

Grade 11 Sample Items

Task Generation Model: 11A.2 Literary Analysis Task – Theme/ Central Ideas

Sample Texts for Grade 11: “A March in the Ranks” by Walt Whitman and “An Episode Of War” by Stephen Crane

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 11th Grade contains seven items, with six items that are 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. After answering EBSR items, the students will read a second passage and answer additional EBSR items. Finally, the students will respond to the PCR item.

This literary analysis task aligns with standards: RL.11-12.1, RL.11-12.2, RL.11-12.5, W.11-12.1, W.11-12.2, W.11-12.4, W.11-12.9, L.11-12.1, L.11-12.2, L.11-12.3

SAMPLE

Today you will read the poem “A March in the Ranks” by Walt Whitman and the short story “An Episode of War” by Stephen Crane about the American Civil War. As you read these texts, you will gather information and answer questions that will help you understand each author’s depiction of the war. When you are finished reading, you will write an analytical essay.

Read the poem “A March in the Ranks” by Walt Whitman and answer the questions.

A march in the ranks hard-press, and the road unknown,
A route through a heavy wood with muffled steps in the darkness,
Our army foil'd with loss severe, and the sullen remnant retreating,
Till after midnight glimmer upon us the lights of a dim-lighted building,
5 We come to an open space in the woods, and halt by the dim-lighted building,
'Tis a large old church at the crossing roads, now an impromptu hospital
Entering but for a minute I see a sight beyond all the pictures and poems ever made,
Shadows of deepest, deepest black, just lit by moving candles and lamps,
And by one great pitchy torch stationary with wild red flame and clouds of smoke,
10 By these, crowds, groups of forms vaguely I see on the floor, some in the pews laid
down,
At my feet more distinctly a soldier, a mere lad, in danger of bleeding to death, (he is
shot in the abdomen,)
I stanch the blood temporarily, (the youngster's face is white as a lily,)
Then before I depart I sweep my eyes o'er the scene fain to absorb it all,
Faces, varieties, postures beyond description, most in obscurity, some of them dead,
15 Surgeons operating, attendants holding lights, the smell of ether, the odor of blood,
The crowd, O the crowd of the bloody forms, the yard outside also fill'd,
Some on the bare ground, some on planks or stretchers, some in the death-spasm
sweating,



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An occasional scream or cry, the doctor's shouted orders or calls,
The glisten of the little steel instruments catching the glint of the torches,
20 These I resume as I chant, I see again the forms, I smell the odor,
Then hear outside the orders given, Fall in, my men, fall in;
But first I bend to the dying lad, his eyes open, a half-smile gives he me,
Then the eyes close, calmly close, and I speed forth to the darkness,
Resuming, marching, ever in darkness marching, on in the ranks,
25 The unknown road still marching

(341 words total)



SAMPLE

1) Part (A) In line six of “A March in the Ranks”, by Walt Whitman, what is the meaning of the word **impromptu** as it is used in this context?

- A. Improvised
- B. Permanent
- C. Sacrilegious
- D. Secure

Part (B) Which phrase from the passage supports the answer to part A?

- A. “...Our army foil’d with loss severe, and the sullen remnant retreating, Till after midnight glimmer upon us the lights of a dim-lighted building...”
- B. “...By these, crowds, groups of forms vaguely I see on the floor, some in the pews laid down, at my feet more distinctly a soldier...”
- C. “...Shadows of deepest, deepest black, just lit by moving candles and lamps, and by one great pitchy torch stationary with wild red flame and clouds of smoke...”
- D. “...An occasional scream or cry, the doctor’s shouted orders or calls, The glisten of the little steel instruments catching the glint of the torches...”

2) Part (A) In “A March in the Ranks”, by Walt Whitman, based on the poem, what word describes the tone?

- A. Somber
- B. Callous
- C. Confused
- D. Sardonic

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Part (B) Which two pieces of text evidence support the answer in Part A?

- A. "...’Tis a large old church at the crossing roads, now an impromptu hospital..."
- B. "...Our army foil’d with loss severe, and the sullen remnant retreating, Till after midnight glimmer upon us the lights of a dim-lighted building..."
- C. "...Entering but for a minute I see a sight beyond all the pictures and poems ever made..."
- D. "A march in the ranks hard-prest, and the road unknown..."
- E. "...But first I bend to the dying lad, his eyes open, a half-smile gives he me, Then eyes close, calmly close..."

3) Part (A) In “A March in the Ranks”, by Walt Whitman, what is the overall theme of the passage?

- A. In life, unfamiliar paths often determine future outcomes.
- B. In war, military service transforms individuals for the worse.
- C. In life, doctors hold in their hands the balance of life and death, and callously determine who survives.
- D. In war, carnage is common place, and duty supersedes emotions.

Part (B) Which two pieces of text evidence support the answer in Part A?

- A. "...Our army foil’d with loss severe, and the sullen remnant retreating..."
- B. "...Surgeons operating, attendant holding lights, the smell of ether, the order of blood, The crowd, O the crowd of the bloody forms, the yard outside also fill’d..."
- C. "A march in the ranks hard-prest, and the road unknown, A route through a heavy wood with muffled steps in the darkness..."
- D. "...Then the eyes close, calmly close, and I speed forth to the darkness, resuming, marching, ever in darkness marching, on in the ranks..."
- E. "...The glisten of the little steel instruments catching the glint of the torches, These I resume as I chant, I see again the forms, I smell the odor, Then hear outside the orders given, Fall in, my men, fall in..."

Read the short story "An Episode of War" by Stephen Crane and answer the questions.

- 1 The lieutenant's rubber blanket lay on the ground, and upon it he had poured the company's supply of coffee. Corporals and other representatives of the grimy and hot-throated men who lined the breastwork had come for each squad's portion.
- 2 The lieutenant was frowning and serious at this task of division. His lips pursed as he drew with his sword various crevices in the heap until brown squares of coffee, astoundingly equal in size, appeared on the blanket. He was on the verge of a great triumph in mathematics, and the corporals were thronging forward, each to reap a little square, when suddenly the lieutenant cried out and looked quickly at a man near him as if he suspected it was a case of personal assault. The others cried out also when they saw blood upon the lieutenant's sleeve.
- 3 He had winced like a man stung, swayed dangerously, and then straightened. The sound of his hoarse breathing was plainly audible. He looked sadly, mystically, over the breastwork at the green face of a wood, where now were many little puffs of white smoke. During this moment the men about him gazed statue-like and silent, astonished and awed by this catastrophe which happened when catastrophes were not expected--when they had leisure to observe it.
- 4 As the lieutenant stared at the wood, they too swung their heads, so that for another instant all hands, still silent, contemplated the distant forest as if their minds were fixed upon the mystery of a bullet's journey.
- 5 The officer had, of course, been compelled to take his sword into his left hand. He did not hold it by the hilt. He gripped it at the middle of the blade, awkwardly. Turning his eyes from the hostile wood, he looked at the sword as he held it there, and seemed puzzled as to what to do with it, where to put it. In short, this weapon had of a sudden become a strange thing to him. He looked at it in a kind of stupefaction, as if he had been endowed with a trident, a sceptre, or a spade.
- 6 Finally he tried to sheath it. To sheath a sword held by the left hand, at the middle of the blade, in a scabbard hung at the left hip, is a feat worthy of a sawdust ring. This wounded officer engaged in a desperate struggle with the sword and the wobbling scabbard, and during the time of it he breathed like a wrestler.
- 7 But at this instant the men, the spectators, awoke from their stone-like poses and crowded forward sympathetically. The orderly-sergeant took the sword and tenderly placed it in the scabbard. At the time, he leaned nervously backward, and did not allow even his finger to brush the body of the lieutenant. A wound gives strange dignity to him who bears it. Well men shy from this new and terrible majesty. It is as if the wounded man's hand is upon the curtain which hangs before the revelations of all existence--the meaning of ants, potentates, wars, cities, sunshine, snow, a feather dropped from a bird's wing; and the power of it sheds radiance upon a bloody form, and makes the other men understand sometimes that they are little. His comrades look at him with large eyes thoughtfully. Moreover, they fear vaguely that the weight of a finger upon him might send him headlong, precipitate the tragedy, hurl him at once into the dim, grey unknown. And so the orderly-sergeant, while sheathing the sword, leaned nervously backward.

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- 8 There were others who proffered assistance. One timidly presented his shoulder and asked the lieutenant if he cared to lean upon it, but the latter waved him away mournfully. He wore the look of one who knows he is the victim of a terrible disease and understands his helplessness. He again stared over the breastwork at the forest, and then turning went slowly rearward. He held his right wrist tenderly in his left hand as if the wounded arm was made of very brittle glass.
- 9 And the men in silence stared at the wood, then at the departing lieutenant--then at the wood, then at the lieutenant.
- 10 As the wounded officer passed from the line of battle, he was enabled to see many things which as a participant in the fight were unknown to him. He saw a general on a black horse gazing over the lines of blue infantry at the green woods which veiled his problems. An aide galloped furiously, dragged his horse suddenly to a halt, saluted, and presented a paper. It was, for a wonder, precisely like an historical painting.
- 11 To the rear of the general and his staff a group, composed of a bugler, two or three orderlies, and the bearer of the corps standard, all upon maniacal horses, were working like slaves to hold their ground, preserve, their respectful interval, while the shells boomed in the air about them, and caused their chargers to make furious quivering leaps.
- 12 A battery, a tumultuous and shining mass, was swirling toward the right. The wild thud of hoofs, the cries of the riders shouting blame and praise, menace and encouragement, and, last the roar of the wheels, the slant of the glistening guns, brought the lieutenant to an intent pause. The battery swept in curves that stirred the heart; it made halts as dramatic as the crash of a wave on the rocks, and when it fled onward, this aggregation of wheels, levers, motors, had a beautiful unity, as if it were a missile. The sound of it was a war-chorus that reached into the depths of man's emotion.
- 13 The lieutenant, still holding his arm as if it were of glass, stood watching this battery until all detail of it was lost, save the figures of the riders, which rose and fell and waved lashes over the black mass.
- 14 Later, he turned his eyes toward the battle where the shooting sometimes crackled like bushfires, sometimes sputtered with exasperating irregularity, and sometimes reverberated like the thunder. He saw the smoke rolling upward and saw crowds of men who ran and cheered, or stood and blazed away at the inscrutable distance.
- 15 He came upon some stragglers, and they told him how to find the field hospital. They described its exact location. In fact, these men, no longer having part in the battle, knew more of it than others. They told the performance of every corps, every division, the opinion of every general. The lieutenant, carrying his wounded arm rearward, looked upon them with wonder.
- 16 At the roadside a brigade was making coffee and buzzing with talk like a girls' boarding-school. Several officers came out to him and inquired concerning things of which he knew nothing. One, seeing his arm, began to scold. "Why, man, that's no way to do. You want to fix that thing." He appropriated the lieutenant and the lieutenant's wound. He cut the sleeve and laid bare the arm, every nerve of which softly fluttered under his touch. He bound his handkerchief over the wound, scolding away in the meantime. His tone allowed one to think that he was in the habit of being wounded every day. The lieutenant hung his head, feeling, in this presence, that he did not know how to be correctly wounded.

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- 17 The low white tents of the hospital were grouped around an old school- house. There was here a singular commotion. In the foreground two ambulances interlocked wheels in the deep mud. The drivers were tossing the blame of it back and forth, gesticulating and berating, while from the ambulances, both crammed with wounded, there came an occasional groan. An interminable crowd of bandaged men were coming and going. Great numbers sat under the trees nursing heads or arms or legs. There was a dispute of some kind raging on the steps of the school-house. Sitting with his back against a tree a man with a face as grey as a new army blanket was serenely smoking a corn-cob pipe. The lieutenant wished to rush forward and inform him that he was dying.
- 18 A busy surgeon was passing near the lieutenant. "Good-morning," he said, with a friendly smile. Then he caught sight of the lieutenant's arm and his face at once changed. "Well, let's have a look at it." He seemed possessed suddenly of a great contempt for the lieutenant. This wound evidently placed the latter on a very low social plane. The doctor cried out impatiently, "What mutton-head had tied it up that way anyhow?" The lieutenant answered, "Oh, a man."
- 19 When the wound was disclosed the doctor fingered it disdainfully. "Humph," he said. "You come along with me and I'll 'tend to you." His voice contained the same scorn as if he were saying, "You will have to go to jail."
- 20 The lieutenant had been very meek, but now his face flushed, and he looked into the doctor's eyes. "I guess I won't have it amputated," he said.
- 21 "Nonsense, man! Nonsense! Nonsense!" cried the doctor. "Come along, now. I won't amputate it. Come along. Don't be a baby."
- 22 "Let go of me," said the lieutenant, holding back wrathfully, his glance fixed upon the door of the old school-house, as sinister to him as the portals of death.
- 23 And this is the story of how the lieutenant lost his arm. When he reached home, his sisters, his mother, his wife sobbed for a long time at the sight of the flat sleeve. "Oh, well," he said, standing shamefaced amid these tears, "I don't suppose it matters so much as all that."

(1,601 words total)

- 4) Part (A) In paragraph eight of “An Episode of War” by Stephen Crane, what is the meaning of the word **proffered** as it is used in this context?
- A. Declined reluctantly
 - B. Offered freely
 - C. Abjured silently
 - D. Coordinated efficiently

Part (B) Which phrase from the passage supports the answer to part A?

- A. “He held his right wrist tenderly in his left hand as if the wounded arm was made of very brittle glass.”
 - B. “And the men in silence stared at the wood, then at the departing lieutenant – then at the woods...”
 - C. “An aid galloped furiously, dragged his horse suddenly to a halt, saluted and presented a paper.”
 - D. “One timidly presented his shoulder and asked the lieutenant if he cared to lean upon it...”
- 5) Part (A) What recurrent image does the author use in the structure of the text to create its aesthetic impact?
- A. The forest
 - B. The cavalry horses
 - C. The lieutenant’s wounded limb
 - D. The concept of honor

Part (B) Which two pieces of text evidence support the answer in Part A?

- A. "The others cried out also when they saw blood upon the lieutenant's sleeve."
- B. "He looked sadly, mystically, over the breastwork of the green face of a wood, where now were many little puffs of white smoke."
- C. "Turning his eyes from the hostile wood, he looked at the sword as he held it there, and seemed puzzled as to what to do with it..."
- D. "The lieutenant, carrying his wounded arm rearward, looked upon them with wonder."
- E. "He saw a general on a black horse gazing over the lines of blue infantry at the green woods which veiled his problems."
- F. "The sound of his horse breathing was plainly audible."
- G. "An aid galloped furiously, dragged his horse suddenly to a halt, saluted, and presented a paper."

6) Part (A) In "An Episode of War," by Stephen Crane, based on the short story, what word describes the tone?

- A. Anxious
- B. Brave
- C. Resigned
- D. Optimistic

Part (B) Which paragraphs contribute to the development of this tone?

- A. Paragraph 8, Paragraph 20, Paragraph 23
- B. Paragraph 7, Paragraph 20, Paragraph 22
- C. Paragraph 7, Paragraph 21, Paragraph 22
- D. Paragraph 6, Paragraph 14, Paragraph 23

Prose Constructed Response

Use what you have learned from reading the poem “A March in the Ranks” by Walt Whitman and the short story “An Episode of War” by Stephen Crane to write an analytical essay. Both Walt Whitman and Stephen Crane examined the dynamics and conditions of the American Civil War. Write an essay that explains each author’s treatment of the subject. In your essay, make a claim about the idea of duty and perseverance. Support your response with textual evidence and inferences drawn from both texts.