaucrat, who had every reason to be cocky, but he was different from his peers. He had empathy for a guy like Akakiy, a little old man who was mocked by other employees because he was not considered ambitious, accomplished, or very bright. All Akakiy did was makes copies – by hand – and even though he did it very well, he was treated like a robot, not like a human being.

Critical thinking: What made Akakiy different from other employees of the company? Akakiy may have been someone who had special needs. In American society, laws have evolved over the last 40 years that are intended to protect people who are different. Quite possibly, the young man who abruptly changed his attitude and actions after the encounter with Akakiy, is someone who will help change laws in his culture. However, very few cultures in the world will accept this kind of change.

Advice for writing this narrative: You must become the young man who is now older. You are using your journal to look back on changes you have made in your life because of the incident with Akakiy. Your journal entry must not only reflect on that incident, but also on everything that has happened since that moment. Your journal entry may also reflect back on your experiences before the critical incident. What previous experience made you stop and listen to the sadness in Akakiy’s questions? What have you done since that incident to become more “human”? What have you done to change your culture? Have you been able to avoid being shunned by your culture because you are also different?