How to Help Your Child Succeed on the Keystone Literature Exam:

A Parent’s Guide to Understanding the Structure and Content of Pennsylvania’s Keystone Literature Exam

**What Is The Literature Keystone Exam?**

According to the Pennsylvania Department of Education, “The Keystone Exams are end-of-course assessments designed to assess proficiency in various subjects. Currently, the following content areas are assessed: Algebra I, Literature and Biology.”

* The Keystone Literature Exam is comprised of two sections, **Fiction** and **Nonfiction**. Both sections include reading passages followed by multiple-choice questions and constructed-response questions.
* Both types of questions assess the student’s ability to comprehend each passage and analyze the use of literary techniques. The constructed-response questions require students to compose a paragraph examining the reading passage. Approximately 65% of the total score will be from multiple-choice questions and 35% will be from constructed-response questions.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Multiple-Choice**  **(1 point each)** | **Constructed-Response**  **(3 points each)** |
| **Module 1 – Fiction**   * Reading for Meaning * Analyzing and Interpreting | 17  (17 points) | 3 Questions  (9 points) |
| **Module 2 - Nonfiction**   * Reading for Meaning * Analyzing and Interpreting | 17  (17 points) | 3 Questions  (9 points) |

**How Do I See A Sample Literature Keystone Exam?**

On the following website, http://www.portal.state.pa.us/portal/server.pt/community/state\_assessment\_

system/20965/keystone\_exams/1190529, click on the link “Item and Scoring Sampler – Literature (PDF)” underneath the header, “Item and Scoring Samplers” to see a portion of an exam with student responses.

Or you can click on this link:

<http://static.pdesas.org/Content/Documents/Keystone_Literature_Feb_2011_Item_and_Scoring_Sampler.pdf>

**How Have Students Been Prepared?**

English teachers have modified the curriculum to include lessons, assignments and assessments aligned to the Literature Keystone Exam. Revisions and additions include:

* Nine weeks exams that address each area assessed on the Literature Keystone Exam and listed on The Keystone Exams Assessment Anchors and Eligible Content document
* Instruction and practice with composing timed, in-class essays written in response to Keystone-style constructed-response questions
* Evaluation of Keystone-style constructed-response essays with the same rubric used on the Literature Keystone Exam
* Reflection on sample Keystone-style constructed-response essays provided by the state and composed by classmates
* The addition of more nonfiction texts to address the nonfiction module of the exam
* Bi-weekly meetings with the Social Studies department to collaborate on enhancing reading and writing skills through the Social Studies curricula
* Instruction given on how to conduct close reading analysis of various types of texts
* Close reading activities in which students analyze a short passage of a text for meaning and literary techniques

**How Are Students Scored?**

**Overall Scoring:**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Content Area** | **Below Basic** | **Basic** | **Proficient** | **Advanced** |
| Literature | 1200-1443 | 1444-1499 | 1500-1583 | 1584-1800 |

* *Advanced* = Superior academic performance indicating an in-depth understanding and exemplary display of the skills included in the Keystone Exams Assessment Anchors and Eligible Content.
* *Proficient* = Satisfactory academic performance indicating a solid understanding and adequate display of the skills included in the Keystone Exams Assessment Anchors and Eligible Content.
* *Basic* = Marginal academic performance indicating work approaching, but not yet reaching, satisfactory performance. Performance indicates a partial understanding and limited display of the skills included in the Keystone Exams Assessment Anchors and Eligible Content. The student may need additional instructional opportunities and/or increased student academic commitment to achieve the Proficient level.
* *Below Basic* = Inadequate academic performance indicating little understanding and minimal display of the skills included in the Keystone Exams Assessment Anchors and Eligible Content. There is a major need for additional instructional opportunities and/or increased student academic commitment to achieve the Proficient level.

**Constructed-Response Scoring:**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Score** | **Description** |
| 3 | The response is a clear, complete, and accurate analysis of how the author constructs the argument in the passage. The response includes relevant and specific information from the passage. |
| 2 | The response is a partial analysis of how the author constructs the argument in the passage.  The response includes limited information from the passage and may include inaccuracies. |
| 1 | The response is a minimal analysis of how the author constructs the argument in the passage.  The response includes little or no information from the passage and may include inaccuracies.  OR  The response relates minimally to the task. |
| 0 | The response is totally incorrect or irrelevant or contains insufficient information to demonstrate comprehension. |

**When Are the Keystones?**

* The Literature Keystone Exam is administered to students at the end of their tenth grade year. If students do not score in the proficient or advanced range, the district will offer opportunities to

re-take the exam. Additionally, students who do not pass the Literature Keystone Exam at the end of their tenth grade year will have a Keystone remediation course and/or a Keystone study hall added to their class schedule to assist students in earning proficiency when they re-take the exam. If students do not pass the exam by their senior year, they will be required to complete a project designed and scored by the state to verify proficiency.

* At Baldwin High School, the Literature Keystone Exam for tenth graders is scheduled for **Wednesday, May 21** for the first module and **Thursday, May 22** for the second module. Students who are absent during testing days will be scheduled to make-up the module(s) missed.
* On average, each module takes students 1-1.5 hours to complete; however, if students do not finish in the allotted time during the testing session, they are permitted extended time to complete the exam. **It is imperative that students know that this is NOT a timed test. They should answer all questions thoroughly and avoid answering questions with haste.** They should take advantage of extended time if they require it.

**What Can Parents/Guardians Do To Help Students Achieve?**

* Students will benefit from ample sleep the nights prior to the exam as well as eating breakfast the morning of the exam days. Additionally, students should come prepared with some pencils/erasers and may want to bring with them a snack/drink and layers of clothing, so they can adjust to be most comfortable.
* Encourage your child to do his/her best!

**For more information pertaining to parents’ role in the Keystone Exam, click on the following link:** [**http://www.pdesas.org/module/assessment/Keystone.aspx#**](http://www.pdesas.org/module/assessment/Keystone.aspx)

**(scroll down to “*Keystone Exam Parent Overview”)***

**For additional information about the Keystone Exams and PA Common Core Standards visit the SAS website at** [**www.pdesas.org**](http://www.pdesas.org)