

# How to Respond to Short Answer Questions



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LEARNING  
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# Quizzes & Exams

- Most quizzes/exams have at least one short answer response.
- If you leave it blank, you are missing out on at least 5 points (sometimes up to 30 points!!).
- It takes practice to write paragraph responses. So the more you write, the better you'll get.
- Keep this document open while you take quizzes. 😊
- I give partial credit, so take a stab at it!!



# The Formula

1. Restate the question in your answer. This becomes your thesis/topic sentence.
2. Use a detail from the reading to support your answer.
3. Explain how the detail supports your answer. This may take one to three sentences.
4. Use another detail.
5. Explain how this detail supports your answer.



# What does it look like?

The first sentence is your insightful answer that restates the question and will completely impress your teacher. Your next sentence uses a specific detail from the reading and shows you read the story/passage. Now you explain how this detail relates to your answer in the first sentence. Finally, you use one more detail from the story, causing your teacher to break out in a grin. You become your teacher's favorite student when you explain this detail, too.



# Always make sure you...

1. Proofread for misspelled words and simple grammar mistakes (capitalization, run-ons and fragments, punctuation, etc.).
2. Use character names, story titles, and/or author names.
3. Use any literary terms mentioned in the question.



## What not to do...

1. Don't simply summarize the passage/story. Most prompts ask you to *analyze*, not summarize.
2. Don't leave it blank. Take some time to *think* about the question and attempt to write a response.



# A Sample Response

**Prompt:** Explain the message of the poem “Theme for English B.”

In “Theme for English B,” Langston Hughes conveys the message that, despite the differences between people, everyone is connected. He states, “You are white—yet a part of me, as I am a part of you.” Hughes is African-American and his teacher is white; they may not always understand each other, especially during the 1920s when race relations were extremely strained. However, Hughes recognizes the fact that their lives are intertwined, and that every time they interact, they are learning from each other. Hughes explains to his teacher, “As I learn from you, I guess you learn from me.” Being connected, they are bound to communicate ideas and values. But his tone is unsure; does he really want to learn from his teacher? Hughes does not always want to be part of his instructor’s life, or even whites; however, he understands that this connection is part of being an American.

## And Remember...

- If you need help on a unit, section, or text, ask for help!
- You can email me, send me a message, or IM me.
- I'm here for you!

