

English Language Arts 30–1, January 2011
Writing Assignments

English Language Arts 30–1
Part A: Written Response
Grade 12 Diploma Examination

Description

Time: 2½ hours. This examination was developed to be completed in 2½ hours; however, you may take an additional ½ hour to complete the examination.

Plan your time carefully.

Part A: Written Response contributes 50% of the total English Language Arts 30–1 Diploma Examination mark and consists of two assignments.

- **Personal Response to Texts Assignment**
Value 20% of total examination mark
- **Critical/Analytical Response to Literary Texts Assignment**
Value 30% of total examination mark

Recommendation: Read and reflect upon the whole examination before you begin to write. Time spent in planning may result in better writing.

Do not write your name anywhere in this booklet. Feel free to make corrections and revisions directly on your written work.

Instructions

- Complete the Personal Response to Texts Assignment first. The Personal Response to Texts Assignment is designed to allow you time to think and reflect upon the ideas that you may also explore in the Critical/Analytical Response to Literary Texts Assignment.
- Complete **both** assignments.
- You may use the following print references:
 - an English and/or bilingual dictionary
 - a thesaurus
 - an authorized writing handbook
- Space is provided in this booklet for planning and for your written work.
- Use blue or black ink for your written work.

Additional Instructions for Students Using Word Processors

- Format your work using an easy-to-read 12-point or larger font such as Times.
- Double-space your final copy.
- Staple your final printed work to the pages indicated for word-processed work for each assignment. Hand in all work.
- Indicate in the space provided on the back cover that you have attached word-processed pages.

PERSONAL RESPONSE TO TEXTS ASSIGNMENT

Suggested time: approximately 45 to 60 minutes

Carefully read and consider the texts on pages 1 to 4, and then complete the assignment that follows.

THE JACKHAMMER SYNDROME

Once I wanted things so badly
they tended to heat up while I looked at them
glowing cherry red and disappeared
thus it was common on the streets
of my hometown twenty
years ago to hear young ladies utter
cries of dismay as their coiffures started
smoking and they vanished like rainbows
while I stared fixed and lasciviously
They say if you wish hard enough long
enough you'll get what you wish for
I maintain the opposite or nearly
one alternates wanting and not-wanting
at unpredictable intervals which
might be called the jackhammer syndrome
For example
I play pool with my brother-in-law
and nearly always lose at first
until finally I don't give a damn
then start to win
The balls jostle in genetic pairs
drop dead
true in side pockets and caroms click
like new false teeth in orbit with a steak
I play like a blind mathematician
give the ball underspin curves
straight from my draughtsman brain
and realize I'm winning by god winning
fifty mounted horsemen in the red desert
draw swords and swear fealty
my spaceship darts with unerring skill
among excreta of constipated planets

which turn out to be radium in fact
I can do anything
and encounter myself in the past thinking
of hide-and-seek and run-sheep-run
in my old hometown
where the kid was pretty funny
He will not know me now no
one does there
among those dream-circumstances
but patches of emotion hover still
on the streets where I lost all my battles
But I retain the memory of winning
close to my vest as a belly button
which is one advantage of total recall
and totally recall swimming
across a river meeting a girl halfway
along the wet footpath and going
on together to the other
side for an hour doing
nothing dizzily balanced
on the moment managing
to outwit myself carefully
not looking at her
There are moments of such elation
in a man's life it's like being struck
alive on the street by the first
god one meets at an intersection
whom one must believe in a second
time after twenty years of atheism
You press the stomach of your business
suit flat and stride on into the sunset
pretending to be serious

Al Purdy

from THE ORCHID THIEF

John Laroche is a tall guy, skinny as a stick, pale-eyed, slouch-shouldered, and sharply handsome, in spite of the fact that he is missing all his front teeth. He has the posture of al dente spaghetti and the nervous intensity of someone who plays a lot of video games. Laroche is thirty-six years old. Until recently he was employed by the Seminole Tribe of Florida, setting up a plant nursery and an orchid-propagation laboratory on the tribe's reservation in Hollywood, Florida.

Laroche strikes many people as eccentric. The Seminoles, for instance, have two nicknames for him: Troublemaker and Crazy White Man. Once, when Laroche was telling me about his childhood, he remarked, "Boy, I sure was a *weird* little kid." For as long as he can remember he has been exceptionally passionate and driven. When he was about nine or ten, his parents said he could pick out a pet. He decided to get a little turtle. Then he asked for ten more little turtles. Then he decided he wanted to breed the turtles, and then he started selling turtles to other kids, and then he could think of nothing *but* turtles and then decided that his life wasn't worth living unless he could collect one of every single turtle species known to mankind, including one of those sofa-sized tortoises from the Galapagos. Then, out of the blue, he fell out of love with turtles and fell madly in love with Ice Age fossils. He collected them, sold them, declared that he lived for them, then abandoned them for something else—lapidary¹ I think—then he abandoned lapidary and became obsessed with collecting and resilvering old mirrors. Laroche's passions arrived unannounced and ended explosively, like car bombs. When I first met him he lusted only for orchids, especially the wild orchids growing in Florida's Fakahatchee Strand. I spent most of the next two years hanging around with him, and at the end of those two years he had gotten rid of every single orchid he owned and swore that he would never own another orchid for as long as he lived. He is usually true to his word. Years ago, between his Ice Age fossils and his old mirrors, he went through a tropical-fish phase. At its peak, he had more than sixty fish tanks in his house and went skin-diving regularly to collect fish. Then the end came. He didn't gradually lose interest: he renounced fish and vowed he would never again collect them and, for that matter, he would never set foot in the ocean again. That was seventeen years ago. He has lived his whole life only a couple of feet west of the Atlantic, but he has not dipped a toe in it since then.

Laroche tends to sound like a Mr. Encyclopedia, but he did not have a rigorous formal education. He went to public school in North Miami; other than that, he is self-taught. Once in a while he gets wistful about the life he thinks he would have led if he had applied himself more conventionally. He believes he would have probably become a brain surgeon and that he would have made major brain-research breakthroughs and become rich and famous. Instead, he lives in a frayed Florida bungalow with his father and has always scratched out a living in unaverage ways. One of his greatest assets is optimism—that is, he sees a profitable outcome in practically every life situation, including disastrous ones. Years ago he spilled toxic pesticide into a cut on his hand and suffered permanent heart and liver damage from it. In his opinion, it was all for the best because he was able

¹lapidary—the cutting, polishing, or engraving of gemstones

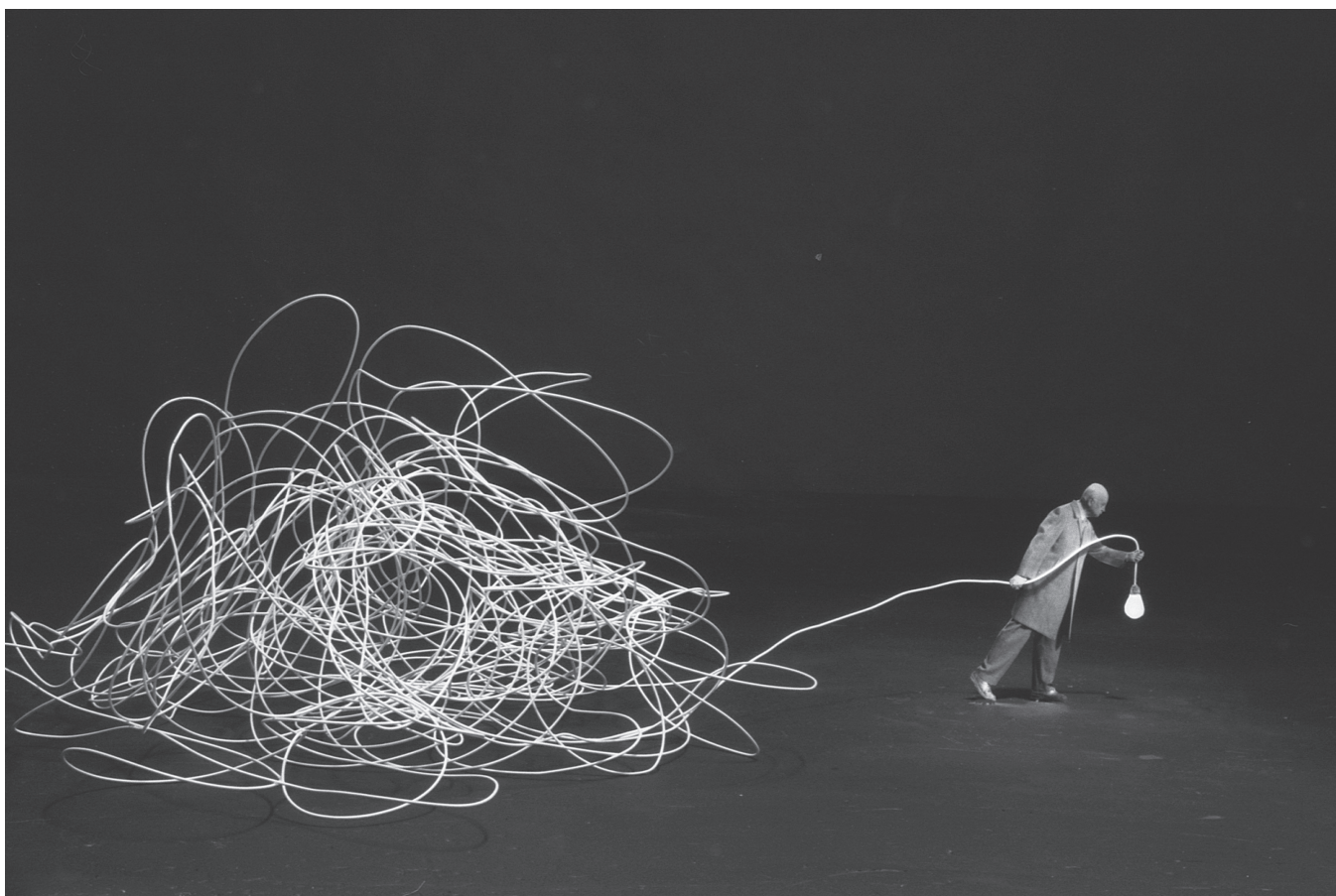
to sell an article about the experience (“Would You Die for Your Plants?”) to a gardening journal. When I first met him, he was working on a guide to growing plants at home. He told me he was going to advertise it in *High Times*, the marijuana magazine. He said the ad wouldn’t mention that marijuana plants grown according to his guide would never mature and therefore never be psychoactive. The guide was one of his all-time favorite projects. The way he saw it, he was going to make lots of money on it (always excellent) *plus* he would be encouraging kids to grow plants (very righteous) *plus* the missing information in the guide would keep these kids from getting stoned because the plants they would grow would be impotent (incalculably noble). This last fact was the aspect of the project he was proudest of, because he believed that once kids who bought the guide realized they’d wasted their money trying to do something illegal—namely, grow and smoke pot—they would also realize, thanks to John Laroche, that crime doesn’t pay. Schemes like these, folding virtue and criminality around profit, are Laroche’s specialty. Just when you have finally concluded that he is a run-of-the-mill crook, he unveils an ulterior and somewhat principled but always lucrative reason for his crookedness. He likes to describe himself as a shrewd bastard. He loves doing things the hard way, especially if it means that he gets to do what he wants to do but also gets to leave everyone else wondering how he managed to get away with it. He is quite an unusual person. He is also the most moral amoral person I’ve ever known.

I met John Laroche for the first time a few years ago, at the Collier County Courthouse in Naples, Florida. I was in Florida at the time because I had read a newspaper article reporting that a white man—Laroche—and three Seminole men had been arrested with rare orchids they had stolen out of a Florida swamp called the Fakahatchee Strand State Preserve, and I wanted to know more about the incident. The newspaper story was short but alluring. It described the Fakahatchee as a wild swamp near Naples filled with exceptional plants and trees, including some that don’t grow anywhere else in the United States and some that grow nowhere else in the world. All wild orchids are now considered endangered, and it is illegal to take them out of the woods anywhere, and particularly out of a state property like the Fakahatchee. According to the newspaper, Laroche was the ringleader of the poachers. He provided the arresting officers with the proper botanical varietal names for all the stolen plants and explained that the plants were bound for a laboratory where they were going to be cloned by the millions and then sold to orchid collectors around the world....

Sometimes this kind of story turns out to be something more, some glimpse of life that expands like those Japanese paper balls you drop in water and then after a moment they bloom into flowers, and the flower is so marvelous that you can’t believe there was a time when all you saw in front of you was a paper ball and a glass of water.

Susan Orlean

Diogène ou la Lucidité – Diogenes¹ or Lucidity, 2005



© Gilbert Garcin / Courtesy of Stephen Bulger Gallery

¹Diogenes—a famous Cynic philosopher (404–323 BC), who lived with extreme simplicity, acted without shame, valued the power of reason, critiqued living by convention, and is reported to have lit a lamp in the middle of the day and wandered about saying: “I am looking for an honest man.”

PERSONAL RESPONSE TO TEXTS ASSIGNMENT**Suggested time: approximately 45 to 60 minutes**

You have been provided with three texts on pages 1 to 4. In “The Jackhammer Syndrome” by Al Purdy, the speaker recalls transcendent moments of elation as he walks about in his business suit. In the excerpt from *The Orchid Thief* by Susan Orlean, Laroche is characterized as an individual who pursues his personal obsessions while maintaining an unconventional code of conduct. In Gilbert Garcin’s *Diogenes or Lucidity*, a man in an overcoat and business suit carries a light bulb.

The Assignment

What do these texts suggest about the conflict between pursuing a personal desire and choosing to conform? Support your idea(s) with reference to one or more of the texts presented and to your previous knowledge and/or experience.

In your writing, you must

- use a prose form
- connect one or more of the texts provided in this examination to your own ideas and impressions

English Language Arts 30–1, January 2011
Personal Response to Texts Assignment

Example Scored Satisfactory–1 (S)

Pursue or Conform

Pursuing a personal desire often leads to a conflicts between your personal desire and choosing to conform to the universal norms. How you respond to the pressure will affect the outcome greatly, living your dreams will have risks involved, where as conforming you would have a stable job or even life style but would live with the regret of not accomplishing your dreams. The story of John Lroche is a perfect example of pursing a personal desire.

John Lroche in “The Orchid Thief” did not conform, instead he chased after his personal desires. His desires changes frequently, as did the character in “The Jackhammer Syndrome”, this however did not prevent him from giving up on his dreams, he decided not to conform to a “normal” life. Instead at each new interest, he would passionately pursue it until the curiosity was lost and another opportunity opened up for the chasing. He had the choice to go to school, settle down, make money, live a conformed life, but he chose the life of pursuing his desires as they came along. John spent his time doing the things he loved, not worried about what the world thought about his actions, even if his desires led him on a tangled chase then ended right back where he had started, just as in the picture of Diogenes with the cord all twisted around because of the quest he was on, looking for an honest man who had not conformed. Both Diogenes and John were seeking something, and no matter where the path of their desires led, they followed, even if it meant ending up exactly where they began. Finally John was caught trying to get

**English Language Arts 30–1, January 2011
Personal Response to Texts Assignment**

Example Scored Satisfactory–1 (S)

away with another of his crazy ideas or fantasies, if he had conformed and quite using his imagination he would not have been caught stealing.

Now when you look at the conflict between pursuing your personal desire and choosing to conform, there is no easy answer. When you conform there is less chance of failure and embarrassment, but a regret is left about not achieving your dreams and the possibilities that could have opened up if they were accomplished. On the other hand, choosing to pursue the personal desire can lead you on an exciting path, but with the excitement there are risks and failures that you will have to be prepared for. Because your desire will change, and it may leave you with nothing except a fresh start but there wont be the regret of not giving it a try. This is the conflict between pursuing a personal desire and choosing to conform, the choice is simply yours.

**English Language Arts 30–1 January 2011
Personal Response to Texts Assignment**

EXAMPLE PAPER—SATISFACTORY–1

SCORING CRITERIA	RATIONALE
<p>Ideas and Impressions (S)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The student’s exploration of the topic is generalized. • Perceptions and/or ideas are straightforward and relevant. • Support is adequate and clarifies the student’s ideas and impressions. <p style="text-align: center; font-size: 2em; margin-top: 100px;">S</p>	<p>In addressing the conflict in the topic, the student explores the notions that “How you respond to the pressure will affect the outcome greatly, living your dreams will have risks involved, where as conforming you would have a stable job or even life style but would live with the regret of not accomplishing your dreams” (2) in a generalized manner. When referring to “The Orchid Thief”, the student offers adequate support, acknowledging that John “had the choice to go to school, settle down, make money, live a conformed life, but he chose the life of pursuing his desires” (2). In discussing the visual, the student further clarifies the ideas and impressions of risks being involved when asserting that like John, Diogenes’ “desires led him on a tangled chase then ended right back where he had started, ... with the cord all twisted around because of the quest he was on” (2). In weighing the pros and cons of choosing between pursuing one’s personal desire and conforming, the student ultimately arrives at the straightforward and relevant conclusion that “there is no easy answer” (3).</p>

English Language Arts 30–1 January 2011
Personal Response to Texts Assignment

EXAMPLE PAPER—SATISFACTORY–1

SCORING CRITERIA	RATIONALE
<p>Presentation (S)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The voice created by the student is apparent.• Stylistic choices are adequate and the student’s creation of tone is conventional.• The unifying effect is appropriately developed. <p>S</p>	<p>The student’s voice is apparent and a conventional tone is developed in sentences such as “When you conform there is less chance of failure and embarrassment, but a regret is left about not achieving your dreams and the possibilities that could have opened up if they were accomplished” (3) and “Both Diogenes and John were seeking something, and no matter where the path of their desires led, they followed, even if it meant ending up exactly where they began” (2). Stylistic choices remain adequate as in “Instead at each new interest, he would passionately pursue it until the curiosity was lost and another opportunity opened up for the chasing” (2).</p> <p>The student’s unifying effect is appropriately developed through the examination of how one’s responses to pressures to conform will “affect the outcome greatly” (2) in one’s life, as well as exploring the “risks involved” (2) in “living your dreams” (2). Though arriving at the notion that the answers are not easy when dealing with this conflict, the student concludes on the very straightforward assertion that “the choice is simply yours” (3).</p>

English Language Arts 30–1, January 2011
Personal Response to Texts Assignment

Example Scored Proficient–1 (Pf)

There is that age old conflict, that between going with or against the flow. The conflict all must face at some point in their life, between choosing to pursue personal desires, or choosing to conform and be 'normal'. We all desire to be accepted. At the end of the day, we want to feel secure, but at what cost? The writing 'Orchid Thief' by Susan Orlean, describes the slightly eccentric fellow, John Laroche. Laroche lives out his life following whatever desire that catches his fancy, and whatever this desire may prove to be, he embraces with intensity. Laroche appears to be a man that has no qualms with going against the flow. Though realizing that it would perhaps be wise for him to go about a more conventional way of life, and perhaps sometimes considering it, Laroche is unable to conform. As stated in the writing 'Orchid Thief', 'once in a while he gets wistful about the life he thinks he would have led if he had applied himself more conventionally.'

Although slightly over eccentric, Laroche seems to demonstrate an ideal. The ideal that we can be happy if we do not conform, that although the world may not entirely accept us for being different, that we can throw care to the wind and be our own persons. We may view a person like Laroche and wonder, 'why can't I be like that?' And why can't we be not afraid? Yet, though most of us dream of breaking away from the 'norm', in the end we tend to, as the poem 'The Jackhammer Syndrome' puts it: 'press the stomach of [our] business suit[s] flat and stride on into the sunset pretending to be serious.' It is accepted in society that we wear that business suit and go about our business like good citizens, sowing a life of security and conformity. We read a novel and love it because we are told that it is a great read. We see fashion in the media and we accept it as good because we are told to. We accept the ideas that the world throws at us, often simply because we want to be like everyone else. Where are our personalities in all of this? We

(Page 2 of 4)

English Language Arts 30–1, January 2011
Personal Response to Texts Assignment

Example Scored Proficient–1 (Pf)

each have personal desires, we each have identities that are unique and beautiful in themselves, yet it seems we would rather not let them be seen. It seems we would rather have security than freedom to dream for ourselves.

To break from the norm does not need to be a big thing. It can be little things, little pieces of personal desire, which we allow ourselves to show. Recently I had some friends over and we were going to watch a movie which we had randomly picked out at the movie store. What I didn't tell them at first was that it was a movie I had seen before, and had really liked it. Turns out, they all thought that it was a weird movie, and initially, as they sat there pulling it apart, I felt a little piece of myself protest. I had liked it and it seemed wrong that I should sit there allowing my true opinion to be squashed simply because I was scared to be different. I heard my voice protesting. They all stopped, turned to stare at me, almost incredulous that I had spoken in support of the movie. "I liked it," I heard myself say again. They laughed but assured me that I was entitled to my own opinion. *I am*, I thought to myself, setting down to argue my case about the movie. Why not let them see what I truly think? Why not show them a piece of myself instead of hiding, instead of conforming my ideas to the crowd?

At first Laroche appears to be just an over eccentric but I think he demonstrates to us a way that we all wish we could be. He gives us a glimpse of life that appears unconventional and unacceptable at first, but then, as the petals open and we truly see what he has to show us, we see a beauty in being ourselves. Like the last lines of the writing 'The Orchid Thief', 'sometimes this kind of story turns out to be something more, some glimpse of life that expands like those

English Language Arts 30–1, January 2011
Personal Response to Texts Assignment

Example Scored Proficient–1 (Pf)

Japanese paper balls . . . that bloom into flowers, . . . and the flower is so marvellous that you can't believe there was a time when all you saw in front of you was a paper ball.'

**English Language Arts 30–1 January 2011
Personal Response to Texts Assignment**

EXAMPLE PAPER—PROFICIENT–1

SCORING CRITERIA	RATIONALE
<p>Ideas and Impressions (Pf)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The student’s exploration of the topic is purposeful. • Perceptions and/or ideas are thoughtful and considered. • Support is specific and strengthens the student’s ideas and impressions. <p style="text-align: center; font-size: 2em; font-weight: bold;">Pf</p>	<p>The student begins the response with a study of John Laroche, characterizing him as one who acts “with intensity” (2), who is “unable to conform” (2), and who “seems to demonstrate an ideal” (2). This considered perception of a man who cannot control his passions yet still serves as an ideal for others is thoughtful. The student builds on this portrayal with a discussion of conformity by asking: “why can’t we be not afraid?” (2) The student’s answer, that we “go about our business like good citizens, sowing a life of security and conformity” (2) and that “It seems we would rather have security than freedom to dream for ourselves” (3) demonstrates a purposeful exploration of the topic.</p> <p>The student then explores and supports this observation with a personal anecdote of watching a film with friends. The student’s conformity is clear: “What I didn’t tell them at first was that it was a movie I had seen before, and had really liked it” (3). This conformity continues when the others “thought that it was a weird movie” (3) and the student remains silent because “I was scared to be different” (3). Upon voicing dissent, however, the student learns that although the others laugh, they also “assured me that I was entitled to my own opinion” (3) implying that the student’s fears were groundless and that in this case, only fear itself has held back an expression of self. The progression through this anecdote provides specific support that strengthens the overarching idea that we should not fear “being ourselves” (3).</p>

**English Language Arts 30–1 January 2011
Personal Response to Texts Assignment**

EXAMPLE PAPER—PROFICIENT–1

SCORING CRITERIA	RATIONALE
<p>Presentation (Pf)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The voice created by the student is distinct. • Stylistic choices are specific and the student’s creation of tone is competent. • The unifying effect is capably developed. <p style="text-align: center; font-size: 2em; font-weight: bold;">Pf</p>	<p>The student creates a voice that is distinct and appropriate to the context of a personal reflective piece. The voice is personal but not colloquial, which is particularly distinct given that the response is narrated from the perspective of an adolescent and has a section describing the social interactions of adolescents, all explored without adopting a more vernacular narrative style. Examples are found in diction, as in “qualms” (2) and “conventional” (2), or when describing the interaction of those peers: “They all stopped, turned to stare at me, almost incredulous that I had spoken in support of the movie” (3).</p> <p>The quality of syntactic structures, such as the complex “He gives us a glimpse of life that appears unconventional and unacceptable at first, but then, as the petals open and we truly see what he has to show us, we see a beauty in being ourselves” (3), and short declarative phrases as in “I liked it” (3) and “<i>I am</i>” (3), as well as the rhetorical questions such as “Where are our personalities in all of this?” (2) are examples of specific stylistic choices. As well, parallelism as in “We read a novel” (2), “We see fashion” (2), and “We accept the ideas” (2) creates a tone best described as confident.</p> <p>The development begins with a portrayal of Laroche who, unmoved by fear, “seems to demonstrate an ideal” (2). The response then explores the idea that in general people conform out of fear, and then presents a specific personal memory wherein the student learns that those fears are largely (in this case) groundless. The return to Laroche and the lessons that he has to offer, after opening with an analysis of his character, closes the response with a symmetry that demonstrates a capably developed unifying effect.</p>

English Language Arts 30–1, January 2011
Personal Response to Texts Assignment

Example Scored Excellent–1 (E)

Written Work

It is often hard to judge how one should behave in society. Prioritizing one's personal desires over societal norms – or vice-versa, can mean the difference between living and not living one's life to the fullest. In the case of John Laroche, choosing to pursue his personal desires has raised more than a few eyebrows, including those of the narrator, because of how eccentric they are relative to the "normal" standards. While I was never obsessed with turtles or Ice Age fossils or old mirrors, I can identify with Laroche because "weird" is what my peers called me up until high school when other girls my age moved on to skinny jeans, I continued wearing my baggy jeans that I found more comfortable. I have many acquaintances but fewer friends; someone is a friend in my view if they can put up with the strange ~~food~~ (but completely vegetarian) food I eat, my frequent rants about math, art, and philosophy (sometimes combined, sometimes separate), and how I will laugh hysterically about something I saw or heard years ago. I chose to attend Matheamp for three summers in a row. No matter how much liking math seems "uncool" or out of the ordinary, I learned more^{math} at camp than I was ever taught in school. One of [Laroche's] greatest assets is

English Language Arts 30-1, January 2011
Personal Response to Texts Assignment

Example Scored Excellent-1 (E)

optimism^{on}." In my opinion, Laroché's ^{individualism is the kind of individualism} ~~is the type kind of individualistic~~ that people pursuing happiness should ~~have~~ have. One should not conform to societal norms if it will impede creativity or venture, but the other bound is that one cannot directly violate the rights of someone else. Spontaneity without rationality is foolishness.

Back in ~~middle~~ ^{elementary} school, I wore the clothes I liked best and did whatever made me happy, which included rallying up people to sing "Phantom of the Opera" at recess. I'd be hypocritical in saying that I was completely shameless (sometimes we sang horribly...) because there was a small degree of conformity involved. The more eccentric of my peers found peace in numbers. In retrospect, I realize that we didn't conform to the standard for the sake of being different; it was just a matter of exploring ~~for~~ our interests and creating an opportunity for others who secretly want to do the same. Now, I still wear what I want even though my preferred colours are brighter than ~~what~~ the ^{whites,} grays, and blacks my peers wear. I sing in choir and feed ~~the~~ people's energy by bringing music into my every day experiences. It makes people happy, on a more tangible scale than Laroché's plant-growing guide.

Some of my fondest memories come from "math-odd's" on the whiteboards of my junior high school.

English Language Arts 30-1, January 2011
Personal Response to Texts Assignment

Example Scored Excellent-1 (E)

Yes, people found the "Asian Ladder of Marks" strange and the five proofs of Pythagorean Theorem perplexing, but in the end I can say that it only yielded benefit. I was upfront about my^{academic} interests. Mark Twain said that "the unexamined life may not be worth living, but the life too closely examined may not be lived at all." I keep a balance of that in my intellectual pursuits. However odd they might seem, they at least enhance my^{views of the} world, if not the views of others.

My final point is quite bold, and it is that most students in high school have no real idea of what mathematics actually is. Almost everyone lives their life just fine ~~without~~ this understanding, but I feel that part of the reason why so few people adore math is because of societal norms. Our curriculum can only accommodate certain concepts, and it tries to be as straightforward as possible. But to really appreciate or become acquainted with an aspect of the mathematical universe, one must step outside the norm. It may involve seeking sources outside of school, or investing education in the subject in higher education. For me, I attend Mathcamp because the math I learned there makes me want to be a math major. I will either become an actuary or a professor. When

English Language Arts 30-1, January 2011
Personal Response to Texts Assignment

Example Scored Excellent-1 (E)

it comes to career choices, what is the societal norm? There shouldn't be one; at some point, people have to be "different". It's the only way ^{to} ~~have~~ have innovation or ^{to} gain knowledge. Laroche's attempt at stealing orchids, for example, is a noble one, and was a creative attempt at saving endangered species. However, there ^{is} ~~was~~ risk in everything we do outside of the social norm.

My ventures in eccentricity are no where near as deviant or shocking as ~~the~~ Laroche's. However, I identify with him because I too see the benefit of choosing one's personal desires over conforming with societal norms. Of course, we are on similar grounds because nothing we ever tried to do seriously harmed someone else, as far as we know. I always settle the conflict between pursuing a personal desire and conforming to social norms by evaluating which ~~decision~~ will produce the greatest amount of happiness as long as there is no calculatable suffering. It's worked so far.

**English Language Arts 30–1, January 2011
Personal Response to Texts Assignment**

EXAMPLE PAPER—EXCELLENT–1

SCORING CRITERIA	RATIONALE
<p>Ideas and Impressions (E)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The student’s exploration of the topic is insightful. • Perceptions and/or ideas are confident and discerning. • Support is precise and aptly reinforces the student’s ideas and impressions. 	<p>The student begins the response by outlining the dilemma facing every member of society – the extent to which one should engage in “Prioritizing one’s personal desires over societal norms” (4) and confidently suggests the correct choice will determine fulfilment in life. The student establishes a sympathetic tone by personally connecting with John Laroche, whose choices “raised more than a few eyebrows” (4), through asserting “I can identify with Laroche because ‘weird’ is what my peers called me up until high school” (4). The student perceives that “‘One of [Laroche’s] greatest assets is optimism’” (4, 5) which is necessary for “creativity or venture” (5), but also concludes the first paragraph with the insightful framing of the idea that “Spontaneity without rationality is foolishness” (5).</p> <p>The student moves on to tie in personal experiences that parallel Laroche’s situation, maturely recognizing that “My ventures in eccentricity are no where near as deviant or shocking as Laroche’s” (7). The precise support ranges from elementary escapades of singing “‘Phantom of the Opera’ at recess” (5), with the student’s discerning reflection that the act was not “completely shameless” (5) because “The more eccentric of my peers found peace in numbers” (5), thus conforming to their chosen group. The student then explores a fond junior high recollection of the “‘mathoff’s on the whiteboards” (5), recognizing like Mark Twain, the need for a balance between a life examined and a life lived, pursuing personal desires of an “intellectual” (6) nature in contrast to conformity. The student concludes the math vignette with the confident idea that “few people adore math” (6) because “Our curriculum can only accomodate certain concepts” (6) due to societal norms, aptly reinforcing the student’s ideas and impressions.</p> <p>The student concludes by reiterating that “people have to be ‘different’. It’s the only way to have innovation or to gain knowledge” (7) and reflects that “I always settle the conflict between pursuing a personal desire and conforming to social norms by evaluating which decision will produce the greatest amount of happiness as long as there is no calculatable suffering” (7), alluding with insight that this is perhaps not the only option, but in the student’s brief life “It’s worked so far” (7).</p>

E

**English Language Arts 30–1, January 2011
Personal Response to Texts Assignment**

EXAMPLE PAPER—EXCELLENT–1

SCORING CRITERIA	RATIONALE
<p>Presentation (E)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The voice created by the student is convincing. • Stylistic choices are precise and the student’s creation of tone is adept. • The unifying effect is skillfully developed. <p style="text-align: center; font-size: 48pt;">E</p>	<p>Confident and complex structures are used throughout the response, such as “I have many acquaintances but fewer friends; someone is a friend in my view if they can put up with the strange (but completely vegetarian) food I eat, my frequent rants about math, art, and philosophy (sometimes combined, sometimes separate), and how I will laugh hysterically about something I saw or heard years ago” (4), demonstrating the creation of a convincing voice that is maintained throughout the response.</p> <p>Stylistically, the student convincingly melds an examination of the text with personal accounts that ring true and create an adept tone. Diction is skillfully chosen and precise, for example: “It makes people happy, on a more tangible scale than Laroche’s plant-growing guide” (5) or to “become acquainted with an aspect of the mathematical universe, one must step outside the norm” (6).</p> <p>The unifying effect is skillfully developed through the student’s transition from literary discussion to personal life experience. The student begins by applying the central idea that living life to the fullest means optimistically, but rationally, following creative impulses to the prose excerpt and then adeptly traces that pattern in the personal narrative. The student concludes by acknowledging that an evaluation of the happiness vs. suffering factor has been a valuable guideline in life “so far” (7).</p>