FSA
ELA & Mathematics
Assessments

Grade 8
FSA ELA Writing Practice Test

The purpose of these practice test materials is to orient teachers and students to the types of passages and prompts on FSA ELA Writing tests. Each spring, students in grades 4–10 are administered one text-based writing prompt for the FSA English Language Arts test. Students will respond to either an informative/explanatory prompt or to an opinion/argumentation prompt. An example of a text-based writing prompt for each grade is available for practice. To familiarize students with the response formats, teachers may encourage students to practice with each type of prompt within a grade band.

The following FSA ELA Writing Practice Tests are available on the Florida Statewide Assessments Portal as shown below:

Elementary Grade Band
Grade 4 - Informative/Explanatory
Grade 5 - Opinion
Middle Grade Band
Grade 6 - Informative/Explanatory
Grade 7 - Argumentation
Grade 8 - Informative/Explanatory
High School Grade Band
Grade 9 - Argumentation
Grade 10 - Informative/Explanatory

The practice test is not intended to guide classroom instruction.

Read the "Pen Names in Literature" passage set.

Pen Names in Literature

Source 1: What's in a Name?

by E. Bennet

1 Names are useful. Sometimes they're even more useful when they're fake—especially if you're a writer. Pen names, aliases, or pseudonyms—as they're variously called—allow authors freedom, flexibility, and opportunity. Eric Blair, author of *Animal Farm* and *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, adopted the name George Orwell because he feared his early work would embarrass his family. C. S. Lewis, concerned about his status as a professor at Oxford, used the name Clive Hamilton to publish a collection of poems. Charles Dodgson, a noted mathematician, used the name Lewis Carroll to write fantasy works such as *Alice in Wonderland*.

2 For many writers, turning to a pen name is the only way to get published. When a local newspaper refused him publication, sixteen-year-old Benjamin Franklin started writing letters to the editor under the persona of the middle-aged widow Silence Dogood. Likewise, many female authors have had to conceal their gender in order to overcome discrimination and get publishers to take them seriously. The Brontë sisters (Charlotte, Emily, and Anne) wrote poetry and novels under male pseudonyms. Charlotte wrote under the name of Currer Bell, while Emily and Anne used the names Ellis and Acton Bell.

3 Even today some authors adopt a pen name in order to stem biases and preconceived notions. Perhaps the best-known example of this is J. K. Rowling. Rowling's publishers feared that young boys—the presumed audience of the *Harry Potter* series—wouldn't take the book seriously if they knew it was written by a woman. So Joanne Rowling became J. K. Rowling. In hindsight, though, the change was hardly necessary. Rowling's books enjoyed unprecedented success, gaining millions of fans among boys and girls of all ages, and adults as well.

4 In fact, Rowling became so famous that she later turned to another pen name, Robert Galbraith, in order to write detective novels. For Rowling, a new pen name meant a fresh start and a chance to explore a new genre without the pressure of her Harry Potter fame. When

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asked why she chose a new pen name, Rowling responded, "I was yearning to go back to the beginning of a writing career in this new genre, to work without hype or expectation and to receive totally unvarnished feedback. It was a fantastic experience and I only wish it could have gone on a little longer than it did."

5 Susan Eloise Hinton, who is famous for young-adult novels, is another author who adapted her name. S. E. Hinton's first book, *The Outsiders*, includes a male narrator. As with J. K. Rowling, Hinton's publisher thought it would be a good idea to use a pen name; if readers associated the narrator of the story with a male author, it would make the story seem more believable. Hinton herself appreciates having the alter ego of a teenage boy. She believes that it helps her separate her writer self from her true self, and it creates a persona as rich as a character in her novels.

"What's in a Name?" by E. Bennet. Written for educational purposes.

Source 2: Introducing Jane Eyre: An Unlikely Victorian Heroine

by National Endowment for the Humanities

6 When Charlotte Brontë set out to write the novel *Jane Eyre*, she was determined to create a main character who challenged the notion of the ideal Victorian woman, or as Brontë was once quoted: "a heroine as plain and as small as myself (Gaskell, Chapter XV)." Brontë's determination to portray a plain yet passionate young woman who defied the stereotype of the docile and domestic Victorian feminine ideal most likely developed from her own dissatisfaction with domestic duties and a Victorian culture that discouraged women from having literary aspirations. There were many expectations and limitations placed on Victorian women. Considering Brontë's position and her desire for literary achievement given that context, we are able to see why she felt compelled to write *Jane Eyre* and to publish it under a male pen name, Currer Bell.

7 During an era in which etiquette guides circulated freely, empire waists[1] gave way to tiny-waisted corsets, and tea parties grew in

[1]empire waists: a style of dress fitting just below the bust, leaving the waist and hips undefined, that became fashionable in the early 19th century.

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popularity, it might seem unlikely that realistic novels would set the Victorian literary trend. Perhaps the socially conscious novel may have been a result of the belief of the rising middle class of Victorian England in the possibility for change, since they had witnessed such economic changes in their lifetimes. Works such as Charles Dickens' *Hard Times*, George Eliot's [another woman using a male pen name] *Middlemarch* and Charlotte Brontë's own sister Emily's *Wuthering Heights* [published under Ellis Bell instead of Emily Brontë] featured female characters that represented trapped and repressed Victorian women marrying for the wrong reasons, disillusioned with family life, and relying on their physical beauty as a means to gain attention and advancement.

8 And then, along came the character Jane Eyre: physically uninteresting yet passionate and intense in her desire to express her emotions and thoughts. It is no wonder that Currer Bell's novel was considered groundbreaking and bold. Jane is a heroine battling the same societal limitations as her literary counterparts, but her raw narrative voice never fails to expose her Romantic sensibilities, psychological depth, and her adamant desire to stay true to herself.

Adapted from "Introducing Jane Eyre: An Unlikely Victorian Heroine," by National Endowment for the Humanities. In the public domain.

Source 3: Letter from Robert Southey to Charlotte Brontë

In December of 1836, Charlotte Brontë sent a letter with some of her poetry to the Poet Laureate of England, Robert Southey, asking his opinion of her work. The following letter is his reply.

Keswick, March, 1837.

Madam,

9 It is not my advice that you have asked as to the direction of your talents, but my opinion of them; and yet the opinion may be worth little, and the advice much. You evidently possess, and in no inconsiderable degree, what Wordsworth calls "the faculty of verse." I am not depreciating it when I say that in these times it is not rare. Many volumes of poems are now published every year without attracting public attention, any one of which, if it had appeared half a century ago, would have obtained a high reputation for its author.

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Whoever, therefore, is ambitious of distinction in this way, ought to be prepared for disappointment.

10 But it is not with a view to distinction that you should cultivate this talent, if you consult your own happiness. . . . The day dreams in which you habitually indulge are likely to induce a distempered state of mind; and in proportion as all the ordinary uses of the world seem to you flat and unprofitable, you will be unfitted for them without becoming fitted for anything else. Literature cannot be the business of a woman's life, and it ought not to be. The more she is engaged in her proper duties, the less leisure will she have for it even as an accomplishment and a recreation. To those duties you have not yet been called, and, when you are, you will be less eager for celebrity. You will not seek in imagination for excitement, of which the vicissitudes of this life, and the anxieties from which you must not hope to be exempted, be your state what it may, will bring with them but too much.

. . . .

Your true friend, Robert Southey.

Excerpt from "Letter from Robert Southey to Charlotte Brontë." In the public domain.

Source 4: Who is Richard Bachman?

by J. L. Campbell

11 Stephen King is one of the most prolific and widely known American authors, with 54 novels and more than 200 short stories to his name. Well, sort of.

12 Stephen King has also written using the pen name Richard Bachman; the Bachman name has been with King for almost the duration of his career. Initially, King wanted to write using the Bachman pseudonym so that he would be able to publish more books. When King started writing, it was common practice for publishers to release only one book per year. Writing as both King and Bachman, he could produce twice as much work.

13 King also embraced the Bachman pseudonym because it allowed him to analyze his own success in his writing career: was he successful because of his talent or successful because of luck? Although King claims that he still does not have an answer to that question, perhaps book sales speak for themselves. *Thinner,* a book released under Richard Bachman's name, sold about 28,000 copies. When it was later

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released as a Stephen King book, it sold more than ten times the Bachman version.

14 King chose his pseudonym very carefully, even though he was pressed by his publisher to quickly come up with a name. He thought about calling himself Gus Pillsbury, as a tribute to his maternal grandfather with that name. Ultimately, though, he settled on a combination. Richard Stark, a pseudonym used by the crime writer Donald E. Westlake, was the inspiration for the first half of his nom de plume. Bachman, the second half of King's pen name, came from the music he was listening to at the time, by a band called Bachman-Turner Overdrive.

15 In an effort to establish Richard Bachman as an author in his own right, King created a detailed backstory about Bachman that included a fictional wife, a former position with the Coast Guard, and the operation of a dairy farm in New Hampshire. Bachman's true identity was revealed in 1985; a Washington, D.C., bookstore owner noticed that the writing styles of the two authors seemed similar. He used his detective skills to look at publishing records kept at the Library of Congress. Even though King was exposed as the real Richard Bachman, it did not stop him from continuing to write using the Bachman pseudonym, though his success as Stephen King meant that—by that time—publishers would likely allow him to publish more than one book per year, without needing a pseudonym at all. As King's and Bachman's writing careers continued to evolve, Bachman's role as King's alter ego has also evolved. King has referenced Bachman in his own stories, as well as Bachman's fictional wife, to create a fan base invested in the author's work, regardless of whether the work has "Richard Bachman" or "Stephen King" on the spine.

"Who is Richard Bachman?" by J. L. Campbell. Written for educational purposes.

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Writing Prompt

Your town's public library is hosting an exhibit on pen names throughout history. You have been asked to write an informational article for the exhibit's display explaining why some authors choose to use pen names. Your essay should be based on the ideas and concepts found in the "Pen Names in Literature" passage set.

Manage your time carefully so that you can

- read the passages;
- plan your response;
- write your response; and
- revise and edit your response.

Be sure to

- use evidence from multiple sources; and
- avoid overly relying on one source.

Your response should be in the form of a multiparagraph essay. Write your response in the space provided.

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Grade 8
FSA ELA Writing Rubric

The FSA ELA Writing Rubric is a scoring tool that describes the characteristics of a written response for each score point within each domain. The rubric may assist educators with evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of student responses based on the text-based writing prompt/task included in the practice test as well as responses based on other text-based writing prompts/tasks educators choose to use in a classroom setting.

The FSA ELA Writing tests for Grades 7–10 will be administered online. Grades 4–6 will be paper-based assessments for all students and for students in Grades 7–10 with an IEP or 504 plan that specifies a paper-based accommodation. (Paper-based and online FSA ELA Practice Writing tests are available on the FSA portal so that students have an opportunity to practice with both administration formats.)

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Grade 8 Informative/Explanatory Text-based Writing Rubric (Score points within each domain include most of the characteristics below.)			
Score	**Purpose, Focus, and Organization (4-point Rubric)**	**Evidence and Elaboration (4-point Rubric)**	**Conventions of Standard English (2-point Rubric begins at score point 2)**
4	The response is fully sustained and consistently focused within the purpose, audience, and task; and it has a clear controlling idea and effective organizational structure creating coherence and completeness. The response includes most of the following: • Strongly maintained controlling idea with little or no loosely related material • Skillful use of a variety of transitional strategies to clarify the relationships between and among ideas • Logical progression of ideas from beginning to end with a satisfying introduction and conclusion • Appropriate style and objective tone established and maintained	The response provides thorough and convincing support, citing evidence for the controlling idea or main idea that includes the effective use of sources, facts, and details. The response includes most of the following: • Smoothly integrated, thorough, and relevant evidence, including precise references to sources • Effective use of a variety of elaborative techniques (including but not limited to definitions, quotations, and examples), demonstrating an understanding of the topic and text • Clear and effective expression of ideas, using precise language • Academic and domain-specific vocabulary clearly appropriate for the audience and purpose • Varied sentence structure, demonstrating language facility	
3	The response is adequately sustained and generally focused within the purpose, audience, and task; and it has a clear controlling idea and evident organizational structure with a sense of completeness. The response includes most of the following: • Maintained controlling idea, though some loosely related material may be present • Adequate use of a variety of transitional strategies to clarify the relationships between and among ideas • Adequate progression of ideas from beginning to end with a sufficient introduction and conclusion • Appropriate style and objective tone established	The response provides adequate support, citing evidence for the controlling idea or main idea that includes the use of sources, facts, and details. The response includes most of the following: • Generally integrated and relevant evidence from sources, though references may be general or imprecise • Adequate use of some elaborative techniques • Adequate expression of ideas, employing a mix of precise and general language • Domain-specific vocabulary generally appropriate for the audience and purpose • Some variation in sentence structure	
Continued on the following page			

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Score	Purpose, Focus, and Organization (4-point Rubric)	Evidence and Elaboration (4-point Rubric)	Conventions of Standard English (2-point Rubric)
2	The response is somewhat sustained within the purpose, audience, and task but may include loosely related or extraneous material; and it may have a controlling idea with an inconsistent organizational structure. The response may include the following: • Focused controlling idea but insufficiently sustained or unclear • Inconsistent use of transitional strategies with little variety • Uneven progression of ideas from beginning to end with an inadequate introduction or conclusion	The response provides uneven, cursory support/evidence for the controlling idea or main idea that includes partial use of sources, facts, and details. The response may include the following: • Weakly integrated evidence from sources; erratic or irrelevant references or citations • Repetitive or ineffective use of elaborative techniques • Imprecise or simplistic expression of ideas • Some use of inappropriate domain-specific vocabulary • Most sentences limited to simple constructions	The response demonstrates an adequate command of basic conventions. The response may include the following: • Some minor errors in usage but no patterns of errors • Adequate use of punctuation, capitalization, sentence formation, and spelling
1	The response is related to the topic but may demonstrate little or no awareness of the purpose, audience, and task; and it may have little or no controlling idea or discernible organizational structure. The response may include the following: • Confusing or ambiguous ideas • Few or no transitional strategies • Frequent extraneous ideas that impede understanding • Too brief to demonstrate knowledge of focus or organization	The response provides minimal support/evidence for the controlling idea or main idea, including little if any use of sources, facts, and details. The response may include the following: • Minimal, absent, erroneous, or irrelevant evidence or citations from the source material • Expression of ideas that is vague, unclear, or confusing • Limited and often inappropriate language or domain-specific vocabulary • Sentences limited to simple constructions	The response demonstrates a partial command of basic conventions. The response may include the following: • Various errors in usage • Inconsistent use of correct punctuation, capitalization, sentence formation, and spelling
0			The response demonstrates a lack of command of conventions, with frequent and severe errors often obscuring meaning.