



Grade 9

**English Language Arts/Literacy
Literary Analysis Task**

2017 Released Items

2017 Released Items: Grade 9 Literary Analysis Task

The Literary Analysis Task requires students to read two literary texts that are purposely paired. Students read the texts, answer questions for each text and for the texts as a pair, and then write an analytic essay.

The 2017 blueprint for PARCC's grade 9 Literary Analysis Task includes Evidence-Based Selected Response/Technology-Enhanced Constructed Response items as well as one Prose Constructed Response prompt.

Included in this document:

- Answer key and standards alignment
- PDFs of each item with the associated text(s)

Additional related materials not included in this document:

- Sample scored student responses with annotations and practice papers
- PARCC Scoring Rubric for Prose Constructed Response Items
- Guide to English Language Arts/Literacy Released Items: Understanding Scoring
- PARCC English Language Arts/Literacy Assessment: General Scoring Rules for the 2015 Summative Assessment

PARCC Release Items Answer and Alignment Document
ELA/Literacy: Grade 9

Text Type: LAT		
Passage(s): from <i>The Song of the Lark</i> / from <i>My Home Is Far Away</i>		
Item Code	Answer(s)	Standards/Evidence Statement Alignment
VH002335	Item Type: EBSR Part A: B Part B: D	RL 9.1.1 L 9.4.1 RL 9.4.1
VH002340	Item Type: EBSR Part A: C Part B: B, D	RL 9.1.1 RL 9.2.1 RL 9.2.2
VH002344	Item Type: TECR Part A: A Part B: <p style="text-align: center;">-----</p> <p>13 The company broke up into groups and expressed their amazement. Of course all Swedes were conceited, but they would never have believed that all the conceit of all the Swedes put together would reach such a pitch as this. They confided to each other that Tillie was “just a little off, on the subject of her niece,” and agreed that it would be as well not to excite her further. Tillie got a cold reception at rehearsals for a long while afterward, and Thea had a new crop of enemies without even knowing it.</p>	RL 9.1.1 L 9.5.1 RL 9.4.1
VH002435	Item Type: EBSR Part A: A Part B: B	RL 9.1.1 L 9.4.1 RL 9.4.1
VH002450	Item Type: TECR <p>1. Marcia had always been quick to catch on to things.</p> <p>2. Marcia couldn't understand why it took Lena so long to learn things.</p> <p>3. At Lena's Exercise Day, Marcia jumped up and recited Lena's piece.</p>	RL 9.1.1 RL 9.2.3

VH002455	Item Type: EBSR Part A: C Part B: D	RL 9.1.1 RL 9.3.1
VH037763_ 2T	Item Type: PCR Refer to Grade 9 Scoring Rubric	RL 9.1.1 RL 9.3.2
VH002443	Item Type: EBSR (additional item) Part A: D Part B: A	RL 9.1.1 RL 9.2.1

Today you will analyze the passage from *The Song of the Lark* and the passage from *My Home Is Far Away*. As you read these texts, you will gather information and answer questions about complex characterization so you can write an essay.

Read the passage from *The Song of the Lark*. Then answer the questions.

from *The Song of the Lark*

by Willa Cather

- 1 Mr. Kronborg considered Thea a remarkable child; but so were all his children remarkable. If one of the business men downtown remarked to him that he “had a mighty bright little girl, there,” he admitted it, and at once began to explain what a “long head for business” his son Gus had, or that Charley was “a natural electrician,” and had put in a telephone from the house to the preacher’s study behind the church.
- 2 Mrs. Kronborg watched her daughter thoughtfully. She found her more interesting than her other children, and she took her more seriously, without thinking much about why she did so. The other children had to be guided, directed, kept from conflicting with one another. Charley and Gus were likely to want the same thing, and to quarrel about it. Anna often demanded unreasonable service from her older brothers; that they should sit up until after midnight to bring her home from parties when she did not like the youth who had offered himself as her escort; or that they should drive twelve miles into the country, on a winter night, to take her to a ranch dance, after they had been working hard all day. Gunner often got bored with his own clothes or stilts or sled, and wanted Axel’s. But Thea, from the time she was a little thing, had her own routine. She kept out of everyone’s way, and was hard to manage only when the other children interfered with her. Then there was trouble indeed: bursts of temper which used to alarm Mrs. Kronborg. “You ought to know enough to let Thea alone. She lets you alone,” she often said to the other children.

- 3 One may have staunch friends in one's own family, but one seldom has admirers. Thea, however, had one in the person of her addle-pated aunt, Tillie Kronborg. In older countries, where dress and opinions and manners are not so thoroughly standardized as in our own West, there is a belief that people who are foolish about the more obvious things of life are apt to have peculiar insight into what lies beyond the obvious. The old woman who can never learn not to put the kerosene can on the stove may yet be able to tell fortunes, to persuade a backward child to grow, to cure warts, or to tell people what to do with a young girl who has gone melancholy. Tillie's mind was a curious machine; when she was awake it went round like a wheel when the belt has slipped off, and when she was asleep she dreamed follies. But she had intuitions. She knew, for instance, that Thea was different from the other Kronborgs, worthy though they all were. Her romantic imagination found possibilities in her niece. When she was sweeping or ironing, or turning the ice-cream freezer at a furious rate, she often built up brilliant futures for Thea, adapting freely the latest novel she had read. Tillie made enemies for her niece among the church people because, at sewing societies and church suppers, she sometimes spoke vauntingly, with a toss of her head, just as if Thea's "wonderfulness" were an accepted fact in Moonstone, like Mrs. Archie's stinginess, or Mrs. Livery Johnson's duplicity. People declared that, on this subject, Tillie made them tired.
- 4 Tillie belonged to a dramatic club that once a year performed in the Moonstone Opera House such plays as "Among the Breakers," and "The Veteran of 1812." Tillie played character parts, the flirtatious old maid or the spiteful *intrigante*. She used to study her parts up in the attic at home. While she was committing the lines, she got Gunner or Anna to hold the book for her, but when she began "to bring out the expression," as she said, she used, very timorously, to ask Thea to hold the book. Thea was usually—not always—agreeable about it. Her mother had told her that, since she had some influence with Tillie, it would be a good thing for them all if she could tone her down a shade and "keep her from taking on any worse than need be." Thea would sit on the foot of Tillie's bed, her feet tucked under her, and stare at the silly text. "I wouldn't make so much fuss, there, Tillie," she would remark occasionally; "I don't

see the point in it"; or, "What do you pitch your voice so high for? It don't carry half as well."

- 5 "I don't see how it comes Thea is so patient with Tillie," Mrs. Kronborg more than once remarked to her husband. "She ain't patient with most people, but it seems like she's got a peculiar patience for Tillie."
- 6 Tillie always coaxed Thea to go "behind the scenes" with her when the club presented a play, and help her with her make-up. Thea hated it, but she always went. She felt as if she had to do it. There was something in Tillie's adoration of her that compelled her. There was no family impropriety that Thea was so much ashamed of as Tillie's "acting," and yet she was always being dragged in to assist her. Tillie simply had her, there. She didn't know why, but it was so. There was a string in her somewhere that Tillie could pull; a sense of obligation to Tillie's misguided aspirations. The saloon-keepers had some such feeling of responsibility toward Spanish Johnny.
- 7 The dramatic club was the pride of Tillie's heart, and her enthusiasm was the principal factor in keeping it together. Sick or well, Tillie always attended rehearsals, and was always urging the young people, who took rehearsals lightly, to "stop fooling and begin now." The young men—bank clerks, grocery clerks, insurance agents—played tricks, laughed at Tillie, and "put it up on each other" about seeing her home; but they often went to tiresome rehearsals just to oblige her. They were good-natured young fellows. Their trainer and stage-manager was young Upping, the jeweller who ordered Thea's music for her. Though barely thirty, he had followed half a dozen professions, and had once been a violinist in the orchestra of the Andrews Opera Company, then well known in little towns throughout Colorado and Nebraska.
- 8 By one amazing indiscretion Tillie very nearly lost her hold upon the Moonstone Drama Club. The club had decided to put on "The Drummer Boy of Shiloh," a very ambitious undertaking because of the many supers needed and the scenic difficulties of the act which took place in Andersonville Prison. The members of the club consulted together in Tillie's absence as to who should play the part of the drummer boy. It

must be taken by a very young person, and village boys of that age are self-conscious and are not apt at memorizing. The part was a long one, and clearly it must be given to a girl. Some members of the club suggested Thea Kronborg, others advocated Lily Fisher. Lily's partisans urged that she was much prettier than Thea, and had a much "sweeter disposition." Nobody denied these facts. But there was nothing in the least boyish about Lily, and she sang all songs and played all parts alike. Lily's simper was popular, but it seemed not quite the right thing for the heroic drummer boy.

- 9** Upping, the trainer, talked to one and another: "Lily's all right for girl parts," he insisted, "but you've got to get a girl with some ginger in her for this. Thea's got the voice, too. When she sings, 'Just Before the Battle, Mother,' she'll bring down the house."
- 10** When all the members of the club had been privately consulted, they announced their decision to Tillie at the first regular meeting that was called to cast the parts. They expected Tillie to be overcome with joy, but, on the contrary, she seemed embarrassed. "I'm afraid Thea hasn't got time for that," she said jerkily. "She is always so busy with her music. Guess you'll have to get somebody else."
- 11** The club lifted its eyebrows. Several of Lily Fisher's friends coughed. Mr. Upping flushed. The stout woman who always played the injured wife called Tillie's attention to the fact that this would be a fine opportunity for her niece to show what she could do. Her tone was condescending.
- 12** Tillie threw up her head and laughed; there was something sharp and wild about Tillie's laugh—when it was not a giggle. "Oh, I guess Thea hasn't got time to do any showing off. Her time to show off ain't come yet. I expect she'll make us all sit up when it does. No use asking her to take the part. She'd turn her nose up at it. I guess they'd be glad to get her in the Denver Dramatics, if they could."
- 13** The company broke up into groups and expressed their amazement. Of course all Swedes were conceited, but they would never have believed that all the conceit of all the Swedes put together would reach such a

pitch as this. They confided to each other that Tillie was “just a little off, on the subject of her niece,” and agreed that it would be as well not to excite her further. Tillie got a cold reception at rehearsals for a long while afterward, and Thea had a new crop of enemies without even knowing it.

From THE SONG OF THE LARK by Willa Cather—Public Domain

1. Part A

What does the word **vauntingly** mean as it is used to describe Tillie in paragraph 3?

- A. playfully
- B. boastfully
- C. artistically
- D. regretfully

Part B

Which is another instance of Tillie speaking **vauntingly** in the passage?

- A. “. . . bring out the expression. . . .” (paragraph 4)
- B. “. . . stop fooling and begin now . . .” (paragraph 7)
- C. “. . . you’ll have to get somebody else.” (paragraph 10)
- D. “. . . they’d be glad to get her. . . .” (paragraph 12)

2. Part A

What is one central idea of the passage?

- A. A foolish woman worries about her performance in a play by the dramatic club.
- B. The parents of a large family wonder why one of their children is so different from the others.
- C. An intelligent and self-sufficient little girl has a strong connection with her eccentric aunt.
- D. A dramatic club's founder refuses to allow her niece to participate in an upcoming play.

Part B

Which **two** sentences best support the answer chosen in Part A?

- A. "She kept out of everyone's way, and was hard to manage only when the other children interfered with her." (paragraph 2)
- B. "She knew, for instance, that Thea was different from the other Kronborgs, worthy though they all were." (paragraph 3)
- C. "Tillie played character parts, the flirtatious old maid or the spiteful *intrigante*." (paragraph 4)
- D. "There was a string in her somewhere that Tillie could pull; a sense of obligation to Tillie's misguided aspirations." (paragraph 6)
- E. "The dramatic club was the pride of Tillie's heart, and her enthusiasm was the principal factor in keeping it together." (paragraph 7)
- F. "They expected Tillie to be overcome with joy, but, on the contrary, she seemed embarrassed." (paragraph 10)

3. Part A

In paragraph 11, what is the meaning of the phrase **The club lifted its eyebrows**?

- A. The members couldn't believe what they were hearing.
- B. The members thought Tillie was being unreasonable.
- C. The members didn't know who else they could get for the role.
- D. The members wondered why Tillie was embarrassed.

Part B

Select a sentence in the passage that provides support for the answer chosen in Part A.

See next pages

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Read the passage from *My Home Is Far Away*. Then answer the questions.

from *My Home Is Far Away*

by Dawn Powell

- 1 Marcia was five years old now, fifteen months younger than Lena, but she was half an inch taller because she took after the Willards instead of the Reeds. It was an understood thing that Lena was the pretty one, with her yellow curls and rosy cheeks, but Marcia was proud of having bigger feet so she got new shoes first, and the fact that she could hold her breath longer. She did admire Lena's social poise, her not being afraid of boys but stalking past them, nose calmly in air, and she desperately envied Lena's birthmark, a strawberry basket on her neck, caused, it was said, by her mother's passion for strawberries. Lena, for her part, was envious of grown-up solicitude over Marcia's health, remarks that she looked "peaked" and sickly. Marcia had a memory, too, though this was a matter of wonder and pride to Lena more than envy. Marcia could remember everything that ever happened, almost from her first tooth. She could remember knowing what people were saying before she could talk and she could remember bitterly the humiliation of being helpless. She remembered being carried in her mother's arms to a family reunion and given ice cream for the first time. She had cried over its being too cold and her mother said, "Here, Baby, I'll put it on a stove to warm it." Any fool of even less than two could see it was a table and not a stove, but for some philosophic reason Baby Marcia decided to let the thing pass without protest. If her mother wanted to think a table was a stove, she would just have to wait for a bigger vocabulary to argue the matter. This was the beginning of a series of disillusioning experiences with adult intelligence, and the recurrent question of whether adults were playing a constant game of insulting trickery, or whether they just didn't know much. Lena was gravely shocked by Marcia's spoken doubts, so Marcia kept her thoughts to herself.
- 2 Lena went to Primary School in London Junction now and no longer considered Marcia a fit companion in public, but walked home with a

girlfriend her own age named Mary Evelyn Stewart. The double name was very fascinating so Marcia changed her own name to Marcia Lily and Lena took the name of Lena Gladys. They tried to make Florrie use her full elegant name of Florence Adeline, but with her customary obstinacy she yelled defiantly, "Me Florrie! Me Florrie!"

- 3** "All right, then, be Florrie," Lena Gladys said contemptuously. "But Mary Evelyn and I won't ride you around any more in your go-cart after school."
- 4** Lena and Mary Evelyn had a glamorous life in Primary that set them far above Marcia. They had to learn pieces to speak on Exercise Day once a month. Since Mary Evelyn's mother worked in the Fair Store, both children learned in the Willard sitting room, while Marcia, burning with jealousy, played by herself in a corner, cutting out lady paper dolls all with two names. Marcia couldn't go to school till next term, although she had read and written almost as soon as she walked and talked. This, like her memory, was a dubious talent, for it was not healthy to be different from other children. It wasn't healthy to learn Lena's and Mary Evelyn's pieces the second time she heard them laboriously spelled out, and it was certainly not tactful. Her mother, with a little schoolgirl on each knee, looked down at Marcia helplessly.
- 5** "Marcia, you're supposed to be playing paper dolls!" she protested. "If the girls haven't begun to know their pieces by this time, there's no reason why you should."
- 6** "She isn't even six," Lena Gladys said coldly to her personal friend, Mary Evelyn. "Now, I'll begin mine again. 'The gingerbread dog and the calico cat-'"
- 7** "'Side by side on the table sat,'" Marcia shrieked, and ran out into the yard yelling the rest of the piece until her mother caught her and boxed her ears.
- 8** This correction, not being understood, was forgotten on Exercise Day the next month, when Lena (and of course Marcia) had learned "Little Orphan Annie" with gestures. Mama left Florrie at Grandma's and took Marcia to

visit the First Grade. It was an exciting day with the rustle of mothers' best silks, the smell of chalk dust and newly scrubbed halls, and the squirming of the children sitting two at a desk to make room for the Second Graders. Marcia and her mother sat with the visiting mothers and smaller children in folding chairs on one side of the room. The teacher had drawn a flag in colors on the blackboard, and there were pussy willows and autumn leaves on her desk. She tapped a little silver gong on her desk when everyone was seated, and she said, "Before we begin the Exercises, perhaps some of our little visitors have a piece they would like to recite for us." Without further urging, Marcia slid off her mother's lap and marched over to the platform, where she recited at terrific speed with glib gestures "Little Orphan Annie." The performance was marked by her mother's horrified face and the sound of Lena sobbing softly into her Reader, "That's my piece! Now I haven't got any piece!"

- 9 Even after a punishment for this breach of etiquette and her stout defense, "But Lena didn't know it anyway!" Marcia continued to steal Lena's arithmetic or reader and run easily through the homework while Lena was patiently working over one word in her Speller. Marcia could not understand why it took her sister or Mary Evelyn so long to learn things when they were like candy—you saw them, ate them, and that was the end. Nor could she understand why it was bad for her to find the books so simple, just because she wasn't in school yet. It was confusing to be scolded for doing Lena's lessons, and then overhear her father chuckling about it to Mr. Friend. These were all matters that would clear up certainly when she started going to school so there was no use puzzling about them.

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4. Part A

What is the meaning of **solicitude** as it is used in paragraph 1?

- A. concern
- B. stamina
- C. arrogance
- D. jealousy

Part B

Which phrase from paragraph 1 provides the **best** evidence for the answer chosen in Part A?

- A. "Lena, for her part, was envious. . . ."
- B. ". . . remarks that she looked 'peaked' and sickly . . ."
- C. ". . . a matter of wonder and pride . . ."
- D. ". . . could remember everything that ever happened . . ."

5. From the list below, choose the three ideas that **best** summarize this passage. Drag the ideas and drop them into the boxes in the correct order.

Select a choice and drag it to a box.

1.

2.

3.

At Lena's Exercise Day, Marcia jumped up and recited Lena's piece.

Marcia sat with her mother and other visitors in the classroom.

Marcia couldn't understand why it took Lena so long to learn things.

Marcia and Lena both took second names to be like Mary Evelyn.

The piece Lena and Marcia learned was "Little Orphan Annie."

Marcia had always been quick to catch on to things.

6. Part A

What confuses Marcia in this passage?

- A. being envious of Lena
- B. being smarter than adults
- C. being scolded for being smart
- D. being told she cannot go to school

Part B

Which evidence provides the **best** support for the answer chosen in Part A?

- A. “. . . or whether they just didn’t know much.” (paragraph 1)
- B. “. . . had a glamorous life in Primary that set them far above . . .”
(paragraph 4)
- C. “. . . couldn’t go to school till next term . . .” (paragraph 4)
- D. “. . . why it was bad for her to find the books so simple . . .”
(paragraph 9)

7. Write an essay analyzing how the characters of Thea in the passage from *The Song of the Lark* and Marcia in the passage from *My Home Is Far Away* develop a theme common to **both** pieces. Use examples from **both** passages to support your response.

8. Part A

Which sentence states one theme of this passage?

- A. Attending school is a privilege that must be earned.
- B. Competing with your sister should be avoided.
- C. Obeying your mother is a rule that is easy to follow.
- D. Being different from others has some interesting challenges.

Part B

Which evidence from the passage provides support for the answer chosen in Part A?

- A. "It was an understood thing that Lena was the pretty one, with her yellow curls and rosy cheeks, but Marcia was proud of having bigger feet so she got new shoes first, and the fact that she could hold her breath longer." (paragraph 1)
- B. "Marcia couldn't go to school till next term, although she had read and written almost as soon as she walked and talked." (paragraph 4)
- C. "'Marcia, you're supposed to be playing paper dolls!' she protested." (paragraph 5)
- D. "Without further urging, Marcia slid off her mother's lap and marched over to the platform, where she recited at terrific speed with glib gestures 'Little Orphan Annie.'" (paragraph 8)