

## Content Domain III: Writing



### A Look at Content Domain III

Test questions in this domain will measure your ability to recognize coherent and focused writing. Your answers to the questions will help show how well you can perform on the following standards:

- Organize a writing sample
- Demonstrate ability to convey information and ideas from primary and secondary sources
- Use research and technology to support writing
- Use the writing process to develop, revise, and evaluate writing

Learning to become a good writer takes time and practice. Writing is a complex process that involves many different elements. Understanding these elements can help you become a better writer. This is the purpose of Content Domain III. While it cannot cover every aspect of writing, Content Domain III does cover many of the major elements of writing.

Since the *American Literature and Composition EOCT* is a multiple-choice test, you will not have to do any actual writing. Instead, many of the questions in this domain will provide you with samples of writing, and your task will be to distinguish the good writing from the poor writing. Some of the questions will present a single sentence for you to evaluate, while others will present a short passage with numbered sentences. The key to answering these questions is to distinguish the good writing traits from the poor writing traits. Overall, you want to make sure the writing in the passage is precise, well organized, and easy to understand.



### Spotlight on the Standards

#### ★ Organize a writing sample ★

This standard is one of the shortest on the EOCT, but it may also be one of the most difficult. You must apply what you know about grammar, usage, and style to create an

organized writing sample that sets a context and engages the reader, maintains a coherent focus throughout, and signals closure. You will be tested on a variety of passages such as letters, reports, essays, journals, and newspaper articles.

Most people write because they have something to say. Journalists write newspaper articles to inform readers about a particular event. Fiction writers create stories that entertain readers and stimulate their imagination. Even a simple poem about roses is written for a reason.

The primary message of a piece of writing is often called the **thesis**, or main idea. Sometimes authors state the main idea very clearly. For example, suppose you are reading an essay titled “Why Standardized Tests Are Good for Students.” Chances are that the main idea of this essay is that standardized tests are good for students. This does not mean that the author expects you to simply accept this idea without question. Instead, the author tries to prove to the reader that the idea has merit. The author will use supporting ideas and examples to support the point.

Understanding the main idea is crucial to understanding the passage. It would be hard to understand the essay without realizing that the main idea of the essay is that standardized tests are good for students. (You don’t have to *agree* with the main idea, but you do have to *understand* it.) You would be missing the point of the essay if you did not pick up on the thesis correctly.

### Tips for Finding the Main Idea and Subordinate Ideas

The questions for this standard will be based on informational passages. (See the short sample on page 55 or look in Appendix C for a longer example.)

Authors of informational text often use a traditional outline approach: first stating the main idea, then addressing all the supporting ideas, and ending by restating the main idea. See the example outline in the box.

From this outline, it is clear the main idea is that writers should consider the different resources available to them. The main idea for this paper will most likely be in the thesis sentence of the introductory paragraph. Each paragraph will support the main idea of considering different resources by identifying a category of resources (e.g., the World Wide Web) and then giving specific information about it.

#### OUTLINE

**Title:** Researching for Results

**Thesis:** There are many different resources you can use when researching a writing topic.

- I. The library contains more than just books
  - a. Magazines
  - b. Reference materials
  - c. AV materials
  - d. Internet access
- II. Surf’s always up on the Web
  - a. Academic sites
  - b. News sites
  - c. Company sites
  - d. Personal sites
- III. Interview those in the know
  - a. Scholars in the field
  - b. Professionals

**Concluding statement:** When researching a writing topic, don’t limit yourself when there are so many resources available.

The **main** idea can often be found in one or more of these places:

- The title
- The thesis statement
- The conclusion

The **subordinate**, or supporting, ideas of a passage can often be found in one or more of these places:

- The topic sentence of each paragraph
- The body paragraphs

In a well-written passage, you'll find evidence to support main and subordinate ideas in the body paragraphs. This evidence might include:

- Anecdotes
- Descriptions
- Facts
- Statistics

The questions on the EOCT that address the main idea or subordinate ideas in a passage may look like this:

**Which sentence does NOT fit with the main idea of the report?**

**Which sentence is the BEST thesis for this passage?**

### **The Secrets of Organization**

A gifted writer knows that there are many ways to organize information. Different topics require different structures. Some of the more common ways to organize a passage include:

- Chronological order
- Cause and effect
- Compare and contrast
- Asking and answering questions

A writer's choice of structure depends on the point he or she wants to make. A persuasive essay, for example, may start with "Why should you recycle?" and then be followed by the answer in a series of well-supported paragraphs.

A writer's choice of words also influences the effectiveness of his or her writing. You've already reviewed specific mechanisms for achieving certain literary effects. Questions for this standard will focus more on the nuts and bolts of effective writing. For example, good writers use precise language. Compare the following sentences:

**Jill brought stuff to the beach.**

**Jill brought a beach towel, a blanket, and a mystery novel for a day at the beach.**

The first sentence is vague, while the second sentence provides detailed information that makes the writing more engaging.

Good writers also use action verbs in active rather than passive voice. Here again are two sentences to compare:

**Money was stolen from the bank by a man wearing jeans and a baseball hat.**

**A man wearing jeans and a baseball cap robbed the bank and stole its money.**

In the first sentence, the passive voice makes an exciting and potentially dangerous event seem dull. Bank officials might issue a statement using a sentence like this one to downplay the seriousness of the event. The active voice and action verbs in the second sentence provide a greater sense of urgency. A newspaper reporter might write a sentence more like the second one.

In sentences written in active voice, the subject of the sentence acts. It performs the action expressed by the verb. In sentences written in passive voice, the subject of the sentence is acted upon by the verb. The actor performing the action may be introduced with a "by" phrase or may not be mentioned. In the examples given above, the first sentence includes a "by" phrase—"by a man wearing jeans and a baseball hat." An easy way to change passive voice into active voice is to look for that "by" phrase and make it the subject of the verb, as in the second sentence.

Questions for this standard will often be preceded by a short essay. You can treat these essays like mini-reading passages and use the same approach you would for a regular full-length reading passage. The questions could include: determining the best topic sentence (i.e., one that introduces a topic or idea) or concluding sentence (i.e., one that summarizes a topic or idea), identifying a sentence that is out of sequence, or one that is extraneous or unrelated to the topic. Look over the essay to find the main idea. Then use this information to help you answer the questions.

Try this on the sample essay below:

### Writing Around People

1) Each writer has his or her own composing process. 2) Some writers produce formal outlines before they begin writing a story or novel. 3) Other writers do not even know how a story will end until they actually write the conclusion. 4) Similarly, *where* authors choose to write also varies. 5) While the image we have of a writer is frequently that of a solitary, isolated individual, poring over sheets of paper, such is rarely the case. 6) In fact, writing tends to be a social endeavor. 7) Many writers wrote some of their best work with other people nearby.

8) Mark Twain, for example, wrote the novels *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* and *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court* while sitting in a small octagonal building with windows on all sides so he could write while his children played in the yard around him. 9) Twain's children have the last name Clemens, because Mark Twain's real name was Samuel Clemens. 10) Ernest Hemingway, too, wrote many of his stories and novels sitting at a table in a busy café in Paris. 11) Kate Chopin wrote on a special "lap desk" that she could carry with her. 12) As her children played and moved from place to place, she could place her things in the small desk, pack it up, and follow them. 13) Wherever her children stopped, she stopped too; while they played, she worked.

**1 Which statement is the BEST thesis for this passage?**

- A Some writers do their best work when surrounded by people.
- B Each writer has his or her own organizational style.
- C A lap desk freed writer Kate Chopin from the limitations of working indoors at a regular desk.
- D Mark Twain was unable to write unless he could see his children playing outside.

**2 Which sentence would be the BEST topic sentence for the second paragraph?**

- A Sentence 4
- B Sentence 7
- C Sentence 8
- D Sentence 13

**3 Which information does NOT belong in the passage?**

- A Sentence 1
- B Sentence 3
- C Sentence 9
- D Sentence 10

For the first question, having an idea of what the main idea of these paragraphs is will lead you to the right answer. Are the paragraphs mostly about Kate Chopin or Mark Twain? They are not, so answer choices **C** and **D** are too specific to act as a good thesis

for the passage. This leaves **A** and **B**. **B** is certainly part of the passage, but choice **A** is more closely related to all of the content. It is the BEST answer.

For the second question, your goal is to find the sentence in the two paragraphs that can serve as the topic sentence for the second paragraph. That paragraph is a series of examples without a topic sentence. Since well-developed paragraphs group ideas together in an intelligent and logical manner, moving Sentence 7 to the start of the second paragraph makes the most sense. Choice **B** is correct.

For the third question, knowing the thesis will help you to identify inappropriate information or anecdotes. The essay is about the writing process. Choices **A** and **B** elaborate on the writing process. Choice **D** gives a specific example of how one writer Mark Twain—worked. The information about Twain’s pen name and his children’s names is not necessary. The correct answer is choice **C**.

### STRATEGY BOX—Choose the BEST Answer



As you take the EOCT, you will often come across answers that are close to the one you had in mind. Keep reading! You need to find the BEST answer, and it may be the last one. You can note which answer choice you think is correct as you read the choices, but don’t mark your final answer until you’ve read through all the choices. There may be more than one answer that looks good, but there is only one correct answer.



### Spotlight on the Standards

**★ Demonstrate ability to convey information and ideas from primary and secondary sources accurately and coherently ★**

This standard elaborates on the previous standard. You will be asked to choose the best sentences to use to engage an audience, develop a controlling idea, summarize a passage, or provide detailed information in a style and tone that is appropriate for the intended audience. The passages will be informational, such as reports, articles, or essays. You may also be tested on rhetorical devices (e.g., repetition, analogy) used to enhance the meaning of a text.

To prepare for this section, you should review your knowledge of thesis statements and main ideas. You may also want to look ahead to the next standard which reviews research techniques, primary and secondary sources, and the correct use of note cards.

### STRATEGY BOX – Become a Detective

Take a close look at the passage. What kind of support does the author offer? Does the author use personal examples, descriptive details, endorsements (testimonials), statistics, relevant research, facts, opinions, or hearsay as support? The kind of support tells a lot about how well the author has chosen information and how well he or she can incorporate primary and secondary sources into his writing. For example, if the author uses a personal example to make a point about how well a medical procedure works, it is not as effective as providing scientific research to support the claim.

Questions for this standard will ask you to identify and use rhetorical devices, such as parallelism, repetition, and analogy. **Parallelism** is the repetition of similar parts of a sentence or of several sentences to show that the phrases or sentences are of equal importance. (In Content Domain IV you will be asked about parallelism as it relates to verb tenses and phrases.) In order to be parallel, the phrases or sentences must share the same grammatical structure. Parallelism also provides a certain rhythm to the work. The sentence “I came, I saw, I conquered,” would not make quite the impact if it were rewritten “I came, saw, and conquered.”

**Repetition** is part of parallelism. Good writers may repeat words or phrases throughout their writing to emphasize a point. Be careful not to overdo this rhetorical strategy. If you repeat the same words and phrases too much, your writing becomes dull, not emphatic.

**Analogy** is another important rhetorical device. Like a simile, an analogy compares two items. An analogy, however, can be more extensive than a simile. A good writer may use an analogy to help convey difficult ideas by comparing them to things or ideas most people know. For example, an expository piece on maintaining your health might compare your body to a car. Most people know that cars need fuel, just as the body needs food. A car needs to have its oil checked regularly, just as humans need to have their blood pressure checked. This analogy might continue throughout the article.

### Don't Always Believe Everything You Read

Be careful when doing research online. We often accept the accuracy of what we read in books because we know that publishers and the editors who work for them would not stay in business long if they printed books full of factual errors. But people who “publish” material online don't have the same pressure to be accurate. Practically anyone with a computer and an Internet account can publish material online. It is important that you consider the source of any material you find on the Internet. When you find a Web resource, try to find out what person or organization is publishing it, and then ask yourself if that person or organization is a respectable, trustworthy source for information on the topic you are researching.



## Spotlight on the Standards

### ★ Use research and technology to support writing ★

Questions for this standard will test your ability to choose the best sources and methods for researching a particular topic. You will also be asked how to add quotations and documented citations into a text using appropriate conventions.

The research process refers to many different steps related to finding information. Roughly speaking, it means going to appropriate resources (e.g., the library or the World Wide Web) with a question and finding a way to answer it. Since the *American Literature and Composition EOCT* is an English test, the focus is on the kind of research you would do for an English assignment. This can be broken down into various steps, as seen below.

#### Some Steps in the Research Process

**1. Deciding on a Topic.** When determining a topic for a paper, be sure to keep the scope in the proper range. Most students pick topics that are too broad to cover in the number of pages they have been assigned. For instance, they might decide to write a three-page paper on “American authors of the past hundred years.” This topic is just too broad for a three-page paper (or even a three-volume series). It would be better to pick a single author, like Eudora Welty, for your paper. Three pages are enough for a very brief introduction to Welty’s life and work. Students can also experience the opposite problem—a topic that is too narrow in scope. For example, it would probably be a stretch to write three pages about Eudora Welty’s favorite animal. The EOCT might ask you to select the best research topic among several choices. You would need to consider which choices are too broad or too narrow and eliminate those.

#### 2. Locating Primary and Secondary Sources.

Once you have decided on a topic, you need to locate sources. **Primary sources** are records of events by people who participated in or witnessed the events. For an English paper, an author’s work, like Welty’s *Delta Wedding*, is a primary source. Personal interviews and newspaper accounts are also primary sources. **Secondary sources** are records of events by people who did not participate. A textbook is a secondary source, as are literary reviews and criticism.

#### Read All About It

Here is a list of some common reference materials:

- ✓ Dictionary
- ✓ Thesaurus
- ✓ Atlas
- ✓ Almanac
- ✓ Encyclopedia
- ✓ Library catalog

Here is a list of some less common reference materials:

- ✓ Microfiche
- ✓ Speeches
- ✓ Journals
- ✓ Technical documents

The growing popularity of computers and the Internet has changed the way research is conducted. One of the best ways to begin to gather information on a topic is to go to an Internet search engine and type in some key words. You can find primary and secondary sources online. For instance, simply typing in *Eudora Welty* will bring you a number of links to different Web sites.

Using additional key words, however, will help you refine your search. If you are interested in writing about Welty's life, entering the key words *Eudora Welty* and *biography* or *early childhood* should lead you to sites that discuss her life. However, if you are interested in one of her works in particular, you would be better off typing in *Eudora Welty*, *The Optimist's Daughter* (one of her novellas), and then perhaps *review* or *criticism*. Using these key words should give you links to sites where people discuss or review *The Optimist's Daughter*.

The Internet should not be your only research tool. A question on the EOCT may ask you to choose the best source for a given topic. These sources may include books, journals, microfiches, almanacs, documentaries, or CD-ROMs. See next section for more detail.

### 3. Paraphrasing Information.

Research papers would be a lot easier if you were allowed simply to copy down, word for word, exactly what your source material said. This is plagiarism, and it is illegal. Instead, you need to take the information you read and rewrite it in your own words. This process is known as paraphrasing. Questions on this aspect of the research process might ask you to select the correct way to quote material from sources.

#### What is Plagiarism?

Plagiarism is taking someone else's words or ideas and presenting them as your own. You may only use another person's words (either the exact wording or a paraphrase) if you cite the source (give credit to where you found the information). If you use the exact same wording as the original, you need to put these words in quotation marks.

### Strategy Tip—Organizing and Recording Information

Recording information on note cards remains one of the most effective ways to keep track of information. Note cards also provide a great way to organize your information. You can shuffle and reshuffle the cards until you get them in an order that will allow you to write an outline.

But using note cards is not the only way to organize information. Depending on what information you need and how you need to use it, you may find other systems of organization more effective. These might include **anecdotal scripting**, a fancy term for recording the events in a literary work. As you read a novel, particularly a long one, you might find yourself forgetting what happened when. Keeping a list or timeline of events will help you remember what happened. A simple way to do this is to summarize an event and write down the page number(s) on which it occurred. You may want to record dates, if given. If an author uses flashback regularly, you should also develop a method for noting if the event described on page 145 actually occurred before an event on page 35. If you are reading nonfiction, a timeline might be more beneficial. Be sure to include page numbers for the events. An index can help you locate these events, but your own record is better. When you begin writing your research paper on a novel, for example, anecdotal scripting will make it easier for you to locate important events that you want to discuss in your paper.

Another system for organizing and recording information is an **annotated bibliography**. As you compile the list of resources you've consulted, add more information about each book. The annotation should contain the following:

- Brief summary of the work - Your summary should include the thesis and main supporting evidence.
- Evaluation of the author - Does this author have the background to support the work? For example, is a book providing medical information written by a doctor or someone without medical training?
- Intended audience - For whom was this book written? A story about Pocahontas written for elementary school students might not be the best source for your biography of Pocahontas.
- Evaluation of usefulness - How will this book or article help you with your research topic? Is this book a good source for anecdotes or statistics? You should put this kind of information in this last category.

Other systems for organizing information include outlines, mindmaps, charts, and graphs. You should try out a few methods and see which one works best for you.

### Identifying and Analyzing Sources

Questions on the EOCT will ask about appropriate sources for research. You will also need to synthesize information from different reference materials. **Reference materials** refer to informative, nonfiction resources like a dictionary or *The Readers' Guide to Periodical Literature*. For the EOCT, it will be helpful to be familiar with the purpose of these materials and how to use them. If you would like to learn more about these materials, go to the library and take a look at them.

In addition to being knowledgeable about reference materials, it is also helpful to know the parts of a book and the function of each part. This information can help you locate information quickly.

Once you've assembled your sources, you need to determine which source provides you with the type of information you need. One aspect of this standard tests your ability to choose the best written or electronic source to use in researching a topic. A question might look like this:

**Which is the best source to consult for a research paper on American poets of the nineteenth century?**

You will need to sort out any discrepancies among sources to determine which statistics to use. This will involve checking the accuracy and validity of facts.

You should also carefully analyze the different perspectives and viewpoints you find in your sources. Depending on a writer's perspective, you may find different information. A logger writing about saving his job may not mention the threats that logging poses to some animals. An environmentalist writing about saving the spotted owl may not mention the loggers who will lose their jobs if logging is restricted. For a research paper on logging and the environment, you would need to include both viewpoints.

### Documenting Your Sources

When you use information from another source, you need to give credit where credit is due, or **cite** where you found the information (See *What is Plagiarism* on page 59). Do you create a bibliography or a works cited list? Both look similar, but a works cited list only documents the works you have specifically referenced in your paper. A bibliography contains all the works you consulted during your research. It may include works you did not cite.



## Spotlight on the Standards

★ *Use the writing process to develop, revise, and evaluate writing* ★

Great works of literature do not flow effortlessly from the pens (or keyboards) of their authors. Most stories, essays, poems, and articles require hard work and revision before they can be considered excellent, or even very good. Even professional writers and famous authors struggle with their words. Drafting, revising, editing, and proofreading your writing are all elements of the writing process. Performing these tasks well is an important part of being a good writer, which is why this standard is tested on the EOCT.

The questions for this standard will focus on your ability to recognize the best revisions to poor writing to make the writing clear. You will be asked to consider the best way to rewrite awkwardly worded sentences, misplaced modifiers, and other errors in sentence structure.

Questions for this standard will be based on a passage. For this example, only the first sentence of the passage is included.

(1) To pick daisies, my friends and I went down to the lake later that evening.

**Which, if any, would be the BEST way to revise Sentence 1?**

- A** My friends and I, later that evening, we went down to the lake to pick daisies.
- B** To pick daisies, later that evening my friends and I went down to the lake.
- C** Later that evening, my friends and I went down to the lake to pick daisies.
- D** Leave as is

The correct answer is **C** because it rewrites the sentence most clearly.

### Steps in the Writing Process

- Step 1. Prewriting:** Gathering ideas, organizing your thoughts
- Step 2. Drafting:** Creating a rough version of the paper, often more than one
- Step 3. Revising and Editing:** Looking at your draft with a critical eye and making improvements
- Step 4. Proofreading:** Polishing your paper to make sure it is free of errors
- Step 5. Publishing:** Sharing your finished paper with others

**STRATEGY BOX – Trust Yourself**

If you can't determine the exact problem with a sentence, don't be afraid to trust your ear and make an educated guess. You can often "hear" a problem even if you can't explain exactly what is wrong with the sentence.

This standard also tests your ability to revise writing for specific audiences and purposes. Much of the writing you do these days is probably academic, or school-related. However, you may find yourself called upon to write for other purposes. These include writing thank-you notes, cover letters for business résumés, and complaint letters. These different activities require using a variety of formats, as well as different levels of formal and informal language.

Try to imagine the intended audience for a particular piece of writing. Was it written for business associates or a group of close friends? Is a teacher going to read it, or does it contain thoughts that the author did not intend to share with anyone? Understanding who the intended audience is will help you understand the purpose of the writing.

Understanding your audience also helps you use appropriate language. Depending on the situation you are in and the people you are talking to, you will choose different words. Let's say you would like an apple. If you are talking to a friend, you might just say, "Hey, give me an apple" or "Let me have that apple, dude." But what if you asked your school's principal? The principal is an important person in your school, requiring you to use language that is more formal. "Excuse me, Principal Edwards, may I please have an apple?" is a more appropriate way to make this request.

Generally speaking, you will have to choose between formal and informal language. Typically, formal language is more grammatically precise, contains longer sentences and more elaborate wording. In contrast, informal language is not always grammatically accurate, and it may involve slang words and phrases.

The following chart provides some examples of formal and informal language.

Informal	Formal
Howdy, y'all!	Greetings, ladies and gentlemen.
What's up?	How are you?
Let's hit the beach.	We should choose a seaside location for our vacation.
Those are some crazy threads!	Your outfit is very unique.

### STRATEGY BOX – Who is Your Audience?

Using appropriate language often boils down to deciding on whether formal or informal language should be used. Therefore, consider the situation and audience. If the situation is relaxed and between friends or family, informal language is suitable. If the situation is more official and there are strangers or important people involved, use formal language. The goal is to match the formality of the situation and audience with the formality of the writing.

Good writers adjust their vocabulary, style, and tone to fit their intended audiences. Questions for this standard will ask you to determine the appropriate language for a particular audience. Try the sample question below:

This passage is from a book review written for a high school English class.

*Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince* is the latest novel in J. K. Rowling's Harry Potter series. It is the next-to-last installment in a planned seven-book series. Readers have had to wait two years for this book. This new book begins where *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix* ends. It pulls together plot lines and story twists from all the previous Harry Potter books. Dark and twisting, this novel rocks.

**Which phrase is too informal for the passage?**

- A Readers have had to wait
- B This new book begins
- C plot lines and story twists
- D this novel rocks.

Remember the audience for this review: a high school English teacher. A book review is a formal document requiring formal language. Choice **D** is the correct answer. (You might use this type of informal language when reviewing the book on your blog.)

## Study Ideas for Content Domain III

To do well on the questions for this domain, you must be able to recognize good writing and understand the importance of audience and purpose. As you look at passages for the other content domains, consider them in terms of what mode of writing they represent, the purpose for writing the passage, and how you can tell this from the writer's word choice and sentence structure. Basically, to practice for the writing questions on this domain you should analyze the writing you see around you.

You should also go to the library and practice researching a topic. It does not have to be a topic for any class. It should be a topic you are interested in and would like to learn more about. Do not, however, limit yourself to the encyclopedias. You want to get experience using a variety of research resources.

You may also want to find a variety of reference materials (e.g., almanac, dictionary, thesaurus, atlas). Look them over and compare their contents. How could each be helpful to someone doing research?

If you have questions about resource materials or the research process, ask your English teacher or a librarian to help you.

### Take a Tour

One of the best ways to become a better researcher and better student is to take a guided tour of your library. Ask about a tour at the main desk. Even if you plan to do all your research at the school library, you can usually arrange for a librarian to show you around. You will learn a lot of valuable information that will save you hours of frustration later—things like how to use the library's catalog system, where to find microfilm materials and how to use them, where to find reference books, where to find magazines, and more.

## Sample Questions for Content Domain III

Read the passage below and answer the questions that follow. After you have answered all the questions, check your answers in the “Answers to the Content Domain III Sample Questions” section that follows. That section will give you the correct answer to each question, and it will explain why the other answer choices are incorrect.

### A Review of *Our Town*

(1) Written by American playwright Thornton Wilder, *Our Town* tells the story of Emily Gibbs, a young woman living in the town of Grover’s Corners. (2) Since it was first produced in 1938, *Our Town* has been inspiring audiences across the country and around the world. (3) Wilder received his second Pulitzer Prize for this drama (Lewis, 54). (4) The play is notable for its innovative staging. (5) While many plays feature extensive stage props and scenery, *Our Town* features little more than chairs for the actors to sit on. (6) Even when Emily and her friends sip sodas at a local store, the actors pretend to hold beverages. (7) Wilder wanted to place the focus directly on the characters themselves, rather than on irrelevant elements. (8) *Our Town*, written as events in Europe were building toward World War II, was Wilder's attempt to draw Americans’ focus to the small things in life that make it worthwhile.

#### Works Cited

Lewis, John. *Our Town: A Critical Look*. New York: Playwright Editions, 2004.

### 1 Which is the best placement for Sentence 3?

- A before sentence 1
- B after sentence 6
- C after sentence 7
- D leave as is

### 2 What is the main purpose of the passage?

- A to describe the life of Thornton Wilder
- B to promote a local production of *Our Town*
- C to provide a brief overview of *Our Town*
- D to offer a traveler’s guide to Grover’s Corners

### 3 Which sentence, if included, would disrupt the formal tone of the passage?

- A Thornton Wilder won lots of prizes for other things he wrote.
- B The staging of the play shocked the first people to see it.
- C The early reviews of *Our Town* were quite enthusiastic.
- D Over the years, *Our Town* has become increasingly popular.

**4 Which is the BEST way to write Sentence 1?**

- A Written by American playwright Thornton Wilder, *Our Town* is telling the story of Emily Gibbs, a young woman living in the town of Grover's Corners.
- B *Our Town*, written by American playwright Thornton Wilder, the story of Emily Gibbs, a young woman living in the town of Grover's Corners.
- C The story of Emily Gibbs, telling about a young woman living in the town of Grover's Corners, written by American playwright Thornton Wilder, and is called *Our Town*.
- D Leave as is

**Staging of *Our Town***

The play opens when a character called the Stage Manager introduces the town and the characters.

Lewis, 74

**5 Where would the information from this note card BEST fit in the passage?**

- A after sentence 1
- B after sentence 4
- C after sentence 7
- D does not belong in the passage

## Answers to the Content Domain III Sample Questions

1. Answer: **C** Standard: *Organize a writing sample*

When you read sentence 3, you realize that it provides information about the play, but it also interrupts the discussion of the play itself. Choices **B** and **D** are incorrect because that sentence would interrupt the description of the play. Choice **A** is incorrect because it would put detailed information about the play before the play is even mentioned. Choice **C** is correct, because it puts the sentence where it does not interrupt and provides a sort of closure for the passage.

2. Answer: **C** Standard: *Demonstrate ability to convey information and ideas from primary and secondary sources accurately and coherently*

In order to determine purpose, you need to look at what kind of information the passage contains. While the passage contains some information relevant to Choice **A**, it is not a biography of Wilder. This information could be used to promote a production of the play, but Choice **B** is incorrect because the passage contains no details on when or where the play will be staged. Choice **D** is incorrect because Grover's Corners is a fictional place. Choice **C**, therefore, is correct. The purpose of the passage is to provide an overview of the play.

3. Answer: **A** Standard: *Use the writing process to develop, revise, and evaluate writing*

The question asks you to consider the context of the passage; that means consider the purpose and the audience as well as the content. When you read the answer choices to this question, one clearly uses more informal language, choice **A**. The phrases, "lots of prizes" and "other things he wrote," are too informal for something that will be read by the general public. Each of the other choices would be appropriate in content and style if added to the passage.

4. Answer: **D** Standard: *Use the writing process to develop, revise, and evaluate writing*

When you are asked to choose the best way to write a sentence, you must read every answer choice as well as the original sentence in the passage. In this case, the original sentence was correct so the answer is **D**, "Leave as is." Both **A** and **C** are written unclearly and **B** is a fragment and grammatically incorrect.

5. Answer: **B** Standard: *Demonstrate ability to convey information and ideas from primary and secondary sources accurately and coherently*

Sentence 4 introduces the topic of staging in *Our Town*. The information on the note card provides more information on this topic. Choice **D** is, therefore, incorrect. Choices **A** and **C** are incorrect because they are not close to the sentences on staging. Choice **B** is correct because it is the best location for the new information.

## Content Domain IV: Conventions



### A Look at Content Domain IV

Test questions in this domain will measure your ability to apply the conventions of Standard American English and to demonstrate an understanding of different writing formats. Your answers to these questions will help show how well you can perform on the following standards:

- Demonstrate understanding and control of the rules of the English language
- Apply conventions of Standard American English to formal manuscript requirements

Content Domain IV focuses on your ability to apply the conventions of Standard American English correctly. Questions for this content domain will ask you to revise texts for organization, purpose, precision of word choice, and correct grammar and punctuation. You will also be asked to demonstrate an understanding of different forms of writing.



### Spotlight on the Standards

#### ★*Demonstrate understanding of Standard American English*★

To test your knowledge of Standard American English, you will be asked to identify and correct the grammatical errors in a passage. You may also be tested on different methods of sentence construction.

The list below identifies some of the topics you can expect to see on the EOCT.

- Main and subordinate clauses
- Gerund, participial, and infinitive phrases
- Punctuation marks (e.g., end punctuation, commas, colons, semicolons, quotation marks, ellipses, and hyphens)
- Verb tense consistency and agreement

- Proper placement of modifiers
- Precise word choice
- Spelling
- Parallel structure

If any of these terms are unfamiliar to you, please talk to your teacher or look them up in a grammar handbook. Each of these topics has a number of subtopics and rules associated with it, so it is important that you use resource materials that will give you this information. All questions for this domain will be based on a passage, which will contain some errors. Questions will look something like this:

**What is the correct way to write Sentence 5?**

- A** Teresa studied for an hour, outlined her paper, and then had taking a break.
- B** Teresa studied for an hour, outlined her paper, and then takes a break.
- C** Teresa studied for an hour, outlined her paper, and then took a break.
- D** Teresa studied for an hour, outlined her paper, and then will take a break.

For this question, think about how often you hear people say, “then had taking.” If it sounds odd to you, it is because there is no such verb tense. This means **A** is wrong. **B** and **D** don’t seem right either. That is because the verb tense shifts in the sentences. You might not notice this specifically, but you probably sensed there was something strange about saying Teresa “studied” and then “takes” or “will take” a break. Contrast this with answer **C**, which uses the same verb tense throughout. This is the correct answer.

This question also tests **parallelism**, which states that objects linked together have to be similar in tense and number. In this case, the verbs *studied*, *outlined*, and *taking* are series of actions joined together by the conjunction *and*. However, the sentence in the question is incorrect because the verbs—studied, outlined, and taking—are not in the same tense. Changing *taking* to *took* corrects this problem because now all the verbs, *studied*, *outlined*, and *took*, are in the past tense.

**A Closer Look at Phrases**

A **gerund phrase** combines a gerund with the object of the gerund or other modifiers. A gerund is a verb used as a noun, with an *-ing* ending.

A **participial phrase** includes the participle and the object of the participle. A participle is a form of a verb, but it does not act as a verb. Rather, it acts as an adjective, often ending in *-ing* or *-ed*.

An **infinitive phrase** includes an infinitive and any modifiers or complements. An infinitive is always a verb with *to* in front of it. The phrase can serve as a noun, an adjective, or an adverb.



## Spotlight on the Standards

**★Apply conventions of Standard American English to formal manuscript requirements★**

Questions for this standard will again test your knowledge of Standard American English, but they will also focus on how well you know formatting requirements for manuscripts. To correctly answer these questions, you should review the Use Research and Technology to Support Writing standard in Content Domain III.

You will also be asked questions about how your manuscript should be formatted. These questions may ask you about pagination, spacing, and margins.

### Study Ideas for Content Domain IV

To study for this domain, you may want to concentrate on the kinds of errors you typically make in your own writing. (Your teacher may be able to help you with this.) If you know what these errors are, look them up in your grammar book and study the samples. Or, you may want to work through a grammar workbook that will allow you to practice in the areas that need improvement. If you are not sure of your weak areas, you may want to take a look at samples of each topic in your grammar book. (See the list of topics on pages 69 and 70 of this study guide.) If any are not clear to you, work through some practice items in a grammar workbook for those topics.

### Sample Questions for Content Domain IV

This section has some sample questions for you to try. The questions are based on the passage found below. After you have answered all these questions, check your answers in the “Answers to the Content Domain IV Sample Questions” section that follows. This section will give you the correct answer to each question, and it will explain why the other answer choices are incorrect.

**Phyllis Wheatley**

(1) Phyllis Wheatley accomplished many amazing feats in her life. (2) She learned to read and write. (3) While learning to read and write may not sound like an unusual accomplishment, Wheatley lived in the American colonies during the late 1700s, when only a tiny handful of people were actually literate. (4) Moreover, Wheatley studied History, geography, Latin, and many other difficult subjects. (5) In 1767 she publishes her first poem in a local newspaper. (6) Later, while in London, Wheatley met Selina Hasting, an English countess who helped her to publish a book of poetry. (7) Wheatley's book was the first poetry collection ever published by an African-American writer. (8) As she toured England to promote her book, noted figures such as Benjamin Franklin and French writer Voltaire recognized her achievement. (9) Wheatley even sent a poem to George Washington, praising him for his efforts in the American Revolution. (10) Phyllis Wheatley's determination paved the way for the later successes of her life.

- 1 Which would be the BEST transition to add to the beginning of Sentence 2?**
- A First,
  - B However,
  - C Nevertheless,
  - D In addition,
- 2 If this paragraph were in a history report, which of these would BEST replace the underlined words, *a tiny handful*, in sentence 3?**
- A a limited collection
  - B a small number
  - C a little bunch
  - D a microscopic sampling
- 3 Which sentence contains an error in verb tense?**
- A Sentence 1
  - B Sentence 4
  - C Sentence 5
  - D Sentence 6

**4 Which word in Sentence 4 contains an error in capitalization?**

- A Wheatley
- B History
- C geography
- D Latin

**5 Which phrase from the paragraph is a participial phrase?**

- A learning to read and write
- B to publish a book of poetry
- C As she toured England to promote her book
- D praising him for his efforts in the American Revolution

### Answers to the Content Domain IV Sample Questions

1. Answer: **A** Standard: *Demonstrate understanding and control of the rules of the English language*

To answer this question, you need to have a sense of what the whole paragraph is about: the accomplishments of Phyllis Wheatley. You also need to recognize where you are in the paragraph: near the beginning. Both **B** and **C** are transitions implying contrast, yet nothing is being contrasted here. Choice **D** suggests that the author wishes to add to ideas already stated. The paragraph is just introducing the ideas, however, so **A** is the most logical choice.

2. Answer: **B** Standard: *Demonstrate understanding and control of the rules of the English language*

In order to answer this question, you must consider the writer's purpose and audience in order to make the correct word choice. A history report is an academic piece of writing, so the language should be formal. You can rule out **C** because "bunch" is too informal. Choice **D** is formal language, but it doesn't make sense with the subject, a group of people. Choice **A** is also somewhat formal but the wording is imprecise. Choice **B** is formal enough to fit the purpose of writing and accurate enough to reflect the idea. Therefore the correct answer is **B**.

3. Answer: **C** Standard: *Demonstrate understanding and control of the rules of the English language*

This passage is written in the past tense. All the sentences should be in the past tense. Choices **A**, **B**, and **D** are in the correct tense. Choice **C** is in the present tense and is the correct answer.

4. Answer: **B** Standard: *Apply conventions of standard American English and format*

Proper nouns, as in Choices **A** and **D**, are capitalized. *Geography* and *history* are not proper nouns. Choice **C** is not capitalized. **B** is the choice with the incorrect capitalization.

5. Answer: **D** Standard: *Demonstrate understanding and control of the rules of the English language*

A participial phrase includes a verb ending in *-ing* that acts as an adjective. Choice **A** is a gerund phrase. Choice **B** is an infinitive phrase. Choice **C** is a subordinate clause. Choice **D**, a participial phrase, is the correct answer.

**From The Shore**  
by Carl Sandburg

A lone gray bird,  
Dim-dipping, far-flying,  
Alone in the shadows and grandeurs and tumults  
Of night and the sea  
5 And the stars and storms.

Out over the darkness it wavers and hovers,  
Out into the gloom it swings and batters,  
Out into the wind and the rain and the vast,  
Out into the pit of a great black world,  
10 Where fogs are at battle, sky-driven, sea-blown,  
Love of mist and rapture of flight,  
Glories of chance and hazards of death  
On its eager and palpitant wings.

Out into the deep of the great dark world,  
15 Beyond the long borders where foam and drift  
Of the Sundering waves are lost and gone  
On the tides that plunge and rear and crumble.

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## To Build a Fire

By Jack London

- 1 For land travel or seafaring, the world over, a companion is usually considered desirable. In the Klondike, as Tom Vincent found out, such a companion is absolutely essential. But he found it out, not by precept, but through bitter experience.
- 2 “Never travel alone,” is a precept of the north. He had heard it many times and laughed; for he was a strapping young fellow, big-boned and big-muscled, with faith in himself and in the strength of his head and hands.
- 3 It was on a bleak January day when the experience came that taught him respect for the frost, and for the wisdom of the men who had battled with it.
- 4 He had left Calumet Camp on the Yukon with a light pack on his back, to go up Paul Creek to the divide between it and Cherry Creek, where his party was prospecting and hunting moose.
- 5 The frost was sixty degrees below zero, and he had thirty miles of lonely trail to cover, but he did not mind. In fact, he enjoyed it, swinging along through the silence, his blood pounding warmly through his veins, and his mind carefree and happy. For he and his comrades were certain they had struck “pay” up there on the Cherry Creek Divide; and, further, he was returning to them from Dawson with cheery home letters from the States.
- 6 At seven o’clock, when he turned the heels of his moccasins toward Calumet Camp, it was still black night. And when day broke at half past nine he had made the four-mile cut-off across the flats and was six miles up Paul Creek. The trail, which had seen little travel, followed the bed of the creek, and there was no possibility of his getting lost. He had gone to Dawson by way of Cherry Creek and Indian River, so Paul Creek was new and strange. By half past eleven he was at the forks, which had been described to him, and he knew he had covered fifteen miles, half the distance.
- 7 He knew that in the nature of things the trail was bound to grow worse from there on, and thought that, considering the good time he had made, he merited lunch. Casting off his pack and taking a seat on a fallen tree, he unmittened his right hand, reached inside his shirt next to the skin, and fished out a couple of biscuits sandwiched with sliced bacon and wrapped in a handkerchief—the only way they could be carried without freezing solid.
- 8 He had barely chewed the first mouthful when his numbing fingers warned him to put his mitten on again. This he did, not without surprise at the bitter swiftness with which the frost bit in. Undoubtedly it was the coldest snap he had ever experienced, he thought.
- 9 He spat upon the snow—a favorite northland trick—and the sharp crackle of the instantly congealed spittle startled him. The spirit thermometer at Calumet had registered sixty below when he left, but he was certain it had grown much colder, how much colder he could not imagine.

- 10 Half of the first biscuit was yet untouched, but he could feel himself beginning to chill—a thing most unusual for him. This would never do, he decided, and slipping the pack-straps across his shoulders, he leaped to his feet and ran briskly up the trail.
- 11 A few minutes of this made him warm again, and he settled down to a steady stride, munching the biscuits as he went along. The moisture that exhaled with his breath crusted his lips and mustache with pendent ice and formed a miniature glacier on his chin. Now and again sensations forsook his nose and checks, and he rubbed them till they burned with the returning blood.
- 12 Most men wore nose-straps; his partners did, but he had scorned such “feminine contraptions,” and till now had never felt the need of them. Now he did feel the need, for he was rubbing constantly.
- 13 Nevertheless he was aware of a thrill of joy, of exultation. He was doing something, achieving something, mastering the elements. Once he laughed aloud in sheer strength of life, and with his clenched fist defied the frost. He was its master. What he did he did in spite of it. It could not stop him. He was going on to the Cherry Creek Divide.
- 14 Strong as were the elements, he was stronger. At such times animals crawled away into their holes and remained in hiding. But he did not hide. He was out in it, facing it, fighting it. He was a man, a master of things.

[Public Domain]

## Edith Wharton

- 1 Young writers are often advised to “write what they know,” or, in other words, to allow their writing to mirror their own lives. Well-known literary figure Edith Wharton may have followed this convention when she authored *The House of Mirth*, a novel that many consider to be her first masterpiece. The book, published in 1905, is set in the affluent New York society in which Edith herself had been raised.
- 2 Wharton was born Edith Newbold Jones on January 24, 1862, in New York. The only daughter of Lucretia Stevens Rhineland and George Frederic Jones, she had two older brothers who were considerably older. Wharton’s grandfather, William Rhineland, was a multi-millionaire with interests in banking, shipping, and real estate; thus, Wharton and her family were able to live a luxurious life in her early years. But when she was four, economic setbacks caused the family to move to Europe where they could live on less money. For the next six years, they traveled through Germany, France, and Italy.
- 3 While abroad, Wharton learned to read. Through the efforts of her father and several tutors she became multilingual, learning the language of every country in which they lived. It was while they were living in Paris that she began to create stories and her talent began to flourish. By age ten, she had already read all of Shakespeare’s plays and many of the poetry of Keats and Shelley. At eleven she started to write her first novel, and when she was only fifteen, she wrote a novella titled *Fast and Loose*. When she was eighteen, Wharton moved to Italy with her parents, but returned to New York after the death of her father.
- 4 In 1885 when the blossoming writer was 23, she married 35-year-old Edward (“Teddy”) Wharton, a man who was accustomed to a life of leisure. Though Edward was wealthy and enjoyed traveling the world, he was not interested in art or literature. Their marriage was not a solid one. After a time Wharton felt lonely, and she began to write again, perhaps to escape her own reality. She sought to have her work published in the highly regarded magazines of her day and was successful. Her poems and short stories appeared in a number of influential publications, including *Harper’s* and *Scribner’s*.
- 5 Wharton also collaborated with a young architect named Ogden Codman, Jr., on a book called *The Decoration of Houses*, one of the first books about home design to be published in the United States. The book was a rapid success, and Wharton was encouraged to continue writing. She went on to publish *The Greater Inclination*, her first collection of short stories, which received rave reviews and truly established Wharton as an author. Her career as a writer spanned over forty years and included the publication of more than forty books, although she is remembered not only for her respected literature; she was also a compassionate woman who sincerely cared for others. She established hostels and schools and housed more than 700 World War I orphans at her own expense.
- 6 After the war ended in 1920, Wharton published *The Age of Innocence*. The novel was both a popular and a critical success, and in 1921, Edith Wharton was the first female to receive the Pulitzer Prize for fiction. Decades later, in 1993, Martin Scorsese directed a film version of *The Age of Innocence*, allowing modern audiences to appreciate Wharton’s work in a new way.

## Basic Literary Elements

1. **Language.** Language makes literature. The words and phrases an author uses create literary works. Language and word choices vary with different literary genres. For example, the way you express your thoughts in a poem is very different than the way you express your thoughts in an essay.

One of the first choices a writer makes about language is which word to use. **Diction** refers to the word choices a writer makes. Read the following sentences and reflect on how changing one word can change its meaning.

Sentence 1: “Hey, y’all, let’s go to the store.”

Sentence 2: “Hey, you guys, let's go to the store.”

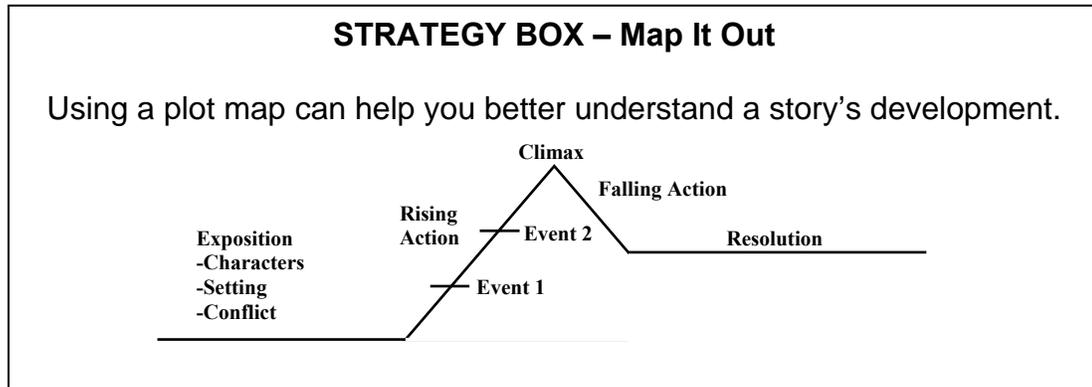
*Y'all* in the first sentence and *you guys* in the second gives you information about where the story occurs. The diction might also influence your opinion of the speaker.

Diction is not the only choice to influence writing. Authors employ a variety of techniques to express meaning and engage the reader. Some may use **figurative language**, or figures of speech, to convey meaning other than the literal meaning of the word. Metaphors and similes are examples of figures of speech. (Please see page 35 for more information on figurative language.)

**Imagery**, or description intended to elicit a sensory experience, allows an author to show a reader something, rather than to tell a reader. You've heard the phrase “a picture is worth a thousand words.” Well, writers use imagery to convey more than they could with literal words.

**Symbolism** is another way in which writers use language to express something more than the literal meaning of the words. A symbol is something that stands for something else. For example, an object may symbolize an idea.

2. **Plot.** Literature commonly follows a specific pattern or plot structure. It often begins with **exposition** that may introduce the characters, establish the setting, and reveal the problem or conflict. The tension may build through a series of **complications** (incidents that either help or hinder the protagonist in finding a solution). This is the **rising action**. The **climax** is the peak or turning point of the action. The problem is resolved. At this point the reader usually knows the outcome. The **denouement** or **falling action** is the part after the climax. It gives any necessary explanation and ends with **resolution**, the sense that the story is complete.



3. **Conflict.** Every plot has a conflict. The conflict is what triggers the action in the story. Here are some common conflicts in literature:
- person vs. person
  - person vs. nature
  - person vs. self
  - person vs. society
  - person vs. machine
4. **Character development.** The plot of a story focuses on the lives of one or more characters. The main character is usually the **protagonist**, the central character and the one with whom the reader often identifies. The **antagonist** is a character (or force) that opposes the protagonist. An author may reveal character through the character's thoughts, words, appearance, and actions, or through what other characters say or think. An author may also tell us directly what the character is like. Characters that grow or change throughout the story are **dynamic** or **round**; characters that seem to stay the same are **static** or **flat**. Understanding the characters is a key element to understanding the piece of literature. Some common questions about characterization include:
- Who is the main character? Give five traits of this character.
  - Who are the minor characters? How do they affect the plot?
  - How is one character similar to or different from another?
  - How is the main character involved in the conflict?
5. **Setting.** The setting is when and where a story takes place. You may be asked to determine why the setting is important or how the setting affects the characters. The setting can clarify conflict, illuminate character, affect the mood (see #6 below), and act as a symbol. The setting itself can be an antagonist in a person-against-nature conflict.
6. **Mood.** The mood in a piece of literature is a feeling or emotion created by the words and setting. Some authors create the mood by using imagery along with the setting.

The example below shows how the mood of a story can change by making a few alterations:

Imagine a group of people in an old, three-story house. The people are whispering and walking very slowly. They are easily startled. Some are visibly shaking. The mood created here is one of scary suspense. A reader will wonder what scared the people and may feel some suspense about the events to come.

Now, change the mood by imagining the people talking loudly. They are gesturing at various rooms in the house and whistling appreciatively. They seem excited about the old, colored-glass windows. A reader could assume that these people are about to move into the old house. The mood is no longer scary and suspenseful. It is now light and optimistic.

7. **Irony.** Irony is a form of speech intended to convey the opposite of the actual meaning of the words. You are probably most familiar with **verbal irony**, or sarcasm. The speaker’s intended message is far different than the usual meaning of the words. For example, a teenager might tell his or her mother, “I just *love* cleaning up my room,” when, in fact, the teenager means that he hates to clean his room. **Irony of fate** refers to developments that are far from what is expected or believed to be deserved. One example of irony of fate would be famed composer Ludwig von Beethoven’s loss of hearing.
8. **Point of View.** The point of view is the perspective from which a story is told. The point of view depends upon who the narrator is and how much he or she knows.

<i>First Person</i>	The events are told by a character in the story using his or her own words. First-person stories have narrators who use <i>I</i> , <i>me</i> , and <i>my</i> throughout the story. The sentence, “I knew it was risky, but I was willing to take that chance,” is an example of first-person point of view.
<i>Second Person</i>	The narrator addresses the reader directly using the word <i>you</i> . This perspective is not as common as either the first- or third-person points of view.
<i>Third Person</i>	A speaker outside the action narrates the events using <i>he</i> , <i>she</i> , and <i>they</i> . In <b>third-person omniscient</b> , the narrator may see and know everything, even the thoughts of all the characters. In <b>third-person limited</b> , the narrator tells the events from the perspective of one character, focusing on this character’s thoughts and feelings.

9. **Theme** The theme is the central idea of a text. It refers to a universal statement about life and/or society that can be discerned from reading a text. The theme of a work is not the same as its main idea, which focuses strictly on the content. The theme of a literary work is often the meaning you take away from it.