

## EVERYTHING YOU ALWAYS WANTED TO KNOW ABOUT THE REGENTS' ESSAY EXAM\*

### **Q: What do I do before the test to prepare?**

- Register for the test online:
  - Working in Netscape, go to <http://www.armstrong.edu>.
  - Click on AASU Quick Information and pull down to Regents' Testing.
  - Select "Sign up to take the Regents' Test."
  - Enter all information requested.
  - Mark only one test session.
  - Print and read carefully the Test Registration/Admission Form.
  - Take the Test Registration/Admission Form to the testing area with you the day of the exam.
- Pick up a list of sample topics in the Writing Center to get an idea of what to expect.
- Write at least one practice essay under conditions similar to those of the actual test; i.e., one hour, quiet place, without help or interruptions.
- Schedule a conference with a Writing Center tutor for gentle criticism.
- Attend a Regents' Exam prep session, held each semester about two weeks before the test.
- Remember that the more you practice, the better you will perform. Keep in mind that the price of failing the Regents' exam calls for additional coursework every semester until you pass. A little prep work now will save you a lot of work and extra tuition later on.

### **Q: What should I do during the test to improve my chances of passing?**

- Arrive on time with a few pens and a dictionary. Do not use pencil; tests written in pencil will not be graded.
- Wear a watch and remain aware of the time.
- Read all four topics carefully. Often, there is a choice between a personal topic and a current issue. Don't assume the topic that looks easier at first glance will guarantee a passing essay, but consider what you could say about each one. Then, choose the one that seems most likely

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to lead you to a developed, organized, and clear essay. Think about the topic before you write. Be sure you understand what the topic is asking for. You may narrow a topic, but you may not change it.

- Jot down your main ideas and key details at the bottom of the first page of the test. If you go blank during the test, these notes should help you to get going again. Spend the first ten or fifteen minutes planning the essay and drafting an introduction.
- Avoid using second person pronouns (you, yours, yourself). Instead, use nouns, third person pronouns (he, she, they, it) when appropriate, or first person pronouns (I, me, we, us).
- Put special effort into the introduction; first impressions are important.
- Offer specific support for each of the main points in the body of your essay. In each body paragraph, try to express your main idea in one clear sentence. The rest of the paragraph should consist of specific details, examples, or explanations that support, not repeat, the main point. Try talking about yourself or your family in relation to a personal topic to add specific details.
- Skip a space between lines, so that you have plenty of room to make revisions and corrections. Write legibly. If your handwriting is poor, print.
- Avoid losing a good idea because you get stuck on a particular word. Leave a blank or substitute word and come back to the spot later.
- Proofread. Save five or ten minutes for this last, crucial step. Read through the essay several times, and look for trouble. Use your dictionary to check spelling. Then, check your verb endings, and most importantly, make sure that all of your sentences are clear and complete. You might want to take a minute to forget your essay before you proofread, or read it backwards, so that you can look at each sentence more clearly.

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