

# Essay Questions

Consider using with *Voyages in English 2011*

Grade 6—Chapter 5, Lesson 6 or Writer’s Workshop

Grade 7—Chapter 7, Lesson 2 or Writer’s Workshop

Grade 8—Chapter 5, Lesson 6 or Writer’s Workshop



## Teach

Explain that students will be asked to answer essay questions on some tests. Point out that essay questions ask students for a written response to convey what they have learned or to apply what they have learned to a new situation. Unlike other types of test questions, essay questions are not graded with an exact answer key but rather on their completeness and organization. Point out that most essay question tests impose a time limit so students must use their time wisely.

Tell students that to answer an essay question effectively, they should do the following:

- Look for key words in the question that will direct them to the correct writing form (compare/contrast, cause/effect, and sequence of events).
- Brainstorm ideas using a graphic organizer to plan their writing.
- Note where gaps in information occur and think how these can be filled.
- Give specific examples that support their analysis or opinions.
- Make key points clear and easy to identify. Restate parts of the test question in their response.
- Review the response for errors, especially those that detract from reader’s comprehension.

## Practice

Model for students how to plan, organize, and answer an essay question. Select an essay question related to a particular unit of study in social studies, history, or science. Textbooks often have examples of essay questions as part of their unit tests. Model how to note the key words in the question, choose an appropriate writing form and graphic organizer, and make notes for writing. Point out how to use the graphic organizer to structure their paragraphs. Use the checklist of key features to discuss the completed response with students.

## Apply

Have students draft a response to this essay question:

*Think about examples of historical fiction—books, movies, and TV—and compare these to nonfiction versions of the same event. Do these fictionalized versions affect our understanding of the people, places, and events of history?*

Before students begin, review the rubric that will be used to evaluate their essay-question responses. Remind them to keep these key points in mind as they organize and plan their writing.

## Assess

Use the rubric on the following page to evaluate students on their understanding of an essay question.

*Listening and Speaking Connection:* Have students work in small groups to conduct mock debates of opposing viewpoints. Group students by whether or not their thesis statements generally agree. Have each group member share his or her writing and work as a group to compile their reasons and examples for their opinion. Then ask each group to present their position, allowing the opposing side to ask questions that challenge their findings. Remind listeners to withhold judgment until they have heard the entire presentation. Remind each group to be ready to anticipate the opposing side’s arguments and defend these challenges with specific examples.

# Essay Questions

POINTS

<b>Ideas</b>	
Response uses key words from question	
Answers question thoroughly	
Supports analysis and opinions with relevant examples	
<b>Organization</b>	
Relevant topic sentence	
Appropriate organizational strategy	
Logical organizational structure	
<b>Voice</b>	
Appropriate for audience	
Sense of conviction	
<b>Word Choice</b>	
Includes key vocabulary related to topic	
Avoids redundancy	
<b>Sentence Fluency</b>	
Uses complete sentences	
Uses a variety of sentence styles	
<b>Conventions</b>	
Correct spelling, grammar, and usage	
Correct capitalization and punctuation	
<b>Presentation</b>	
Writing plan is apparent	
Neatness with consistent margins and spacing	