

This document contains *Chapter 3: Literary Response and Analysis* from the **2008 California High School Exit Examination (CAHSEE): English-Language Arts Teacher Guide** published by the California Department of Education. The entire guide is available at <http://www.cde.ca.gov/ta/tg/hs/elateacherguide.asp>



Literary Response and Analysis

7 questions	18 questions	20 questions	12 questions	15 questions	1 question
Word Analysis, Fluency, and Systematic Vocabulary Development	Reading Comprehension	Literary Response and Analysis	Writing Strategies	Written and Oral English Language Conventions	Writing Applications

Literary text includes, but is not limited to, novels, short stories, essays, poetry, and plays. Although students learn about the elements of literature in earlier grades, students in grades 9 and 10 are expected to understand literary elements in depth. Students need to understand the characteristics and purposes of the major genres in literature, and they need to use their understanding of literary elements to analyze and respond to what they read. Students need to spend time reading high-quality literature inside and outside of the classroom. In grades 9 and 10, students are expected to read independently about one and one-half million words annually. Independent reading can significantly improve students' reading comprehension.

In the Classroom

The goal for teaching literary response and analysis goes beyond having students define literary terms. The goal is to have students understand and use those terms to analyze, interpret, and evaluate the literary piece. Analyzing and responding to literary works are skills that require explicit instructional strategies. Students need guided practice to analyze elements such as:

- Characters, interactions among characters, and interactions between characters and plot
- Time and sequence (e.g., foreshadowing and flashbacks)
- Comparison of universal themes in several works
- Literary elements such as figurative language, allegory, and symbolism
- Ambiguities, contradictions, and ironies in text
- Voice, persona, and point of view

Students should be able to:

- Analyze relationships between the purposes and characteristics of different forms of dramatic and other kinds of literature
- Determine characters' traits by what the characters say or do
- Analyze interactions between what main and subordinate characters say about themselves in narration, dialogue, dramatic monologue, and soliloquy
- Compare works that express a universal theme
- Interpret and evaluate the impact of ambiguities, subtleties, contradictions, ironies, and incongruities in text
- Explain how voice, persona, and the choice of a narrator affect characterization and the tone, plot, and credibility of a text
- Analyze a work of literature, showing how it reflects the heritage, traditions, attitudes, and beliefs of its author
- Evaluate the aesthetic qualities of style, including the impact of diction and figurative language on tone, mood, and theme, using the terminology of literary criticism

On the CAHSEE

The CAHSEE contains 20 Literary Response and Analysis items. To demonstrate achievement, students must comprehend and analyze literary texts and focus on the common literary elements taught in middle school and high school.

Students should be familiar with the genres of dramatic literature named in the grades 9 and 10 California academic content standards (comedy, tragedy, dramatic monologue), as well as the genres that are the focus of the academic content standards in preceding grades (e.g., short story, novel, novella, essay, ballad, couplet, and sonnet). Students should also understand the meaning and use of specific characteristics of dramatic literature, including dialogue, soliloquy, and asides.

Questions within Literary Response and Analysis will focus on other aspects of the study and interpretation of literary works. For example, students should understand the important aspects of characterization in dramatic and other fictional literature. Students should be able to determine what characters are like, how the author reveals characterization, how characters interact to affect the plot, and how characters function as foils within a given work. Students should also be able to analyze other aspects of plot, including an author's manipulation of time sequence and the foreshadowing of events. Questions will also address other aspects of critical reading: interpreting nuances of meaning, analyzing the use of literary devices such as metaphor and symbolism, recognizing thematic elements, and understanding subtle aspects that require attentive reading of a literary work.

The following pages discuss the 12 California academic content standards in Literary Response and Analysis.

**Literary Response
and Analysis**

Standard **10RL3.1**
Articulate the relationship between the expressed purposes and the characteristics of different forms of dramatic literature (e.g., comedy, tragedy, drama, dramatic monologue).

2 test questions

How does the reader know that the story is a dramatic monologue?

- A** The narrator is the only speaker.
- B** The story is about the narrator’s love of acting.
- C** The narrator has a vivid personality.
- D** The story is based on the narrator’s experiences.

CAHSEE questions in this standard require students to demonstrate knowledge of the characteristics of literary genres and their purposes. Because the focus of the grades 9 and 10 standards is dramatic literature, questions will require students to recognize different forms of dramatic literature (e.g., comedy, tragedy, and dramatic monologue) and to use their knowledge of the purpose of these genres to aid understanding. However, because various genres are introduced in the academic content standards throughout the middle school and high school years, questions that address the characteristics of different forms of fiction and poetry, e.g., short story, novel, novella, essay, ballad, couplet, epic, sonnet, will also be included on the CAHSEE. In addition, literary nonfiction genres will be addressed (e.g., essay, autobiography, biography). Students are asked to recognize the purpose and use of the genres named above, but to label only those that are most common. Questions are based on literary texts, including stories, poems, and dramatic literature, as well as literary nonfiction texts.

The sample question is based on the passage “Acting Up,” which is reproduced on pages 86 and 87 in Appendix B of this guide. The question focuses on dramatic monologue as a genre. Students should know the characteristics of this genre in both prose and poetry, including choice A, that there is a single speaker. Thus, choice A is the correct answer. The other answer choices accurately describe certain aspects of the passage, but they are not characteristics of the genre named in the stem. Students should recognize that choice B (The story is about the narrator’s love of acting.) could apply to several other literary genres, as could choices C and D.

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Standard **10RL3.3**
**Analyze interactions between
 main and subordinate characters
 in a literary text (e.g., internal
 and external conflicts,
 motivations, relationships,
 influences) and explain the way
 those interactions affect the plot.**

2 test questions

**In what way does Mrs. Spector influence
 the narrator?**

- A** She is the person who tells the narrator he has to write an essay.
- B** She compliments his sense of humor and gives him a book of James Thurber stories to read.
- C** She encourages his interest in acting by offering him a chance to perform a James Thurber piece.
- D** She is the teacher who convinces the narrator to become a member of the school debate team.

CAHSEE questions for standard 10RL3.3 focus on characterization in literary texts. Students should be able to analyze the interactions between or among characters and to determine the relationships among character interactions and plot. To understand how characterization relates to plot, students should also possess foundational knowledge about the significant aspects of plot, including problem, conflict, and resolution. Some CAHSEE questions will focus on the basic aspects of plot when they are important to an understanding of character interactions. Questions for this standard are based on literary texts, including stories, poems, and dramatic literature, as well as literary nonfiction texts. Informational passages are used if they contain the qualities appropriate to the standard.

The sample question is based on the passage “Acting Up,” which is reproduced on pages 86 and 87 in Appendix B of this guide. The question asks students to examine the interactions. Students should be able to find textual evidence for character interactions. The textual evidence best supports choice C, which is the correct answer because this is the only option that involves extensive interaction between characters. Option A offers no interaction. Option B is only partially true. Option D is lacking in textual support.

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Standard **10RL3.4**
**Determine characters' traits by
 what the characters say about
 themselves in narration, dialogue,
 dramatic monologue, and
 soliloquy.**

2 test questions

**Why does the narrator take a walk on the
 day before the family moves?**

- A** to take one last look at everything familiar
- B** to visit the statue in the middle of town
- C** to see if the same people are still in the same places
- D** to be away from home when the movers come

CAHSEE questions in this standard require students to understand and analyze character traits and motivations in dramatic literature. Questions may also focus on characters' states of mind, as revealed by their own statements. Because the California English–Language arts academic content standards for earlier grades focus on other literary genres in addition to drama, the CAHSEE questions related to this standard may also be based on other literary texts, including stories, poems, and literary nonfiction texts. In literary nonfiction, items may require the student to understand or analyze the person who is the focus of the passage. Informational passages may be used if they contain the qualities appropriate to the standard.

The sample question is based on the passage “Going Home,” which is reproduced on pages 88 and 89 in Appendix B of this guide. The question asks students to determine the narrator’s motivation based on his own words in the story. Students should recognize that by emphasizing the routine of his walk to school in the early part of the story, the narrator is establishing his love of both his home town and his personal routine. The story is structured around three such walks, and the third one logically represents choice A, a desire to take a final look at familiar landmarks, which is the correct answer. Choice B represents a misreading of the text; the student may mistake characteristics of the new town for those of the old. Choice C requires that students read critically to understand the narrator’s motive not as curiosity but as a desire to say goodbye. Students should recognize choice D as an effect rather than a cause; the narrator was indeed away from home when the movers arrived, but his walk had a different motivation.

**Literary Response
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Standard **10RL3.5**
**Compare works that express a
universal theme and provide
evidence to support the ideas
expressed in each work**

2 test questions

**Which sentence BEST expresses an
important theme in this drama?**

- A** A positive attitude is its own reward.
- B** Friendship helps overcome obstacles.
- C** It is good to give new ideas a chance.
- D** Working toward a goal requires patience.

CAHSEE questions in this standard require students to understand and analyze literary themes. Students may be asked to identify the theme or to determine which sections of the passage support or state the theme. Determining the main idea of a literary text may also be assessed under this standard as a foundational skill, i.e., helping students analyze theme. To understand theme, students should also understand mood when it is central to the understanding of theme. Accordingly, some questions for this standard may ask students to identify the mood of a text, when it is closely related to the theme, as a foundational skill. Students will not be required to bring specific background knowledge of other literary works to the tasks. Questions for this standard are based on literary texts, including stories, poems, and dramatic literature, as well as literary nonfiction texts. Informational passages may be used if they contain the qualities appropriate to the standard. In some cases, questions will be based on two literary texts or a literary text and an informational text that deal with a similar theme.

The sample question is based on the passage “The School Garden,” which is reproduced on pages 90 and 91 in Appendix B of this guide. The question measures achievement in a foundational skill for standard 10RL3.5, as it focuses on the main idea. Option C comes closest to the theme of the play since winning a chance to plant a garden doesn’t appeal to the students until they investigate the implications of the new concept about how this garden will be unique. Option A has little support or relevance within the drama. Option B may be a universal truth, but it is not supported by the drama at all. Option D also may be a universal truth, but it is not the focus of this drama.

**Literary Response
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Standard **10RL3.6**
**Analyze and trace an author’s
 development of time and
 sequence, including the use of
 complex literary devices (e.g.,
 foreshadowing, flashbacks).**

2 test questions

**What does the use of flashbacks
accomplish in “Acting Up”?**

- A** makes the narrator seem dreamy and unrealistic
- B** shows the reader what the narrator was like as a child
- C** allows the narrator to list his achievements
- D** gives the reader more insight into the narrator’s character

CAHSEE questions for this standard require students to analyze an author’s development of time and sequence. Students are asked to recognize the purpose or use of literary devices related to time and sequence, but to label only those that are most common, such as foreshadowing and flashback. Students may be asked what happens first, second, or last in the text, what kind of literary device is illustrated by the text, what effect the author creates by using the device, or what section of the text is an example of a specific literary device. Questions are based on stories, poems, and dramatic literature, as well as literary nonfiction texts. Informational passages may be used if they contain the qualities appropriate to the standard.

The sample question is based on the passage “Acting Up,” which is reproduced on pages 86 and 87 in Appendix B of this guide. The question focuses on the author’s use of the literary device of the flashback. Students should know the meaning of this term and recognize it as a manipulation of time within literary texts. In this instance, students should recognize that the flashback allows the narrator to describe not only the events of a past day but also his own reaction to them, thus giving the reader insight into his character (choice D). Choice A cannot represent the purpose of the flashback because the narrator represents himself as realistic about his appearance (“I was no heartthrob”) as well as his ability to sing and dance (“enthusiasm is my real talent”). Students who have understood the time sequences in the narrative, as required by standard 10RL3.6, will determine that the flashback focuses on the narrator’s senior year in high school rather than his childhood (choice B). Choice C represents a misreading of the purpose of the flashback as an opportunity to record achievements rather than to retell an event.

**Literary Response
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Standard **10RL3.7**
**Recognize and understand
the significance of various literary
devices, including figurative
language, imagery, allegory, and
symbolism, and explain their
appeal.**

2 test questions

**What is the main effect produced by
the repetition of the phrase *Write
something?***

- A** It reminds the reader that the narrator is daydreaming.
- B** It proves that the narrator has finished his homework.
- C** It emphasizes the importance that writing has to an actor.
- D** It makes the story easier for the reader to understand.

CAHSEE questions for standard 10RL3.7 require students to identify or analyze an author’s use of the following literary devices: analogy, metaphor, simile, imagery, repetition, allegory, symbolism, and personification. Students are asked to identify a sentence or phrase as an example of a specific literary device or to recognize the purpose or use of a literary device, but they are asked to label only those that are most common. Questions are based on literary texts, including stories, poems, and dramatic literature, as well as literary nonfiction texts. Informational passages may be used if they contain the qualities appropriate to the standard.

The sample question is based on the passage “Acting Up,” which is reproduced on pages 86 and 87 in Appendix B of this guide. The question requires students to determine the purpose of the literary device of repetition as used in this monologue. In the opening paragraphs, the narrator states that his teacher was telling him to write a response to what he had read, and the repetition of the sentence indicates that the narrator has continued to daydream instead of writing. Thus, choice A is the correct answer. Choices B and C represent misreadings of the text, as neither interpretation is supported by textual evidence. Students may recognize that choice D represents a logical purpose for the use of repetition, but students who read closely will realize that it is not the primary purpose within this passage.

**Literary Response
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Standard **10RL3.8**
**Interpret and evaluate the impact
of ambiguities, subtleties,
contradictions, ironies, and
incongruities in a text.**

2 test questions

Read this excerpt from the selection.

I know that somewhere there are parents telling their children about a town filled with oak trees, a place where you can get the best milkshake in the world . . .

**What makes the preceding statement
ironic?**

- A** the fact that, like the narrator, other children are worried about moving
- B** the fact that, like the people in the narrator’s neighborhood, most people enjoy their homes
- C** the fact that, like the narrator’s father, parents often get promotions
- D** the fact that, like the narrator’s home, every house has its stories

The focus of questions for this standard is the recognition and analysis of ambiguities, subtleties, contradictions, ironies, and incongruities in literary texts. These aspects of literature require attentive, critical reading of texts. The CAHSEE questions will require students to understand and analyze these aspects within a passage but not to label them. Questions are based on literary texts, including stories, poems, and dramatic literature, as well as literary nonfiction texts. Informational passages may be used if they contain the qualities appropriate to the standard.

The sample question is based on the passage “Going Home,” which is reproduced on pages 88 and 89 in Appendix B of this guide. Students should understand the concept of situational irony as contradictory or incongruous events within a story. The stem of the question gives students an excerpt from the passage and asks for an explanation of the irony it expresses. The question requires students to analyze the irony in terms of the story as a whole. Choice A is the best response, as the irony lies in the fact that the narrator is sorry to leave the town at the same time that other children are worried about moving to the same town. Choices B, C, and D provide statements that represent misreadings of the excerpt or a lack of understanding of the relationship of the excerpt to the passage.

**Literary Response
and Analysis**Standard **10RL3.9****Explain how voice, persona, and the choice of a narrator affect characterization and the tone, plot, and credibility of a text.****2 test questions****Which word BEST describes the narrator’s tone in the second half of the passage?**

- A persuasive
- B humorous
- C sarcastic
- D frustrated

CAHSEE questions in this standard focus on the person who tells the story or acts as the speaker within a text, whether the genre is short story, drama, poetry, or other kinds of literature. Students should be able to recognize who the narrator or speaker is, what persona he or she has been given, and what characteristics distinguish the narrator’s or speaker’s voice. Questions in this strand will also require students to analyze the effect of these elements within the text. Because a foundational understanding of tone and literary point of view are necessary for achievement of this academic content standard, questions may also assess students’ understanding of tone and literary point of view when they are closely related to the voice or the narration. Students will need to understand the purpose of voice, persona, and choice of narrator but will not be required to label them. Questions are based on literary texts, including stories, poems, and dramatic literature, as well as literary nonfiction texts. Informational passages may be used if they contain the qualities appropriate to the standard.

The sample question is based on “A Day Away,” which is reproduced on pages 80 and 81 in Appendix B of this guide. Students are asked to identify the tone of the passage, which in this passage is closely linked with the persona of the speaker. Students should recognize that the essay has two major parts. In the first half, the speaker describes, in a fairly dispassionate tone, what it means to take “a day away.” In the second half, the speaker addresses the reader and argues that other people should also take a day away. The diction and tone become persuasive (e.g., “Each of us needs to withdraw from the cares which will not withdraw from us”), making choice A the correct answer. Students should recognize that choices B and C are incorrect because the speaker is presenting a serious argument, advocating a position, and countering what “many may think and some will accuse.” Choice D represents a misinterpretation of the tone: the speaker implies that a day away helps resolve frustrations, but the diction of the essay does not create a tone of frustration.

**Literary Response
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Standard **10RL3.10**
**Identify and describe the function
of dialogue, scene designs,
soliloquies, asides, and character
foils in dramatic literature.**

1 test question

**How is Karl a foil character in the
drama?**

- A** He shows a reluctance to agree with the group.
- B** He explains the feelings of the class as a whole.
- C** He asks questions that let other characters teach him.
- D** He reveals thoughts that are mature for one so young.

CAHSEE questions in standard 10RL3.10 require students to use their understanding of genre features to aid in the understanding and analysis of literary texts. Because the focus of the grade 10 standard is dramatic literature, many questions require students to understand and to analyze the dramatic features named in the standard: dialogue, soliloquy, asides, character foils, and scene design. Various other genres are studied throughout the middle school and high school years as well, and thus some items will be included that address the features of fiction and poetry, such as setting, methods of characterization, line length, punctuation, rhythm, repetition, rhyme, problem, conflict, climax, and resolution. Students will need to understand the purpose or use of these genre features but to label only those that are most common. Questions for this standard are based on literary texts, including stories, poems, and dramatic literature, as well as literary nonfiction texts.

The sample question is based on the passage “The School Garden,” which is reproduced on pages 90 and 91 in Appendix B of this guide. To answer the question correctly, students must understand the concept of a foil character as a character that contrasts with other characters and therefore makes the other characters’ qualities more obvious. Choice C is the correct response, because in the drama Karl asks questions that allow other characters, such as Carolina, Max, and Macy, to reveal their knowledge of key concepts in the drama—botany, Xeriscaping, and the term “indigenous.” Karl’s lack of knowledge and need for clarification are juxtaposed to the knowledge of other characters who are willing to share it with Karl. Choices A, B, and D represent misreadings of the text, as these choices are not supported by the action in the drama.

Literary Response and Analysis

Standard

**8RL3.7 Analyze a work of literature, showing how it reflects the heritage, traditions, attitudes, and beliefs of its author.
(Biographical approach)****[Tasks that assess the three different approaches (8RL3.7, 10RL3.11, and 10RL3.12) will be rotated across test forms.]**

CAHSEE questions in this standard require students to analyze a work in relation to the author's background. Context information is provided with the questions so that students will not need specific prior knowledge about the author. To analyze a work using the biographical approach, the student is required to understand basic elements of theme, setting, plot, and character as they relate to the author's background, and these literary elements may be the focus of questions in this standard. The questions are based on literary texts, including stories, poems, and dramatic literature, as well as literary nonfiction texts. Informational passages may be used if they contain the qualities appropriate to the standard.

Literary Response and Analysis

Standard **10RL3.11 Evaluate the aesthetic qualities of style, including the impact of diction and figurative language, on tone, mood, and theme, using the terminology of literary criticism. (Aesthetic approach)**

CAHSEE questions in this standard require students to analyze an author's style, noting how his or her use of diction affects the tone, mood, or theme of the text. Because an understanding of tone, mood, and theme is fundamental to achievement in this standard, questions may ask students about these literary elements in a passage. Questions are based on literary texts, including stories, poems, and dramatic literature, as well as literary nonfiction texts. Informational passages may be used if they contain the qualities appropriate to the standard.

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Standard **10RL3.12 Analyze the way in which a work of literature is related to the themes and issues of its historical period. (Historical approach)**

CAHSEE questions for this standard require students to analyze a text in relation to the historical period in which it was written or in which it is set. Context information is provided so that students will not need specific prior knowledge about the historical period. To analyze a work using the historical approach, students are required to understand basic elements of theme, setting, plot, and character, and questions may address these literary elements when they relate to the historical period reflected in the text. Questions are based on literary texts, including stories, poems, and dramatic literature, as well as literary nonfiction texts. Texts may include those written during a prior historical period or those set in a prior historical period (historical fiction). Informational passages may be used if they contain the qualities appropriate to the standard.