



Planning and Preparation Guide

Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test, March 2012

This guide contains information to help you prepare your students for the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test (OSSLT) that will be administered March 29, 2012.

Please visit our Web site, www.eqao.com, to see

- a sample test, with a Student Answer Sheet and Student Answer Key;
- previously administered tests, with Student Answer Keys and scoring rubrics and
- the OSSLT *Framework*.

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Introduction

What is the OSSLT?

The OSSLT is a provincial test of literacy (reading and writing) skills students have acquired by Grade 10. It is based on the literacy skills expected in *The Ontario Curriculum* across all subject areas up to the end of Grade 9.

Overview

Administration Date	March 29, 2012
Test Materials	two test booklets and one Student Answer Sheet
Duration	2.5 hours of testing time in total
Results	an Individual Student Report indicating whether the student was successful or unsuccessful

Reading	Writing
<p>Reading selections:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• informational (225 to 250 words)<ul style="list-style-type: none">– paragraph– news report• narrative<ul style="list-style-type: none">– dialogue (225 to 250 words)– real-life narrative (550 to 600 words)• graphic (fewer than 150 words)	<p>Types of writing tasks and questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• long-writing tasks<ul style="list-style-type: none">– news report (one page)– series of paragraphs expressing an opinion (two pages)• two short-writing tasks (six lines each)• multiple-choice questions<ul style="list-style-type: none">– developing a main idea with supporting details– organization of ideas– language conventions
<p>Types of questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• multiple-choice• open-response (six lines each)	

Reading

For the OSSLT, reading is defined as the process through which the reader makes meaning of a variety of written texts as reflected in the expectations in *The Ontario Curriculum* across all subjects up to the end of Grade 9. The OSSLT's informational, narrative and graphic reading selections focus on three reading skills:

- understanding explicitly (directly) stated ideas and information
- understanding implicitly (indirectly) stated ideas and information
- making connections between information and ideas in a reading selection and personal knowledge and experience

Reading selections

The reading selections include

- **information paragraph:** presents ideas and information on a topic
- **news report:** presents information in the form of a news story
- **dialogue:** presents a conversation between two or more people
- **real-life narrative:** presents an account of a significant time in an individual's life
- **graphic text:** presents ideas and information with the help of graphic features, such as diagrams, photographs, drawings, sketches, patterns, timetables, maps, charts or tables

Types of questions

- **multiple-choice**

Each reading text is followed by a number of multiple-choice questions. Students select the best or most correct answer from a list of four options.

Note:

Correct answers to multiple-choice questions are indicated by an asterisk.

- **open-response**

The information paragraph, news report and dialogue are followed by one or two open-response questions. Students construct a response based on the reading selection. They should respond on the six lines provided.

Examples of Selections and Questions

Example I

Information Paragraph

Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test

Read the selection below and answer the questions that follow it.



The Little Bear is a vital, year-round train in Northern Ontario. It connects the town of Cochrane in the boreal forests with Moosonee, 310 kilometres north in the James Bay Lowlands. It is a “mixed train”—one that carries both passengers and freight. During the morning, in Cochrane, the crew loads the box cars with things people

5

in Southern Ontario take for granted (fresh fruits, vegetables and meats, dry goods, frozen foods, mail). Then, flat cars are connected behind the loaded box cars. These flat cars carry everything from heavy construction equipment to entire prebuilt fabricated houses. Once people have boarded the passenger cars, the Little Bear heads north. It is one of the last “flag stop” trains in Canada. This means the train will stop anywhere along the route to let people on and off. It is common for the Little Bear to stop for canoe tripping parties at the major rivers—the Missinaibi, Mattagami or Kwataboahagan. Adventurers from all over the world match their trips on these rivers with the Little Bear’s schedule. In summer, the train pulls a special flat car with racks for transporting canoes. The famous Polar Bear Express carries tourists over the same route during the summer months, but the Little Bear is the all-season working train for this northern route.

10

15

20

Adapted from the James Bay Frontier’s Web site: www.jamesbayfrontier.com/community/moosefactory.html. Reprinted with permission. Image © Ontario Northland.

Multiple-Choice (Record the best or most correct answer on the Student Answer Sheet.)

- | | |
|---|---|
| <p>1 What is the best meaning for “crew” in this selection?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">A touristsB workers *C passengersD adventurers <p>2 Why would words be placed in parentheses in the fourth sentence?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">F to explain what is carried on flat carsG to show in what order things are loaded on the trainH to demonstrate that the Little Bear is a “mixed train”J to clarify what “people in Southern Ontario take for granted” * <p>3 What does “the train will stop anywhere along the route to let people on and off” suggest to the reader?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">A There are other trains.B The Little Bear is not in a hurry.C The Little Bear has no schedule.D The area has very few settled communities.* <p>4 Why does the Little Bear pull a special flat car during the summer?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">F to let people on and offG to carry canoes for adventurers *H to carry heavy construction equipmentJ to carry fresh fruits, vegetables and meats | <p>5 The main way the Little Bear differs from the Polar Bear Express is</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">A its schedule. *B its destination.C the route it follows.D the passengers it carries. <p>6 What idea connects the first and last sentences?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">F tourismG flag stopsH vital service *J summer months |
|---|---|

Written Answers

- 7** State a main idea of this selection and provide one specific detail from the selection that supports it.

Rough Notes

Use the space below for rough notes. Nothing you write in this space will be scored.

Example 2

Real-Life Narrative

Read the selection below and answer the questions that follow it.

Heroes of the Noronic Disaster

Twenty-seven-year-old Don Williamson completed his shift at the Goodyear Tire Plant and 1
drove a friend downtown. Although it was past one o'clock in the morning, Don, who had
worked on lake boats, decided to take a few minutes to view the ships tied up along
Toronto's waterfront.

It was September 17, 1949. In those days the Port of Toronto was a very different place, 2
with all sorts of passenger and freight boats lining the docks from one end of the bay to the
other. The elegant passenger ship S.S. *Noronic* had arrived in Toronto on Friday evening for
an overnight stop before heading down the lake to Prescott.

As Williamson turned onto Queen's Quay, he suddenly heard a ship's whistle blasting the 3
dreaded fire signal—10 short blasts followed by one, two or three additional blasts
depending on where the fire was raging. Approaching the lake at the foot of Yonge Street,
he could distinctly see flames dancing from the back of a large passenger vessel docked at
Canada Steamship Lines Pier 9.

The *Noronic* was on fire! 4



Pulling his car to the side of the road, Williamson 5
scrambled over the iron fence, removed his heavy
jacket and jumped onto a large floating painter's raft
tied up beside the *Noronic*.

Calling encouragement to those huddled on the deck 6
of the ship that was now a blazing inferno,
Williamson was soon busy pulling onto his raft those
who had the nerve to jump into the black water.

At almost the same moment that Williamson was arriving on the scene, Constables Ron 7
Anderson and Warren Shaddock in their Toronto Police accident car were turning onto
Lakeshore Boulevard. The dispatcher on the radio suddenly advised that a box alarm had
been rung nearby at Bay Street and Queen's Quay.

The constables arrived as the sky turned red and the ship erupted into uncontrollable 8
flames. Anderson raced over to the pier, removed his uniform and jumped onto the same
raft where Williamson was busily pulling people from the cold waters of Toronto Bay.

Through it all, the two men on the raft, strangers to each other but with a common purpose, 9
continued to work frantically to get people to jump from the boat. The noise made it impossible
to communicate with each other, even though they worked frantically just feet apart.

As dawn broke, it was obvious they had done all they could. Eventually Anderson left the raft and returned to the police station, not fully realizing the extent of the disaster. Soon after, young Williamson left the raft he had used as a rescue pad and headed for home. For more than five hours, the two rescuers had been unable to say a word to each other. Another 40 years would pass before they would. 10

As days went by, the extent of the terrible tragedy unfolded. Of the 524 passengers and crew of 171 on board the S.S. *Noronic*, a total of 119 (all American tourists) had died in the early hours of Saturday, September 17, 1949, in what remains Toronto's worst-ever disaster. 11

As the 40th anniversary of the fire was approaching, a Toronto newspaper columnist arranged for the two men to meet at the Island Ferry Docks. It was there, exactly 40 years previously, that their lives first crossed. This time it was a much happier meeting. 12

On the 40th anniversary of the disaster, Ron Anderson and Don Williamson laid wreaths at the memorial in Mount Pleasant Cemetery where five unidentified victims of the S.S. *Noronic* disaster were buried. 13

Mike Filey, "Heroes of the Noronic Disaster" in *More Toronto Sketches: The Way We Were*. Toronto: Dundurn Press, pp. 155–156.
Photo © Toronto Harbour (CP).

Multiple-Choice (Record the best or most correct answer on the Student Answer Sheet.)

- 1** According to this selection, what was Don Williamson doing at the waterfront on the night of the fire?
- A He was on his way to work.
 - B He was picking up a co-worker.
 - C He was visiting friends downtown.
 - D He wanted to see the ships tied up at the docks. *
- 2** Which of the events mentioned in paragraph 1 happened first?
- F Don drove a friend downtown.
 - G Don had worked on lake boats. *
 - H Don completed his shift at the Goodyear Tire Plant.
 - J Don decided to view the ships tied up along the waterfront.
- 3** How did the S.S. *Noronic* signal it was on fire?
- A by 10 short blasts
 - B by a continuous, long blast
 - C by 10 long blasts followed by one, two or three long blasts
 - D by 10 short blasts followed by one, two or three additional blasts *
- 4** Why is paragraph 4 so short?
- F It is too dark to see many details.
 - G It emphasizes the seriousness of the situation. *
 - H The police dispatcher broadcast only that message.
 - J Williamson had no warning that the ship was on fire.
- 5** What continuous noise prevented any conversation during the rescue?
- A the roaring fire *
 - B the ringing alarm
 - C the radio dispatcher
 - D the fire truck sirens
- 6** The phrase “As dawn broke” (paragraph 10) is used to
- F complete the story.
 - G describe the disaster.
 - H establish the time sequence. *
 - J explain the rescuers’ fatigue.
- 7** Why did the fire end in tragedy?
- A too few rescuers *
 - B not enough life boats
 - C too many other ships in port
 - D the weather conditions that night
- 8** Why is the second meeting of Anderson and Williamson’s described as “much happier”?
- F They were celebrating an anniversary.
 - G They were not struggling to save lives. *
 - H They had not seen each other in 40 years.
 - J They were touring the Toronto waterfront.

9 Which of the following best describes the time period covered by this selection?

- A** It starts and ends on the same day.
- B** It starts prior to the fire and ends on the anniversary.*
- C** It starts with Williamson's arrival and ends when he leaves.
- D** It starts with the arrival of the S.S. *Noronic* and ends with its departure.

Example 3

Graphic Selection

Read the selection below and answer the questions that follow it.

1 EXPLORE

- Living Memory
- Places
- People
- War
- Aboriginal Peoples
- Government
- Postal Archives

RESEARCH

- Services
- ArchiviaNet: On-line Research Tool
- Genealogy

2 LIVING MEMORY

GAMES

INTRO

Explore the gifts of our past - they are the prelude to our future.

BY THEME

BY TIME PERIOD

BY MEDIA TYPE

3

ABOUT THE EXHIBITION | NEW | SITE MAP | SEARCH | FEEDBACK

LIVING MEMORY

GAMES

GAMES

Top Ten:

In a recent survey, Canadians were asked to choose the top ten defining moments in Canadian history. The Archives holds documents relating to each one. Can you match the survey result?

Puzzles:

Unscramble puzzles using historical images.

Pop Quiz:

Test your knowledge.

Map Trap:

Match the event and location.

The National Archives is a treasure house of the memory of Canada. We care for and share millions of documents of all kinds —films, maps, diaries, treaties, journals, art, government records, photographs, sound recordings and more. Many are of unique value and exceptional beauty. Some are centuries old. All reveal how we have lived in this place called Canada and enable Canadians to better understand the story of their country and of their fellow citizens.

Adapted from the Web site www.archives.ca/08/08_e.html. Reproduced with permission of the National Archives of Canada.

Multiple-Choice (Record the best or most correct answer on the Student Answer Sheet.)

- 1** What would you click on if you wanted to know how this Web site is organized?
- A Site Map *
 - B Welcome
 - C Contact Us
 - D Preservation
- 2** What conclusion can you draw from the box labelled “Français”?
- F It is about Quebec.
 - G The site is bilingual. *
 - H The site is about France.
 - J It is available only in Ontario and Quebec.
- 3** Which of these pages could you go to from the “GAMES” page?
- A War
 - B Feedback *
 - C Genealogy
 - D Publications
- 4** Which part of the site would give information about how the National Archives keeps important old newspapers in good condition?
- F Preservation *
 - G Publications
 - H Living Memory
 - J Digital Collections
- 5** How has technology contributed to Canadians’ access to historical documents?
- A It has made Canadian history come alive.
 - B It has made historical documents available to more Canadians. *
 - C It has provided documents to the National Archives of Canada.
 - D It has enabled the government to provide people with their genealogy on request.
- 6** The information on the three screens is organized from
- F past to present.
 - G oldest to newest.
 - H present to future.
 - J general to specific. *

For the OSSLT, writing is defined as a constructive process of communicating in the forms in which students are expected to write according to the expectations in *The Ontario Curriculum* across all subjects up to the end of Grade 9.

Through a combination of short- and long-writing tasks, the OSSLT focuses on three writing skills:

- developing a main idea with sufficient supporting details
- organizing information and ideas in a coherent manner
- using conventions (spelling, grammar, punctuation) in a manner that does not distract from clear communication

The lined space provided for written work indicates the approximate length of the writing expected.

Types of questions

There are three types of writing questions on the OSSLT: long-writing tasks, short-writing tasks and multiple-choice questions.

A. Long-writing tasks

There are two long-writing tasks: a news report and a series of paragraphs expressing an opinion.

I. News report

- Students are required to write a news report based on the picture and headline provided. Students must find a link between the headline and the photograph that could be used as an event for a report that would appear in a newspaper. Students are given one lined page for their written work.
- A news report usually answers the questions who, what, where, when, why and how.

N.B. Students should not write an advertisement, a television or radio report or a report about an event that will take place in the future. They should write about an event that has occurred in the past in order to inform readers about the event.

Students must make sure that

- the response is related to the picture and headline;
- the response contains sufficient and specific information and facts related to the event;
- the response is coherent and organized;
- the response is written in the third person with a reportorial tone and
- the grammar, spelling, punctuation and sentence structure are correct.

Example

Writing a News Report

- 1 Task:** Write a **news report** on the next page based on the headline and picture below.
- You will have to make up the facts and information to answer some or all of the following questions: Who? What? Where? When? Why? How?
 - You must relate your newspaper report to **both** the headline **and** the picture.

Purpose and

Audience: to report on an event for the readers of a newspaper

Length: The lined space provided for your written work indicates the approximate length of the writing expected.

Students Win Competition



Rough Notes

Use the space below for rough notes. Nothing you write in this space will be scored.

2. A series of paragraphs expressing an opinion

- The topic will be current and familiar to teenagers.
- The student must write a minimum of three paragraphs, which include an introduction, development and a conclusion. Students are given two lined pages for their written work.
- The student must express an opinion and support it with details. The opinion must be stated clearly at the beginning or end of the response.
- The student must adequately support the opinion with reasons, examples or facts.

Students must make sure that

- the opinion is clearly stated;
- they have provided enough specific detail to support it;
- the response is coherent and organized and
- the grammar, spelling, punctuation and sentence structure are correct.

Example

Writing a Series of Paragraphs

- 1 Task:** Write a **minimum of three paragraphs** expressing an **opinion** on the topic below. Develop your main idea with supporting details (proof, facts, examples, etc.).
- Purpose and Audience:** an adult who is interested in your opinion
- Length:** The lined space provided for your written work indicates the approximate length of the writing expected.
- Topic:** **Is it important for teenagers to pay attention to world news?**

Rough Notes

Use the space below for rough notes. Nothing you write in this space will be scored.

B. Short-writing tasks

These tasks will give students the opportunity to demonstrate their writing skills using their knowledge and personal experience. Responses must be written in complete sentences. Students are given six lines for their response.

Example

Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test

Short Writing Task (Answer in full and correctly written sentences.)

- 1** What was your favourite game as a child? Explain why you liked it.

Rough Notes

Use the space below for rough notes. Nothing you write in this space will be scored.

C. Multiple-choice questions

The multiple-choice questions for writing deal with the three writing skills. Correct answers to multiple-choice questions are indicated by an asterisk.

Examples

Choose the sentence that does **not** belong in the paragraph.

(1) Wayne Gretzky's early career foretells what an amazing hockey player he was to become. (2) At ten, while playing in a league with boys four years older, he scored 378 goals in 85 games. (3) That was 238 more goals than the boy who came second. (4) At 18, Gretzky scored 46 goals as an Edmonton Oiler and won the National Hockey League Rookie of the Year award. (5) The Wayne Gretzky Foundation Golf Classic raises over \$120 000 a year for youth in sports.

- A Sentence 2
- B Sentence 3
- C Sentence 4
- D Sentence 5 *

Which is the best way to combine all the information in the following sentences?

Anna's assignment is due tomorrow.

She has to work tonight.

She is feeling rushed.

- F Anna's assignment is due tomorrow because she is rushing to work tonight.
- G Anna is feeling rushed because she has to work tonight and her assignment is due tomorrow. *
- H Since Anna's assignment is due tomorrow and she has to work tonight and she is feeling rushed.
- J Although Anna has to work tonight and her assignment is due tomorrow because she is feeling rushed.

Choose the sentence that uses capitalization correctly.

- A My friend from manitoba, whose name is ari, earns money by delivering the *Winnipeg herald*.
- B My friend from Manitoba, whose name is Ari, earns money by delivering the *Winnipeg herald*.
- C My friend from manitoba, whose name is Ari, earns money by delivering the *Winnipeg Herald*.
- D My friend from Manitoba, whose name is Ari, earns money by delivering the *Winnipeg Herald*. *

Choose the correct option to fill in the blank.

Like her mother, the artist Manuela Sanchez _____

- F painted portraits to support her family. *
- G her paintings of portraits supported her family.
- H and also painted portraits to support her family.
- J whose famous portraits were painted to support her family.

Teachers' Frequently Asked Questions

How does the OSSLT benefit teachers?

The OSSLT gives teachers valuable information about strengths and areas for improvement in their students' learning. In addition, many teachers and principals across Ontario are actively involved in test development and scoring. These experiences provide excellent professional development in curriculum and assessment and give teachers and principals opportunities to share assessment strategies and practices with colleagues.

What is the OSSLT based on?

The OSSLT is based on the expectations for literacy (reading and writing) across all subjects in *The Ontario Curriculum* up to the end of Grade 9. For more information, please refer to the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test Framework, posted on the EQAO Web site, www.eqao.com.

How does EQAO report results from the OSSLT?

EQAO reports on student achievement at the individual, school, board and provincial levels. Each student who participates in the OSSLT will receive an Individual Student Report that indicates whether he or she has successfully completed the OSSLT.

Schools and boards will also receive a report that provides aggregated achievement results, aggregated contextual data about students' literacy preferences and practices and provincial results.

How do boards and schools use the OSSLT results?

Boards use the results to analyze their achievement data in terms of the provincial results, and schools use the results to analyze their achievement data in terms of both provincial and board data. School boards and schools can use this approach to determine relative strengths and areas for improvement

in their students' achievement and to address board- and school-level remediation efforts.

Who is required to write the OSSLT?

Students who began Grade 9 during the 2000–2001 school year and those who began it thereafter are required to write the OSSLT, according to *Ontario Secondary Schools, Grades 9 to 12: Program and Diploma Requirements* (1999). These students (and any others who are placed in one of these cohorts) are required to complete the test or the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Course (OSSLC) successfully in order to earn their Ontario Secondary School Diploma (OSSD). Students normally participate in the test when they are in Grade 10. Students who do not participate in the OSSLT in the year following the year in which they entered Grade 9 require either a deferral or an exemption.

Mature students may enrol directly in the OSSLC without first attempting the OSSLT.

A mature student is a student who

- is at least 18 years of age on or before December 31 of the school year in which he or she registers in an Ontario secondary school program;
- was not enrolled as a regular day-school student for a period of at least one school year immediately preceding his or her registration in a secondary program and
- is enrolled in a secondary program for the purpose of obtaining an OSSD.

Which students can be deferred and exempted?

If a student is working toward an OSSD but either has not yet acquired a level of proficiency in English advanced enough to complete the OSSLT successfully or is unable to write the test because of illness, injury or other extenuating circumstances, the principal may grant a deferral for the current year in

accordance with the EQAO deferral policy. The student will need to complete the OSSLT or the OSSLC successfully in order to earn an OSSD.

Students who have an Individual Education Plan that indicates that they are not working toward an OSSD may be exempted from writing the OSSLT. Exemptions must be documented according to EQAO's administration guide.

Is it possible for a school to modify the dates for administering the OSSLT?

No. To protect the security of test materials and to ensure the validity and reliability of the results, all students across the province must write the OSSLT at the same time. This policy applies to schools in the publicly funded system and to independent schools, including First Nations schools. Teachers and principals who are responsible for administering the OSSLT must follow this policy.

Why can't staff photocopy test materials? Wouldn't it be helpful for teachers to read the test so they can better support and prepare students?

The OSSLT is a secure test and confidentiality must be ensured. Field-test items are embedded in the OSSLT to be tested for future use. Teachers are encouraged to use the materials on the EQAO Web site, www.eqao.com, to support and prepare students.

Why are these field-test items on the OSSLT?

Field testing ensures the quality of current and future test items and helps to ensure year-to-year comparability. EQAO embeds field-test items in every student's booklets each year. No student is disadvantaged by the placement of these items in the OSSLT. The scores on the field-test items are not included in the student's result.

Students' Frequently Asked Questions

Who has to take the OSSLT?

If you entered Grade 9 in September 2000 or later and are working toward an Ontario Secondary School Diploma, you must write the OSSLT to graduate. This applies to all students in publicly funded schools and inspected private schools.

Mature students may enrol directly in the OSSLC without first attempting the OSSLT.

A mature student is a student who

- is at least 18 years of age on or before December 31 of the school year in which he or she registers in an Ontario secondary school program;
- was not enrolled as a regular day-school student for a period of at least one school year immediately preceding his or her registration in a secondary program and
- is enrolled in a secondary program for the purpose of obtaining an OSSD.

How long will it take me to write the test?

The allotted time for each of the two sessions is one hour and 15 minutes. It is very important that you manage your time to complete the entire test.

Is the test difficult?

The OSSLT is designed to reflect the requirements of *The Ontario Curriculum*. The test assesses literacy (reading and writing) skills students are expected to have acquired by the end of Grade 9.

Who marks the OSSLT?

The test is scored by qualified individuals who have received special training for this purpose.

Does my name appear anywhere?

Written responses are identified only by a number. Furthermore, the booklets from

different schools and different school boards are all mixed up when they are distributed for scoring.

You are asked to write your name on the Student Answer Sheet to assist EQAO in case some materials are misplaced.

How will I receive my results?

You will receive an Individual Student Report indicating whether or not you have passed the OSSLT.

What happens if I do not pass the OSSLT?

You can take the test again the following year.

You can also talk to your parents or guardians and your school principal and/or teacher about taking the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Course (OSSLC) instead of retaking the test.

What is the OSSLC?

The OSSLC is another way of meeting the literacy graduation requirement.

Principals have the discretion to allow a student to enrol in the OSSLC before he or she has had a second opportunity to take the OSSLT if the principal determines that it is in the best educational interests of the student (Ministry of Education Policy/Program Memorandum 127).

What happens if I leave questions blank?

You'll get a score of zero for these questions.

**Education Quality and
Accountability Office**



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