



PRACTICE TEST

Writing Subtest (092)

VA-PT-FLD092-01

VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

EVALUATION SYSTEMS

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GETTING STARTED

The Virginia Communication and Literacy Assessment® (VCLA™) is composed of two subtests—a reading subtest and a writing subtest. This document provides a full-length sample VCLA writing subtest consisting of 41 multiple-choice questions, 3 short-answer items, a writing summary assignment, and a writing composition assignment.

A practice test for the reading subtest is also available; see the VCLA Web site at www.va.nesinc.com.

◆ Reviewing the Test Content

The content of each VCLA subtest is documented in the test blueprint, which consists of a set of test objectives. The content of the VCLA writing subtest is defined by the objectives in the "Subtest II—Writing Knowledge and Proficiency" section of the test blueprint.

The test blueprint for the VCLA is available on the VCLA Web site at www.va.nesinc.com.

◆ Taking the Practice Test

To take the practice test, follow these steps:

- Read the directions for the multiple-choice questions, then read each multiple-choice question carefully and choose the ONE best answer out of the four answer choices provided. Record your answer to each question on the Multiple-Choice Answer Sheet provided.
- Read the directions for the short-answer items, then read and respond to each item using the lines provided below each item.
- Read the directions for the writing summary assignment, then read the assignment carefully. Use scrap paper to make notes, write an outline, or otherwise prepare your response. Write your response on the Writing Summary Response Document provided.
- Read the directions for the writing composition assignment, then read the assignment carefully. Use scrap paper to make notes, write an outline, or otherwise prepare your response. Write your response on the Writing Composition Response Document provided.
- Follow the instructions in "Evaluating Your Performance" to score your test and evaluate and interpret your results.

You may wish to monitor how long it takes you to complete the practice test. When taking the actual VCLA, you will have a four-hour test session. Keep in mind that if you are taking both VCLA subtests at one administration, you will be assigned to complete both subtests during one four-hour test session. If you are taking only one subtest, you will have the full four-hour test session to complete the subtest.



MULTIPLE-CHOICE SECTION

◆ Multiple-Choice Answer Sheet

Use the space provided below to record your responses to the multiple-choice questions that follow.

Question Number	Your Response
1	
2	
3	
4	
5	
6	
7	
8	
9	
10	
11	
12	
13	
14	
15	
16	
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19	
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Question Number	Your Response
21	
22	
23	
24	
25	
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36	
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41	

◆ Grammar and Usage Multiple-Choice Questions

DIRECTIONS FOR THE GRAMMAR AND USAGE SECTION OF THE WRITING SUBTEST

This section of the Writing subtest is based on several passages. In this part of the writing section, the term *error* refers to language use that does not conform to the conventions of Standard English.

Each passage is followed by several multiple-choice items related to the passage. Read each passage carefully and then read the items that refer to that passage. For each item, choose the ONE best answer based on the information contained in the passage you have just read.

Use the passage below to answer the three questions that follow.

¹According to a recent study, people who sleep between six and seven hours a night tend to live longer than people who log eight hours of sleep. ²Even more surprising, the study found that people who regularly sleep as little as four hours a night outlive those who sleep eight hours or more. ³Although the reasons for this are still unclear, some doctors speculate that periods of darkness associated with sleep may trigger hormonal changes that effect life span. ⁴During periods of prolonged sleep, they suggest, the rate of these hormonal changes speeds up. ⁵There is also considerable evidence that age is a major determinant of the amount and quality of sleep people enjoy.

⁶The National Sleep Foundation, however, which advocates eight hours of sleep per night, criticized the data collection method used in the study and argued that the side effects of accumulated sleep debt would outweigh any benefits derived from sleeping less. ⁷The director of the sleep study questions the relevance of this critique. ⁸He contends that the principal reason people feel tired is not the number of hours they sleep, but their worries that they are not getting enough sleep. ⁹The new study encourages people to relax in the knowledge that when it comes to sleep, less may actually be more.



1. Information in the passage is presented in a style that is most consistent with:
 - A. a newspaper article.
 - B. a science textbook.
 - C. an encyclopedia entry.
 - D. a scientific journal.

2. Which sentence draws attention away from the main idea of the first paragraph?
 - A. Sentence 2
 - B. Sentence 3
 - C. Sentence 4
 - D. Sentence 5

3. Which change is needed to correct an error in usage?
 - A. Sentence 1: Change "than" to "then."
 - B. Sentence 3: Change "effect" to "affect."
 - C. Sentence 8: Change "principal" to "principle."
 - D. Sentence 9: Change "to" to "too."

Use the passage below to answer the three questions that follow.

¹Sha Sha Higby is an artist who draws on several Asian traditions to combine sculpture with dance. ²After college, she spent a year in Japan, where she worked with artists creating the elaborate masks and costumes used in Japanese Noh theater. ³A later trip to Indonesia enabled Higby to expand her aesthetic vision by working in an artistic culture that places great emphasis on ornate detail. ⁴For four years, she carved and sewed costumes made of water buffalo hide and batik cloth.

⁵When Higby returned from Indonesia, she drew on her experiences to create huge, gigantic costumes that had so many facets they had to be

propped up with poles or suspended from above by strings. ⁶One costume might encapsulate an entire world with multiple figures, arms, heads, animals, and objects worked into the body of the fabric or suspended from it. ⁷In performance, she moves so slow that audience members are sometimes barely aware of any motion. ⁸What they do see is a hypnotic unfolding of the different aspects of the costume, as Higby opens up her arm to reveal a host of flying dragons, a dozen clay figures, or some equally fantastic scene. ⁹The whole effect is so mesmerizing that viewers are often unsure just what they are viewing.



4. Which change would make the sequence of ideas in the second paragraph clearer?
- A. Delete Sentence 6.
 - B. Delete Sentence 8.
 - C. Reverse the order of Sentences 6 and 7.
 - D. Reverse the order of Sentences 8 and 9.

5. Which sentence should be revised to eliminate redundancy?
- A. Sentence 2
 - B. Sentence 3
 - C. Sentence 5
 - D. Sentence 6

6. Which change is needed to correct an error in modification?
- A. Sentence 2: Change "elaborate" to "elaborated."
 - B. Sentence 3: Change "artistic" to "artistical."
 - C. Sentence 7: Change "slow" to "slowly."
 - D. Sentence 8: Change "equally" to "equal."

Use the passage below to answer the three questions that follow.

¹People sometimes confuse comets with meteors because both appear to have tails and to streak across the sky. ²Apart from such surface similarities, however, the two celestial phenomena differ in important ways. ³_____ meteors are random chunks of matter that glow brightly when they enter the earth's atmosphere and are visible for only seconds, comets are very slow moving conglomerates of ice, dust, ions, and gases that can be observed for weeks and have fixed orbits. ⁴_____ astronomers have identified nearly 1,000 comets, only a few can be seen. ⁵That is why the appearance of a comet is such an event.

⁶Another reason for popular fascination with comets is their intriguing character as cosmic fossils. ⁷Just as paleontologists study the fossils found in rocks or layers of Earth to learn about the geology and biology of the past. ⁸Astrophysicists and astronomers study the molecular structure and chemical constitution of comets to learn about the birth, development, and composition of our solar system. ⁹Some scientists believe comets may be among the oldest objects in the solar system.

¹⁰ _____



7. Which of the following words or phrases, if inserted *in order* into the blanks in Sentences 3 and 4 in the first paragraph, would best help the reader understand the sequence of the writer's ideas?

- A. Because/Since
- B. Whereas/Although
- C. Thus/Yet
- D. Although/Even if

8. Which statement, if added as Sentence 10, would be most consistent with the writer's purpose and intended audience?

- A. Their extreme age is one of the reasons I have always found comets so interesting.
- B. Anything that old is sure worthy of the study it seems to get from the scientific community.
- C. If old age means anything, then there is certainly lots to be learned from comets.
- D. Like their rarity, the antiquity of comets adds to the air of mystery surrounding them.

9. Which of the following excerpts from the passage contains an error in sentence structure?
- A. Apart from such surface similarities, however, the two celestial phenomena differ in important ways.
 - B. That is why the appearance of a comet is such an event.
 - C. Just as paleontologists study the fossils found in rocks or layers of Earth to learn about the geology and biology of the past.
 - D. Some scientists believe comets may be among the oldest objects in the solar system.

Use the passage below to answer the three questions that follow.

¹As an architect whose work took her to some of the more inaccessible areas of the American West, Mary Colter (1869–1958) had to overcome numerous obstacles in the course of her long career. ²Of the many buildings she designed, perhaps the most problematic was Phantom Ranch, which is located north of the Colorado River at the very bottom of the Grand Canyon. ³The main problem was finding a way to transport supplies and building materials to a work site that could be reached only by mule or by boat. ⁴The immense chasm presented a formidable terrain containing a multitude of peaks, gorges, and ravines. ⁵Her solution was to minimize such needs by creating a design that called for use of

those materials most readily available: rocks and rough-cut wood. ⁶Although conditions for the construction crews were, to say the least, less than optimal, Colter got the job done and Phantom Ranch became a major tourist attraction.

⁷Colter further demonstrated her creativity in a design she developed for a rustic Grand Canyon hotel called Bright Angel. ⁸Again she used rock to great advantage. ⁹In constructing the hotel's massive fireplace, she arranged the rocks in the same geological order in which it appeared in the Grand Canyon itself. ¹⁰ _____



10. Which sentence, if added as Sentence 10, would be most consistent with the writer's purpose and intended audience?
- A. This bold touch was a perfect example of the originality and inventiveness that made Colter one of the most dynamic architects of her time.
 - B. Wherever such originality and inventiveness might have come from, it sure worked wonders in this instance.
 - C. I think this splendid touch is probably the best example one is likely to find of the originality and inventiveness that characterized Colter's work as an architect.
 - D. Who could have anticipated such originality and inventiveness from an architect working on a project in the Grand Canyon?
11. Which change is needed to improve the unity and focus of the first paragraph?
- A. Reverse the order of Sentences 2 and 3.
 - B. Reverse the order of Sentences 3 and 4.
 - C. Reverse the order of Sentences 4 and 5.
 - D. Reverse the order of Sentences 5 and 6.

12. Which change is needed to correct an error in usage?
- A. Sentence 1: Change "whose" to "who's."
 - B. Sentence 2: Change "which" to "that."
 - C. Sentence 3: Change "that" to "which."
 - D. Sentence 9: Change "it" to "they."

Use the passage below to answer the two questions that follow.

¹In 1959, playwright Lorraine Hansberry became the first African American woman to have a play produced on Broadway. ²Her production of *A Raisin in the Sun* was a timely contribution that addressed important issues at a moment when the nation was poised on the edge of massive social change. ³In the play, Hansberry examined familial legacies and the dreams that parents pass down to their children, as well as the special constraints that African American families labored under in post–World War II U.S. society. ⁴A Chicago native who attended the University of Wisconsin for several years, Hansberry had refined her writing skills and sharpened her analytical abilities at New York City's New School for Social Research.

⁵*A Raisin in the Sun* revolves around three generations of the Younger family and their efforts to escape the poverty of their tenement life and achieve some measure of financial security. ⁶Despite its potentially depressing subject matter, the production earned praise from critics and audiences alike. ⁷It did so, in part, because Hansberry created recognizable characters with universal appeal. ⁸She also challenged viewers to rethink simplistic constructions of the American dream. ⁹Although the Youngers ultimately triumph in their quest for a better life, they must overcome formidable obstacles to do so. ¹⁰Thus, while the play affirmed that the American dream was for everyone, it vividly demonstrated that for some in the United States it was a much more difficult dream to attain than it was for others.



13. Which change is needed to improve the unity and focus of the first paragraph?
- A. Delete Sentence 3.
 - B. Delete Sentence 4.
 - C. Reverse the order of Sentences 2 and 3.
 - D. Reverse the order of Sentences 3 and 4.
14. The writer presents the material in the passage in a way that is most consistent with which of the following purposes?
- A. to explain the critical success of *A Raisin in the Sun*
 - B. to analyze Hansberry's reasons for writing *A Raisin in the Sun*
 - C. to summarize the plot of *A Raisin in the Sun*
 - D. to assess the strengths and weaknesses of *A Raisin in the Sun*

Use the passage below to answer the three questions that follow.

¹Long before Spanish explorers arrived, the artisans of Peru and Colombia had developed a mastery of goldsmithing techniques equal or superior to those being used in Europe. ²Gold is unusually soft for a metal, making it particularly suitable for fine craftwork. ³This, combined with its great beauty, inspired early Andean goldsmiths to explore innovative ways of working with the prized metal. ⁴They were especially adept at filigree, a technique using coiled wires to form lacelike decorations for earrings, bracelets, and necklaces. ⁵They also turned embossing, lost-wax casting, and welding into high art forms.

⁶Of particular interest were the advances made by the artisans of Peru's Chimú Empire during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. ⁷The Chimú would ultimately become part of the Incan Empire. ⁸They learned to mix molten gold with other metals to form alloys that strengthened the naturally malleable gold by making it less malleable. ⁹Even more remarkable was the method they developed of gold plating items using a copper alloy, which they melted and poured in a thin layer over each item. ¹⁰Afterward, in an extraordinary feat of early chemistry similar to modern electroplating, they applied acids extracted from plants that reacted with the copper in the alloy. ¹¹When the resulting residue was cleaned off, a thin coating of pure gold was left on the piece.



15. The writer presents the material in the passage in a way that is most consistent with which of the following purposes?
- A. to foster appreciation of the skills of early Andean goldsmiths
 - B. to compare techniques used by Andean and European goldsmiths of the same era
 - C. to correct misconceptions about early Andean goldsmiths
 - D. to provide criteria for evaluating the techniques used by early Andean goldsmiths
16. Which sentence is not relevant to the main idea of the second paragraph?
- A. Sentence 7
 - B. Sentence 8
 - C. Sentence 10
 - D. Sentence 11
17. Which sentence should be revised to eliminate unnecessary repetition?
- A. Sentence 1
 - B. Sentence 4
 - C. Sentence 8
 - D. Sentence 9

Use the passage below to answer the three questions that follow.

¹Plants defend themselves against predators in both direct and indirect ways. ²Direct defense occurs when plants produce chemicals that insects find revolting or harmful. ³Another form of direct defense involves the production of tannins, substances that contain little nutritional value but surround all of the useful parts of a plant. ⁴When an animal eats this type of plant, its stomach fills with enough empty calories to stunt its growth permanently.

⁵Indirect defenses produces less immediate results, but sometimes prove to be even more effective. ⁶One example is a plant that generates chemicals that attract wasps to help get rid of caterpillars. ⁷With their multisegmented cylindrical bodies and numerous pairs of legs, caterpillars are surprisingly mobile. ⁸The wasps lay eggs on the caterpillars. ⁹The eggs soon hatch, leaving the wasp larvae to eat the caterpillars as their first meal. ¹⁰One might think of it as nature's affirmation of the ancient proverb, "The enemy of my enemy is my friend."



18. Which sentence draws attention away from the main idea of the second paragraph?
- A. Sentence 6
 - B. Sentence 7
 - C. Sentence 8
 - D. Sentence 10
19. The writer achieves effective organization in the passage primarily by:
- A. comparing how different plants and insects interact with one another.
 - B. describing examples of different types of defenses used by plants.
 - C. discussing the advantages and disadvantages of different plant defenses.
 - D. evaluating the harm done to plants by different types of insects.

20. Which change is needed to correct an error in subject-verb agreement?
- A. Sentence 3: Change "surround" to "surrounds."
 - B. Sentence 5: Change "produces" to "produce."
 - C. Sentence 6: Change "attract" to "attracts."
 - D. Sentence 9: Change "hatch" to "hatches."

Use the passage below to answer the three questions that follow.

¹Dorothea Lange began her career as a studio photographer. ²She probably would have remained one had it not been for the Great Depression. ³Appalled by the widespread human devastation of that cataclysmic event, she felt compelled to turn her talents to helping those less fortunate than herself. ⁴In frank and unapologetic photographs, she began documenting the plight of migrant workers and other victims of hard times, in effect becoming a visual messenger from those society had forgotten.

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_____ ⁶During World War II, she accepted an assignment to document the

internment of Japanese Americans. ⁷Later, she made photographic tours of Asia, South America, and the Middle East. ⁸Wherever she went, Lange found an opportunity to call attention to the lives of less fortunate people. ⁹Her photographs constitute one of the most comprehensive social documentaries of the twentieth century. ¹⁰Through her work, she helped define the field of documentary photography in images that never let viewers forget that poverty and hardship exist outside the comfortable confines of the affluent world.



21. Which statement, if added as Sentence 5, would be the most effective topic sentence for the second paragraph?
- A. In 1941, Lange was awarded a Guggenheim Fellowship for one of her photographic studies.
 - B. When officials of the federal Resettlement Administration saw Lange's work, they offered her a job.
 - C. Many of Lange's photographs appeared in *Life* magazine and other major publications.
 - D. Lange's commitment to the dispossessed did not stop at the end of the Depression.
22. The writer achieves effective organization in the passage primarily by:
- A. describing the stages of Lange's career in chronological order.
 - B. assessing Lange's accomplishments from most important to least important.
 - C. comparing and contrasting different periods of Lange's life.
 - D. linking Lange's evolving artistic goals to different geographic locations in which she worked.

23. Which change is needed to correct an error in usage?
- A. Sentence 3: Change "then" to "than."
 - B. Sentence 4: Change "effect" to "affect."
 - C. Sentence 6: Change "accepted" to "excepted."
 - D. Sentence 8: Change "lives" to "life."

Use the passage below to answer the three questions that follow.

¹Zora Neale Hurston was a major twentieth-century American writer. ²Born in Alabama in 1891, she grew up in Eatonville, Florida, the first incorporated African American town in the United States. ³Her literary career began in the 1920s, when she arrived in New York City at the height of the Harlem Renaissance. ⁴From those years emerged her novel, *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (1937), as well as poetry, short stories, ethnographic studies, and a play. ⁵It was a period of tremendous creativity in African American culture, and Hurston helped shape this important movement through various writings that illuminate unexplored features of African American rural life.

⁶Although Hurston's writings achieved some critical acclaim in the period between World Wars I and II, her talent went unnoticed for many years during which people paid little attention to her work. ⁷At the time of her death in 1960, all of her books were out of print, and she had been largely forgotten by the general reading public. ⁸It was not until the late twentieth century that interest in Hurston's work revived. ⁹She is now considered one of the nation's most accomplished authors, and many of her books—nearly all of which are back in print—are taught in high schools and colleges around the world.



24. The writer presents the material in the passage in a way that is most consistent with which of the following purposes?
- A. to inform readers about Hurston's work and her career as a writer
 - B. to defend Hurston's writing from critical attacks
 - C. to persuade readers to admire Hurston's life and work
 - D. to analyze the main themes in Hurston's writing
25. Which change would make the sequence of ideas in the first paragraph clearer?
- A. Reverse the order of Sentences 1 and 2.
 - B. Reverse the order of Sentences 2 and 3.
 - C. Reverse the order of Sentences 3 and 4.
 - D. Reverse the order of Sentences 4 and 5.

26. Which sentence should be revised to eliminate redundancy?
- A. Sentence 4
 - B. Sentence 5
 - C. Sentence 6
 - D. Sentence 9

Use the passage below to answer the three questions that follow.

¹Separating opinion from fact, identifying evidence, engaging in careful reasoning, and assessing an author's credibility are all essential to critical thinking. ²_____

_____ ³Experienced writers use a range of rhetorical strategies to persuade readers. ⁴Strategies that may not be readily apparent during an uncritical first reading of a text.

⁵Artfully used language can blur the line between fact and opinion. ⁶A strong worded statement may mask a lack of evidence, and one-

sided evidence may support inaccurate conclusions. ⁷The use of sarcasm, indignation, and personal attack may sway a reader's emotions without adding to the credibility of an argument. ⁸False premises and logical fallacies can mar an essentially weak argument that at first glance appears persuasive. ⁹Thoughtful readers need to be aware of such tactics. ¹⁰They need to understand that it is just as important to consider the language used in a serious piece of writing as it is to assess the points an author is trying to make.



27. Which statement, if added as Sentence 2, would best fit the writer's pattern of development in the first paragraph?
- A. It is particularly important that readers know something about the author of a book or article.
 - B. Some arguments make no logical sense whatsoever.
 - C. To employ these skills effectively, a reader must pay careful attention to language.
 - D. Not everyone provides adequate supporting evidence for an argument.
28. Which of the following excerpts from the passage contains an error in sentence structure?
- A. Strategies that may not be readily apparent during an uncritical first reading of a text.
 - B. The use of sarcasm, indignation, and personal attack may sway a reader's emotions without adding to the credibility of an argument.
 - C. Thoughtful readers need to be aware of such tactics.
 - D. They need to understand that it is just as important to consider the language used in a serious piece of writing as it is to assess the points an author is trying to make.

29. Which change is needed to correct an error in modification?
- A. Sentence 1: Change "critical" to "critically."
 - B. Sentence 6: Change "strong" to "strongly."
 - C. Sentence 8: Change "essentially" to "essential."
 - D. Sentence 9: Change "Thoughtful" to "Thoughtfully."

Use the passage below to answer the three questions that follow.

¹Almost every successful invention is made possible by one or more great failures. ²In the case of bicycles, cyclists everywhere should give thanks to Karl de Drais de Sauerbrun, the inventor of the draisienne. ³Predating the bicycle by almost fifty years, his invention provided its basic design. ⁴There was a cushioned seat, a wooden frame, two iron wheels, and even a rudimentary steering bar. ⁵Riders propelled the machine by straddling the seat and moving their feet across the ground in a walking or running motion. ⁶The only crucial elements missing were the pedals, driving sprocket, and chain.

⁷Although the draisienne allowed people to progress twice as fast as on foot, it quickly acquired a negative reputation. ⁸One problem was its high cost, which limited ownership to the rich. ⁹Indeed, as initial curiosity passed, many people were coming to view riders with open hostility.

¹⁰_____ ¹¹At a weight of over fifty pounds and with no brakes, it was a burden to ride uphill and dangerous to ride down.



30. Which statement, if added as Sentence 10, would best fit the writer's pattern of development in the second paragraph?

- A. Sauerbrun apparently gave little thought to cost considerations.
- B. An even greater problem was the machine's impracticality.
- C. This doubtless had a negative effect on sales.
- D. That the machine increased mobility did not seem to matter.

31. Which change would make the sequence of ideas in the first paragraph clearer?

- A. Reverse the order of Sentences 1 and 2.
- B. Reverse the order of Sentences 2 and 3.
- C. Reverse the order of Sentences 4 and 5.
- D. Reverse the order of Sentences 5 and 6.

32. Which sentence should be revised to correct an error in verb tense?
- A. Sentence 2: Change "give" to "be giving."
 - B. Sentence 5: Change "propelled" to "would propel."
 - C. Sentence 7: Change "allowed" to "had allowed."
 - D. Sentence 9: Change "were coming" to "came."

Use the passage below to answer the three questions that follow.

¹Across the United States, individuals and groups trying to conserve open space from residential development are encountering stiff opposition. ²Whether builders, real-estate agents, or property owners, those in favor of more development point to a growing burden of state environmental regulations and local permitting requirements. ³One of the most frequently repeated arguments raised by opponents of land conservation is that since land that remains as fields or woodlands is taxed at a much lower rate than residential property, preserving a town's farmlands, forests, and meadows increases the property taxes of every homeowner in the community.

⁴ _____ ⁵Community studies have repeatedly demonstrated that the taxes collected from new residential properties do not equal the cost of the additional services a town must provide in the way of police protection, road maintenance, and, most important, public education. ⁶ _____, each new family drives up everyone's property taxes, while each acre of land preserved from development saves the town money. ⁷Land conservation is not only good for the land, it's good for the communities with the foresight to pursue appropriate preservation of open spaces.



33. Which sentence, if added as Sentence 4, would be the most effective topic sentence for the second paragraph?
- A. But how can we be sure they are telling the truth?
 - B. In fact, preserving land from development has exactly the opposite effect.
 - C. Unfortunately, this is a highly complex issue almost impossible to sort out.
 - D. Land preservation groups, on the other hand, try to convince people of the recreational and aesthetic value of open space.
34. Which word or phrase, if inserted into the blank in Sentence 6, would best help the reader understand the sequence of the writer's ideas?
- A. As a result
 - B. At the same time
 - C. Moreover
 - D. On the other hand

35. Which of the following details *from the body of the passage* best supports the main idea of the second paragraph?
- A. Land that has been preserved from residential development is taxed at a lower rate than land that is developed.
 - B. Developers must satisfy a growing number of environmental regulations before they can build.
 - C. Community studies have demonstrated that new families cost the town more than they provide in taxes.
 - D. Town services include police protection, road maintenance, and public education.

◆ Mechanics Multiple-Choice Questions

DIRECTIONS FOR THE MECHANICS SECTION OF THE WRITING SUBTEST

This section of the Writing subtest consists of one passage. The passage contains errors in spelling, punctuation, and capitalization. The passage is followed by six multiple-choice items, one for each sentence in the passage. For each item, you will be directed to determine if the sentence contains an error in spelling, punctuation, or capitalization or if the sentence is correct as written. Each sentence should be considered as a single sentence. For each item, choose the ONE best answer.

Use the passage below to answer the six questions that follow. This passage contains errors in spelling, punctuation, and capitalization.

Long considered the foundation of western literature, the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* have offered insights into the human condition for over two thousand years. Little is known about Homer the author of the two epics, but many of the historical events that he wrote about can be confirmed. This is particularly true of the *Iliad*, which describes the Greeks' ten-year seige of the city of Troy. Available historical evidence supports the notion that a Greek raiding party attacked the walled fortress of Troy and succeeded in burning the city sometime around 1200 BCE. Much of that evidence can be found in the work of Heinrich Schliemann, a Nineteenth-century scholar who used Homer's poems to locate the city of Troy in present-day Turkey. Later archaeological expeditions showing that Troy was destroyed by fire around the traditional date of the war provided further confirmation of the historical accuracy of the Homeric account.

36. If one of the underlined segments of the sentence below contains an error in spelling, capitalization, or punctuation, select the type of error. If there is no error, select D, "sentence correct."

Long considered the foundation of western literature, the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* have offered insights into the human condition for over two thousand years.

- A. spelling error
- B. punctuation error
- C. capitalization error
- D. sentence correct

37. If one of the underlined segments of the sentence below contains an error in spelling, capitalization, or punctuation, select the type of error. If there is no error, select D, "sentence correct."

Little is known about Homer the author of the two epics, but many of the historical events that he wrote about can be confirmed.

- A. spelling error
 - B. punctuation error
 - C. capitalization error
 - D. sentence correct
38. If one of the underlined segments of the sentence below contains an error in spelling, capitalization, or punctuation, select the type of error. If there is no error, select D, "sentence correct."

This is particularly true of the *Iliad*, which describes the Greeks' ten-year seige of the city of Troy.

- A. spelling error
- B. punctuation error
- C. capitalization error
- D. sentence correct

39. If one of the underlined segments of the sentence below contains an error in spelling, capitalization, or punctuation, select the type of error. If there is no error, select D, "sentence correct."

Available historical evidence supports the notion that a Greek raiding party attacked the walled fortress of Troy and succeeded in burning the city sometime around 1200 BCE.

- A. spelling error
 - B. punctuation error
 - C. capitalization error
 - D. sentence correct
40. If one of the underlined segments of the sentence below contains an error in spelling, capitalization, or punctuation, select the type of error. If there is no error, select D, "sentence correct."

Much of that evidence can be found in the work of Heinrich Schliemann, a Nineteenth-century scholar who used Homer's poems to locate the city of Troy in present-day Turkey.

- A. spelling error
- B. punctuation error
- C. capitalization error
- D. sentence correct

41. If one of the underlined segments of the sentence below contains an error in spelling, capitalization, or punctuation, select the type of error. If there is no error, select D, "sentence correct."

Later archaeological expiditions showing that Troy was destroyed by fire around the traditional date of the war provided further confirmation of the historical accuracy of the Homerian account.

- A. spelling error
- B. punctuation error
- C. capitalization error
- D. sentence correct



CONSTRUCTED-RESPONSE SECTION

◆ Short-Answer Items

DIRECTIONS FOR THE SHORT-ANSWER SECTION OF THE WRITING SUBTEST

This section of the Writing subtest consists of three items. For each item you are asked to revise text that contains two errors (e.g., in grammar, usage, construction, spelling, capitalization, punctuation). For each item, rewrite the text so that the errors are addressed and the original meaning is maintained. In addressing the errors, you may restructure the syntax of the original text, but the essential elements (e.g., names, places, actions) and relationship among those elements (e.g., cause/effect, before/after) must be maintained. Your rewrite should be a single sentence and should not introduce any new errors in grammar, usage, construction, spelling, punctuation, or capitalization. Note that proper names of people are correctly spelled within the text.

Write your response to each item on the lines provided below the item. Be sure to write or print legibly. The space provided reflects the amount of space available on an actual test.

42. **The following text contains two errors (e.g., in grammar, usage, construction, spelling, capitalization, punctuation). Rewrite the text so that the errors are addressed and the original meaning is maintained. Your rewrite should be a single sentence.**

Having promised to be back at our apartment by early afternoon Mike was concerned when I didn't arrive until just before dinner.

43. **The following text contains two errors (e.g., in grammar, usage, construction, spelling, capitalization, punctuation). Rewrite the text so that the errors are addressed and the original meaning is maintained. Your rewrite should be a single sentence.**

As we ran toward it, the bus drove away. Leaving Nan and I standing helplessly on the corner.

44. **The following text contains two errors (e.g., in grammar, usage, construction, spelling, capitalization, punctuation). Rewrite the text so that the errors are addressed and the original meaning is maintained. Your rewrite should be a single sentence.**

Joanne, who earned her degree at the state's largest College spoke at the conference.

◆ Writing Summary Assignment

DIRECTIONS FOR THE WRITING SUMMARY SECTION OF THE WRITING SUBTEST

This section of the Writing subtest presents a passage for you to summarize in your own words. The passage can be found on the next page. Prepare a summary of approximately 150 to 200 words.

Your summary should effectively communicate the main idea and essential points of the passage. You are expected to identify the relevant information and communicate it clearly and concisely in your own words.

On the actual VCLA writing subtest, your summary will be evaluated based on the following criteria:

- **FIDELITY:** Fidelity is the extent to which the response accurately and clearly represents in your own words the essential meaning, content, and point of view of the original passage.
- **CONCISENESS:** Conciseness is the extent to which the response is of appropriate length, depth, and specificity to convey the essential meaning, content, and point of view of the original passage.
- **ORGANIZATION:** Organization is the extent to which your sequencing and paragraphing of ideas convey the essential meaning, logical structure, and point of view of the original passage.
- **MECHANICS, GRAMMAR, AND WORD CHOICE:** Mechanics, grammar, and word choice are the extent to which words are spelled correctly and your writing follows the conventions of punctuation and capitalization; the effectiveness of the sentence structure and the extent to which the sentences are free of structural errors; and the extent to which your writing shows care and precision in word choice and is free of usage errors.

The final version of your summary should conform to the conventions of Standard English, should be written legibly, and should be in your own words.

Use the passage below to prepare a summary of 150 to 200 words.

Antibacterial Soaps

One of the biggest medical breakthroughs of the past two hundred years occurred in a Vienna maternity hospital in the mid-nineteenth century. A young doctor named Ignaz Semmelweis reduced obstetric mortality rates by almost 30 percent when he began requiring medical staff to wash their hands between procedures. Although Semmelweis's innovation initially encountered antagonism from the medical establishment, he is now considered a pioneer of medicine. For many years, routine hand washing in home, school, work, and health-care environments has been seen as one of the most effective ways to reduce the risk of illness. The recent proliferation of antibacterial soaps, however, has introduced new health concerns.

Although it is becoming increasingly uncommon to go through a day without using antibacterial products, few people understand the ways in which antibacterial soap differs from regular soap. On a chemical level, a regular soap molecule is one-part water binding and one-part water repellent. The fatty acids in the soap attract the dirt and grime, which become trapped in droplets of water that can be washed off the body through simple scrubbing. Antibacterial soap changes this activity through the addition of an agent that attacks bacteria on the skin. One concern about antibacterial soap is that daily use encourages the development of resistant bacteria, making people more rather than less susceptible to illness.

Dermatologists voice a different set of concerns about antibacterials. The same chemicals used to kill bacteria strip away moisture and amino acids from the skin and

disrupt the growth process. This, in turn, can lead in some cases to eczema, a severe inflammation of the skin. The latter outcome is particularly ironic because eczema on people's hands is known to be a common means of transmitting bacteria from one person to another. In these situations, the antibacterial "cure" has actually contributed to the problem.

As part of an effort to determine whether the benefits of antibacterial soaps outweigh the risks, several scientific studies compared the health of families who use antibacterial cleaning products with those who use regular soap. After a year of monitoring a diverse sample of families, the studies found that both groups experienced about the same number of colds, flus, and other common illnesses. Yet these findings are by no means conclusive, as it is possible that antibacterial soaps require a much longer period to demonstrate the side effects that some medical practitioners fear. To find that out, we will need to wait for further studies.

Given the potentially negative consequences of using antibacterial soap, it may be safest to return to the time-honored practice of washing hands with regular soap and warm water. Unfortunately, even this may not be possible for much longer. Recent estimates indicate that up to 75 percent of liquid soaps and 30 percent of bar soaps now contain antibacterial agents. Consumer demand for these products is so high that the already \$16-billion-a-year industry anticipates continued growth. Thus, despite the potential risks, it appears that antibacterial soaps are here to stay.

◆ Writing Composition Assignment

DIRECTIONS FOR THE COMPOSITION SECTION OF THE WRITING SUBTEST

This section of the Writing subtest consists of one writing assignment. The assignment can be found on the next page. You are asked to prepare a multiple-paragraph composition of approximately 300 to 600 words on an assigned topic.

Your composition should effectively communicate a whole message to the specified audience for the stated purpose. You will be assessed on your ability to express, organize, and support opinions and ideas. You will not be assessed on the position you express.

On the actual VCLA writing subtest, your composition will be evaluated based on the following criteria:

- **APPROPRIATENESS:** Appropriateness is the extent to which your response addresses the topic and uses language and style appropriate to the given audience, purpose, and occasion.
- **ORGANIZATION:** Organization is the clarity of the writing and the logical sequence of your ideas.
- **FOCUS AND UNITY:** Focus and unity are the clarity with which you state and maintain focus on the main idea or point of view.
- **DEVELOPMENT:** Development is the extent to which your response provides statements of appropriate depth, specificity, and/or accuracy.
- **USAGE:** Usage is the extent to which your writing shows care and precision in word choice and is free of usage errors.
- **SENTENCE STRUCTURE:** Sentence structure is the effectiveness of the sentence structure and the extent to which the sentences are free of structural errors.
- **MECHANICAL CONVENTIONS:** Mechanical conventions are the extent to which words are spelled correctly and your response follows the conventions of punctuation and capitalization.

The final version of your composition should conform to the conventions of Standard English, should be written legibly, and should be your own original work.

COMPOSITION EXERCISE

Read the passages below about banning vending machines containing soft drinks and snack foods from public schools; then follow the instructions for writing your composition.

**Ban Soft Drinks and Snack Foods
from Public Schools**

Obesity among young people is a serious public health problem that has been linked to the growing incidence of diabetes, high blood pressure, and heart disease in U.S. society. Educators can help address this problem by removing vending machines that sell soft drinks and snack foods from public schools. Doing so will not only improve student health and combat the soaring costs of public health care, it will also send an important message to students about making responsible choices about what they consume.

**Keep Soft Drinks and Snack Foods
in Public Schools**

The availability of soft drinks and snack foods in schools is not the main reason for the growing problem of obesity among young people. Rather, it is the failure of students to make responsible choices for themselves. Schools should provide courses that will enable students to identify foods that contribute to a well-balanced diet and to make wise decisions about their personal health and nutrition. But neither teachers nor school administrators have the right to dictate to students what they should eat and drink.

Your purpose is to write a persuasive composition, to be read by a classroom instructor, in which you take a position on whether or not soft drinks and snack food vending machines should be banned from public schools. Be sure to defend your position with logical arguments and appropriate examples.



EVALUATING YOUR PERFORMANCE

This section describes how to evaluate your performance on this practice test for the VCLA writing subtest. Your practice test results may provide helpful information regarding your preparedness in the content tested on the actual VCLA writing subtest.

In this section you will find:

- ◆ an Answer Key providing the correct response for each multiple-choice question and a column for tracking your results
- ◆ a Results Worksheet organized by objective that will help you interpret your multiple-choice section results
- ◆ sample strong responses to the short-answer items
- ◆ scoring criteria, including performance characteristics and a scoring scale, that will help you evaluate your response to the writing summary assignment
- ◆ a sample strong response to the writing summary assignment
- ◆ scoring criteria, including performance characteristics and a scoring scale, that will help you evaluate your response to the writing composition assignment
- ◆ a sample strong response to the writing composition assignment

Use the resources provided in this section and the VCLA test blueprint (available free of charge at www.va.nesinc.com) to help determine your preparedness for the actual VCLA writing subtest. Although your results on this practice test cannot be used to determine your score on the actual subtest, your results may help you gauge your readiness to test and help identify any areas for further study.

◆ Answer Key

Determine which multiple-choice questions you answered correctly and incorrectly by comparing the answers you recorded on your Multiple-Choice Answer Sheet to the correct responses listed on the Answer Key below. Circle "Y" or "N" in the "Correct?" column to keep track of your results. For the questions you answered incorrectly, review these questions and their correct responses.

Question Number	Correct Response	Correct?	
1	A	Y	N
2	D	Y	N
3	B	Y	N
4	D	Y	N
5	C	Y	N
6	C	Y	N
7	B	Y	N
8	D	Y	N
9	C	Y	N
10	A	Y	N
11	B	Y	N
12	D	Y	N
13	B	Y	N
14	A	Y	N
15	A	Y	N
16	A	Y	N
17	C	Y	N
18	B	Y	N
19	B	Y	N
20	B	Y	N

Question Number	Correct Response	Correct?	
21	D	Y	N
22	A	Y	N
23	A	Y	N
24	A	Y	N
25	D	Y	N
26	C	Y	N
27	C	Y	N
28	A	Y	N
29	B	Y	N
30	B	Y	N
31	D	Y	N
32	D	Y	N
33	B	Y	N
34	A	Y	N
35	C	Y	N
36	C	Y	N
37	B	Y	N
38	A	Y	N
39	D	Y	N
40	C	Y	N
41	A	Y	N

◆ Results Worksheet

Use the Results Worksheet below and the VCLA test blueprint to determine whether there are objectives for which you should further prepare before taking the actual VCLA writing subtest.

Transfer your results from the Answer Key to the Results Worksheet by totaling the number of questions you answered correctly for each objective.

Refer to the VCLA test blueprint to assist you in evaluating your performance. The test blueprint contains the objectives and descriptive statements that describe the content assessed by the VCLA.

Objective	Questions	Number Correct by Objective
6. Understand the influence of purpose and audience in written communication.	1, 8, 10, 14, 15, 24	_____ of 6
7. Apply principles of unity, focus, and development in writing.	2, 11, 13, 16, 18, 27, 30, 35	_____ of 8
8. Apply principles of organization in writing.	4, 7, 19, 22, 25, 31, 34	_____ of 7
9. Apply principles of sentence and paragraph construction in writing.	5, 9, 17, 21, 26, 28, 33	_____ of 7
10. Apply correct usage in Standard English.	3, 6, 12, 20, 23, 29, 32	_____ of 7
11. Apply knowledge of mechanical conventions in Standard English.	36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41	_____ of 6
Performance on Writing Subtest Multiple-Choice Section: Total		_____ of 41

◆ Sample Strong Responses to the Short-Answer Items

The following are examples of strong responses to the sample short-answer items. Review the sample strong responses and compare them to your responses. You may also want to ask a mentor, advisor, or teacher to evaluate your responses to the short-answer items.

The content assessed by the short-answer items is described in objective 12 of the VCLA test blueprint.

42. **The following text contains two errors (e.g., in grammar, usage, construction, spelling, capitalization, punctuation). Rewrite the text so that the errors are addressed and the original meaning is maintained. Your rewrite should be a single sentence.**

Having promised to be back at our apartment by early afternoon Mike was concerned when I didn't arrive until just before dinner.

Since I promised to be back at our apartment by early afternoon, Mike was concerned when I didn't arrive until just before dinner.

43. **The following text contains two errors (e.g., in grammar, usage, construction, spelling, capitalization, punctuation). Rewrite the text so that the errors are addressed and the original meaning is maintained. Your rewrite should be a single sentence.**

As we ran toward it, the bus drove away. Leaving Nan and I standing helplessly on the corner.

As we ran toward it, the bus drove away, leaving Nan and me standing helplessly on the corner.

44. **The following text contains two errors (e.g., in grammar, usage, construction, spelling, capitalization, punctuation). Rewrite the text so that the errors are addressed and the original meaning is maintained. Your rewrite should be a single sentence.**

Joanne, who earned her degree at the state's largest College spoke at the conference.

Joanne, who earned her degree at the state's largest college, spoke at the conference.

◆ Criteria for Scoring Your Response to the Writing Summary Assignment

Review your response to the writing summary assignment using the scoring criteria below. You may find it useful to review the sample strong response that follows. You may also want to ask a mentor, advisor, or teacher to evaluate your response to the assignment.

The content assessed by the summary assignment is described in objective 13 of the VCLA test blueprint.

Performance Characteristics

Each response will be evaluated based on the following criteria.

Fidelity	The extent to which the candidate accurately and clearly represents in his or her own words the essential meaning, content, and point of view of the original passage.
Conciseness	The extent to which the candidate's response is of appropriate length, depth, and specificity to convey the essential meaning, content, and point of view of the original passage.
Organization	The extent to which the candidate's sequencing and paragraphing of ideas convey the essential meaning, logical structure, and point of view of the original passage.
Mechanics, Grammar, and Word Choice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The extent to which words are spelled correctly and the candidate's writing follows the conventions of punctuation and capitalization. • The effectiveness of the sentence structure and the extent to which the sentences are free of structural errors. • The extent to which the candidate's writing shows care and precision in word choice and is free of usage errors.

Scoring Scale

Each response is rated on a four-point scale. The four points of the scale correspond to varying degrees of performance that are related to the performance characteristics. The scoring scale for the writing summary assignment is shown on the next page.

Score Point	Score Point Description
4	<p>A well-formed written response</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Using his or her own words, the candidate accurately and clearly represents the essential meaning, content, and point of view of the original passage. The candidate does not distort or misrepresent the original meaning or substitute his/her own ideas or opinions for those expressed in the original text. The candidate's response is concise, but provides enough statements of appropriate depth and specificity to represent the essential meaning, content, and point of view of the original passage. The response exhibits control and organization; the sequencing and paragraphing of ideas clearly represent the essential meaning, logical structure, and point of view of the original passage. The candidate shows mastery of mechanical conventions (i.e., spelling, punctuation, and capitalization). The candidate uses correct and effective paragraph and sentence structure. The candidate's usage and choice of words are careful and precise.
3	<p>A generally well-formed written response</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Using his or her own words, the candidate generally represents most of the meaning, content, and point of view of the original passage without distortion or misrepresentation. The candidate's response may be too long or too short, but generally provides enough statements of appropriate depth and specificity to convey most of the meaning, content, and point of view of the original passage. The candidate's organization of ideas may be somewhat unclear, incomplete, or partially ineffective, but sequencing and paragraphing of ideas generally represent the essential meaning, logical structure, and point of view of the original passage. The candidate may make some errors in the use of mechanical conventions (i.e., spelling, punctuation, and capitalization). The candidate uses adequate paragraph and sentence structure, but minor errors may be present. The candidate's usage and choice of words may display minor errors.
2	<p>A partially formed written response</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The candidate represents only some of the meaning, content, and point of view of the original passage. The candidate may substitute his or her own ideas and opinions for those expressed in the original passage. The candidate may distort or misrepresent some of the original meaning. The candidate may rely heavily on the language of the original passage to express the essential ideas and meaning of the original passage. The candidate's response may be too long or too short, or lack appropriate depth or specificity, to convey the essential meaning, content, and point of view of the original passage. The candidate's organization, paragraphing, and sequencing of ideas may compromise or distort the meaning, logical structure, and/or point of view of the original passage. The candidate makes frequent errors in the use of mechanical conventions (i.e., spelling, punctuation, and capitalization). Sentence and paragraph structure are poor, with noticeable and distracting errors. Imprecision in usage and word choice is distracting.
1	<p>An inadequately formed written response</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The candidate fails to represent the meaning, content, and point of view of the original passage in his or her own words. The original meaning is distorted, misrepresented, or merely copied. The candidate's response fails to convey the depth or specificity of meaning conveyed by the original passage. The candidate's organization, paragraphing and sequencing of ideas fail to convey the meaning, logical structure, and point of view of the original passage. The candidate makes serious and numerous errors in the use of mechanical conventions (i.e., spelling, punctuation, and capitalization). Sentence and paragraph structure are ineffective, and few sentences are free of errors. Imprecision in usage and word choice interferes with meaning.
U	<p>The response is unrelated to the assigned topic, illegible, primarily in a language other than English, not of sufficient length to score, or merely a repetition of the passage.</p>
B	<p>There is no response to the assignment.</p>

◆ Sample Strong Response to the Writing Summary Assignment

Since the mid-nineteenth century when a Viennese doctor proved that simple hand washing could reduce the spread of germs, using soap and warm water has become a standard of medical and public hygiene. Ironically, a supposed improvement to this long-held practice—the introduction of antibacterial soaps to further reduce germ transmission—may be contributing to an increase rather than a decrease in bacteria-induced infections and is triggering scientific study and concern.

Scientists now suspect that regular use of antibacterial soap creates bacteria-resistant germs that make users more rather than less vulnerable to infection. Dermatologists report that the chemicals in antibacterial soap can cause eczema, a condition that makes passing on germs to another person even easier. Although one year-long study found no differences between regular soap and antibacterial soap users in number of illnesses, it may be that the predicted antibacterial side effects take longer to develop. More studies are needed to be certain about the dangers.

While washing with regular soap may be safer, old-fashioned soaps are harder to come by. Consumers favor antibacterial soap and sales continue to skyrocket despite warnings of potential long-term health hazards.

◆ Criteria for Scoring Your Response to the Writing Composition Assignment

Review your response to the writing composition assignment using the scoring criteria below. You may find it useful to review the sample strong response that follows. You may also want to ask a mentor, advisor, or teacher to evaluate your response to the assignment.

The content assessed by the composition assignment is described in objective 14 of the VCLA test blueprint.

Performance Characteristics

Each response will be evaluated based on the following criteria.

Appropriateness	The extent to which the candidate addresses the topic and uses language and style appropriate to the given audience, purpose, and occasion.
Organization	The clarity of writing and the logical sequence of the candidate's ideas.
Focus and Unity	The clarity with which the candidate states and maintains focus on the main idea or point of view.
Development	The extent to which the candidate provides statements of appropriate depth, specificity, and/or accuracy.
Usage	The extent to which the candidate's writing shows care and precision in word choice and is free of usage errors.
Sentence Structure	The effectiveness of the sentence structure and the extent to which the sentences are free of structural errors.
Mechanical Conventions	The extent to which words are spelled correctly and the candidate follows the conventions of punctuation and capitalization.

Scoring Scale

Each response is rated on a four-point scale. The four points of the scale correspond to varying degrees of performance that are related to the performance characteristics. The scoring scale for the writing composition assignment is shown on the next page.

Score Point	Score Point Description
4	<p>A well-formed written response</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The candidate addresses the assignment fully and uses appropriate language and style. The candidate exhibits control in the organization of ideas. The candidate clearly states a main idea and/or point of view, and maintains focus and unity throughout the response. The candidate develops the response fully by providing ample statements of appropriate depth, specificity, and accuracy. Usage and choice of words are careful and precise. Sentence structure is effective and free of errors. The candidate shows mastery of mechanical conventions (e.g., spelling, punctuation, and capitalization).
3	<p>A generally well-formed written response</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The candidate generally addresses the assignment and for the most part uses appropriate language and/or style. The organization of ideas is generally clear and logical, but there may be occasional ambiguity or partial ineffectiveness. The main idea and/or point of view of the response is generally clear, and focus and unity are generally maintained. The response is generally developed through the use of statements of appropriate depth, specificity, and accuracy. Minor errors in usage and word choice may be evident. Sentence structure is generally correct, although minor errors may be present. There may be some errors in the use of mechanical conventions (e.g., spelling, punctuation, and capitalization).
2	<p>A partially formed written response</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The candidate partially addresses the assignment and may use inappropriate language and/or style. The candidate may make an effort to organize and sequence ideas, but organization is largely unclear. The main idea and/or point of view is inconsistent and/or the focus and unity of the discussion are not sustained. The response includes very few statements that contribute effectively to the development of the response. Imprecision in usage and word choice is distracting. Sentence structure is poor, with noticeable and distracting errors. The candidate makes frequent errors in the use of mechanical conventions (e.g., spelling, punctuation, and capitalization).
1	<p>An inadequately formed written response</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The candidate attempts to address the assignment, but language and style are generally inappropriate for the given audience, purpose, and/or occasion. Any organization that is present fails to present an effective sequence of ideas. The main idea and/or point of view of the response is not identified. The candidate fails to include statements that contribute effectively to the development of the response. Imprecision in usage and word choice interferes with meaning. Sentence structure is ineffective, and few sentences are free of errors. The candidate makes serious and numerous errors in the use of mechanical conventions (e.g., spelling, punctuation, and capitalization).
U	<p>The response is unrelated to the assigned topic, illegible, primarily in a language other than English, not of sufficient length to score, or merely a repetition of the assignment.</p>
B	<p>There is no response to the assignment.</p>

◆ Sample Strong Response to the Writing Composition Assignment

When I was in high school, I found it very strange to walk out of my class on health and nutrition, full of information about the benefits of fruits and vegetables, fiber, and protein, to find myself facing a row of vending machines selling soft drinks, chips, and candy. I would look around at my classmates, many of whom were struggling with weight problems, like so many Americans overall. Of course we bought things from those machines—because we were hungry and rushed, and because they were there. But those foods are associated with a rising incidence of obesity, diabetes, and heart disease. Their presence in the public schools contradicts the schools' educational mission, which increasingly is to prepare students with life skills as well as academic knowledge. Public schools should not allow the sale of these unhealthy foods on their premises.

The contradictions are obvious. For one thing, if the health class guidelines on food can be so casually ignored, what about the guidelines on drug use or sexual activity? Those messages are being undermined, too. For another, the school is an institution with authority, almost parental in nature. If a mother served her children a lunch of potato chips and root beer, she would be seen as a bad mother, particularly if her children became obese. The school with the junk-food vending machines is being similarly negligent.

Even though unhealthy foods are widely available outside of school, and may well be present in people's homes, that is no reason to have them at school, too. In fact, it's a reason to make sure they are not available at school. Eating habits are very socially based. It is hard to eat differently from people around you (ask any vegetarian or someone allergic to peanuts). If everywhere else there are people drinking cola and eating fried pork rinds, at least the school could be one place where the expectations and the norms are different, and people are drinking milk and eating apples. It could offer students a better diet, which they might actually like and eventually choose on their own when not in school.

(continued)

Defenders of the vending machines say that they offer students a choice, one that the students should be free to make. But what is that choice, if all the foods are bad for you? Even the popcorn has too much salt, and the crackers are full of saturated fats. The soft drinks contain either high-calorie, tooth-rotting sugar or artificial sweeteners that carry health hazards of their own. Also, if the vending machine is lit up with the product's name in huge neon lights, and every beverage before you is made by that same manufacturer, that isn't really a choice either, in terms of the marketplace. Students are a captive consumer audience for just one or two companies. Furthermore, at this stage of their lives, students cannot be expected to exercise adult judgment; you can't put candy in front of them and expect them wisely to ignore it. These vending machines are less like a choice and more like a trap.

Public schools, clearly, should not be in the business of entrapping their students, and burdening both them and society with bad habits and costly long-term health problems. The vending machines should go.