

**ELA Task Generation Model 6A.2 MY
Central Idea/ Lesson of Literature
Grade 6 Sample Items**

Task Generation Model: Literary Analysis Task – Central Idea/Lesson of Literature

Sample Texts for Grade 6

- Passage from Chapter 5 of *Anne of Green Gables*, by L.M. Montgomery (public domain)
- “Caged Bird,” a poem by Maya Angelou

Text Complexity

Anne of Green Gables: Lexile 990

The Literature Task plays an important role in honing students’ ability to read complex text closely, a skill that research reveals as the most significant factor differentiating college-ready from non-college-ready readers. This task will ask students to carefully consider literature worthy of close study and compose an analytic essay.

A complete literary analysis task (LAT) for 6th grade contains seven items, with six Evidence-Based Selected Response (EBSR) items and one Prose Constructed Response (PCR) item. Students will read a purpose setting statement for the task and then read the first passage, an excerpt from a novel. After answering EBSR items, the students will read a poem and answer additional EBSR items. Finally, the students will respond to the PCR item.

The literary analysis task aligns with the following standards: RL.6.1, RL.6.2, RL.6.3, RL.6.4, RL.6.5; L.6.4, L.6.5; W.6.2, W.6.9a

Today you will read a passage from the novel *Anne of Green Gables*, by L.M. Montgomery, and the poem “Caged Bird,” by Maya Angelou. As you read the passage and the poem, you will answer questions and think about how the authors present similar themes. After you read, you will write an essay comparing these themes.

Read the following passage from chapter five of *Anne of Green Gables* and answer the questions that follow. In the first four chapters, the reader learns that an error has been made; Anne, an orphan, was sent to live with Marilla and Matthew Cuthbert, who had requested a boy, not a girl.

1 “. . . I was born in that house. Mrs. Thomas said I was the homeliest baby she ever saw, I was so scrawny and tiny and nothing but eyes, but that mother thought I was perfectly beautiful. I should think a mother would be a better judge than a poor woman who came in to scrub, wouldn't you? I'm glad she was satisfied with me anyhow, I would feel so sad if I thought I was a disappointment to her—because she didn't live very long after that, you see. She died of fever when I was just three months old. I do wish she'd lived long enough for me to remember calling her mother. I think it would be so sweet to say 'mother,' don't you? And father died four days afterwards from fever too. That left me an orphan and folks were at their wits' end, so Mrs. Thomas said, what to do with me. You see, nobody wanted me even then. It seems to be my fate. Father and mother had both come from places far away and it was well known they hadn't any relatives living. Finally Mrs. Thomas said she'd take me, though she was poor and had a drunken husband. She brought me up by hand. Do you know if there is anything in being brought up by hand that ought to make people who are brought up that way better than other people? Because whenever I was naughty Mrs. Thomas would ask me how I could be such a bad girl when she had brought me up by hand—reproachful-like.

2 “Mr. and Mrs. Thomas moved away from Bolingbroke to Marysville, and I lived with them until I was eight years old. I helped look after the Thomas children—there were four of them younger than me—and I can tell you they took a lot of looking after. Then Mr. Thomas was killed falling under a train and his mother offered to take Mrs. Thomas and the children, but she didn't want me. Mrs. Thomas was at HER wits' end, so she said, what to do with me. Then Mrs. Hammond from up the river came down and said she'd take me, seeing I was handy with children, and I went up the river to live with her in a little clearing among the stumps. It was a very lonesome place. I'm sure I could never have lived there if I hadn't had an imagination. Mr. Hammond worked a little sawmill up there, and Mrs. Hammond had eight children. She had twins three times. I like babies in moderation, but twins three times in succession is TOO MUCH. I told Mrs. Hammond so firmly, when the last pair came. I used to get so dreadfully tired carrying them about.

3 “I lived up river with Mrs. Hammond over two years, and then Mr. Hammond died and Mrs. Hammond broke up housekeeping. She divided her children among her relatives and went to the States. I had to go to the asylum at Hopeton, because nobody would take me. They didn't want me at the asylum, either; they said they were over-crowded as it was. But they had to take me and I was there four months until Mrs. Spencer came.”

6 Anne finished up with another sigh, of relief this time. Evidently she did not like talking about her experiences in a world that had not wanted her.

7 “Did you ever go to school?” demanded Marilla, turning the sorrel mare¹ down the shore road.

“Not a great deal. I went a little the last year I stayed with Mrs. Thomas. When I went up river we were so far from a school that I couldn’t walk it in winter and there was a vacation in summer, so I could only go in the spring and fall. But of course I went while I was at the asylum. I can read pretty well and I know ever so many pieces of poetry off by heart—‘The Battle of Hohenlinden’ and ‘Edinburgh after Flodden,’ and ‘Bingen of the Rhine,’ and most of the ‘Lady of the Lake’ and most of ‘The Seasons’ by James Thompson. Don’t you just love poetry that gives you a crinkly feeling up and down your back? There is a piece in the Fifth Reader—‘The Downfall of Poland’—that is just full of thrills. Of course, I wasn’t in the Fifth Reader—I was only in the Fourth—but the big girls used to lend me theirs to read.”

8 “Were those women—Mrs. Thomas and Mrs. Hammond—good to you?” asked Marilla, looking at Anne out of the corner of her eye.

9 “O-o-o-h,” faltered Anne. Her sensitive little face suddenly flushed scarlet and embarrassment sat on her brow. “Oh, they MEANT to be—I know they meant to be just as good and kind as possible. And when people mean to be good to you, you don’t mind very much when they’re not quite—always. They had a good deal to worry them, you know. It’s very trying to have a drunken husband, you see; and it must be very trying to have twins three times in succession, don’t you think? But I feel sure they meant to be good to me.”

10 Marilla asked no more questions. Anne gave herself up to a silent rapture over the shore road and Marilla guided the sorrel abstractedly while she pondered deeply. Pity was suddenly stirring in her heart for the child. What a starved, unloved life she had had—a life of drudgery and poverty and neglect; for Marilla was shrewd enough to read between the lines of Anne’s history and divine the truth. No wonder she had been so delighted at the prospect of a real home. It was a pity she had to be sent back. What if she, Marilla, should indulge Matthew’s unaccountable whim and let her stay? He was set on it; and the child seemed a nice, teachable little thing.

11 “She’s got too much to say,” thought Marilla, “but she might be trained out of that. And there’s nothing rude or slangy in what she does say. She’s ladylike. It’s likely her people were nice folks.”

¹ sorrel mare: a female horse with a reddish-brown coat

DRAFT

1. Part A: What is the meaning of the phrase **reproachful-like** as it is used in paragraph 1 of the excerpt from *Anne of Green Gables*?

- A. in a confused manner
- B. in an unfeeling manner
- C. in a curious manner
- D. in a disapproving manner

Part B: Which quotation from the text **best** supports the answer in part A?

- A. "Mrs. Thomas would ask me how I could be such a bad girl . . ."
- B. "Do you know if there is anything in being brought up by hand . . ."
- C. "Mrs. Thomas said she'd take me, though she was poor and had a drunken husband."
- D. "That left me an orphan and folks were at their wits' end, so Mrs. Thomas said . . ."

2. Part A: How does Marilla's attitude towards Anne change in this excerpt?

- A. Marilla becomes concerned about Anne's lack of education.
- B. Marilla develops greater sympathy for Anne.
- C. Marilla becomes more impatient with Anne.
- D. Marilla decides that Anne deserves to be adopted.

Part B: Which quotation from the excerpt **best** supports the answer to Part A?

- A. "“Did you ever go to school?” demanded Marilla, turning the sorrel mare down the shore road.”
- B. "“Anne gave herself up to a silent rapture over the shore road and Marilla guided the sorrel abstractedly. . .”
- C. "“What a starved, unloved life she had had—a life of drudgery and poverty and neglect; for Marilla was shrewd enough to read between the lines . . .”
- D. "“And there's nothing rude or slangy in what she does say. She's ladylike. It's likely her people were nice folks.”

3. Part A: Read the following sentence from the excerpt.

“ ‘Were those women—Mrs. Thomas and Mrs. Hammond—good to you?’ asked Marilla, looking at Anne out of the corner of her eye.”

How does this sentence contribute to the development of the plot of the excerpt?

- A. It contributes to the exposition, as it provides basic information about the characters.
- B. It is the first indication that Marilla is experiencing an internal conflict.
- C. It indicates that there will be an external conflict between Anne and Marilla.
- D. It contributes to the resolution, when it is clear that Anne will be adopted.

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Part B: Which detail from the passage **best** supports the answer to Part A?

- A. “. . . Marilla guided the sorrel abstractedly while she pondered deeply.”
- B. “They had a good deal to worry them, you know.”
- C. “What if she, Marilla, should indulge Matthew’s unaccountable whim . . .”
- D. “Her sensitive little face suddenly flushed scarlet . . .”

Now read the poem “Caged Bird,” by Maya Angelou, and answer the questions that follow.

Caged Bird

1

The free bird leaps
on the back of the wind
and floats downstream
till the current ends
and dips his wings
in the orange sun rays
and dares to claim the sky.

2

But a bird that stalks
down his narrow cage
can seldom see through
his bars of rage
his wings are clipped and
his feet are tied
so he opens his throat to sing.

3

The caged bird sings
with fearful trill
of the things unknown
but longed for still
and his tune is heard
on the distant hill
for the caged bird
sings of freedom

4

The free bird thinks of another breeze
and the trade winds soft through the sighing trees
and the fat worms waiting on a dawn-bright lawn
and he names the sky his own.

5

But a caged bird stands on the grave of dreams
his shadow shouts on a nightmare scream
his wings are clipped and his feet are tied
so he opens his throat to sing

6

The caged bird sings
with a fearful trill
of things unknown
but longed for still
and his tune is heard
on the distant hill
for the caged bird
sings of freedom.

Maya Angelou

4. Part A: As used in Stanza 5, what does the phrase “his shadow shouts” suggest about the caged bird?
- He feels depressed because he cannot express himself freely.
 - He is consumed by fury because of his situation.
 - He is protesting the fact that he is not treated equally.
 - He feels resentful because the free bird is able to live a life of liberty.

Part B: Which quotation from the poem **best** supports the answer to Part A?

- “for the caged bird/ sings of freedom” (stanza 6)
 - “his wings are clipped and his feet are tied” (stanzas 2 and 5)
 - “can seldom see through his bars of rage” (stanza 2)
 - “the free bird leaps/ on the back of the wind” (stanza 1)
5. Part A: How do stanzas 1 and 4 contribute to the poem’s message?
- They show how brave someone can be when he or she is free.
 - They paint a picture of the joys of freedom.
 - They underscore how much prisoners resent those who are free.
 - They demonstrate the dangers of a world with no laws.

Part B: Which phrase **best** supports the answer to Part A?

- “. . . and dares to claim the sky . . .”(stanza 1)
 - “. . . stands on the grave of dreams . . .”(stanza 5)
 - “. . . of the things unknown/ but longed for still . . .”(stanza 5)
 - “. . . dips his wings in the orange sun rays . . .”(stanza 1)
6. Part A: What can be learned about suffering from the poem “Caged Bird”?
- The reader comes to understand that people who suffer eventually try to hurt others.
 - The reader comes to understand that suffering causes people to become depressed and unable to do anything positive.
 - The reader comes to understand that people who suffer experience great pain, but they will find a way to express themselves.
 - The reader comes to understand that suffering causes people to become jealous.

Part B: Which quotation from the poem **best** supports the correct answer to Part A?

- “. . . his wings are clipped and/ his feet are tied . . .”(stanza 5)
- “. . . can seldom see through/ his bars of rage . . .”(stanza 2)
- “. . . and the fat worms waiting on a dawn-bright lawn . . .”(stanza 4)

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D. “. . . for the caged bird/ sings of freedom.”(stanzas 3 and 6)

PCR:

You have read the passage from *Anne of Green Gables* and the poem “Caged Bird.” Both texts develop the theme of understanding. Write an essay that compares and contrasts the approaches each text uses to develop the theme of understanding.

SAMPLE