



Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test
Sample Questions and Answers



April 2004



OSSLT Sample Questions and Answers

The OSSLT, which the Ministry of Education announced in 1998 as a graduation requirement, is administered by EQAO and assesses the reading and writing skills that students are expected to have learned in all subjects by the end of Grade 9, as outlined in *The Ontario Curriculum*.

This document provides parents, guardians, teachers and students with sample questions from the OSSLT. Included are a reading sample and a writing sample from each of the February 2002 and the October 2003 administrations of the OSSLT. Also included are students' answers to these sample test questions. Correct and incorrect answers are presented. Additional support materials are available on the EQAO Web site (www.eqao.com).

Test Content

The OSSLT consists of two components:

- a reading component
- a writing component

In the **reading** component, students are asked to complete a total of 12 reading selections, divided into three different types:

- information (e.g., explanation, opinion)
- graphic (e.g., graph, schedule, instructions)
- narrative (e.g., story, dialogue)

There are three different question formats used for the reading component:

- multiple-choice (40 questions)
- questions requiring a written short answer (35 questions)
- questions requiring a written explanation (25 questions)

In the **writing** component, students are asked to complete four writing tasks:

- a summary
- a series of paragraphs expressing an opinion
- a news report
- an information paragraph

Test Format

The test is administered across Ontario in two blocks of two and a half hours each (including breaks and instructions) over two days. Students complete two booklets each day, and each booklet includes reading selections and one writing task. Students work on one booklet at a time and are given one hour to complete each booklet, followed by a fifteen-minute break.

Reusing Test Questions

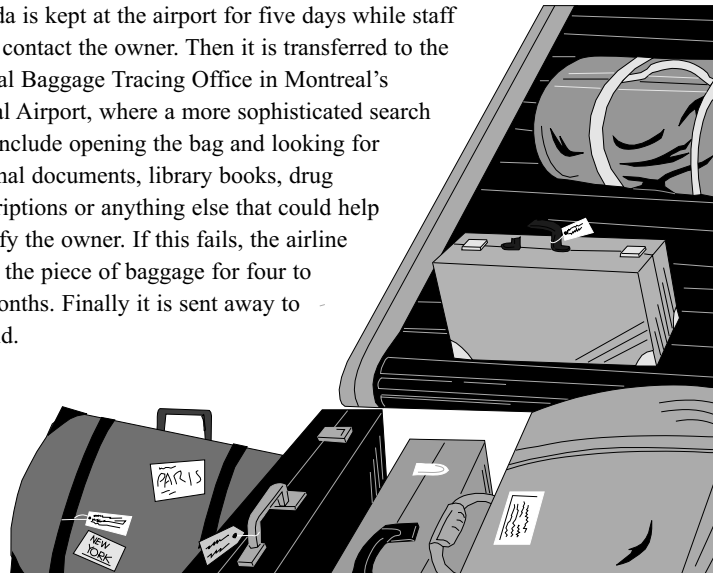
Some OSSLT questions are reused. Reusing questions allows EQAO to ensure that tests are comparable from one year to the next, and it results in significant cost savings. The test questions reproduced in this document have been removed from EQAO's reuse schedule.



Tracking the Path of Lost Baggage

For air travellers, the problem of lost luggage occurs much less frequently today than it did a few decades ago. Then, it was not unusual for passengers to arrive in London and discover that their luggage had taken a different route, to Paris, Hawaii or Rome. Airlines are now much better than they used to be at uniting passengers with their baggage. For example, Air Canada carries 33 million pieces of baggage each year and only about 600 of these fail to reach their owners. Moreover, 95 percent of all claims for lost luggage are resolved within 24 hours. Air Canada and 350 airlines around the world are now using barcoded luggage tags and a computerized tracking system that can locate bags better than the most dedicated human employee. When an airline uses this system to match passenger claims with unclaimed luggage, the computers automatically search the databases of all the other airlines.

What happens to that lost suitcase that is found riding around on the airport luggage carousel? An unclaimed bag from Air Canada is kept at the airport for five days while staff try to contact the owner. Then it is transferred to the Central Baggage Tracing Office in Montreal's Dorval Airport, where a more sophisticated search may include opening the bag and looking for personal documents, library books, drug prescriptions or anything else that could help identify the owner. If this fails, the airline keeps the piece of baggage for four to six months. Finally it is sent away to be sold.



One of the best-kept shopping secrets in Canada is the Unclaimed Luggage and Goods Store in Ottawa, where keen bargain hunters may purchase luggage or other articles left on the planes of many international airlines. Many unchecked items found on airplanes — eyeglasses, coats, books and umbrellas — are donated to charity. The rest are sold. Among the items that have been sold at the Ottawa store are a \$10 000 solid gold Bulgari pen and a hand-crafted mandolin left by some unknown musician. In the American lost-luggage store in Scottsboro, Alabama, a 5.75-carat diamond was discovered in the toe of a sock, and one lucky woman bought a bag that had \$2000 tucked in a side pocket. 3

To keep your bags from going astray, experts suggest a few simple actions. Put a red ribbon, an adhesive colour strip or a colourful sticker on the outside of your luggage to distinguish it from similar bags. This makes it much easier for you to spot your own bag on the luggage carousel and helps prevent other travellers from picking up your bag by mistake. In addition, you should place a card or label with your full name and address on the inside of your luggage. If the bag is lost, airline employees will be able to open and return it. A little prevention can ensure that your bag doesn't end up at the lost-luggage store. 4

Adapted from "Tracking the Path of Lost Baggage" by Gerry Hall. Reprinted with permission of the author © Gerry Hall, 1999.

Reading 3—Successful Student (Actual Student Work)

multiple choice (Circle the letter next to the best or most correct answer for each question.)

1. What is the best meaning for “uniting” as used in paragraph 1?
 - A lining
 - B** joining (Correct)
 - C tracking
 - D separating
2. What is the best meaning for “sophisticated” as used in paragraph 2?
 - F quick
 - G classic
 - H mature
 - J** thorough (Correct)
3. Why are the dashes used in paragraph 3?
 - A to add a new idea
 - B to make a personal comment
 - C to emphasize an important idea
 - D** to begin and end a list of examples (Correct)
4. Which of the following best describes the key idea linking the first and last paragraphs?
 - F tracking luggage electronically
 - G** connecting passengers and their luggage (Correct)
 - H putting an identifying mark on your luggage
 - J selling the contents of travellers’ lost luggage

written answers

5. Explain how “Moreover” connects the ideas in sentence 5 in paragraph 1 with the previous sentence.

Student response: *“The Previous sentence was talking about numbers and the next was talking about percentages”* (Incorrect)

A correct response:
“moreover connects to the other sentence because it explains what happens to the missing luggage.”

6. Why does Air Canada sell unclaimed luggage after four to six month?

Student response: *“Because they have no use for it and can’t keep it any longer”* (Correct)

7. Name one item that has been sold at the Unclaimed Luggage and Goods Store in Ottawa. (paragraph 3)

Student response: *“gold bulgari Pen”* (Correct)

8. In paragraph 4, what word or words are used to connect two related sentences?

Student response: *“In a ddition.”* (Correct)

9. Why would some “unchecked items found on airplanes” be donated to charity rather than sold?

Student response: *“PeoPle probably wouldn’t buy it and if they dit they would get little money so it would be easier are better to donate them”* (Correct)

10. Based on your reading of this selection, explain whether airline companies are doing enough to prevent lost luggage.

Student response: *“Yes. They are doing as much as they humanly can”* (Incorrect)

A correct response:

“Yes. Not only do they have bar codes for luggage and a tracking system, they also tell passengers what to do for their own luggage.”

Get Rid of that T-shirt!

A recent newspaper article pointed out that Canadians purchased 73.7 million T-shirts last year. The article went on to say that the average North American owns 25 of them. The T-shirt was praised as the favourite garment of the twentieth century, worn by men and women, young and old, rich and poor. As we begin a new century, I suggest we leave the old T-shirt behind. 1

The first wearers of an “undershirt” or a “work shirt” in public were making a rebellious statement, but it quickly became the accepted style. Eventually, we all began to wear underwear anywhere and everywhere. 2

In the 60s, hippies tie-dyed their T-shirts. In the 70s, punk rockers shredded, safety-pinned and spray-painted them. In the 80s, T-shirts became great democratic portable billboards — each shirt an editorial column or personal ad telling others about the places the wearer has been, or the products, bands and politics the wearer supports or abhors. 3

The most recent trend seems to be toward slogans or messages that are increasingly meaningless. The best known examples are expensive T-shirts sporting only the name of the manufacturer. It seems strange that people are now expressing themselves by broadcasting their support of a shirt manufacturer. I can’t think of anything less individualistic or less attractive to wear in public. 4

The T-shirt is basically a formless, ugly garment. What should happen to the 25 T-shirts each of us is supposed to have? I suggest that we use them as rags for washing our 1.7 cars. 5



Adapted from “The T-shirt Century” by Russell Smith. Reprinted with permission from the author © Gerry Hall, 1999.

Reading 4—Successful Student (Actual Student Work)

multiple choice (Enter answers on Student Answer Sheet — Booklet 1.)

- In this selection, the T-shirt is compared to
 - a slogan.
 - a product.
 - a garment.
 - a billboard. (Correct)
- From the following sentences, choose the best one to end with an exclamation mark.
 - “In the 60s, hippies tie-dyed their T-shirts.”
 - “Eventually, we all began to wear underwear anywhere and everywhere.” (Correct)
 - “The best known examples are expensive T-shirts sporting only the name of the manufacturer.”
 - “The most recent trend seems to be toward slogans or messages that are increasingly meaningless.”
- Which of the following is the best way to describe the purpose of this selection?
 - to state an opinion (Correct)
 - to describe an object
 - to present information (Incorrect)
 - to provide instructions

written answers

- Give one reason why the first T-shirt wearers were considered to be “making a rebellious statement.” (paragraph 2)

Student response: *“Undershirts were used as clothing under a work suit or coat, without anything covering their undershirts it seemed to be rebellious.”* (Correct)

- What is the meaning of the phrase “broadcasting their support of a shirt manufacturer” as used in paragraph 4?

Student response: *“This means that lots of shirts have labels on them showing who made the shirt so people would buy them.”* (Correct)

6. Explain the purpose of the question in paragraph 5.

Student response: *“To ask you what you need so many shirts for. And to prove that you don’t need so many.”* (Correct)

7. Do you think T-shirts will continue to be popular? Use one piece of information from this selection to support your answer.

Student response: *“Yes, because they were popular in the 60’s, 70’s, 80’s and today.”* (Correct)



Sample Writing Task—October 2003

Opinion

Task: Write a **series of paragraphs** (a minimum of three) expressing an opinion on the topic below. Develop your main idea with supporting details (proof, facts, examples, etc.).

Purpose and

Audience: an adult who is interested in your opinion

Topic: **Should Canada Join the United States?**

Length: The lined space provided for your written work indicates the approximate length of the writing expected.

Three lined pages were provided for the student's response.

Opinion: Student Sample #1 (Actual Student Work)

Should Canada join the United States? No. I think that Canada shouldn't join the United States because we are our own country and most people like it that way.

Canada is the land of freedom of speech, and canada is a free country. the United States isnt.

In the United States there is alot of comotion and there are way too many problems and I dont think that the people of Canada wouldnt like for both of these countrys joined together!

Analysis

An opinion is clearly expressed: *"No. I think that Canada shouldn't join the United States...."*

The response does not include sufficient supporting details. Details are not developed.

There are lapses in organization. The details that are provided are not linked to the opinion expressed. No conclusion is provided.

Errors in spelling, *"alot of comotion"*, *"countrys"*, and in apostrophe use, *"isnt"*, *"dont"*, are present but do not interfere with communication.

Opinion: Student Sample #2 (Actual Student Work)

Canada should join the united states and form one large country. It would be good because we would have more power, and our country would be much richer.

IF Canada joined the united states the country that we would make would have alot of power. It would be very good because we would have large amys and alot of people living in our country. Therefore it would be very unlikely that wars would occur because of the amount of people we have. And if such a time come that we need to have a war we would be able to win easily because of the amount of soldiers we have. Power would be a major benefit if Canada joined America.

IF Canada joined America we would be a much richer country. Since Canadian money is worth less the American if we joined them we would all be earning the same amount of money. We would also have an extreamly large country . with a wide range of resources that we could use. Also if we were joined as one maybe we would have more peace instead of being seperate countrys and fighting. We could join as one, and be peaceful. If it worked out between Canada and the USA, maybe other countries would follow in our footsteps and begin to join and come together, rather then breaking up and being indepentant. Canada joining America has many benifits. It would be a good decision to make it become a reality.

Analysis

A clear statement of opinion is expressed: *“Canada should join the united states and form one large country.”*

Sufficient supporting details are well developed around three key ideas: *“...more power...”, “...much richer...”* and *“more peace”*.

The organization is simple, with links from the opening paragraph to the body. Each key idea is developed in the two paragraphs of the body, which begin with a parallel opening: *“IF Canada joined the united states we would be...”* and *“IF Canada joined America we would be...”* There is also a conclusion that links to the statement of opinion: *“Canada joining America has many benifits. It would be a good decision to make it become a reality.”*

There are errors, but they do not interfere with communication: *“extreamly”, “benifits”*.

Sample Writing Task—February 2002

News Report

Task: Write a **news report** based on the headline and picture below. You will have to make up the facts and information, answering some or all of the following questions: Who? What? Where? When? Why? How?

Purpose and

Audience: to report on an event for the readers of a newspaper

Length: The lined space provided for your written work indicates the approximate length of the writing expected.

One lined page was provided for the student's response.

Important discovery made by local student



News Report: Student Sample #1 (Actual Student Work)

** H_____ found a new yerm when at her High school in Geulph. She was at her 3 period class on Monday 2004. She ask her teacher what this yerm was. The teacher said he did not know what it was? That they have to bring this new germ too a lab. The teacher and H_____ were surprised and a tonished what they had found in the science class thant day! There is a good chance that they may name the germ after her.*

Analysis

An insufficient number of related facts are provided. The discovery of a “yerm” is mentioned, but this report gives very little additional information about the discovery. The who, what and where of the discovery are mentioned but are not developed.

This report sounds like a simple narrative rather than an objective news report when the writer describes the interaction between student and teacher: *“The teacher and H_____ were surprised and a tonished what they had found in the science class thant day!”*

Errors interfere with communication: “yerm”, “surpised”, “a tonished”, “thant”.

* In the news report, some students used names. These names have been removed or changed in order to protect individual privacy according to the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*.

News Report: Student Sample #2 (Actual Student Work)

*Yesterday morning a young girl named *Y_____ made an amazing discovery. Although she is only 19 years old she has changed medical history forever.*

While working in here lab at McMaster University she combine two herbal chemical compounds. These had never before been mix together. Her intelligence has finally found a cure for all form's of cancer.

Y_____ being the only girl from a family of five cannot believe her amazing discovery. We talked to her earlier today to see how she was feeling.

"I really am overwhelmed with excitement. I truely hope that people will remember me. People have already been speculating my discoveries, but I know what I have done. My father died two years ago of lung cancer, I only wish I could have saved him, but now I can save other peoples lifes!"

This young lady has every right to be excited, congradulations Y_____, on a job well done.

Analysis

Sufficient related facts are provided: who – “Y_____”; when – “yesterday”; where – “McMaster University”; what – “a cure for cancer”; how – “combine two herbal chemical compounds”; why – “father died... of lung cancer”.

It is mostly in report form, although some opinion is included: “Her intelligence has finally”, “This young lady has every right to be excited...”.

Organization is simple.

Errors, while present, do not interfere with communication: “other peoples lifes”.

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Reading 3 (page 4)

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Reading 4 (page 8)

“Get Rid of That T-Shirt!” Excerpt from “The T-Shirt Century” by Russell Smith, published in *The Globe and Mail*, July 29, 1999. Reprinted with permission of the author.

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