

# Sample Expository Prompts for High School Proficiency Assessment (HSPA)

(effective with March 2010 administration)

**NOTE:** The Department of Education (DOE) intends to phase out the HSPA over the next several years in favor of an end of course competency assessment program which we believe will more effectively measure student preparedness for post-secondary challenges and opportunities in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. As part of that transition, we are making one change to the HSPA language arts literacy (LAL) writing component. Effective with the March 2010 administration, we are eliminating the picture prompt from the HSPA LAL test, and replacing it with an expository writing task. The picture prompts have previously been eliminated from the New Jersey Assessment of Skills and Knowledge (NJ ASK) program. This change to the HSPA test design is consistent with our larger plans for assuring that our writing assessments are fully supportive of New Jersey’s secondary education goals.

What follows are two sample HSPA expository prompts to illustrate the basic format of these HSPA prompts. Expository writing is an integral part of the *New Jersey Core Curriculum Content Standards* (NJCCCS) for LAL and should already be addressed thoroughly in the current writing instructional program. As with the HSPA persuasive writing task and all other New Jersey writing prompts, the HSPA expository tasks will be scored using the New Jersey Registered Holistic Scoring Rubric, which is used to determine that a student has written a focused essay with several key ideas that are elaborated with specific and vivid details and organized in a logical progression that is unified by various cohesive devices (5 generic elements of good writing regardless of the prompt).. Districts are encouraged to focus instruction on the writing skills identified in the NJCCCS rather than using these or other writing prompt samples simply for “test prep” activities.

## Sample 1

Although fear is a common human emotion, our response to it varies. Using an example from literature, history, science, film, or your own experience or observation, write an essay analyzing a particular response to fear and the effect of that response.

## Sample 2

In *The Crime of Sylvester Bonnard*, French writer Anatole France writes, “To know is nothing at all; to imagine is everything.” Why might one argue that imagination is more valuable than facts? Using an example from literature, history, science, film, or your own experience or observation, write an essay analyzing the worth of imagination.

## NEW JERSEY REGISTERED HOLISTIC SCORING RUBRIC

In scoring, consider the grid of written language	Inadequate Command	Limited Command	Partial Command	Adequate Command	Strong Command	Superior Command
Score	1	2	3	4	5	6
<b>Content and Organization</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>May lack opening and/or closing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>May lack opening and/or closing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>May lack opening and/or closing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Generally has opening and/or closing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Opening and closing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Opening and closing</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Minimal response to topic; uncertain focus</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Attempts to focus</li> <li>May drift or shift focus</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Usually has single focus</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Single focus</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Single focus</li> <li>Sense of unity and coherence</li> <li>Key ideas developed</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Single, distinct focus</li> <li>Unified and coherent</li> <li>Well-developed</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No planning evident; disorganized</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Attempts organization</li> <li>Few, if any, transitions between ideas</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Some lapses or flaws in organization</li> <li>May lack some transitions between ideas</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ideas loosely connected</li> <li>Transitions evident</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Logical progression of ideas</li> <li>Moderately fluent</li> <li>Attempts compositional risks</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Logical progression of ideas</li> <li>Fluent, cohesive</li> <li>Compositional risks successful</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Details random, inappropriate, or barely apparent</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Details lack elaboration, i.e., highlight paper</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Repetitious details</li> <li>Several unelaborated details</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Uneven development of details</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Details appropriate and varied</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Details effective, vivid, explicit, and/or pertinent</li> </ul>
<b>Usage</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No apparent control</li> <li>Severe/numerous errors</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Numerous errors</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Errors/patterns of errors may be evident</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Some errors that do not interfere with meaning</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Few errors</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Very few, if any, errors</li> </ul>
<b>Sentence Construction</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assortment of incomplete and/or incorrect sentences</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Excessive monotony/same structure</li> <li>Numerous errors</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Little variety in syntax</li> <li>Some errors</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Some variety</li> <li>Generally correct</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Variety in syntax appropriate and effective</li> <li>Few errors</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Precision and/or sophistication</li> <li>Very few, if any, errors</li> </ul>
<b>Mechanics</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Errors so severe they detract from meaning</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Numerous serious errors</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Patterns of errors evident</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No consistent pattern of errors</li> <li>Some errors that do not interfere with meaning</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Few errors</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Very few, if any, errors</li> </ul>

<b>NON-SCORABLE RESPONSES</b>	<b>NR = No Response</b>	Student wrote too little to allow a reliable judgment of his/her writing.
	<b>OT = Off Topic/ Off Task</b>	Student did not write on the assigned topic/task, or the student attempted to copy the prompt.
	<b>NE = Not English</b>	Student wrote in a language other than English.
	<b>WF = Wrong Format</b>	Student did not respond in the format (or mode) designated in the prompt.

Content/Organization	Usage	Sentence Construction	Mechanics
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Communicates intended message to intended audience</li> <li>Relates to topic</li> <li>Opening and closing</li> <li>Focused</li> <li>Logical progression of ideas</li> <li>Transitions</li> <li>Appropriate details and information</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Tense formation</li> <li>Subject-verb agreement</li> <li>Pronouns usage/agreement</li> <li>Word choice/meaning</li> <li>Proper Modifiers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Variety of type, structure, and length</li> <li>Correct construction</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Spelling</li> <li>Capitalization</li> <li>Punctuation</li> </ul>

Note: All unscorable responses (NSRs), with the exception of NR, must be coded by the Scoring Director